



Identify the successful story of the indigenous Ammatoa community preserving the environment

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study explores how the Ammatoa indigenous community demonstrates the capacity to preserve indigenous land and forest through indigenous knowledge practice, a result of a dialectical process between their traditional knowledge based on Pasang ri Kajang with non-traditional knowledge such as modernism. The dialectical process could be seen in how they practice indigenous tourism, which is a part of the modern industry. The indigenous tourism that uses the indigenous recognition as an authoritative foundation attracts more visitors that increasing not only their economic income but also their social and political position. **Methods:** Using a qualitative approach through library research based on theses, reports, and relevant documents, this study examines how the Ammatoa community obtains recognition as an indigenous community. **Findings:** The findings reveal that formal state recognition as an indigenous community requires multiple internal and external factors, particularly those related to policy frameworks and political dynamics. Two key strategies emerge: the development of cultural tourism as a form of asserting territorial rights, and the advocacy for legal recognition of customary land to prevent state acquisition. **Conclusion:** These findings show that indigenous knowledge, tourism development, and legal recognition are interrelated processes in securing indigenous rights and sustaining environmental stewardship. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article offers several original contributions that align strongly with the journal's aims and scope in advancing interdisciplinary ecological discourse and environmental justice.

KEYWORDS: Ammatoa community; indigenous knowledge; indigenous tourism.

1. Introduction

Indigenous communities are stewards of over 15% of the world's land, with at least 370 million people who identify as indigenous and retain social, economic, cultural, and political connections to the original inhabitants of a country before conquest or colonization (Shawoo & Thornton, 2019). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, there are an estimated 70 million indigenous people, divided into 2371 indigenous communities spread across Indonesia. The second-largest Indigenous communities are distributed across Sulawesi, where there are 664 Indigenous communities (Berger et al., 2021).

Indigenous communities around the world have similar characteristics to such as having a sense of interrelatedness and reciprocity ("returning the gift") that relies on the idea of a genealogical network, where nature is not perceived in terms of resources, but as full of "relatives" (Whyte et al., 2018). The indigenous community is characterized with

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responsible for nature, including non-human beings such as plants, animals, water, and so on. For them, the members are not allowed to dominate, but are only responsible (Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000). They also see wealth as a quality of relationships, different from the modern community that sees wealth only as capital accumulation (Wildcat, 2013). Fulvio Mazzocchi (2020) argues that the indigenous view and principles have contrasted the Western dualistic view and the idea of a mechanistic order. The characteristics of the indigenous community should become a sustainable requirement according to its characteristics: attitude of giving, reciprocity and caretaking, and sense of interconnectedness.

Study found that land managed by an indigenous community has lower rates of deforestation (Sze et al., 2022) because of their indigenous knowledge that informs restoration efforts, effective management practices, close engagement, and responds quickly to environmental changes. Therefore, the indigenous practice is a key to saving the environment from deforestation, a condition of forest areas experiencing a decline due to land conversions for infrastructure, settlements, agriculture, mining, and plantations. Deforestation nowadays has become a threat around the world, including in Indonesia, which has more than 90 million hectares of tropical forest, the third largest in the world after Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Alisjahbana & Busch, 2017). According to the Director of the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup*, WALHI) in South Sulawesi, the condition of deforestation is unsettling. In the last decade, forest area has steadily decreased from 2.1 million hectares to only 1 million hectares left (Afdal et al., 2022).

Indigenous communities around the world, including in Indonesia, have a substantial contribution to environmental conservation; however, they are included as vulnerable groups among the majority society. They have to face the colonialization that results in them clearing the ethnic. In Indonesia, the indigenous communities, including one of the strongest, the Ammatoa Community, have experienced discrimination for a long time; they have been marginalized, alienated, and even experienced cultural genocide by both state and majoritarian dominations (Sangaji, 2007). Besides, the majoritarian society stigmatized some of them as uncivilized, the heretic community, or even half Muslim because of their traditional practice (Maarif, 2014). The facts show that indigenous communities are in a very weak position, economically, politically, and legally, when faced with more established groups that are better able to protect and fulfill their own human rights.

In the era of the New Order, the state used a pejorative term for their development programs such as the program of *Suku Terasing* (estranged tribes) and *Masyarakat Terbelakang* (backward communities) (Sangaji, 2007; Davidson & Hanley, 2007) which included education program, health program, and prosperity program such as culture and tourism (Maarif et al, 2019). The New Order's development programs, which employed a top-down approach, have been criticized by many as failed programs. They disturbed the indigenous communities and exploited their tradition for tourist displays, and were otherwise accused of being primitive, so they changed to appear modern.

In the Reformation Era, regimes' policies have changed. They are characterized by promoting liberalization, democratization, and decentralization. At the beginning, issues of the indigenous community had been revived. Many NGOs (Non-government Organizations) that focus on the indigenous communities, such as AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*/Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of Indonesia), emerged to advocate for the indigenous community to reclaim their rights, including their rights over their lands and forests (Van der Muur & Bedner, 2016). Decentralization policies, despite their malpractices, were meant for empowerment. They changed their approach from top-down to a bottom-up approach, which emphasized community participation. The new approach had facilitated the indigenous communities to organize themselves and express their identities. Their local wisdom attracted public attention, despite being abused for electoral interests (Li, 2007).

The condition of the indigenous communities today, after 27 years of reformation, has not significantly changed from that of the New Order era. Across the archipelago, they are

still facing various challenges, particularly the loss of living space and minimal protection for their rights. Land grabbing and the criminalization of indigenous communities are still common. Furthermore, the recognition of customary forests is too low. The BRWA (Customary Territory Registration Agency) argues that the condition is caused by several factors: the existence of regulations that require the establishment of indigenous people whose indigenous territories are located within forest areas by local regulation, the existence of budget constraints, and the weak capacity of the local government to accelerate the process of legal recognition. Besides, they have limited resources and budgets to reach and implement indigenous forest recognition targets, and the involvement of indigenous communities and civil society organizations in supporting the achievement of customary forest recognition targets is not yet optimal (BRWA, 2024).

Among the vulnerable communities, some of the indigenous communities in Indonesia show their resistance, and one of the strongest is the Ammatoa Community in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi (Van der Muur, 2018). That argument is based on the recognition of the indigenous community by the regional and central government, becoming one of nine indigenous communities who officially recognized as an indigenous community. The regional government of Bulukumba issued Regulation No. 9/2015 on the recognition and protection of the Ammatoas' rights as an indigenous community. The regulation is about the Inauguration, recognition, and protection of the rights of the Ammatoa Kajang customary law community. The role of the Ammatoa Kajang Customary Institution in Preserving Customary Forests i.e., (1) protect the forest, (2) supervise the use of forest products, (3) provide sanctions for those who violate customary rules, (4) supervise and protect the paleko'na boronga (forest blanket) and buffer forest, (5) determining the time of the activities of traditional rituals and indigenous community in the forest area, and (6) Determining the outer boundaries of the rambang seppang and rambang luar (Megawati & Mahdiannur, 2021). The central government followed up the regulation by issuing the decree (SK) of the Forestry and Environment Ministry (*Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan/ KLHK*) No. 6746/MENLHK-PSKL/KUM.1/12/2016 on recognition of Ammatoa's Indigenous forest covering an area of ± 313.99 ha in Kajang, Bulukumba. The regulation recognizes that the Ammatoa community successfully preserves its environment through Ammatoa Indigenous knowledge.

Furthermore, The Washington Post called the Ammatoa Indigenous community the best forest guardians in the world. The article argues that when the indigenous community is armed with land rights, such as the Ammatoa community, who use their indigenous knowledge to protect the forests surrounding their settlements, they are remarkably effective custodians. Therefore, empowering the indigenous community is a key way to protect the world's rainforests. As the Ammatoa has been done for years, they have safeguarded the wealth of native wildlife, including deer, monkeys, wild boars, and tropical birds, as well as four rivers whose watersheds supply water to several villages outside the Kajang area (Yeung, 2022).

The Ammatoa Community faces the same challenges as others, but they emerge as one of the strongest, especially their successful at preserving their indigenous land and forest. To better understand, this research aims to explore internal and external factors that lead to the community's success in preserving the environment. In particular, the study aims to answer the following research questions: what factors support the Ammatoa, and how does the Ammatoa community succeed in preserving the environment?

2. Methods

This study is grounded in the phenomenon of environmental crises experienced by indigenous communities, particularly the socio-environmental dynamics faced by the Ammatoa Indigenous Community. It aims to describe and reflect on these issues by examining the community's involvement in managing customary forests as a form of recognition of their ancestral land. In this regard, the study is framed around three key developments. First, the social status of indigenous communities as an expression of the

recognition of customary territories. Second, the ways in which the knowledge systems of the Ammatoa Indigenous Community shape social structures and promote environmental conservation. Third, the external influences that affect the community's acceptance of formal recognition.

Using qualitative research and a liberatory research approach, this study observes how the Ammatoa Indigenous Community responds to environmental crises through spirituality, a synthesis of religion and culture. For the Ammatoa people, customary forests function as a spiritual medium that shapes the relationship between humans and nature. The Ammatoa community resides in the Toa area of Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. In this research, we used several sources to trace the Ammatoa community, including digital maps to identify their residential areas. The map above illustrates the recognition of the Kajang Ammatoa customary territory in both national and international cartographic records. It serves as a key reference point in representing the geographic scope of the Ammatoa Indigenous Community. Although this study primarily employs a library research approach, it aims to conceptually describe the geographic location of the Ammatoa community.

Qualitative research and a library-based research approach were employed to interpret and gain an in-depth understanding of the social reality of the Ammatoa Indigenous Community. The researchers not only analyzed data from books and articles but also examined key documents that describe the life of the Ammatoa people. Data collection techniques involved the analysis and interpretation of documents, books, and scholarly articles related to studies of the Ammatoa community. The primary data in this study were obtained through an extensive process that began with reviewing field research findings published in books concerning the Ammatoa Indigenous Community.

The library research approach aims to analyze scientific evidence by answering research questions in a specific, transparent, and comprehensively processable manner. Data found in books, journals, and documents in material form are used to evaluate the quality of findings in a study. This approach requires careful analysis of the documents found so that they can be processed in stages. The results of a systematic literature review can serve as a foundation for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge management studies through a structured and systematic approach (Akmal et al., 2025).

The keywords used in the literature search for this study were "traditional knowledge and recognition," and the data sources were obtained primarily from Google Scholar, focusing on works published within the past ten years. Based on these processes, data analysis was conducted through restating, interpreting, and reflecting on findings from the literature. These analytical stages enabled the researchers to draw conclusions about the role of the Ammatoa Indigenous Community in preserving customary forests in Kajang, South Sulawesi.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *The terminology of indigenous knowledge in the Indonesian context*

According to Bastien (2004), knowledge is relational and dependent upon the relationships that are learned in childhood. Meanwhile, another scholar, Gupta (2015), defines knowledge as a common agreement, understood to refer to the total of what is known by an individual, group, cultural, and otherwise, community, society, nation, and humanity. The agreement included a set of various facts and information traits, categorized into two types: traditional and non-traditional. Traditional Knowledge is defined as a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature, including a system of self-management that governs resource utilization (Johnson, 1992).

In Indonesia, most of the population lives in rural areas, and a part of them still uses traditional knowledge. We could categorize a part of the Javanese, Sundanese, or Balinese as a community that still practices traditional knowledge. Traditional Knowledge in this

context is related to living in harmony with nature, living in rural areas, but it has no specific rule on how to treat nature. They are also open to the modern lifestyle, such as using technology or being a part of writing traditions. Besides, there is another category for several communities known as the indigenous law society (*Masyarakat Hukum Adat*, hereinafter mentioned as the indigenous community) that has specific rules according to their community. They have privileged rights inherent and owned by a community of people for the similarity of origin (genealogical), territorial similarity, and other indigenous objects, the right to *ulayat* (customary/*adat*) land, rivers, forests, and practices in their communities (Tampubolon, 2024). Furthermore, the indigenous community uses a different worldview or paradigm known as indigenous knowledge, which I argue in this research is the result of dialectical knowledge between traditional knowledge and non-traditional knowledge.

There are many debates on the issue of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Several scholars used the term Indigenous Knowledge same as the terms Traditional Knowledge (TK), and Local Knowledge (LK) (Gupta, 2012; Onyancha, 2024). Onyancha (2022) argues that terminologies are commonly used to describe the knowledge practiced by traditional and indigenous communities because those terms have similarities, but each of them has a different meaning. However, I prefer to position the Traditional Knowledge as a part of Indigenous Knowledge according to the existence of the indigenous law society in Indonesia.

In addition, there are also debates among Indonesian scholars about the terms indigenous and *adat*. The term indigenous refers to the native community, such as aborigines in Australia, Maori in New Zealand, or Indians in Canada and the United States. Those communities are the settlers before the colonists came. Governing institutions like the United Nations have persistently defined indigenous communities in terms of those who are historically related to their territories from precolonial times and distinct from others who now settle on those territories (Göcke, 2013). Meanwhile, the term indigenous in Indonesia is more ambiguous, related to the history and geographical conditions. Indigenous '*adat*' could mean tradition, ethnic, sultanate, native, marginal group, or the indigenous law society (Riyanto, 2025). Among the debates of the indigenous '*adat*' terminology, I specifically refer to the terminology on the indigenous law society (MHA).

Table 1. Terminology of indigenous knowledge in Indonesia

Theme / Concept	Key Findings	Significance
Traditional Knowledge (TK)	A body of knowledge built through generations of living in close contact with nature; includes self-management systems governing resource use. Distinct from non-traditional knowledge. TK is 'traditional' not because it is old, but because it persists through continuous reinterpretation.	Provides the conceptual foundation for understanding indigenous practice and distinguishes it from modern or external knowledge systems.
Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Positioned as broader than TK. For the Ammatoa community, IK is the product of dialectical knowledge — the result of ongoing negotiation between Traditional Knowledge (Pasang) and Non-Traditional Knowledge from outsiders.	Distinguishes IK from mere tradition; it is dynamic, relational, and context-specific — not static or frozen in the past.
Indigenous Law Society (MHA)	Communities (<i>Masyarakat Hukum Adat</i>) with specific customary rules, genealogical and territorial bonds, and <i>ulayat</i> rights over land, rivers, and forests. The Ammatoa community of Kajang, Bulukumba qualifies under this definition.	The term 'indigenous' in Indonesia is ambiguous; the MHA definition provides legal and scholarly precision needed for recognition and rights advocacy.

According to the terminology of indigenous 'adat', the Ammatoa community in Kajang, Bulukumba, is included in the indigenous community. The Ammatoa community lives in rural areas, has several privileges (*ulayat* land), and practices their oral tradition known as *Pasang ri Kajang* (massage of Kajang ancestors) as their Traditional Knowledge. The term traditional is not meant as the old knowledge because all knowledge is contemporary. The *Pasang ri Kajang* is called traditional knowledge because it can last a long time with continuous reinterpretation or revision. The Traditional Knowledge of the Ammatoa community refers to their oral tradition, *Pasang ri Kajang*, which contains specific environmental knowledge, including the code of ethics of the relationship of beings: human and non-human beings. However, the Ammatoa community does not live in separation from common society. They do interact with non-Ammatoa people who have their own knowledge that is categorized as Non-Traditional Knowledge. They meet one another through which the Ammatoa community continually revises its tradition. Therefore, what is called the Indigenous Knowledge of the Ammatoa community is the result of dialectical knowledge between the Traditional Knowledge and Non-Traditional Knowledge.

3.2 *The Ammatoas traditional knowledge as an internal factor*

The *Pasang ri Kajang* (ancestral messages of Kajang), the oral tradition, is the foundation of the Ammatoans' ways of life, an authoritative value manifested in their daily lives (Kambo, 2021). The *Pasang* is a set of messages inherited from their ancestors of Kajang, transmitted from generation to generation (Sahib et al., 2019). Those messages contain knowledge and values about different kinds of ideas and daily practices, which include the historical, political, sociocultural, economic, and religious activities, and Kajang is the name of the area where Ammatoans reside (Maarif, 2012). As the foundation, the Ammatoans positioned *Pasang* as the authoritative reference for all their daily lives. There are many messages of the *Pasang*, but here, take the most articulated ones which talk about the main principles of daily life: *kamase-kamasea* and four other basic values of *Pasang*: *lambusuk* (honesty), *gattang* (firmness), *subbarak* (patience), and *appisona* (self-sufficiency).

'*Pasang ri Kajang*' contains all knowledge and experiences of Ammatoans' life. The Ammatoan community is obedient to the teaching of *Pasang*, and so they preserve the inner territory, indigenous land and forest, and traditional practices up to the present (Maarif, 2012; Maruf, 2018). Part of the *Pasang* teaching is the existence of an indigenous leader 'Amma' whose important role is to keep Ammatoa law and punish anyone breaking the law with a fine.

The Ammatoa community divides its area into two: the inner (*ilalang emba*) and the outer territory (*ipantarang emba*). The inner territory, which includes the indigenous forest/land. The inner territory is the sacred place, which is a manifestation of the traditional knowledge that emphasizes the preservation of the environment, protecting it from modern intrusion, such as electricity, asphalt roads, and so on. In the inner territory is the indigenous forest, which is traditionally unlawful to cut down even one tree by anyone. The existing traditional practices, such as bare feet, wearing traditional clothes whose color is black, rituals, and others, have functioned to support the existence of the inner territory.

The division is a manifestation of the *kamase-kamasea* (modesty) principle, which is inseparable from the opposing principle, *kalumanynyang* (excessive). The division is also their political strategy, which aims at balancing the environment. Through the division which each division has its functions, they are situated to filter the outer intrusions coming from many forces, such as religious institutions, modernism, and even state programs. Through the division, the Ammatoa community had been able to protect its knowledge from external intrusions. Filtering does not mean that the Ammatoa community denies everything coming from outside, but rather facilitates a spate of dialectical encounters between the Ammatoa community and outsiders.

The community could not avoid other values coming from external knowledge. Therefore, external values may be accepted as long as those values are compatible with the

Traditional Knowledge *Pasang ri Kajang*. In the process of accepting other values or something new from outsiders, the dialectics also occurred among the internal community, between those of the inner and the outer. In that way, they practice intersubjective relationships, a form of reciprocal relationship to build two-sided ethical codes: rights and responsibilities. Exercising intersubjective relationships aims at establishing the social unity of beings and an effective ecosystem for the cosmic balance (Maarif, 2012).

The geographical boundary is indicated by a gate, demarcating a line between the inner and outer territory. In the inner territory, people (both the Ammatoas and non-Ammatoas) are forbidden to bring something new and modern stuff such as a TV, car, electricity, and many others. However, the Ammatoas, including those who live in the inner territory, could enjoy new things in the outer territory because, in the territory, the people (both the Ammatoa and non-Ammatoa) could live with and exercise things, including those mentioned above. For the community, living in the outer territory does not mean that they violate and ignore the Ammatoa tradition. As already explained, the Ammatoa living in the outer territory still could practice *kamase-kamasea*. They use black-colored clothes, bare feet, or they could even commit to being a Pasappu (a man wearing a black head cover, barefoot, and black-colored clothes for his whole life), and other traditional practices. For values and practices, the Ammatoa community places more on personal engagement than living in the inner or outer territory. Dividing their territory does not limit their tradition, and each territory has its functions to strengthen and support the others.

Table 2. Ammatoa's traditional knowledge as an internal factor

Theme / Concept	Key Findings	Significance
Pasang ri Kajang	Oral tradition functioning as the authoritative foundation of Ammatoa life. Contains historical, political, sociocultural, economic, and religious knowledge. Key principles: <i>kamase-kamasea</i> (modesty), <i>lambusuk</i> (honesty), <i>gattang</i> (firmness), <i>subbarak</i> (patience), <i>appisona</i> (self-sufficiency).	Pasang is not merely cultural memory — it is an active governance system that regulates behavior, land use, and social relations within the community.
Inner vs. Outer Territory	The community divides territory into inner (<i>ilalang emba</i>) — a sacred zone barring modern intrusions (electricity, asphalt, cars) — and outer (<i>ipantarang emba</i>) — open to modernism. The inner zone is home to the indigenous leader (Ammatoa) and core tradition-holders.	This spatial division is both a cosmological statement and a political strategy: it preserves TK at the core while allowing dynamic cultural exchange at the periphery.
Static & Dynamic Knowledge	The inner territory keeps TK static (preserved, authoritative). The outer territory makes IK dynamic (open to negotiation with religion, modernism, and the state). Together they enable the community to filter and selectively adopt external values compatible with Pasang.	Challenges simplistic portrayals of indigenous communities as either purely traditional or fully assimilated; the Ammatoa model is simultaneously conservative and adaptive.
Role of Ammatoa Leader	The indigenous leader (Ammatoa) enforces Pasang law within the inner territory, including imposing fines for violations. Leadership is central to maintaining cosmic balance through intersubjective (rights-and-responsibilities) relationships.	Demonstrates that indigenous communities have functioning internal governance structures — not a gap requiring state substitution.

Through the division, the Ammatoa community engages itself facilitating cultural dialectics between their knowledge and others. The knowledge of the Ammatoa community is therefore dynamic, but at the same time, static. The existence of the inner territory as the center of the cosmos (Maarif, 2012, quoted from McKenzie, 1994) is to preserve Traditional Knowledge. In the inner territory, the Indigenous leader 'Ammatoa' and some of the Indigenous holders live. The existence of the inner territory makes the Ammatoa community static. In contrast, the existence of the outer territory is dynamic, which facilitates outsiders bringing their values and lets the Ammatoa learn about something new, including religion, modernism, the presence of the state, and many others. In doing so, negotiations between their traditional knowledge, *Pasang ri Kajang*, with outsiders occurred through exercising the existence of the outer territory. The divisions of the Ammatoa territories have facilitated their indigenous tradition to be static and dynamic at the same time.

The division of the Ammatoa territories is the realization of the *Pasang ri Kajang*. It is also their political strategy aiming at preserving their knowledge in practicing and balancing the cosmic. Through the division, one territory becomes a reminder to another one to keep the Ammatoa values through strengthening and complementing one another. Preserving the Ammatoa values through political strategy aims at preserving the existence of the Ammatoa tradition. However, their political strategy is not employed to deny the new other, but rather for the distribution of power, which culminates in power balancing.

To explain further, the values of *Pasang ri Kajang* have been negotiated with modernism, which have been accepted and even admired in the outer territory. The community has claimed that modernism in the outer territory is their own. Modernity came through colonialism, mingled with the Indonesian state, which had also been accepted (Maarif, 2012). The outer territory welcomed and facilitated any agencies, norms, values, people, and so on. The acceptance of modern institutions could be seen in the existence of a traditional market, schools, a health clinic, modern houses, modern transportation, telecommunication, and so forth. Furthermore, the acceptance of the modern institutions as non-traditional knowledge could be seen in the tourism practice in the Ammatoa territory.

3.3 *The Ammatoa indigenous community and tourism development*

The practice of traditional knowledge, *Pasang ri Kajang*, that drives the community to succeed in preserving the environment (indigenous land and forest), attracts outsiders to come and learn, especially by visiting the leader. The visitors come to the community for a long time; however, due to the lack of tourism, the Ammatoa community did not gain much profit, instead receiving residuals from visitors, such as the large amounts of plastic waste found in the Inner Territory (Chotimah, 2020). In 2015, the Ammatoa community obtained the Bulukumba Regulation No. 9, followed up the regulation by issuing the decree (SK) of the Forestry and Environment Ministry (*Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan/ KLHK*) No. 6746/MENLHK-PSKL/KUM.1/12/2016. The recognition that recognizes and protects the rights of the Ammatoa community to manage their culture independently, politically strengthened the community. Three years after the recognition, the regional government collaborated with the indigenous holder and CRCS UGM, using the recognition as a foundation for a cultural tourism revitalization program in the Ammatoa indigenous territory from 2018-2020. The program focused on emphasizing sustainable tourism, including in terms of increasing economic income. Furthermore, through tourism, the Ammatoa community has become popular and is a reference to learn how to conserve the environment.

This regulation emphasizes that the Ammatoa community has the authority to maintain its resources, including through tourism. Tourism is allowed in their territory only if the tourism practice is in line with the value of pasang. Strengthen the tourism practice, the Tourism Department of Bulukumba had published the regional decree of Bulukumba SK No: 188.45-211 the year of 2019 regarding the tourism village of Tanah Toa. The decree is based on the tourism potential that belongs to Tanah Toa village, such as cultural and

natural potential that support developing community-based tourism (Chotimah, 2020). The tourism practice in the Ammatoa indigenous territory has a substantial impact on the community, especially in increasing the community's income while preserving cultural heritage and the environment. The argument is based on the rising number of visitors, which has been increasing every year. In 2019, the number of visitors was recorded at 1,000 and continued to surge to almost 10,000 by 2023 (Dandi et al., 2025).

The acceptance of tourism as a non-traditional knowledge in the community is proof that the community is not static. They are dynamic and revise their indigenous practice as long as the outsider knowledge is in line with the value of *Pasang ri Kajang*. Furthermore, the indigenous characteristics are suitable with the global demand for tourism. The indigenous community needs tourism as an instrument to improve their prosperity; meanwhile, tourists need to experience other cultures and pristine nature. Some scholars argue that tourism is a sustainable instrument to alleviate marginalization and empower the indigenous community. On the other hand, some scholars argue that tourism is a part of the industry and therefore tourism would leave the local community with negative impacts. Tourism in the 21st century is about connecting people with other cultures and having real experiences. The global demand for learning, discovery, and connecting with other rich cultural experiences has increased. Besides demand for cultural interest, the world of tourism, both international and domestic, has a high interest in the development of the most ecologically fragile, biodiverse, aesthetically, and spiritually (Trau & Bushell, 2008, quoting from Bushell, 2005).

One of the many tourism forms that is commonly practiced by indigenous people is ecotourism. Ecotourism and indigenous characteristics are compatible because indigenous people commonly live in their traditional homelands, far away from mainstream development. According to Zeppel (2006), indigenous people live in pristine or fragile ecosystems. They are separated from their land, even united with the land rather than a part of it. Besides, ecotourism also has a positive effect on land value; the value of ecotourism-controlled land is higher than that of land used for other activities like logging, ranching, or agriculture (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010).

Table 3. Ammatoa community and tourism development

Theme / Concept	Key Findings	Significance
Legal Recognition & Tourism Policy	Bulukumba Regulation No. 9/2015 and KLHK Decree No. 6746/2016 formally recognized Ammatoa's right to manage its culture independently. A cultural tourism revitalization program (2018–2020) followed in collaboration with CRCS UGM and the regional government.	Legal recognition was the prerequisite enabling the community to govern tourism on their own terms — ensuring tourism practice aligns with Pasang values.
Growth in Visitor Numbers	Visitor numbers rose from approximately 1,000 in 2019 to nearly 10,000 by 2023, following the 2019 Bulukumba SK No. 188.45-211 designating Tanah Toa as a tourism village.	Quantitative evidence that community-based, culturally grounded tourism can generate meaningful and growing economic benefit without compromising indigenous identity.
Indigenous Ecotourism	The Ammatoa's environmental stewardship (protecting forests and land) aligns naturally with ecotourism demand. Ecotourism-controlled land holds higher economic value than land used for logging or agriculture (Mbaiwa and Stronza, 2010).	Positions indigenous land conservation as economically rational — environmental preservation and income generation are mutually reinforcing, not in tension.

3.4 The external factors for the Ammatoa community achieving recognition as an indigenous community

In the era of the Reformation, the state promoted liberalization, democratization, and decentralization, which were characterized by the growth of civil organizations, including mass media and NGOs. In addition, in this era, issues concerning indigenous communities have resurfaced. One NGO that focuses on advocating for the land rights of indigenous peoples is AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* or the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago). This organization is the largest indigenous peoples' rights organization in Indonesia. AMAN is based in Indonesia. AMAN's goal is to coordinate issues related to indigenous peoples' environmental crises, indigenous peoples' resistance to rights and housing, and the fight for recognition of indigenous territories in Indonesia. In addition, AMAN and its partners have urged the government to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples (officially referred to as customary law communities) to manage their land in areas designated as "state forests.

In 2012, AMAN submitted an appeal to the Indonesian Constitutional Court demanding that the government acknowledge the constitutional rights of indigenous communities over their customary land that falls within state forest boundaries. In 2013, the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of AMAN and their demand for the state's recognition of the indigenous communities' land rights. The Constitutional Court's decision stated that customary forests are no longer part of state forests (The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia Decision No 35/PUU-X/2012: 174–75). However, the scheme can only be realized in 2016, in the era of Joko Widodo (Afiff & Rachman, 2019).

This ruling was followed by a new regulation from the Ministry of Forestry recognizing the existence of indigenous communities in Ministerial Regulation No. 62/Menhut-II/2013 concerning Amendments to Ministerial Regulation No. P.44/Menhut-II/2012 concerning the Confirmation of Forest Areas (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia 2013 No. 1364); another development was Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia 2014 No. 7), which allows for the establishment of customary villages. Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency No. 9 of 2015 concerning procedures for determining communal rights over land for indigenous communities and communities within certain areas (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia 2015 No. 742) also eased the requirements for indigenous communities to obtain recognition of their land ownership (Muur et al., 2015).

AMAN and its allies are not the only actors for the indigenous recognition. There is also what so called institutional activism, some individuals who are members of a social movement who use their political access, knowledge, and other resources for advocating, but they stand as a part of the state. Therefore, they work to ensure that the newly elected government, 'Joko Widodo', implements the promised agenda during the election. The collaboration between the insider and the outsider activist strengthens the social movement even though they have their own tactics and strategies to pursue their own goal. Their social movement collaboration even works in practice, but is full of dynamics and challenges.

In 2013, a year before the presidential election, some politicians, scholars, and activists were involved in designing Jokowi's presidential campaign, called *Nawa Cita*. And after they won the election, those activists collaborated with the inner circle of the new government and were involved in the formulation of the *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional* (RPJMN: the Mid-Term National Development Plan) 2015–19, and one of those results is the agenda of *Reforma Agraria* (Agrarian Reform). The scheme included provision for local communities to have legal access to state forests as well as granting legal recognition to indigenous communities' rights over their customary forest (Afiff & Rachman, 2019). At the beginning of the implementation of Agrarian Reform, the state designated nine indigenous communities that would receive recognition, and one of these is the Ammatoa community of Kajang, Bulukumba, South Sulawesi. However, the state

recognition required a district regulation recognising them as an indigenous community before they could apply to become a recipient of the customary forest scheme.

Meanwhile, in the Ammatoa community, there is an agrarian conflict between Kajang farmers and PT London Sumatera (PT Lonsum). The Kajang farmers, the owners of the land, had been evicted by PT Lonsum, which had obtained the right to use the land. The conflict escalated when there was a different decision between the Bulukumba District Court with the Supreme Court. The Bulukumba District Court ruled that PT Lonsum return 540 hectares to the Kajang farmers; meanwhile, the other court ruled that PT Lonsum return 200 hectares. So there is a surplus of around 340 hectares. To respond to the condition, the Bulukumba Regent announced on July 18, 2003, that farmers from Kajang District only have the right to 200 hectares of land. Furthermore, the Kajang farmer who joined with NGOs protested against the decision by staging an occupation of PT Lonsum in the Palangisang area, Bonto Manggiring village, Bulukumpa. The occupation was forcibly stopped by the police, which resulted in a violent clash between the two sides. More than a dozen people were injured; one died on the spot, and three others died after several days of treatment at Bulukumba Hospital (Muur et al., 2015).

Table 4. External factors for achieving indigenous recognition

Theme / Concept	Key Findings	Significance
Role of AMAN	AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara) filed a 2012 Constitutional Court appeal demanding state recognition of indigenous customary land. The Court ruled in AMAN's favor in 2013 (Decision No. 35/PUU-X/2012), declaring customary forests are no longer state forests.	This ruling was the structural turning point that enabled downstream regulations opening pathways for formal Ammatoa recognition (Ministerial Reg. No. 62/2013, Village Law No. 6/2014, Agrarian Reg. No. 9/2015).
Nawa Cita & Agrarian Reform	Activists, scholars, and politicians embedded indigenous land rights into Jokowi's 2015–2019 RPJMN. Agrarian Reform included legal access to state forests and recognition of customary forest rights. Ammatoa was among the first nine communities designated.	Illustrates 'institutional activism' — insiders and outsiders working in parallel with different tactics but toward shared goals of indigenous recognition.
PT Lonsum Land Dispute	A violent confrontation arose from conflicting court rulings over Kajang farmland occupied by PT London Sumatera. One person died on the spot; three more died after treatment. The incident triggered the formation of SNUB (National Solidarity for Bulukumba).	The conflict catalyzed national attention and accelerated local government support for formal indigenous recognition of the Ammatoa community.
Local Government Recognition Process	After the 2013 Constitutional Court ruling, Bulukumba formed a joint team (regional agencies, AMAN, NGOs, and customary law experts) to draft a district regulation recognizing the Ammatoa as an indigenous community, submitted to the Bulukumba DPRD.	Demonstrates that formal indigenous recognition requires multi-stakeholder collaboration across government, civil society, and the community itself — not merely top-down policy.

The incident sparked a national reaction from human rights activists across the archipelago, and national mass media headlined the detention as a human rights violation by the police. Several prominent national NGOs jointly established SNUB (National Solidarity for Bulukumba), a network aimed at exposing the injustices perpetrated by the company and the police. However, facing the case, the indigenous holder instead chose to avoid it and not make a firm statement. Meanwhile, the Bulukumba Regency government did not seriously respond to the NGOs' statement that PT Lonsum had occupied the Ammatoa customary area. However, the local government also considered that the

Ammatoa Kajang community is an important part of Bulukumba. Therefore, when several organizations initiated efforts to push for formal recognition of the Ammatoa Kajang as an indigenous community, several local government agencies responded positively (Muur et al., 2015).

However, the Bulukumba Regional Government then took a stance to fully support the recognition of the Ammatoa indigenous community following the issuance of the Constitutional Court decision in 2013 regarding customary forests no longer being part of state forests. Following up on this decision, the local government of Bulukumba formed a joint team comprised of several Bulukumba regional government agencies, including representatives from AMAN (Anti-Corruption Eradication Commission), as well as several local and national NGOs and institutes, who served as customary law experts and representatives of the Ammatoa Kajang community. AMAN sent legal experts from its headquarters in Jakarta and its office in Makassar. After all parties approved the draft, it was submitted to the Bulukumba Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) (Muur et al., 2015).

4. Conclusions

Two factors strengthen the Ammatoa as the indigenous community: internal and external factors. The Ammatoa community has traditional knowledge, 'Pasang ri Kajang', which is still obeyed by its members. However, the community is also adapted with the external knowledge, such as coming from religion 'Islam', state regulation, or modernity. They dialectically combine traditional and non-traditional knowledge, which makes them an adaptive community. Besides, the Ammatoa community shows a good relationship with the government, which could be seen in how they remained calm when they faced the conflict between Kajang farmers and PT Lonsum.

Internally, the Ammatoa community is a solid community. And when the national politics changed from the Orba to the Reform era, which allowed the emergence of many civil society organizations (NGOs) that fight for the rights of indigenous peoples, the Ammatoa community is one of the indigenous groups that is ready for recognition. Other indigenous communities around the archipelago have similar wisdom or traditional knowledge and have to face similar challenges, such as facing the extractive companies. However, not many can adapt to the modern perspective and maintain good relations with the government.

This recognition politically strengthened the Ammatoa community. Three years after the recognition, the regional government collaborated with the indigenous holder and CRCS UGM, using the recognition as a foundation for a cultural tourism revitalization program in the Ammatoa indigenous territory. The program focused on emphasizing sustainable tourism, including in terms of increasing economic income. Furthermore, by using tourism, the Ammatoa community has become popular and is a reference to learn how to conserve the environment.

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