

***Pantun* as a Medium for Environmental Education and Ecological-Political Activism by Customary Institutions in Haruku Island**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the ecological values and political practices contained in *pantun*, particularly those used by the *kewang*, a customary or *adat* institution in Haruku Village, Central Maluku. In Haruku, *pantun* is used as a medium of environmental education and ecological activism for the community, specifically for younger generations. This study helps reconstruct an eco-friendlier vision of environmental ethics by streamlining the potential of local traditions in promoting sustainability and conservation. Haruku Village, in this study, presents a model through its use of *kewang* as a customary institution, with the head of the *kewang* serving as the central figure in building ecological awareness and cultural-political strategy based on oral tradition and literature. The case study method is further complemented by thematic analysis to show that the role of *pantun* in environmental activism carried out by *kewang* as a customary institution bolsters efforts of environmental conservation in Haruku. Eliza Marthen Kissya, as the head of *kewang*, applied a strategy of producing *pantun* as a medium for environmental education to support a broader cultural-political agenda to protect Haruku's environment from external threats. The *Pantun* also served as a medium for inheriting values of ecological harmony, sustainability, and cultural resilience among the young generation of Haruku, especially those preparing to uphold *kewang* in the future (*kewang muda*). More broadly, this research shows that traditional orality can be effectively utilized to support not only values of ecological harmony but also assists in cultivating an ideological, political, and cultural strategy that travels beyond the site. Therefore, local culture and natural conservation converge to develop ecological awareness and maintain eco-political activism, a value being inherited across local cultural practices.

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KEYWORDS

Pantun; Environmental Education; Natural Preservation; *Kewang*; Haruku.

1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis is pervasive across different governing scales around the world (Alfian, 2023; Berkes, 2012; Morton, 2021; Plumwood, 2005). Phenomena such as deforestation, land conversion, water crisis, drought, air pollution, public health issues, damage to biological ecosystems, climate change, species extinction, and loss of biodiversity are crucial issues that threaten future sustainability (Bagir, 2015; Latour, 2007; Merchant, 1980; Northcott, 2015). Therefore, interest has grown over the various aspects of public life that could be mobilized to find ecologically relevant solutions (Alfian, 2023; Bauman et al., 2017; Morton, 2021). One of these solutions is to involve the potential of indigenous peoples in conservation activities (Fatem et al., 2023). Indigenous peoples' art and oral tradition, such as poetry and folklore, contain deeply rooted ecological messages that encourage people to preserve the environment. This translates into generational ecological wisdom contained in oral tradition, conveying

essential insights to deal with environmental crises (Anwar, 2020). The means for conveying such knowledge, according to Ong, (1982, 43-46) is possible through the rhetoric of repetition, and formulas in oral literature that help shape a collective consciousness permeating across a community, including in terms of environmental conservation.

Oral literature is a form of creativity of local communities in Indonesia in an effort to preserve the environment whose utilization synergizes with traditional institutions (Yasir et al., 2023). In central Maluku, the customary institution in charge of protecting nature such as forests, seas, and rivers is called *kewang* (derived from the word *kewang* which means forest). The utilization of oral literature as a medium and ecological campaign is evident at Haruku Island, Central Maluku. In Haruku, *kewang* uses *pantun* as a medium to educate children and local residents about environmental conservation by packaging messages about the importance of protecting nature in their *pantun* stanzas. This shows that creativity and local culture can be an effective tool in the mobilization of environmental conservation efforts.

In the history of Nusantara communities (referring to archipelagic communities across Indonesia and beyond), there are various oral literature that contain ecological values. There are many examples on the local promotion of local wisdom as a basis for nature conservation, such as forest and river conservation in Bara and Cindakko that uses the customary rules of A'liing on Sulawesi Island (Alfian, 2023). In Haruku Island, where this research was conducted, the practice of *sasi* is well-known and has been passed down from generation to generation. *Sasi* is a set of rules governing the use of natural resources or environmental conservation and guides social attitudes and behavior towards nature (Barus, 2021; Gaspersz & Saiya, 2019; Persada et al., 2018; Sisinaru et al., 2020; Soselisa, 2019). The practice of *sasi* is then enforced by the *kewang* through various mechanisms, such as customary sanctions which are part of the oaths of ancestors (*ina ama*) in the past which are now becoming the norms of social life in Haruku Island (Batiran & Salim, 2020; Ruhullessin, 2017; Sahureka & Sahupala, 2023; Tjoa et al., 2021). In the process of preserving the practice of *sasi*, oral literature is involved, both in the form of *kapata* and *pantun*. In practice, in the case of *pantun*, it is produced and reproduced by the head of *kewang* and then passed down orally through generations. That is, the head of *kewang* narrates it, although there are *pantun*(s) that have been written down, and then passed on to the younger generation, one of which is through informal education for *kewang muda*, which we will elaborate on in the discussion section of this paper.

Previous studies of oral literature have tended to focus on cultural preservation, such as the study of meaning in a linguistic-anthropological way (Lubis & Abus, 2020; Sibarani, 2015), history (Darman, 2017; Surakhman, 2021; Wati, 2023; Wibowo, 2022), art transmission (Latupeirissa, 2022), and religious values (Nesi et al., 2019; Diana, 2023; Soehardi, 2012; Suryani et al., 2019; Yulianto, 2022). There is currently no in-depth research on *pantun*, particularly in Haruku that specifically elaborates the values of human-ecological relations, as well as the use of *pantun* as a medium for environmental education and natural preservation. Therefore, this research helps to reveal the ecological values of *pantun* in Haruku and how they serve as a medium for environmental education and conservation.

This research is based on the idea that oral literature such as *pantun* produced and reproduced by *kewang* in Haruku, not only have ecological values, but also serve as a creative medium for environmental education and sustainability activism for younger generations. Most significantly, *pantun* becomes a part or at least a representation of existing environmental conservation practices in Haruku such as *sasi ikan lampa*, wetland conservation through mangrove planting, and *gosong* bird conservation

(Batiran & Salim, 2020). By focusing on the concept of harmonious-ecological relations and environmental conservation, this research not only highlights the importance of preserving creative culture, but also poses imperative questions elaborated with a critical approach on how creativity is utilized for the purpose of promotion and advocacy of natural resource sustainability as done by a customary institution of *kewang* in Haruku. The research also elaborates on how the ecological values and practices among the people of Haruku can serve as a guide for other regions across the archipelago and beyond, in terms of building and creatively educating the community on local relationships with nature.

The findings and discussion of this study will be further divided into three sections. The first section discusses traditional ecological practices as an introduction and initial overview of ecological knowledge and practices in Haruku. The second section discusses how ecological values are contained in *kewang's pantun* and how they are used by *kewang* as an instrument for environmental education and nature conservation. In this section, we also elaborate further on the effectiveness as well as the outreach of the *pantun* to the community in Haruku. Finally, the third section discusses the opportunities and challenges of *pantun* as oral creativity. In this section, we explore how the identity and value of oral literature negotiate with modernization, as well as the exclusivity of *pantun* as a tool for environmental education.

2. METHODS AND CONCEPTS

2.1 Context

This research uses a qualitative case study approach, a bounded system (Coombs, 2022; Léger & Martin, 2020; Alpi & Evans, 2019; Baxter & Jack, 2015), which explores the role of *kewang* as an actor as well as a customary institution that plays an important role in preserving nature (Salampessy et al., 2024; Keliat et al., 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2020). *Kewang* in Haruku was chosen as a model that represents the best practice of nature conservation, with Eliza Marthen Kissya (75 years old) as the head of *kewang* as the central figure. Eliza's work in environmental conservation led him to receive the *Kalpataru* twice, the highest environmental award in Indonesia, in 1985 and 2022. Eliza has also received a number of other awards in the fields of culture and environment, including a cultural award as a maestro for traditional arts in 2017. Since 1979, Eliza has dedicated himself as the head of *kewang*, who is responsible for protecting the nature of Haruku. Eliza's work that inspires environmental conservation includes initiating the rejection of mining exploration by PT Antam in 1997, conservation of the Maluku *gosong* bird (*Eulipoa wallacei*), which is an endemic bird of Maluku (Leimena et al., 2023), and mangrove forest initiation. Eliza is also a recognized indigenous figure and leader who educates and advocates for local communities, especially among younger generations. He works towards environmental conservation by utilizing traditional arts, such as *pantun*.

Haruku is a traditional village (*negeri*) with an area of 13km² and a population of 2,319 in 2023. The village, located in the southwest of Haruku Island, has marine, river, and forest resources. In order to preserve the ecosystem, the community practices *sasi* culture, which is the practice of preserving natural resources and ecosystem balance (Sahusilawane et al., 2024; Saptanno & Timisela, 2024). Haruku still practices *sasi*, both land and sea *sasi* (Azuz & Mony, 2018). The most famous *sasi* practice is *sasi ikan lomp*a (Trisina baelama) (Tetelepta et al., 2022; Soselisa, 2019). The practice of *sasi laut* (the sea) is handled directly by the *kewang* as the customary institution, while land *sasi* usually shares authority with religion, known as *sasi gereja* (church) (Hallatu et al., 2019).



Figure 1. The Map of Haruku Island, Maluku Province (Infographic by Hans from Kompas.id., 2022)

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Eliza as the head of the *kewang*, the village government, and the community. Observation was carried out by being involved in the *lompa* fish open *sasi* ritual, as well as observing the residential situation where there are many *pantun* boards that contain messages to build environmental awareness. Literature study was conducted by analyzing the messages of environmental conservation in a collection of *pantuns* written by Eliza. Thematic data analysis (Bryman, 2016) is explained through the parameters of the relationship between *pantun* as oral-ecological creativity in building public awareness related to nature conservation (Creswell, 2013), as well as a tool of ecological-political activism, as explored further in the discussion section of this article.



Figure 2. A *pantun* board with a message not to cut down trees because it can have dangerous consequences (Personal documentation, 2024).

2.2 Using traditional creativity to foster ecological awareness and strengthen cultural-political strategies

This research explores traditional creativity as an educational medium for environmental preservation as well as a tool of ecological-political activism. Creativity in this case is the ability to generate ideas and something new (Stankevičienė et al., 2011). Creativity to preserve nature is done in several forms, including through the use of oral literature in the form of old poetry, namely *pantun*. *Pantun* is known as a form of oral literature used as a means to introduce culture and represent the cultural dynamics of Indonesian society (Effendy, 2006). In the context of Haruku, *pantun* serves not only as a medium for ecological education and cultural preservation but also as a powerful tool for political resistance. The customary institution, *kewang*, uses *pantun* to voice resistance against exploitative policies, such as mining operations sanctioned by the government, that threaten the environment and socio-cultural identity of the Haruku community.

By embedding messages of resistance within the poetic structure of *pantun*, the *kewang* subtly critiques and challenges hegemonic power structures. This practice transforms *pantun* into more than just a literary form; it becomes a strategic mechanism for mobilizing collective awareness and opposition to environmentally degrading policies. For instance, *pantun* is used to articulate the community's disapproval of land exploitation, forced relocations, and the erosion of ecological knowledge that has been passed down through generations. This dual function—as both a cultural artifact and a medium of resistance—demonstrates the adaptability of oral traditions in addressing contemporary political and ecological challenges. This research captures Eliza's creativity as the head of *kewang* in relation to the preservation and inheritance of natural conservation and political strategy to protect nature in Haruku.

In this context, we can categorize *pantun* as ecolinguistics. According to Stibbe, ecolinguistics is the study of the role of language in human interactions with other species (Alfian, 2023; Stibbe, 2021). Ecolinguistics makes language able to bring human attention back to remembering the surrounding nature that has been forgotten (Kosatika, 2023). Operationally, ecolinguistics as a theoretical approach is based on three parameters, namely: interrelationships (language and environment), environment (natural environment and socio-culture), and diversity (diversity of language and environment) (Widayati et al., 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Traditional ecological practices in Haruku Island: An overview

The people of Haruku Village are a community with ecological awareness. This is evidenced by various activities that support ecological practices that still take place today. These ecological practices are carried out traditionally by the Haruku people by prioritizing customary rules. These traditional ecological practices demonstrate the local wisdom in utilizing natural resources sustainably and maintaining ecosystem balance. They strengthen the relationship between humans and nature and provide a crucial example of the harmonious relationship between the two. The management of Haruku Village's ecosystem is carried out by *kewang* in order to prevent natural destruction and concerns about the erosion of culture as one of the components of indigenous peoples.

In the context of Maluku customary society, *kewang* is a customary institution under Raja (village head). *Kewang* as one of the institutions in the traditional village,

has a significant role in managing the environment which is packaged in traditional activities in Negeri Haruku (Batiran & Salim, 2020). His position within the indigenous community is to oversee the village's natural resources, both in the forest area (ewang) and in the coastal and marine areas. The protected area is known as petuanan, which is an area of customary land rights in which there is a prohibition on taking natural products within a certain period of time called sasi. The exact history of the first time sasi was implemented is unknown (Keliat et al., 2021).

The kewang institution has a monitoring and conflict management mechanism. If a person from the community or from outside is caught violating sasi in their area (petuanan), the kewang will conduct a meeting and decide the sanction based on the applicable customary rules. In Haruku, the implementation of sasi for petuanan areas is regulated based on sasi custom. Meanwhile, privately-owned plantation or forest areas are regulated using church sasi. The fascinating thing found in this research is the ability of Eliza, as the head of kewang in organizing traditional arts to become widely known in the national and international community. The village of Haruku has the potential to become an ecotourism area where the activities are tours. In addition, every year, kewang organizes an event related to environmental conservation, buka sasi ikan lomp. The tradition is a form of local wisdom practiced preserving fish.



Figure 3. Poster of the tradition of sasi ikan lomp, maleo bird conservation, and wetland conservation with mangrove planting on Haruku Island (Personal documentation, 2024).

The Haruku community aims to manage natural resources sustainably, especially the management of the sea, rivers and forests. This has made Haruku Village nationally and internationally recognized as an indigenous village where traditional arts and traditions are still very well preserved to this day. Sasi ikan lomp provides positive values for the community, not only as a source of income for the villagers, sasi lomp activities are also able to provide a strong sense of brotherhood (seen from the many outsiders who participate when catching fish), create a sense of togetherness, foster a high sense of concern for the village, and play a role in the conservation of fish and rivers. Currently, the tradition of Buka Sasi Ikan Lomp has been recognized as an Indonesian intangible cultural heritage by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture.

The practice of Buka Sasi Ikan Lomp has a good impact on the community economically, socially and culturally. The sea area where sasi is carried out is usually opened during the dry season through observation when the potential for fish in the area begins to appear. It is usually determined once a year. Prohibition or sasi in Haruku has long been established and inherited since the time of their ancestors, which was enforced by customary leaders at that time. The sasi ban is also accompanied by

prohibitions or customary laws such as no poisoning, electrocuting fish, and cutting down trees in the village area. If there is someone who violates it, they will be subject to customary sanctions through customary courts conducted by the kewang institution.

Eliza's position as head of kewang for 45 years has seen his dedication to environmental conservation and tradition preservation increase. On several occasions at national and international forums, Eliza was invited to be a speaker representing traditional actors in voicing environmental sustainability issues, as far as the Netherlands and Spain. To increase his knowledge and experience in preserving the environment, Eliza is involved in various activities at the Asian regional level. In the field, practices to preserve the environment by Eliza is assisted by 39 other kewang members from eight soa or clans in Haruku.

The role of kewang as the guardian of forest and sea in Haruku is inseparable from several challenges. Resistance efforts were made in 1992-1997 against the central government who wanted to conduct gold mining exploitation in the upstream to the mouth of the Learisa Kayeli river. The river is the location of Buka Sasi Ikan Lompa. The experiences in protecting the environment led the head of Haruku's kewang, Eliza, to join organizations or networks working on environmental issues, including becoming part of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara—AMAN).

However, up to this day, environmental conservation efforts carried out by the kewang in Haruku have not been fully prioritized by the government at the village, district and provincial levels. Based on data found in the field, the kewang institution and the village government do not have a harmonious relationship. However, this disharmony does not stop the kewang from carrying out its duty to protect the environment in Haruku. The head of kewang and his staff continue to perform their duties without financing or incentives budgeted in the village fund (*dana desa*). As for the efforts to maintain ecological harmony in Haruku, the head of kewang has made various innovations to continue to revive local culture and customs in preserving the environment. For instance, the building of a kewang house as a traditional kewang house (a place for traditional ceremonies) as well as a place to stay for guests who come to Haruku, the provision of library facilities containing books for the community and publishing a collection of *pantun* books created by the head of the kewang. The *pantun* with the theme of environmental preservation is made using Indonesian and Ambon Malay. The rhymes have not only been compiled in books but are also used as an educational medium while inviting the community to protect the environment. At various points around the coast of Haruku, there are various prohibitions against polluting the sea and cutting down trees conveyed in the form of rhymes. This is an innovative effort by the kewang to remind the community of the importance of preserving the environment. In some cases of *sasi* violations, before the kewang imposes customary sanctions, the perpetrators are given persuasive guidance and warnings. The synergy between the kewang institution as part of the customary construction and the village head must work well so that the village economy achieves significant improvements.

3.2 *Pantun* as medium for environmental education and environmental conservation

Eliza, as head of Haruku's kewang, uses *pantun* as a medium to build cultural awareness of the importance of nature conservation. Eliza created many rhymes that are used as a medium to communicate with society regarding human relations with nature, as described in the concept of ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021). Every *pantun* created by Eliza is conveyed continuously to everyone he meets, both the Haruku

community and everyone who visits him. The *pantuns* he created focus on preserving and protecting nature on land and at sea. Some of Eliza's *pantuns* have been recorded under the book titles "Kapata Kewang Haruku and Sasi Aman Haru-ukui" (Kissya, 2021). In the book, eighteen *pantuns* discuss the environment. Among them, there are twelve *pantuns*, which are voices about environmental conservation classified into four parts, namely an introduction to Kewang Haruku as a guardian of nature, a warning about the dangers of destroying nature, a prohibition against activities destroying nature, and an invitation to conserve nature.

First, the introductory part is about Kewang Haruku as a guardian of nature. In this section, Eliza creates three *pantuns* about recognizing his institution of the kewang as guardian of nature. There is a *pantun* that emphasizes that Kewang Haruku is a savior of the environment, not an encroacher or destroyer of forests. These two aspects are stated in the two *pantuns* listed below.

Table 1. Kewang as a guardian of nature ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Di Maluku banyak kelapa</i>	In Maluku, there are lots of coconuts
<i>Jalannya padat banyak tikungan</i>	The road is busy with lots of bends
<i>Biar orang mau bilang apa</i>	Let people say what they want
<i>Kewang Haruku penyelamat lingkungan</i>	Kewang Haruku saves the environment
<i>Di Maluku banyak Mengkudu</i>	In Maluku there is much noni
<i>Kalau nyamuk pakai autan</i>	If there are mosquitoes, use an autan
<i>Jangan hanya sembarang nuduh</i>	Do not just make accusations
<i>Kami bukan perambah hutan</i>	We are not forest encroachers

The content of the third line explains that no one can fight or protest (from the sentence "biar orang mau bilang apa" [let people say what they want]), which means that the function of protecting and saving can be seen from Kewang Haruku's activities that are responsible for preserving nature (from the sentence Kewang Haruku penyelamat lingkungan" [Haruku's ewang saves the environment]). These activities include prohibiting logging activities, protesting against actions that damage the environment, such as those carried out by irresponsible individuals, and even protecting species from extinction, such as Maleo bird conservation activities, and planting mangrove forests around the Wairisa Kayeli River. These activities emphasize kewang as an environmental savior.



Figure 3. A *pantun*'s board contains a message prohibiting throwing garbage into the sea as a form of environmental awareness (Personal documentation, 2024).

Second, the *pantun* warns people about the dangers of destroying nature. In this

section, Eliza created three *pantuns*. However, two *pantuns* remind people not to take actions that harm the ocean as follows:

Table 2. The dangers of destroying the environment ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Beta ini orang kaya</i>	I am a rich man
<i>Beta tinggal di Tomohon</i>	I live in Tomohon
<i>Kalau tau itu berbahaya</i>	If we know it is dangerous,
<i>Mengapa anda menebang pohon</i>	Why do you cut down the trees?
<i>Mari mendaki gunung binaya</i>	Let's climb Mount Binaya
<i>Bersama temanku bernama Daut</i>	With my friend named Daut
<i>Kalau tahu itu berbahaya</i>	If we already know it is dangerous
<i>Mengapa buang sampah di laut</i>	Why throw garbage in the sea

These two *pantuns*, both emphasize the dangers of destroying the environment. The first *pantun* states, "*kalau tahu itu berbahaya, mengapa anda menebang pohon*" (If we already know it is dangerous, why do you cut down trees) divided into two arrays whose content is a warning not to cut down trees. Cutting down trees is a hazardous activity for the environment, and if this activity is carried out continuously, the environment will be damaged. Both *pantuns* do not explain the negative impacts specifically. However, the phrase "if we already know it is dangerous" shows that people are already aware of the dangers of cutting down trees on land and dumping garbage in the sea. Other *pantun* that describes environmental destruction include:

Table 3. The environmental catastrophes caused by human actions ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Bulan terang di waktu malam</i>	The moon is bright at night
<i>Ku panggil cucuku bernama Kezia</i>	I call my granddaughter, Kezia
<i>Sering terjadi bencana alam</i>	Natural disasters often occur
<i>Karena ulah umat manusia</i>	Because of mankind's deed

The *pantun* emphasizes that the natural disasters that often occur result from human actions. The third and fourth lines directly imply that humans (addressed to all humans in various places on Earth) do many activities that negatively impact nature and result in disaster. Eliza indirectly warns that humans must immediately realize that many actions they take harm the environment or damage the preservation of nature.

Third, in addition to making *pantuns* to warn about the dangers of destroying nature, Eliza also creates *pantuns* about the prohibition of destroying nature. Eliza created two *pantuns* on this topic.

Table 4. The impacts of environmental damages ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Ada orang menyerang kami</i>	People were attacking us
<i>Kami lari membawa tembakau</i>	We ran away, bringing tobacco
<i>Kalau takut dihantam tsunami</i>	If you are afraid of being hit by a tsunami
<i>Jangan anda menebang bakau</i>	Do not cut down mangroves
<i>Cerita ini kedengarannya lucu</i>	This story sounds funny
<i>Cerita rakyat dari Talaud</i>	Folklore from Talaud
<i>Kalau cinta anak dan cucu</i>	If you love your children and grandchildren
<i>Stop bom ikan di laut</i>	Stop bombing fish in the sea

In this section, Eliza emphasizes that the real impact of environmental damage will occur in the future. The future Eliza refers to is described in the body of the *pantun*, "*kalau takut dihantam tsunami | jangan anda menebang bakau*" (if you are afraid of

being hit by a tsunami | do not cut down mangroves). This sentence provides education that cutting down mangroves will increase the risk of being affected by a tsunami. Meanwhile, in the second rhyme, Eliza emphasizes that “kalau cinta anak dan cucu | stop bom ikan di laut” (if you love your children and grandchildren | stop bombing fish in the sea). This sentence explains that if you continue to bomb fish, it will damage the ecosystem, and future generations’ children and grandchildren will bear the consequences. The fish may run out and will not be enjoyed by the next generation. Therefore, Eliza emphasized that fish should not be caught by bombing. Both rhymes are intended for people who carry out activities in coastal forests (mangroves) and oceans.

Fourth, include *pantuns* about the invitation to preserve nature as follows.

Table 5. The invitations to preserve nature ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Kalu mau makan cumi</i> <i>Biarlah makan di waktu malam</i> <i>Mari selamatkan bumi</i> <i>Sebelum terjadi bencana alam</i>	If you want to eat squid Let us eat it at night Let us save the earth Before a natural disaster happens
<i>Katong semua sedang nanaku</i> <i>Jujare Maluku paling balagu</i> <i>Katong semua orang Maluku</i> <i>Mari lestarikan hutan Sagu</i>	We all are notice Malukus girls are the most picky We all are Moluccans Let us preserve the Sago forest
<i>Beta ini anak pelaut</i> <i>Tujuan hidup sudah terjangkau</i> <i>Takut berhadapan dengan maut</i> <i>Beta harus menanam bakau</i>	I am a sailor's son The goal of life is within reach Afraid to face death I must plant mangroves

In the first *pantun*, Eliza explains that the way to avoid the adverse effects of activities that destroy nature is through more positive activities. Eliza explicitly invites people to save the earth before a natural disaster occurs, as stated in the sentence, “Let’s save the earth before a natural disaster occurs.” That is, Eliza advised that disaster mitigation handling starts with prevention. So, Eliza implicitly invites the community to conduct activities impacting ecological harmony. Ways to preserve nature can be done in many ways. However, in the *pantuns*, Eliza states two ways, namely planting mangroves in the sentence “beta harus menanam mangrove” (I must plant mangroves); and preserving the sago forest in the sentence “Katong samua orang Maluku | mari lestarikan hutan sagu” (We all are Moluccans, let’s preserve the sago forest). In the case of preserving sago forests, in addition to preserving nature, this method is also used to fulfill human needs for food or food ingredients. In this case, the sago forest is an illustration of the food and local wisdom of Maluku that serves to absorb water so that floods do not occur. In addition, Eliza also made a *pantun* that contains a message to utilize natural resources wisely.

Table 6. The natural resources must be utilized wisely ...

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Sekarang hari sudahlah malam</i> <i>Singgah dulu di Sanana</i> <i>Manfaatkan sumber daya alam</i> <i>Secara arif dan bijaksana</i>	Now the day is already night First stopover in Sanana Utilize natural resources discerningly and wisely

The above *pantuns* show that the natural resources around humans must be utilized wisely. This *pantun* means that the natural resources used must be in the appropriate way. Using natural resources wisely means reforestation so natural resources are not

easily destroyed. This *pantun* is made in Malay so that it can be delivered in all forums to motivate people to carry out activities that positively impact the environment.

The significance of *pantun* lies not only in its literary expression but also in its strategic role in environmental conservation efforts (Warami 2020; Yusari 2021). Although individually composed by the kewang leader, in the case of Haruku, *pantun* serves as an innovative and effective communication strategy for both education and advocacy. It functions as a tool for political strategy to address threats to the ecosystem, particularly those related to power dynamics and inter-institutional relations.

Threats to the sustainability of Haruku's ecosystem can be classified into two categories: internal and external threats. Internal threats stem from within the Haruku community itself, such as behaviors and practices by residents that have the potential to disrupt or damage the ecosystem. These internal threats are regulated through customary laws and sanctions outlined in Haruku's sasi kewang rules, which are regularly recited during the sasi lompas ritual opening. This ensures that the community adheres to ecological conservation principles. In addition to these regulations and customary sanctions, Eliza composes *pantun* that reinforces social control, reminding the community of the ecosystem's importance to their collective survival. While the sasi kewang rules pertain to the legal framework of customary law, *pantun* enhances and sharpens the moral and philosophical foundation of these regulations.

External threats, on the other hand, are related to disruptions originating outside the Haruku community. Historically, external threats have been documented through the experiences of the kewang in combating environmentally destructive practices such as blast fishing and mining exploration carried out in the name of development. Eliza recounted experiences in resisting fish bombers who operated extensively around Haruku Village Beach. These actions successfully halted destructive activities, resulting in legal prosecution for the perpetrators.

Similar resistance was voiced by the Haruku kewang in response to gold mining explorations managed by a consortium of three companies: Ingold (a subsidiary of Inco, Canada), Indometals (a new company established by former Inco executives), and Aneka Tambang or PT Antam (an Indonesian state-owned enterprise)¹. Eliza revealed that Haruku had received the Kalpataru Award for environmental conservation in 1985, the highest recognition for ecological preservation efforts by the kewang through the sasi tradition. Unfortunately, mining concessions approved by both the government and the village administration were seen by the kewang as threats to adat-based environmental preservation efforts and as a potential elimination of Haruku's collective ecological knowledge and practices.

Historically, the relationship between the kewang institution and the village administration has been marked by rivalry, oscillating between preserving ecological sustainability and exploiting resources for economic interests. As part of the resistance against mining exploration, Eliza composed a *pantun* that not only intrinsically represents the form of resistance but also serves as an oral record of this historical event.

Table 7. The record of resistances to mining ...

¹ The operations of this consortium of three major mining companies, known as the Maluku Joint Venture Property, have been ongoing since 1992, covering an area of approximately 100,000 hectares that includes western Ambon Island and the Lease Islands (Haruku, Saparua, and Nusalaut). It has even been rumored that if mining operations continue, the residents of Haruku will be relocated (Novaczek & Palyama 1999: 41). This mining exploration has sparked resistance from various community groups, NGOs, and the *kewang* institution.

Eliza's <i>Pantun</i> in Bahasa Indonesia	Translation in English
<i>Naik-naik ke gunung Nona</i>	Climbing up the Nona mountain
<i>Naik pedati bersama kusir</i>	Riding a carriage with a coachman
<i>Kalau tambang jadi primadona</i>	If mining becomes the favored treasure
<i>Masyarakat Haruku jangan diusir</i>	Haruku people should not be evicted

This experience demonstrates that the kewang institution in Haruku strives to maximize its authority as a guardian of the environment. By using *pantun*, Eliza seeks to articulate and document the collective experiences of the Haruku community in confronting hegemonic development policies. In short, *pantun* serves as a weapon used to fight for the rights of subordinate groups (see Scott 1985). The satire in the above *pantun* stems from the experiences of mining management, which often displaces indigenous peoples through relocation programs. Relocation due to industrial exploration, in many contexts, serves the ecological relationships between communities and their forests, land, and sea (Owen & Kemp 2014; Topatimasang 2016). For Haruku, which practices *sasi* and has the kewang institution, mining not only degrades the environment they have long protected but also risks eliminating and uprooting the socio-cultural order and ecological relationships passed down through generations.

The above complexities illustrate two dimensions on different scales. First, internal threats tend to focus on the transformation of ecological values due to modernization and economic pressures. These threats are localized, as they relate to the behaviors and practices of grassroots communities. Second, external threats involve more powerful actors, such as corporations and the government, which possess dominant and hegemonic control mechanisms.

In contemporary developments, Eliza—as a representative of the kewang institution—has had a less harmonious relationship with the village government. The latent conflict between these two institutions represents two forces with differing interests. On the one hand, the kewang institution feels neglected in village development. The facilities of the kewang are not supported by the village government as a local partner. Eliza stated that the government lacks serious attention to adat-based ecosystem preservation, particularly in supporting the sustainability of the kewang institution and its members. Instead of receiving financial aid from the village government, the kewang receives support from national and international organizations, including Japan's NHK, which funded the construction of the kewang house currently in use.

On the other hand, the village government—as the highest authority in the village—feels overlooked in the cross-sectoral activities carried out by the kewang institution. We believe this conflict stems from ineffective coordination and communication as well as the strengthening hegemony of each institution. On one side, the strengthening hegemony of the kewang institution is intertwined with the various awards Eliza has received, both nationally and internationally, which have made her a prominent figure. Additionally, the cross-sectoral relations successfully established by the kewang have made this institution strategically positioned in the context of environmental preservation in Haruku. Eliza claims these achievements as the result of his independent efforts alongside the kewang institution, without contributions from the village government.

Conversely, the village government feels neglected in the structural relationship. This occurs because the kewang is perceived as an institution that should be obligated to coordinate with the village government regarding all forms of activities and collaborations. The institutional conflict escalated when the kewang institution

became more prominent, marked by Eliza being named a Maestro of Traditional Arts in 2017 by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Despite the less harmonious relationship, both institutions are formally present in adat rituals. Observations reveal that during the opening ceremony of the *sasi lomp*a event, the first net casting is carried out by the Raja of Haruku, accompanied by the *kewang* leader. This procession symbolically marks the beginning of the tradition of harvesting *lomp*a fish. In adat rituals, the representation of these two institutions can be internalized as a symbol of harmony that is maintained amidst the disharmony of their relationship. This phenomenon illustrates how adat, in other contexts, also functions as a consensus and a space for negotiation.

Ultimately, we emphasize that *pantun* is a tool for the *kewang* to articulate various interests, such as ecosystem preservation and resistance against environmentally destructive policies. Thus, *pantun* serves as a dynamic adaptive mechanism for responding to social, ecological, and political complexities, including development at both local and global levels.

4. CONCLUSION

The results show that the strategic role of *kewang* as a customary institution is quite influential in environmental conservation efforts in Haruku Village, Central Maluku. *Kewang*, with the figure of Eliza Marthen Kissya as the head of the institution, became the central figure who took strategic steps that succeeded in realizing best practices for ecological harmony and eco-political activism in Haruku. The rejection of gold mining company exploration, initiating mangrove forest planting, *gosong* bird breeding, and safeguarding the ecosystem of *lomp*a fish (*trisina baelama*) through *sasi ikan lomp*a, are examples of the real work of Haruku's *kewang* in maintaining natural sustainability. Haruku is now widely recognized as one of the indigenous areas with the best examples of environmental conservation management, as evidenced by the head of the *kewang* who has twice received the Kalpataru award.

Kewang, as a customary institution, is responsible for safeguarding and preserving the environment both on land and at sea and has the difficult task of nurturing the community's ecological awareness and passing down the culture of ecological conservation to the younger generation. The head of *kewang* at the case study site, with his creativity took the initiative to use *pantun* as a means of conveying eco-harmony messages to the community as well as a tool for advocating nature rights. *Pantun* has, in this case, been effective as a medium of education and campaigning, which is embodied through various social encounters. The use of *pantun* by *kewang* as a medium for education and conservation campaigns shows the importance of affirming local culture and orality in maintaining and passing on ecological awareness to the community, especially the younger generation.

Pantun in this matter is far from being a living tradition, but served as a creative initiative by Eliza, as the head of *kewang*, to foster a message in particular contexts. The cultural inheritance of *pantun* as a living tradition is expected to continue to thrive among Haruku's younger generations. Certain cultural practices are exclusively taught to *kewang muda*, who are descendants of the current *kewang*. Therefore, it is necessary to involve broader community participation so that the use of *pantun* media can be more effective in supporting environmental conservation and ecological cultural political activism. Furthermore, research on regeneration and cultural inheritance to *kewang muda* can be a further theme of this research going forward.

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Sabara wrote the abstract, methodology, and conclusion sections. Andi Alfian developed the outline and wrote the introduction, some parts of the discussion, and then synchronized bibliography. Diah Meutia Harum and Helmina Kastanya authored the first subsection of the results, while Devi Fauziyah Ma'rifat and Selvone Christin Pattiserlihun wrote the second subsection of the discussion. Vikry Reinaldo Paais composed the third subsection of the discussion. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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