

Influence of Cosmology in Life and Architecture: Insights from the Kajang People of Indonesia

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Abstract

Culture, created through the intersection of people and Nature, is the built environment often referred to as architecture. Inhabiting it involves designing, producing, and erecting dwellings for doing one's worldly activities. In the past, communities developed their dwellings in response to the natural environments as well as the materials available. However, the methods of constructing dwellings were drawn largely from the beliefs often related to the deities that people believed inhabited Nature. From such beliefs, customary laws have emerged to regulate all the aspects of human behaviour, including the utilization of resources and conservation of the natural world.

This study examines the cosmology of the Kajang people in Indonesia and its application in everyday life and architecture. The customary community in Tana Toa continues to uphold its ancestral customs and belief systems in everyday life and architecture, and thus its spaces are replete with spiritual meanings and values.

Employing a phenomenological approach in conjunction with a survey of documents, this study uses descriptive/qualitative research which shows that the Ammatoan customary community continues to firmly adhere to their ancestral belief system, or *patuntung*. This consists of the tenets: belief in God Almighty, belief in the *ammatoa*, belief in *Pasang*, belief in the hereafter and belief in fate.

This belief system is closely intertwined with the customary cosmology of the Kajang people, which departs from the assumption that the natural world contains the keys to the eternal human soul. In this system, the cosmos—having been created as such by the Almighty, God,—is replete with meanings and purpose. The spaces constructed by the human beings, including settlements and dwellings, are manifestations of the cosmologies/worldviews enconced in the society's belief system.

The study unravels the abstract ideas of space manifested in the physical artefacts and symbols around which the human settlements are constructed by the Kajang people. Belief systems also shape social interactions. Such meta-empirical concepts are realised through the physical spaces created through architecture as seen among the Kajang people.

Keywords: Cosmology, Kajang People, Ammatoa, Belief System, Architecture.

Introduction

One aspect of culture, being created through the intersection of human beings and Nature, is the built environment referred to as architecture. Inhabiting an area means designing, producing, and erecting dwellings wherein one can conduct one's worldly activities. The first groups of human beings, the founders of the communities around the world, erected their earliest dwellings through a trial-and-error process that ultimately produced ideal forms that endured for centuries and even millennia. They developed their dwellings with an eye to the specific characteristics of their natural environments as well as the mechanical characteristics of the materials available to them. At the same time, the methods used when constructing homes and dwellings were derived from the customary beliefs in the divine—i.e., the deities that customary communities believed inhabited Nature, at times offering protection and at times causing disasters to express their anger. From such beliefs, customary laws emerged to regulate all aspects of human behaviour, including the utilization of resources and the conservation of the natural world.

Kajang people are an example of the customary manifestation of the cosmologies through the built environments. Fundamental tenets of the Ammatoan belief system influence the community's spatial organisation, as evidenced in the orientation, balance, and spatial hierarchy (involving the *para*, *kale balla*, and *siring*) dwellings and in their spatial dimensions (all of which are proportional to the human body). Thus, in Central Java, dwellings are designed following *Petung Pawukon* (Javanese cosmology) and Angsar/Kawruh Kalang (the mystic values of Javanese architecture). Customary communities study the pranic power of the human body through spiritual training, even as they perceive the earth and sky as possessing their own potent energies. Architecture, being created by human beings must be considered within the context of its natural phenomena; indeed, it manifests customary cosmologies, as evidenced in the site plans, orientations, constructs, materials, details and ornaments of traditional dwellings.

The term cosmology—derived from the Greek word *cosmos*—commonly refers to the science of the world and the universe. Western cosmology, which tends to be rationalistic, holds that the world and its contents can be truly and clearly understood through the human senses. It seeks to answer such questions as: "How was the world created?" "When?" "What are the relative positions of the earth and the sky?" "What systems regulate the two?" "How do the two influence each other, and what is their relationship?". With this emphasis on the rational, Western cosmology—at least as seen by the authors—tends to rely on astronomic means of understanding the movement of stellar bodies and its effect on the seasons, climate change, weather, humidity, wind, and other geographic factors, as well as its effect on the socio-economic activities of the human beings. The meta-empirical aspects of cosmology are relegated to studies of myth and mysticism; conversely, in Eastern cosmology, these meta-empirical aspects are front and centre. In architecture, these meta-empirical considerations are evidenced in studies of the origin of architecture, primitive huts, and the axis mundi, etc.

Nelson et al. (2010) note that customary cosmologies are manifested at the empiric level through the calendars used by the ancient people of the Americas, which they used to organise their activities (Nelson et al, 2010)—including their agriculture, routines, annual events, and other periodic activities. In greater detail, Sprajc (2009) explains that the positions of astral bodies were used to predict seasonal changes. Particularly important were the Sun, the Moon, and the Venus. The Sun, the bringer of heat, was identified with passion, joy, light, and growth; meanwhile, the Moon and Venus—both visible primarily at night—were identified with fertility, darkness, humidity, and rest. Due to the importance of the heavenly bodies in indigenous Americans' lives, as well as their roles in these peoples' "myths" of the origins of the world and of life, the Sun, the Moon, and Venus were seen as playing an active role in human life and were treated as symbols of the power wielded by the divine (i.e., gods). In this context, a link between the empiric and the meta-empiric is amply evident.

In their understanding of cosmology, Nelson et al. (2010) emphasised its astronomical aspects. Although they do touch upon the Earth's surface, they do not provide a detailed exploration of how geographical structures influence the design decisions and spatial organizations. Sprajc (2009) similarly focuses more on the position and orientation of the

heavenly bodies as well as the changing seasons. Western cosmologies differ significantly from feng shui, wherein geomancy is dominant. As written by Xu (1998), feng shui holds that an energy (*qi*) permeates the Earth, which must be considered—in conjunction with the geographic conditions such as the wind, rain, sun/heat, rivers, and land—when siting any dwelling. Wind and rain, naturally, are heavily informed by the bodies in the sky and on land. Likewise, feng shui is rooted in the concept of "pairs" through which balance and harmony are created.

Space is understood as the area wherein objects (including human beings, the subjects who experience them) exist. Spatial perceptions are integrally intertwined with the recognition (cognisance) of the physical appearance of objects, as well as how their interactions are perceived, seen, accepted, or felt. In the psychology of space, it is theorised that space can shape or control human behaviour; likewise, human behaviour can influence space. Four components of behaviour are understood as contributing to the shaping of space: personal space, territoriality, privacy regulation, and boundary control (Sanders in Kent, 1990; Barker, 1968).

According to scholars, personal space refers to the space wherein individuals feel comfortable with themselves. Its extent and boundaries are heavily influenced by one's social relationships. When one's personal space is encroached upon by others, one feels uncomfortable. Conversely, when one allows others to enter one's space, there is no discomfort. As shown by this example, space is not only defined by the "physical" or "empirical", but also by the social and psychological. Space is therefore relative, with its boundaries informed by the specific characteristics of the individuals. It is thus important for us to understand culture when we investigate the spaces wherein communities exist. The systems and values embraced within a culture, as well as its specific understanding of the cosmos/universe (i.e., its system of belief), influence the means through which individuals interact with their peers as well as their natural environment. It also determines how communities define space: personal space, territory, sacred space, private–public space, etc.

Drawing on the above explanation, this article seeks to identify the cosmological concepts embraced by the Kajang people in their architecture and everyday lives. As the Kajang Dalam and Tana Toa Kajang customary communities adhere to the traditional values and belief systems of their ancestors, they continue to draw on the traditional cosmology in their built environment.

Research Method

This research employs a descriptive–qualitative analysis to investigate the values practised within the Tana Toa Kajang customary community. It employs a phenomenological approach to uncover and understand the lived experiences of human beings within their particular contexts and environments. Phenomenological research seeks to allow the object to express itself without any interference from the researcher. Phenomenological research necessarily involves several stages: intuition, analysis, and illustration.

Phenomenological research is a qualitative approach wherein the researcher attempts to look and listen more closely to obtain a detailed understanding of individuals and their experiences. It seeks to interpret and explain the experiences of individuals in their everyday lives, including in their interactions with others and their environments. In qualitative research, a researcher seeks to provide a clear and real explanation of a phenomenon. Phenomenological research prioritises the search, study, and understanding of diverse phenomena and events within the context and experiences of the ordinary people. Such research is pure qualitative research, as it is conducted to seek out and understand the intrinsic characteristics of phenomena as they occur and are experienced.

Phenomenology focuses on how people experience particular phenomena; in other words, it does not look at experience qua experience but rather lived experiences as illustrating the phenomena in individuals' lives. Researchers seek to explore the object under study through the experiences of the informants involved. The phenomena studied should be based in reality and understood through a naturalistic perspective. By employing qualitative methods, researchers can obtain a deeper, broader, more comprehensive, and more credible understanding of the research object. All aspects of human life can be considered potential

objects of qualitative research. Human beings and all things influenced by them can likewise be considered the research objects of qualitative research. These objects are to be described and explored as they are, within the context of other elements; this may include economics, culture, law, administration, religion, etc. An emphasis on the natural world may also be found in qualitative research. This study employs a phenomenological approach within the context of the Kajang people living in Tana Toa Village, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province.

Findings and Discussion

The Kajang people, also known as the Ammatoans, are part of the cultural constellation of South Sulawesi. They may be found in the hinterlands of South Sulawesi, in Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency. As a customary community, the Kajang people continue to place great emphasis on traditional values. They have inhabited their customary land for generations, perceiving it as bequeathed upon them by their ancestors. This land is known locally as Tana Toa.

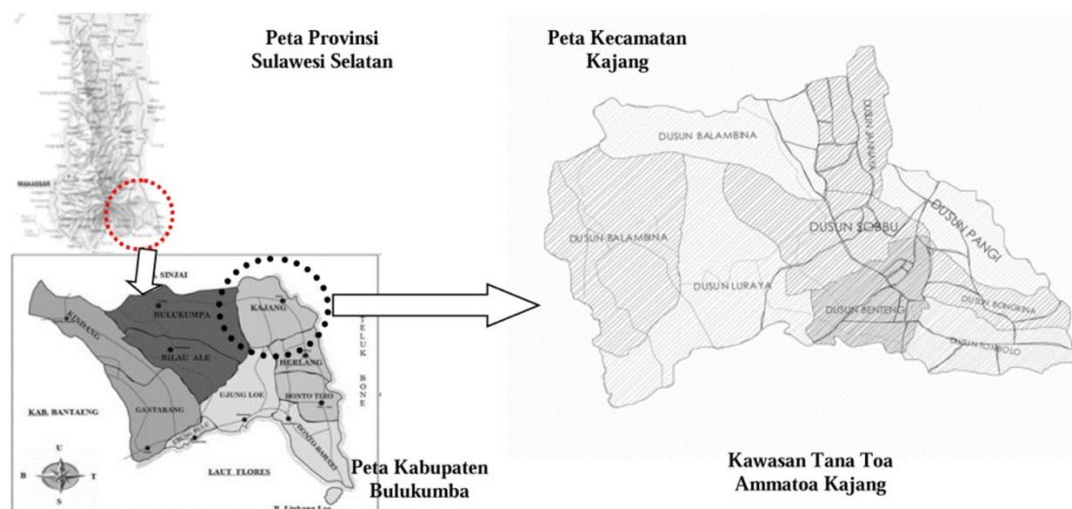


Fig. 1: Administrative Map of Kajang Village (Tana Toa), Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency
Source: author

Tana Toa Village is located in the northern hinterlands of Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province. It is populated by a customary community that is popularly known as the Kajang people, who are led by individuals known as *ammatoa*. Administratively, Tana Toa is equivalent to a *desa/kelurahan* (village-level administrative bodies in the Indonesian system). It consists of two different social groups that differ significantly in many ways; perhaps most distinct is their worldviews. One group strictly follows the teachings of Islam in everyday life, while the other identifies itself as practising a belief system known as Patuntung; this latter group is also widely identified as adhering to the Kajang belief system.

These members of Kajang community inhabit different parts of the same settlement, with their territories being identified as *Ilalang Embaya* and *Ipantarang Embayya*, respectively. The word *ilalang* means "within", while the word *embayya* means "jurisdiction"; as such, *ilalang embayya* may be translated as "within the jurisdiction" of customary law. Meanwhile, *ipantarang* means "outside"; as such, *Ipantarang Embayya* means "outside the jurisdiction" of customary law. Within the context of governance and administration, *Ilalang Embaya* refers to the territory that remains under the authority of the *ammatoa* (customary leader). Conversely, *Ipantarang Embaya* refers to the area outside the authority of the *ammatoa*—i.e., under the authority of the village government. These territories are separated by a large gate, which is used to enter the *Ilalang Embayya*:



Fig. 2: Gateway to the *Ilalang Embaya*

Source: author

Tana Toa is divided into nine *dusun* (hamlets, sub-village administrative units). Seven of these hamlets are under customary jurisdiction: Balagana, Jannayya, Sobba, Benteng, Pangi, Bongkina, Tombolo, Lurayya, and Balambi. The other two hamlets, Balagana and Jannayya, are outside customary jurisdiction. Those seven hamlets that remain under customary jurisdiction are subject to numerous restrictions; for instance, residents are prohibited from using electricity. The other two hamlets have received permission from the *ammatoa* to use electricity, construct dwellings out of stone, use two- and four-wheel vehicles, and other modern technologies; this was permitted by the *ammatoa* due to these hamlets being the site of village offices, clinics, markets, schools, mosques, and other venues that require modern equipment.

Members of the Kajang customary community, including those living within the *Ilalang Embayya*, identify themselves as Muslims, as seen on their identity cards. However, Islamic practices such as prayer (*shalat*), alms (*zakat*), fasting (*puasa*), and the hajj pilgrimage (*haji*) are not evident in their everyday lives. Nonetheless, they remain committed to Islam. This religion first entered Tana Toa c 1605 CE. According to the *ammatoa* and the community's other customary leaders, the Kajang people recognise Islam as their religion but practice it differently than their peers elsewhere in Indonesia. Although their everyday practises remain entrenched in the *Patuntung* belief system, they do not identify themselves as adherents of a *Patuntung* "religion"; rather, they understand *Patuntung* to be a belief system that must be observed and obeyed by all members of the Kajang community. It is a truth revealed by the ancestors and transmitted inter-generationally from the community's earliest days. *Patuntung* may be translated to "guideline" or "instruction"; it is thus a guideline or instruction for inquiring into or investigating the truth. *Patuntung* teaches that, if humans desire to find the truth, the search must rely on three pillars: *Tau Riek Akrakna* (God), the land bequeathed by God, and the ancestors (Rossler, 1990). Belief in and respect for *Tau Riek Akrakna* is fundamental to the teachings of *Patuntung*.

Kajang people believe that *Tau Riek Akrakna* is the omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal creator, the one who brought everything into being. This belief is known as *Pasang ri Kajang*. As the most important principle of Kajang life, the *Pasang* is referenced in all things. All that is contained within the *Pasang* guides this customary community in its thoughts and actions. Literally, *Pasang* refers to oral messages that must be adhered to, obeyed, and realised, as otherwise undesirable consequences may occur. It includes messages, mandates, advice,

instructions, warnings, and reminders. In other words, the *Pasang* does not only specify those things deemed positive but also prohibits the Kajang people from certain things. The *Pasang ri Kajang* is a compilation of systems, including belief systems, rites, and social norms. Its prescriptions—especially its ceremonies and rituals—are closely followed by the community members who inhabit the *Ilalang Embaya*. For example, the *Apparuntuk paknganro* ceremony, wherein prayers and expressions of gratitude are directed to *Tau Riek Akrakna*; such ceremonies may be held by the *ammatoa* or by individual families. Meanwhile, in the outer area—*Ipantarang Embaya*—the *Pasang* is not strictly followed, as residents of these hamlets have adapted to modern technologies and integrated with the outside society.

According to the beliefs of the Kajang customary community, *Tau Riek Akrakna* revealed His commands in the form of a *pasang* (what are commonly known as "revelations" in the Abrahamic tradition) through the first human being, who was also the first *ammatoa*. As mentioned previously, the word *pasang* translates to "message". However, this message is no ordinary message. It contains the entirety of the community's collective knowledge and experience, thereby dealing with all aspects of life, and it is conveyed orally across generations (Usop, 1985). It is binding, with obeisance expected of all members of the customary community in Tana Toa. Should the *pasang* be violated, there would be undesirable consequences, as indicated through the adage "*Punna suruki, bebbeki; Punna nilingkai, pesokki*" (If we squat, our hair should fall out and never return; should we violate [the pasang], we will collapse.). To ensure that his messages were remembered by humanity, *Tau Riek Akrakna* ordered the *ammatoa* to uphold, disseminate, and preserve the *pasang*. In the Kajang society, the *ammatoa* serves a mediative role between *Tau Riek Akrakna* and ordinary human beings. As narrated by the Kajang, the *ammatoa* was the first human being created by the Almighty, and Tana Toa was the first area settled by humanity.

Within the *pasang*, Kajang people understand themselves as situated at the intersection of four inter-connected systems: *Tau Riek Akrakna* (God), *Pasang*, *Ammatoa* (the first ancestor), and the land bequeathed to the ancestors by *Tau Riek Akrakna*. For members of the Kajang community, maintaining the forest is part of making the *pasang* manifest, as the forest is part of the land granted to the ancestors by *Tau Riek Akrakna*. They believe that, within the forest, there are supernatural forces that can bring prosperity to the devout and disaster to those who neglect Nature. These forces, which originate with the ancestors of the Kajang community, seek to protect the natural environment from the evil intentions of human beings (Aziz, 2008). Should someone dare enter the protected forests and fell trees or kill animals, that person would be cursed by the ancestors. This curse may take the form of illness, or it may be a drought that affects all of Tana Toa. One *pasang* states:

*“Naparanakkang juku Napaloliko raung kaju Nahambangiko allo Nabatuiko
Ere Bosi Napalolorang Ere Tua Nakajariangko Tinanang”*

This *pasang* illustrates how the Kajang people respect the environment by protecting the forest. For the Kajang people, the continued integrity of the forest shows that the chosen *ammatoa* has been accepted by *Tau Riek Akrakna* and by Nature. Such acceptance is important, as it is believed that an *ammatoa* can most easily realise his mandate to uphold the *pasang* if he has been accepted by the Almighty. Putting aside the empiric truth of the Kajang beliefs, the community's belief that the forest is sacred has promoted values of conservation and sustainability.

This community has long been known to live in isolated areas, far from others, in areas that cannot easily be accessed by others. Today, however, adherents of the *Patuntung* belief system have also been influenced by the outside factors, including outside cultures. This can be seen in community rituals, where syncretism is evident. Some elements of Buddhist and Islamic teachings are evident. At the same time, traditional elements—such as the tendency for community members to wear dark black or blue clothing—are still present.

In their religious activities, members of the Kajang community:

1. Worship God Almighty, the one who created the universe.
2. Believe that the Prophet Adam was sent to Tana Toa by God as His messenger.
3. Believe that ancestral spirits use their great power to protect Tana Toa.
4. Believe in rebirth.
5. Believe in and obey all of the commands of the *ammatoa*, the leader and supervisor of ancestral beliefs and practices.

The sacred text of the Kajang people and their *patuntung* belief system is the *Kitab Panuntung*, which provides a *kalompoang* in Tana Toa. This system's teaching is that, should human beings seek truth, three pillars are necessary: respecting *Tau Riek Akrakna*, maintaining the land bestowed by *Tau Riek Akrakna* (i.e., Tana Toa) as well as the natural world, and honouring the *ammatoa*.

In its view of God, the *Patuntung* belief system consists of three primary deities, all of which influence human life:

1. Karaeng Ampatana, the creator of the universe and its contents; this force exists in the sky.
2. Karaeng Kaminang Kammaya or Kaminang Jaria A'ra'na, defined as might or power; this force exists at Tombolo Tikka (the peak of Mount Bawakaraeng), which is held to be sacred; and
3. Karaeng Patanna Lino or Patanna Pa'rasangang, which is entrusted with the maintenance of the universe created by Ampatana, particularly the world inhabited by humanity.

Apart from these three deities, who are believed to exist in all places, Kajang people also believe that particular objects, plants, and animals are inhabited by powerful spirits, and that these spirits are particularly common in the sacred spaces. It is believed that these spirits derive their power from the above-mentioned deities.

In understanding Nature, the *Patuntung* belief system holds that all things are interconnected. Members of the Kajang customary community believe that all things are interconnected. They depend heavily on the natural environment, including the land (as *anrongta*) and the forest (the location of rituals). In the *Patuntung* belief system, Nature is an entity that is heavily intertwined with all the other elements of the universe. Adherents believe that the natural world consists of three "continents": the one at the highest level, or "upper continent" (*benua atas*); the middle continent (*benua lino*), inhabited by the human beings; and the lower continent (*paratihi*), which exists underwater. According to Akip (2008), the land and forest are the natural realm of humanity. They are the elements of the macrocosm inhabited by the human beings and the other living things, while the sky and sea are unknown mysteries.

The *Patuntung* belief system also teaches the Kajang people to honour their ancestors and the spirits of those who came before them. Every year, members of the Kajang customary community hold rituals to communicate with the spirits of their ancestors; known as a "grave cleaning ritual" (*ritual bersih kubur*), it is conducted on the 24th day of the Hijri month of Ramadhan. This ritual has great significance within the community, and members of Kajang society are required to attend, without exception. Community members currently outside Tana Toa are expected to return home to speak with their ancestors. The primary ritual is conducted at the tomb of Bohetomi, the first *ammatoa* of the Kajang people. During the ritual, participants burn incense, pray, and give offerings. Once the ritual has concluded, participants eat at the home of the current *ammatoa*; this symbolises their ongoing harmony and their obeisance to their ancestors.

Another ritual practised by the Kajang people is *Rumatang*, through which they express their gratitude to the Almighty Creator for providing them with bountiful harvests and freeing them from the spectre of famine. In preparation for this ritual, the female members of the

community cook a range of foods—including rice in four colours. At the same time, the men begin to tie their harvests in large bundles.

Before the main ritual, participants gather to eat lunch together near the rice fields, with the main course being black rice. The men also drink *ballo* to symbolise their kinship. Afterwards, the bundles of rice are brought to the village. The *rumatang* ritual is subsequently held, involving not only prayers to the Almighty, but also eight types of offerings, including four types of rice, various natural fruits, and cooked dishes. After being blessed by the *ammatoa*, these offerings are brought in the eight compass directions. These offerings are placed in various locations, showing that the harvest is not only enjoyed by the members of the community but also by parts of the world.

Kajang people have a dualism in their belief systems, embracing both Islam—a religion that has been recognised by the Indonesian state—and the *Patuntung* belief system taught by their ancestors. Their understandings of Islam are not based on the texts of Islam, but rather the teachings of Islamic organisations. When Islam was first introduced to the Kajang people, they were unable to read or write; consequently, it was difficult for them to obtain the knowledge contained within the scripture. Such religious understandings are made manifest, especially amongst those living in *Ialalang Embayya*, in the precept of *jenne talluka, sembahyang tamattappuka* (ritual ablutions that are never invalidated, and worship that never ends). In other words, it is believed that charity to others is a form of worship, and thus their religious activities are all in accordance with the Islamic teachings.

In principle, all belief systems—including religions—consist of concepts that stimulate belief and obeisance in adherents. Faith means certainty in the existence of something supernatural, of the hereafter, and of various forces that are beyond human comprehension and power (Akip, 2008). The Kajang customary community has emerged, grown, and evolved without using Islam as its primary source of knowledge and guidance in everyday life. Instead, focus has been given to the *Patuntung* belief system, wherein *Tau Riek Akrakna* is understood as the almighty being who created the universe and its contents. Members of the Kajang community do not only look to their god but also the *ammatoa*—their spiritual leader who also leads their community. They thus continue to uphold the teachings of their ancestors and adhere to a customary code, the *Pasang ri Kajang*, that has been understood as complying with the principal teachings of Islam. One characteristic of the Kajang customary community, which is evident in all of their rituals, is the belief that the forest is part of everyday life. Ancestral rituals have persevered into the present day, remaining part of the Ammatoans' everyday lives and collective identity. Rituals are commonly understood as religious expressions that are used as media for communicating with the supernatural. In their form, rituals vary, depending on communities' particular belief systems and cultural characteristics.

Within the context of religion, rituals and ceremonies are used as media for connecting human beings with all that is sacred around them. In other words, rituals are not only a means for strengthening social bonds and reducing tensions but also a means of commemorating important milestones and events. Religious rituals, as part of the human belief systems, likewise contain values and norms that guide the human beings in their interactions with their peers. For the members of the Kajang customary community, rituals are used to provide a value and ethical basis for the social practices.

Members of the Kajang customary community perceive rituals and ceremonies as integral to their social systems and interactions. Almost every aspect of customary life requires members of the community to interact and integrate themselves with the others. As manifestations of the Kajang belief system, rituals contain significant local wisdom that must be preserved to ensure the continuation of customary culture, promote character-building, and maintain the essence of the community. An important means of preserving local values is conducting a systematic investigation into the rituals and beliefs of the customary communities. The rituals and beliefs of the customary communities can be understood by considering their philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and ecological aspects and implications. As indicated by a review of literature, three studies have focused specifically on the *patuntung* belief system; each has used a different perspective.

Important in all such studies, however, has been an emphasis on conservation. For the members of the Kajang community, the forest is an extremely valuable asset, and as such it has consistently been protected and maintained. Conservation activities have strongly been influenced by the environmentalist messages contained within the *Pasang*. Followers of the *Patuntung* belief system hold that human beings cannot survive without the forest, as it brings rain and contains springs that channel water from within the earth. Due to its central role in everyday life, Ammatoans describe the forest as the lungs of the world and hold that it—as with all of Nature—must be preserved. To harm the forest would be to harm oneself. One adage holds, "*olo'-oloji anjo akkulle ammanraki boronga. Jari punna nia' tau ammanraki boronga sangkammajintu olo'-olo'a*" (only animals would harm the forest; any person who deliberately harms the forest is no more than an animal). Likewise, members of the Kajang customary community have strong beliefs about the position of humanity; in the *Patuntung* belief system, human beings were created before all the plants and animals, but they were themselves preceded by the land, water, and sun. Creation occurred, it is believed, at Tompo Tikka at the peak of Mount Bawakaraeng—a mountain that is thus held sacred as the origin of all the creations.

The *Patuntung* belief system embraced by members of the Kajang customary community consists of five principal beliefs:

1. Belief in *Tau Riek Akrakna* (God Almighty)
2. Belief in the *ammatoa*
3. Belief in the *Pasang*
4. Belief in the hereafter (*allo riboko*)
5. Belief in fate

Belief in the *Pasang* is an unnegotiable element of the Ammatoans' customary belief system. It is understood as providing community members with messages, decrees, advice, and guidance that have been passed from the *mula tau* (first human beings) to the present through oral transmission; it is prohibited to record the *pasang* as this may lead to its neglect. The *Pasang* is believed to have been revealed by *Tau Riek Akrakna* to *tutoa mariolo* (the first *ammatoa*) and preserved through an unbroken chain of customary leaders. Such unbroken transmission of the *Pasang* illustrates the community's continued belief in the content and truth of *Pasang ri Kajang*.

The *Pasang* also requires its adherents to accept all of its content as doctrine. In the Kajang customary community, the *Pasang* has an elevated status, being held in even higher regard amongst the Ammatoans than the compiled knowledge of the Buginese and Makassarese in their respective communities. The *Lontara ri Gowa* and *Kitta ri Luwu* are perceived by the Buginese and Makassarese as sacred texts, with teachings that emphasise the power of mantras. For the Kajang customary community, the *Pasang* is even more sacred than these texts, or even the sacred texts of Islam. It is held to contain the history of Kajang society as well as the principles for interactions between human beings and *Tau Riek Akrakna*, between human beings and their peers, and between human beings and the natural world. Any violation of its teachings is perceived as a great sin that could not only result in the ostracism of the perpetrator but also threaten the continued social and physical stability of Ammatoan society. Likewise, the *Pasang* must be transmitted exactly as it was received from *Tau Riek Akrakna*, without any additions or subtraction; the *Pasang* thus occupies a position in the Kajang society that is equivalent to the revelations of Abrahamic tradition.

Regarding humanity's interactions with Nature, the Ammatoans believe that their settlement is situated where the world was first created (*Tana Toa*), and the centre of the earth (*Possi' Tana*). Community members believe that their village is the site where the first *ammatoa* arrived from the heavens (Kajang: *Boting Langi*). Specifically, this site is believed to be located within the customary forest of Tupalo Balambina, which is known by Ammatoans as *Pa'rasangan I Raja* (the western settlement). It is further narrated that, having begotten several heirs, the first *ammatoa* returned to the heavens (Kajang: *sajang*) from a location in the Karanjang forest—known locally as *Pa'rasangang I Lau* (the eastern settlement). These

locations remain sacred to the *ammatoans*, and are commonly used for rituals. Likewise, it is forbidden to take anything from these sites, and anyone who violates this prohibition will face severe consequences. Dwellings are oriented westward, towards the sacred forest where the first *ammatoa* (*tomariolo*) descended to the earth. From an ecological perspective, the community's view of the sacrality of this forest—which covers approximately 110 hectares—is positive as it promotes sustained conservation.

In their management of resources, the Ammatoans are likewise mindful of the teachings of the *Pasang*. Community members believe that the world and its contents were created by *Tau Riek Akrakna*, and that balance must be maintained in everything—including in the forest. As such, it is necessary to care for the forest and avoid causing any harm. As one adage states:

“*Anjo boronga anre nakkulle nipanraki. Punna nipanraki boronga, nupanraki kalennu*” (“The forest must not be harmed. If you do damage, it is the same as injuring yourself.”)

Another *adaged* holds, *Anjo natahang ri boronga karana pasang. Rettopi tanayya rettoi ada* (“The forest may endure because of [our] customs; should the land crumble, so too will the customs of the *Ammatoa*”).



Fig. 3: (left) Conservation of the forest is a hallmark of the customary community (right) The principle of balance within nature is also evident in Ammatoan dwellings, for their lives and activities are one with the environment.

Source: author

Under customary law, the forests surrounding Tana Toa are divided into three categories:

1. *Borong Karama'* (sacred forests), i.e., forests in which all activities aside from rituals are prohibited. It is these forests wherein the first *ammatoa* is believed to have descended. No trees may be felled or planted, nor may any measurements be taken; even visits are prohibited, except during rituals. Likewise, members of the Kajang customary community are forbidden from disturbing the fauna and flora in these forests. It is believed that these sacred forests are inhabited by the ancestral spirits (*Pammantanganna singkamma Tau Riolonta*), and thus they are carefully protected by the community. This is emphasised in one adage, which clearly describes these sacred forests as primary forests that must not be disturbed by the Ammatoans. Should the sanctity of the forest be disturbed, violators will face customary sanctions—including lashings and fines.
2. *Borong Batasayya* (boundary forests), i.e., those forests wherein wood may be collected, within prescribed limits, with the permission of the *ammatoa*. The wood collected in these forests may only be used to build public facilities and dwellings for the community members who cannot build their own. Only certain types of trees—known locally as *asa*, *nyatoh*, and *pangi*—may be felled. Even then, wood can only be collected in amounts that suffice for the stated purpose; it is common for the *ammatoa* to permit community members to collect less wood than requested initially. The size of the wood may also be dictated by the *ammatoa*. When wood is requested,

community members must plant two new trees for every tree felled; they may only fell existing trees once the new ones have been taken. Trees may only be felled using traditional axes and machetes. Once trees have been felled, they may only be carried away. Community members are prohibited from pulling fallen logs, as this may cause damage to the local flora.

3. *Borong Luara'* (public forests), i.e., those forests under the stewardship of the local community. Although these forests are generally accessible, certain prohibitions are still in effect. The resources available in these forests may not be used recklessly.

Apart from the fines, those found to violate customary law also face strict social sanctions, which greatly influence conservation efforts as these are stronger deterrents. Violators of customary law may be excommunicated, and this applies to their descendants for seven generations. Such sanctions are provided through the *Poko' Ba'bala*. It is clear that these sanctions strongly influence conservation activities.

One adage:

"*Jagai Linoa Lolong Bonena. Kammayya Tompa Langika. Siangang Rupa Taua. Siangang Boronga*".

Means "maintain the world and its contents, as well as the sky, humanity, and the forest."

Members of the Kajang community hold that this *pasang* was the first revealed by *Tau Riek Akrakna* to the *ammatoa*, which holds that the ecosystem of the world (*lino*) is the source of all life and the guarantor of human well-being. Other *pasang* remind the Ammatoans of their reliance on natural resources and the importance of maintaining the forests. Through such messages, conservation is mandated for all Ammatoans.

These *Pasang* remind members of the Kajang customary community that, should they fell trees without replacing them, precipitation will be reduced and the springs will dry up. As such, the *pasang* does not permit community members from harvesting wood in a non-sustainable manner. Administratively, this prohibition is supervised by the *Galla Puto*, the customary leader in charge of forestry.

When community members need wood, they must first request permission from the *Galla Puto*. Their request is then conveyed by the *Galla Puto* to the *ammatoa*. Once the *ammatoa* is made aware, the question is passed to the *Galla Lombo'* (an official who, in conjunction with the *Galla Puto*, assists the *ammatoa* with the administration of the village), who then ascertains the availability of wood. This wood may only be used for construction; it must not be sold or traded. As mentioned previously, before any trees are felled, two more must be planted to take their place.

The cosmology of the Kajang customary community encompasses their worldview and their understanding of the natural world, the spiritual world, and the afterlife. The Ammatoans believe that the universe consists of three layers, with the heavens above, the earth in the middle, and the underworld below. Every layer has its inhabitants and beings. In their everyday lives, the Kajang people strive to honour and conserve the natural world. They believe that everything in Nature has its own spirit that must be respected and protected.

This cosmology has also influenced the customary architecture of the Kajang people, as traditional buildings imitate natural forms and balance the human and natural worlds. For example, customary Ammatoan dwellings consider the direction of the wind and the position of astral bodies to optimise air circulation and lighting. Sacred buildings are likewise influenced by this cosmology; for example, the stilt houses used for worship and congregational activities are erected according to the sacral values contained within the Kajang cosmology.

In all things, the Kajang people manifest a holistic worldview that seeks to strike a balance between the natural and human worlds. Some implications of this worldview include:

1. Conserving the natural world. The traditional structures of the Kajang people are designed with consideration of the surrounding environment, relying on natural materials such as wood and bamboo as well as layouts that maximise lighting and natural ventilation. This allows them to minimise the environmental impact of their constructions.
2. Creating harmony between the human society and Nature. The Kajang cosmology holds that human beings and the natural world are inexorably intertwined, and as such they must co-exist harmoniously. Through traditional architecture that respects the natural world and reflects their customary cosmology, the Kajang people strive to realise balance.
3. Developing a strong cultural identity. Through their traditional architecture and cosmology, the Kajang people have developed a unique cultural identity that has been carefully maintained across generations. This has made it possible for them to persevere even as the world around them has transformed.
4. Ensuring the continued survival of local culture and wisdom. The architecture and the cosmology of the Kajang customary community have played an important role in ensuring the survival of their local culture and wisdom. Through continued reliance on traditional architecture and cosmology, this community has ensured that its cultural values and wisdom can be transmitted to future generations.

In general, the architecture and cosmology of the Kajang customary community have positive implications. They promote the creation of harmony between humanity and Nature, the maintenance of traditional culture and local wisdom, and the perpetuation of the community's cultural identity.

The Ammatoan community is characterised by a unique architectural style. Traditional structures are constructed using natural materials such as wood, bamboo, and palm fronds, using designs that are suited to the climate and natural environment. One traditional form is the stilt house, which is built using wooden pillars, bamboo floors, and palm frond roofs. These dwellings are designed to optimise air circulation and protect inhabitants from floods and dangerous beasts.

Apart from these stilt houses, the Ammatoans also have sacred buildings known as *balai bola*, domed structures used for worship and customary rituals that are likewise made using natural materials such as bamboo and palm fronds. The Kajang customary community also has structures known as *londa*, which are used for storing the bodies of the deceased. These structures are built into stone cliffs and accessible only through wooden ladders. In this manner, Ammatoan architecture blends function, beauty, and local wisdom. It consists of unique designs that are part of the cultural identity of the customary community.

Conclusion

The Kajang customary community, also known as the Ammatoan people, continue to strictly follow an ancestral belief system known as Patuntung. Its principles and precepts include belief in Tau Riek Akrakna (God Almighty), belief in the ammatoa (customary leader), belief in the Pasang, belief in the hereafter (allo riboko), and belief in fate. This belief system is intertwined with the customary cosmology of the Kajang people, which departs from the belief that the natural world holds the keys to understanding the eternal human soul. This worldview holds that the cosmos, having been created by the Almighty, is replete with meaning and purpose. This belief system is also evident in the community's constructed spaces, including its dwellings and its ritual sites. As shown by this case, abstract ideas of space and meta-empirical concepts are manifested through physical artefacts such as human settlements and architecture. Likewise, the Kajang belief system also influences social interactions within the community.

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