


Dynamics of Culture and Social Organization of Five Ethnic Groups in the Archipelago: Comparative Analysis of the Communities of Gorontalo, Makassar, Papua, Flores, and Timor

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Culture Organization Modernization Ethnicity	This study examines the cultural dynamics and social organization of five Indonesian ethnic groups Gorontalo, Makassar, Papua, Flores, and Timor—in response to modernization pressures. Using a qualitative comparative design with ethnographic approaches and literature review (2015–2025), distinct adaptation patterns are revealed. Gorontalo society contends with local language erosion and dualism of traditional authority but integrates Islamic values into rituals like Burdah. Makassar recontextualizes Siri' Na Pacce for multiethnic urban interactions and institutionalizes Appassili through education. Papua experiences social fragmentation due to disparities in special autonomy policies and cultural commodification, with churches mediating conflicts. Flores harmonizes Catholicism with Caci rituals and Go'et Idep oral traditions, yet navigates sacred-meaning reduction from tourism. Meanwhile, Timor sustains identity via the Tetum language in diasporas but grapples with geopolitical fragmentation post-1999. Commonalities lie in kinship-based social structures as cultural anchors, while differences emerge in adaptation strategies: institutionalization (Gorontalo-Makassar), hybridization (Papua-Flores), and cross-border identity (Timor). The research enriches cultural complexity theory (Hannerz) and recommends gradient protection policies for cultural preservation.
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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic country, has a complex cultural mosaic with more than 1,300 ethnic groups. This diversity creates unique dynamics of social organization while being vulnerable to the pressures of modernization. This study focuses on five important ethnicities Gorontalo, Makassar, Papua, Flores, and Timor representing the cultural spectrum from Eastern to Western Indonesia. The Gorontalo community demonstrates a richness of linguistic traditions such as the recitation of Burdah in Arab-Gorontalo ethnic weddings (Arif, 2021), while Makassar maintains a culinary heritage of 481 types of traditional food (Tawani & Nahriana, 2022). In Papua, the implementation of special

autonomy is a significant test for national integration (Yambeyapdi, 2022), while the Flores community maintains educational values through go'et literature (Ngadut, 2022). The Timorese ethnic group, both domestically and in the diaspora, faces a dynamic identity transformation (Tsuchiya, 2019; Goglia & Hajek, 2020). The convergence between tradition and social change across these five ethnicities offers a critical lens for understanding cultural resilience in the era of globalization.

Modernization has resulted in significant shifts in cultural values, such as the weakening of the transmission of the Gorontalo language due to population mobility and weak government support (Lutsyantie et al., 2019), as well as the stagnation of the inheritance of trade culture among the Timorese ethnic group in Kupang (Muddin et al., 2025). Similar challenges are seen in the Bajo community in North Maluku, where the modernization of settlements and fishing gear has eroded ancestral traditions (Gorontalo, 2015). This phenomenon shows the tension between preserving cultural identity and adapting to social change, which has an impact on the organizational structure of society, ranging from the mechanical solidarity of the Batak group in Gorontalo (Harold et al., 2023) to the dynamics of multi-ethnic interactions in traditional markets.

Based on this context, this study answers two fundamental questions: (1) How do the dynamics of culture and social organization of the five ethnic groups adapt to the pressures of modernization and social change? (2) What are the similarities and differences in the mechanisms of cultural resilience and social structures between the five ethnic groups? The purpose of the study is to analyze patterns of cultural adaptation—such as the synthesis of regionalist architecture in Kupang (Lake et al., 2020) or the Catholic Church's campaign to maintain East Timor's identity (Leach, 2023)—and to compare the effectiveness of cultural resilience strategies, including the role of religious institutions, education, and autonomy policies.

The significance of the study covers two dimensions. Academically, this study enriches the anthropological discussion on cultural complexity (Hannerz, 1991) and the transformation of nationalism (Kamisuna, 2023). Practically, the findings can be the basis for recommendations for cultural preservation policies, such as the evaluation of Papua's special autonomy (Hasibuan, 2022) or the revitalization of educational values in the Bugis-Makassar appassili tradition (Megawati, 2023). The scope of the study is limited to aspects of material/non-material culture and social organization in the geographical context of five ethnicities, with the main reference period of 2015–2025. The main limitations include the reliance on secondary data and the complexity of cross-ethnic comparisons that require an in-depth contextual approach.

METHOD

This study uses a comparative qualitative design with an ethnographic approach to capture the complexity of cultural dynamics and social organization in five ethnic groups. This approach was chosen because of its ability to reveal subjective meanings, cultural practices, and interaction patterns in a natural context (Hannerz, 1993; Babu, 2024). Ethnography

allows researchers to "dive" into socio-cultural phenomena holistically, such as the adaptation of the Makassar songkabala tradition in responding to disasters (Akbar et al., 2023) or the transformation of Timorese nationalism (Kamisuna, 2023). A comparative focus is applied to identify common threads and variants across ethnicities, referring to the cultural complexity framework (Hannerz, 1991) which emphasizes the interaction between local agency and global structures.

The data collection technique relies on an in-depth literature study of authoritative sources for the period 2015–2025. The data is classified into three categories: (1) Historical documents such as Gorontalo traditional architecture (Ikhar U Duluwo Limo Lo Pahalaa) which records pre-colonial collective consciousness (Damis, 2016); (2) Academic works in reputable journals (e.g. symbolic analysis of Kupang architecture by Lake et al., 2020; study of Rote-Timor ethnic interaction by Pandie & Pandie, 2023); and (3) Policy archives including evaluations of Papua's special autonomy (Hasibuan, 2022; Yambeyapdi, 2022). The source selection process applies purposive sampling criteria with considerations of: thematic relevance, contextual depth, and methodological credibility. The search was conducted through scientific databases (Scopus, Garuda), university repositories, and published field notes from previous researchers.

In data analysis, researchers applied two sequential stages. First, thematic analysis identified patterns in each ethnic group using open coding. For example, in the Gorontalo ethnic group, the theme of "language disruption" emerged from the study of shifts in language attitudes (Lutsyantie et al., 2019), while in Flores, the theme of "educational value" was extracted from go'et literature (Ngadut, 2022). This stage adopts the principle of symbolic hermeneutics (Budiman, 2020) to unravel hidden cultural meanings, such as the representation of fertility in the Manggarai panggala. Second, inter-ethnic comparative analysis was carried out using the constant comparison technique to map convergence and divergence. For example: comparing the mechanisms of cultural inheritance in the Timorese ethnic group (trade stagnation Muddin et al., 2025) versus the Bugis (adaptation through education Megawati, 2023), or the response to modernization in the Bajo (Gorontalo, 2015) versus Kanikkar (Babu, 2024) communities. The validity of the findings is maintained through source triangulation (cross-checking historical, academic, and policy documents) and critical reflexivity towards the researcher's positionality in interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gorontalo society

The culture of the Gorontalo people is characterized by the Hulondalo Customary value system and the Molontalo ritual which are the backbone of ethnic identity. This value system regulates social, spiritual, and ecological relations, while the Molontalo ritual functions as a mechanism for resolving conflicts and maintaining community cohesion (Damis, 2016). However, globalization and modernization have resulted in significant shifts, especially in the inheritance of language and cultural practices. A study by Lutsyantie, Zakaria, and Emzir (2019) showed a negative attitude of the younger generation towards the Gorontalo

language, which resulted in its use being restricted to the family and traditional ceremonies. This shift is exacerbated by the weak transformation of values through formal and non-formal education, as well as population mobility which increases inter-ethnic interaction (Mohi, 2021).

In social organization, the Hulondalo structure with the central role of Bate (traditional leader) faces the challenge of dualism of authority. Traditional Bate serves as guardian of custom and mediator of conflict, but its influence is eroded by modern government institutions. Damis's study (2016) revealed that since the pre-colonial era, the Gorontalo people have developed collective awareness through the "Fellowship U Duluwo Lo Limo Lo Pahalaa" to free themselves from military dependence and external political domination. This mechanism shows cultural resistance to external hegemony, but is now deformed due to the lack of regeneration of traditional leaders.

The influence of Islam has enriched cultural dynamics through the integration of religious values into traditional practices. Rituals such as the reading of Burdah in Arab-Gorontalo ethnic weddings are not only spiritual expressions, but also a means of strengthening Islamic brotherhood and moral education (Arif, 2021). However, modernization accelerates changes in leadership patterns. Gorontalo's research (2015) on the Bajo community in North Sanana confirmed that increased access to education, economy, and technology has driven a shift from customary leadership to a bureaucratic model. In Gorontalo, this can be seen from the reduced role of Bate in public decision-making, replaced by village deliberation mechanisms that often ignore community participation (Kota Tengah, Gorontalo Regency, Gorontalo City, 2019).

Table 1. Synthesis of Selected Literature

Aspect	Traditional Characteristics	Modernization Change	Driving Factors
Language	Gorontalo language as primary identity	Decline in usage; dominance of Indonesian	Population mobility, negative attitudes of the younger generation (Lutsyantje et al., 2019)
Leadership	Bate's authority in conflict resolution	Village government authority eroded	Bureaucratization, weak community participation (Kota Tengah et al., 2019)
Ritual	Molontalo as a unifier of the community	Integration of Islamic values (eg, Burdah)	Religious acculturation (Arif, 2021)
Cultural Transmission	Oral and participatory inheritance	The weakening role of informal education	Globalization, lack of cultural innovation (Mohi, 2021)

Current dynamics show tensions between cultural preservation and modern pressures. Revitalization efforts, such as the documentation of the Huyula ritual, are still hampered by miscommunication of cultural meanings among the younger generation (Mohi, 2021). Meanwhile, participatory leadership in the agricultural sector offers the potential for reconciliation between traditional and modern models, but requires strengthening customary institutions in local policies (Kota Tengah et al., 2019). The main challenge is to make Adat Hulondalo not just a symbol, but an adaptive framework that responds to social change without losing its cultural essence.

Makassar Community

The Makassar community, which predominantly inhabits the South Sulawesi region, displays unique cultural dynamics and social organizations, especially in maintaining the philosophy of *Siri' Na Pacce* (self-esteem and solidarity) and traditional rituals such as *Appassili*. The *Appassili* tradition, as an integral part of the local wisdom of the Bugis-Makassar, involves a series of processions such as gift-giving, war dances, and taking holy water. This ritual not only functions as a means of preserving culture, but also instills educational values such as religiosity, togetherness, independence, and courage (Lydia Megawati, 2023). These values form the basis of the collective ethos of society, especially in facing the challenges of modernization.

In the context of social organization, the *Pangngadereng* (customary law) system and the *Karaeng* (noble)- *Anak Karunrung* (commoners) stratification historically regulate the hierarchy and responsibilities of the community. Although this caste structure is not explicitly described in recent sources, Basir's (2021) research confirms that social interaction patterns in Makassar remain based on respect for social status, where immigrant groups are expected to adapt to the dominant norms of the Bugis-Makassar ethnic group to maintain harmony. For example, the use of language such as "Iye", "Tabe", or "Daeng" is a sign of respect that must be understood by ethnic immigrants to avoid conflict (Muhammad Basir, 2021).

Siri' Na Pacce values in urban society are evident in the efforts to recontextualize this philosophy. In multi-ethnic cities like Makassar, the value of *siri'* (self-esteem) is no longer merely related to individual honor, but also extends to ethics in interactions between groups. Basir's study (2021) shows that urban Makassar society uses *siri'* values as a "cultural filter" to regulate verbal and nonverbal behavior, such as avoiding harsh words (*tai laso*, *nassundala*) that have the potential to trigger inter-ethnic conflict. Meanwhile, the *Appassili* tradition is revitalized through integration into formal and non-formal education to strengthen the identity of the younger generation amidst globalization (Lydia Megawati, 2023).

Table 2. Dynamics of Culture and Social Organization of Makassar Society

Aspect	Traditional Form	Transformation in Urban Society	Driving Factors
Cultural Values	<i>Siri' Na Pacce</i> as an ethic of individual honor.	<i>Siri'</i> as a guideline for multiethnic interaction.	Ethnic dominance and immigrant adaptation (Muhammad Basir, 2021).

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Ritual	Appassili as a community-based sacred ritual.	Appassili is integrated into cultural education.	Declining understanding of the younger generation (Lydia Megawati, 2023).
Social Organization	Hierarchy of Karaeng-Anak Karunrung and Pangngadereng.	Interaction patterns based on respect for social status.	Population mobility and multiculturalism (Muhammad Basir, 2021).

The main challenge faced is maintaining the authenticity of traditions such as Appassili and Songkabala rituals to ward off disaster that internalize the values of the Qur'an (Rahmatul Akbar et al., 2023). amidst the current of modernization. Strengthening the role of traditional institutions and educational strategies based on local wisdom are key to ensuring the sustainability of this cultural dynamic.

Papuan people

Papuan culture is characterized by a diversity of cultural expressions such as the Wam ritual of the Dani Tribe and Asmat carvings that represent cosmology and spiritual relationships with nature. The Wam ritual functions as a mechanism for resolving conflicts and restoring social harmony through the exchange of pigs as a symbol of peace (Hannerz, 1993), while Asmat carvings become a medium for mythological narratives about ancestors and ecological balance. However, globalization and modernization threaten the sustainability of these practices. Zhang's study (2025) revealed that the erosion of the "cultural gene threshold" causes the alienation of cultural objects, where the sacred meaning of Asmat carvings shifts to become mere tourism commodities.

In social organization, the structure of Ondoafi (tribal chief) as a traditional leader and the pattern of honai settlement (traditional round house) reflect the principles of collectivity and ecological sustainability. Ondoafi not only acts as a determinant of customary policy, but also as a guardian of resource distribution based on the kinship system (Yambeyapdi, 2022). The honai settlement pattern integrated with the traditional agricultural cycle shows wise ecological adaptation (Hannerz, 1999). However, large-scale migration and special autonomy policies have fundamentally changed this landscape. Kambu's research (2020) shows that the flow of migrants ("Amber") dominated by non-Papuan ethnicities has created spatial fragmentation, where honai settlements are pushed out by modern settlements that are ethnically fragmented.

The dynamics of ethnic identity experience complex pressures due to the special autonomy (Otsus) policy. Although Otsus is intended to accelerate development, Hasibuan's (2022) evaluation reveals structural inequalities:

- a. The Special Autonomy Fund (Rp138.65 trillion, 2002–2021) was ineffective in reducing poverty (31.53% in 2022) due to corruption and weak institutional capacity (Setiawan, 2022).
- b. Massive migration creates a social dichotomy between indigenous peoples ("Komen") and migrants ("Amber"), exacerbating resource competition (Yambeyapdi, 2022).

- c. Papua's Human Development Index (HDI) (60.62) remains the lowest nationally, reflecting the failure to transform special autonomy funds into basic services (Sarjiyanto et al., 2024).

Table 3. Impact of Special Autonomy and Migration on Papuan Society

Aspect	Pre-Special Autonomy Conditions (Pre-2001)	Post-Special Autonomy Changes (2002–2024)	Main Impact
Leadership	Ondoafi as the sole authority	Dualism: Ondoafi vs. state bureaucracy	Fragmentation of authority (Yambeyapdi, 2022)
Settlement	Honai integrated with customary land	Ethnic segregation; land conversion	Tenure conflict (Kambu, 2020)
Cultural Identity	Wam ritual as conflict resolution	Commercialization of Asmat carving art	Cultural alienation (Zhang, 2025)
Welfare	Subsistence based on local wisdom	Dependence on Special Autonomy funds	Structural poverty (Setiawan, 2022)

Cultural resistance emerged through the role of the church as a conflict mediator. The Catholic Church, for example, advocated reconciliation based on the values of "love and forgiveness" to bridge the Komen-Amber dichotomy (Yambeyapdi, 2022). The church's 1981–1989 campaign against the "extinction of ethnic identity" even became a pillar of the formation of Papuan nationalism (Leach, 2023). However, the effectiveness of this approach was limited by the lack of state support.

Regression analysis of Otsus data Sarjiyanto et al., (2024) confirmed that education spending (-0.32; $p < 0.01$) and access to clean water (-0.41; $p < 0.05$) were negatively correlated with poverty, but the migration variable (+0.67; $p < 0.01$) was positively related to inequality. This finding supports Tsuchiya's (2019) thesis that Papuan identity is a "fluid geobody" threatened by state narratives and globalization.

Flores Community

The Flores community, especially the Manggarai ethnic group, maintains its cultural richness through the Rebo ritual and Caci art which have been harmoniously integrated with Catholic values. The Caci dance a ritual fight using a whip (panggal) and shield is not merely an aesthetic performance, but is a symbolic medium that represents the concept of fertility and spiritual knowledge. Panggal as a cultural artifact functions as a physical (hardwood) and spiritual (cosmological connector) metaphor that teaches the balance of life (Karolus Budiman, 2020). The integration of Catholic values into local culture can be seen in the adaptation of traditional rituals such as Go'et Idep (traditional poetry) which is used to instill values of religiosity, courage, and social criticism through metaphors, in line with the principles of critical humanism education (Anonymous, 2022).

The social organization of the Flores community is based on the Gae kinship system (patrilineal clan) and the leadership of the Mosalaki (customary elders). The Gae system regulates genealogical relationships and the distribution of customary land, while the Mosalaki act as guardians of customary law and conflict mediators. This kinship pattern shows flexibility in accepting immigrant groups, such as the Buton ethnic group who entered Kampung Sagu, Adonara Island (1894-1930). The Buton community adapted to Lamaholot customs for example, adopting the belis system (elephant ivory dowry) while maintaining maritime expertise and the spread of Islam (Sonia S Nia et al., 2024). This interaction enriched the social structure without eliminating the authority of the Mosalaki.

The dynamics of tourism and cultural commercialization create complex transformations. On the one hand, Caci and the Appassili ritual (from the Bugis-Makassar ethnic group spread across Flores) are used as tourist attractions that drive the local economy. However, research by Megawati (2023) indicates that commercialization risks reducing the sacred meaning of rituals—such as the procession of giving gifts and taking holy water—to mere entertainment. Similar challenges arise in the inheritance of Go'et Idep, where the pressures of modernization weaken the transmission of values between generations (Anonymous, 2022). Community responses include:

- a. Institutionalization of culture: Integration of Go'et Idep into school curriculum to strengthen critical literacy of the younger generation.
- b. Ethical filter: Mosalaki sets boundaries for commercialization by protecting sacred rituals (e.g. Rebo) from tourism exploitation.

Table 4. Cultural Dynamics and Social Organization of Flores Society

Aspect	Traditional Form	Contemporary Transformation	Driving Factors
Ritual & Art	Caci as an agricultural ritual and Go'et Idep as an educational poem.	Caci becomes a tourist attraction; Go'et Idep is adopted in formal education.	Tourism and cultural revitalization (Karolus Budiman, 2020; Anonymous, 2022).
Social Organization	Mosalaki leadership and the Gae system are clan-based.	Adaptation to immigrant groups (example: Buton ethnic group).	Population mobility and cultural integration (Sonia S Nia et al., 2024).
Integration of Religion and Custom	Catholicism acculturated with traditional symbols (holy water, dance).	The church adopted Go'et Idep as a medium of catechesis.	Religious-cultural dialogue (Anonymous, 2022).

The conflict between preserving authenticity and economic demands is seen in the commercialization of Caci. Budiman's (2020) study noted the reduction of the meaning of panggal - from a symbol of fertility to a tendency towards decorative artifacts - due to the

design of the performance for tourists. However, local wisdom mechanisms such as the role of Mosalaki in regulating the "sacred zone" of the ritual have the potential to mitigate this negative impact.

Timorese people

The culture of the Timorese people in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is characterized by the complexity of the Likurai ritual and the Uis Neno myth that form the cosmological framework of the Atoni ethnic group. The Likurai ritual, a war dance with drums, functions as a mechanism for transmitting collective history and resolving inter-clan conflicts (Tsuchiya, 2019). Meanwhile, the Uis Neno (Sky God) myth regulates a hierarchical social order through the division of roles based on matrilineal lineage. However, recent ethnographic studies show that this practice is under pressure due to geo-political fragmentation. Pandie and Pandie's (2023) research revealed that the younger generation on the Indonesia-Timor Leste border is experiencing disorientation in the meaning of rituals, where Likurai has shifted its function from a spiritual medium to a mere "tourist attraction".

In social organization, the Amanat (customary council) structure and clan division based on the feto-mone (female-male) principle represent gender balance and distribution of authority. Amanat acts as the guardian of customary law and manager of agrarian resources, while the clan system regulates marriage alliances and land ownership (Tsuchiya, 2019). The traditional settlement pattern concentrated around the ume kbubu (round house) reflects the integration between local social and ecological organizations. However, post-referendum border dynamics in 1999 resulted in the disintegration of this system. Tsuchiya's (2019) research notes that the border divides the geo-cultural unity of the Atoni ethnic group, triggering dualism of identity: in West Timor (Indonesia), identity is constructed as "NTT citizens", while in Timor Leste a nationalist narrative based on resistance to Indonesia has developed.

The influence of borders creates complex identity tensions. In Kupang, the interaction of Timorese with Bugis migrants shows the polarization of economic strategies. Mudin et al.'s (2025) study found that Timorese traders tend to maintain subsistence trading patterns without cultural regeneration, in contrast to the Bugis who invest in education and cross-generational networks. This weakens the competitiveness of the Timorese in the Oesapa traditional market. On the other hand, the Timorese diaspora in Australia and the Netherlands actually show a strengthening of identity through the Tetum language as a marker of nationalism (Goglia & Hajek, 2020; Kurvers & Kroon, 2020).

Table 5. Dynamics of Timorese Community Identity in Border Areas

Aspect	Pre-Split (Pre-1999)	Post-Split (2000–2024)	Main Impact
Ritual	Likurai as social integration	Commercialization; desacralization of meaning	Erosion of local wisdom (Pandie & Pandie, 2023)
Leadership	Mandate as the sole customary authority	Eroded by border bureaucracy	Fragmentation of authority (Tsuchiya, 2019)

Clan	Balanced feto-mone system	Cross-border land disputes	Inter-clan tenure conflicts (Mudin et al., 2025)
Identity	Uis Neno cosmology integrated	The "NTT vs. Timor Leste" dichotomy	Cultural dislocation (Kamisuna, 2023)

Responses to these changes have varied. The Catholic Church has become a key actor in maintaining social cohesion through the integration of Uis Neno values with Christian theology, especially in the interior (Leach, 2023). Meanwhile, Timorese nationalism based on human rights (Kamisuna, 2023) has influenced the perception of ethnic Timorese in NTT about cultural autonomy. The main challenge is to revitalize the role of Amanat as a mediator between identities in the context of a plural nation-state.

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of five ethnic groups in the archipelago reveals complex patterns of adaptation in the face of the pressures of modernization. Fundamentally, the main similarities lie in the resilience of the kinship system as the core of social organization and the adaptive capacity of traditional values. The Gorontalo community maintains the Hulondalo Custom through collective mechanisms such as the Fellowship U Duluwo Lo Limo Lo Pahalaa (Damis, 2016), while the Makassar ethnic group relies on Siri' Na Pacce to maintain social cohesion in multi-ethnic urban areas (Basir, 2021). In Papua, the Ondoafi structure and honai settlements remain the guardians of kinship-based resource distribution (Yambeyapdi, 2022), similar to the Gae and Mosalaki systems in Flores (Nia et al., 2024) and the Amanat council in the Timorese ethnic group (Tsuchiya, 2019). The adaptation of traditional values is also seen in the integration of rituals with religion: Islam in Burdah Gorontalo (Arif, 2021), Catholicism in Go'et Idep Flores (Anonymous, 2022), and Christian-indigenous syncretism in Timor (Leach, 2023).

Crucial differences emerge in the response to modernization and the role of religion. Gorontalo and Makassar show institutionalized adaptation through formal institutions. In Makassar, Appassili is integrated into the education curriculum (Megawati, 2023), while in Gorontalo, participatory leadership in the agricultural sector bridges the gap between customary models and modern bureaucracy (Kota Tengah et al., 2019). In contrast, Papua faces systemic fragmentation due to the special autonomy (Otsus) policy that failed to resolve the Komen-Amber dichotomy and structural inequalities (Hasibuan, 2022; Sarjiyanto et al., 2024). The role of religion also varies: in Flores, Catholicism is dominant in ritual acculturation (eg, Caci as a medium of catechesis) (Anonymous, 2022), while Timor shows syncretism through the integration of Uis Neno with Christian theology (Leach, 2023).

Custom-based social organizations function as buffers for change by mediating conflict and maintaining the transmission of values. However, their effectiveness depends on policy support. The cultural resilience of the Makassar and Flores ethnic groups is strengthened by institutionalization through education (Megawati, 2023; Anonymous, 2022), while the fragility in Gorontalo and Papua is caused by the weak regeneration of traditional leaders and

minimal state intervention (Mohi, 2021; Yambeyapdi, 2022). The Timorese ethnic group faces cultural dislocation due to geo-political fragmentation, but the diaspora strengthens its identity through the Tetum language (Goglia & Hajek, 2020).

Table 6. Comparative Synthesis of Cultural Dynamics and Social Organization of Five Ethnic Groups

Aspect	Gorontalo	Makassar	Papua	Flores	Timor
Kinship System	Hulondalo Customs (Bate) (Damis, 2016)	Pangngadereng (Karaeng-Anak Karunrung) (Basir, 2021)	Ondoafi + honai (Yambeyapdi, 2022)	Gae (clan) + Mosalaki (Nia et al., 2024)	Mandate + feto-mone (Tsuchiya, 2019)
Modernization Response	Bureaucratization of Bate authority (Kota Tengah et al., 2019)	Recontextualization of Siri' Napacce in urban areas (Basir, 2021)	Fragmentation by Special Autonomy and Migration (Hasibuan, 2022)	Commercialization of Caci with traditional filters (Budiman, 2020)	Economic polarization (traders vs. migrants) (Muddin et al., 2025)
The Role of Religion	Islam in the Burdah ritual (Arif, 2021)	Islam in Songkabala (Akbar et al., 2023)	The Church as a mediator (Yambeyapdi, 2022)	Catholic dominance in acculturation (Anonymous, 2022)	Uis Neno Syncretism - Christianity (Leach, 2023)
Resistance Mechanism	Huyula oral inheritance (inhibited) (Mohi, 2021)	Appassili cultural education (Megawati, 2023)	Church advocacy (Leach, 2023)	Go'et Idip in the school curriculum (Anonymous, 2022)	Tetum language in the diaspora (Goglia & Hajek, 2020)
Major Vulnerabilities	Regeneration of traditional leaders (Damis, 2016)	Ritual authenticity (Megawati, 2023)	Cultural alienation (Zhang, 2025)	Reducing the meaning of panggala (Budiman, 2020)	Desacralization of Likurai (Pandie & Pandie, 2023)

The implications of these findings reinforce the theory of cultural complexity (Hannerz, 1991): cultural resilience is not passive resistance, but rather a dialectic between local agency (eg, Mosalaki in Flores) and global structures. Without a policy based on "gradient protection" (Zhang, 2025), indigenous social organizations are vulnerable to deformation, such as the stagnation of Timorese ethnic trade (Muddin et al., 2025) or the commercialization of Papuan

Asmat carvings (Zhang, 2025). Policy recommendations should prioritize strengthening indigenous institutions within the framework of cultural autonomy, as the effectiveness of Papua's Special Autonomy depends on reforms in fund governance (Sarjiyanto et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Comparative research on the dynamics of culture and social organization of five ethnic groups in the archipelago reveals cultural resilience expressed through different adaptation patterns. The Gorontalo and Makassar communities demonstrate resilience through the institutionalization of customs, where the values of the Hulondalo Custom are integrated into participatory leadership in the agricultural sector (Kota Tengah et al., 2019), while Appassili and Siri' Na Pacce are adopted in the formal education curriculum to strengthen the identity of the younger generation (Megawati, 2023; Basir, 2021). In contrast, Papua and Flores develop cultural hybridization strategies: in Papua, the church acts as a mediator in the Komen-Amber conflict through a humanist approach based on reconciliation (Yambeyapdi, 2022), while in Flores, the acculturation of Catholicism and customs is reproduced through Go'et Idep as a medium for catechesis and social criticism (Anonymous, 2022). The Timorese ethnic group faces geo-political fragmentation with a cross-border identity strategy, maintaining Tetum as a core identity marker in the diaspora (Goglia & Hajek, 2020) despite experiencing the desacralization of the Likurai ritual in the border region (Pandie & Pandie, 2023). The theoretical implications of this study enrich the discussion of cultural complexity (Hannerz, 1991) by emphasizing that the dynamics of Nusantara culture are not a passive response to modernization, but rather an active dialectic between local agencies (eg, Mosalaki in Flores) and global structures. The findings on the synthesis of traditional-institutional values (eg, Pangngadereng in Makassar) broaden the understanding of the transformation of nationalism in a postcolonial context (Kamisuna, 2023). The main limitations lie in the geographical coverage that does not include sub-ethnic variations (eg, East Manggarai in Flores) and the reliance on secondary data. Further research is recommended to explore the impact of digitalization on cultural transmission, such as the role of social media in the inheritance of Burdah or Likurai, as well as quantitative analysis of the impact of cultural education policies on the indigenous resilience index.

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