

THE ROLE OF BUNGO MALAY CUSTOMARY INSTITUTION IN EXPLORING, FOSTERING, PRESERVING, MAINTAINING, AND DEVELOPING CUSTOMS AND CULTURE OF BUNGO MALAY

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to thoroughly examine the role of Bungo Malay Customary Institution (LAM) in the exploration, facilitation, preservation, and development of Bungo Malay customs and culture, as well as the associated obstacles experienced. In order to achieve the stated objectives, phenomenological, historical and qualitative methods were adopted. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were carried out with several Bungo Malay traditional figures, after which qualitative analysis was conducted. Based on the observations made, Bungo LAM performed its assigned duties well, but not optimally. This was evidenced by the results obtained from examining the various activities carried out in relation to the exploration, facilitation, and maintenance of Bungo Malay customs and culture. In terms of development, customs and culture was found to be constrained by limited funding and human resources dedicated to its preservation. Various obstacles have been reported to be associated with the exploration, facilitation, preservation, maintenance, and development of Bungo Malay's traditional and socio-cultural values. A major challenge in this regard includes the community's limited understanding of how to preserve these values. It is also important to state that the inclusion of Mulok (local content curriculum) in schools has not yet been realized, primarily due to budget constraints, hence, not all teachers are familiar with the local customs and traditions. In order to effectively address this challenge, substantial training is needed, which also requires funding. Moreover, since these customs and cultural practices have not been documented, no written records exist, making the practices extremely vulnerable to the pervasive nature of external cultures, particularly through the internet and social media.

Keywords: Customary Institution; Bungo Malay; Preserving; Customs; Culture

INTRODUCTION

Current technological advances have led to significant shifts in societal values (Rizky Febriansyah, 2025) as well as in moral and ethical standards (Kasanah, Rosyadi, NURNGAINI, & Wafa, 2022), specifically with the rise of social media. These changes are becoming more noticeable (H. Guntoro, Rikardo, Amirullah, Fahrisani, & Suarsana, 2022), and it has become a concern for all levels of community, particularly parents and cultural actors, considering the fact that Indonesia is known for its diverse ethnicities, languages, customs, and cultures.

Culture is defined as a way of life that is developed and shared by a group or community, passed down from generation to generation. It is formed from many complex elements, including religious and political systems, customs, language, tools, clothing, buildings, and works of art. According to a previous research, culture and community are inextricably linked, as culture emerges in a particular community with its unique characteristics that distinguish it from others and can be passed down to future generations (M. Guntoro, Kurniawan, & Rosalina, 2022).

Cultural richness is a key characteristic of the Indonesian nation. The diversity of ethnicities, religions, and cultures across the various provinces of the nation makes it unique in the eyes of the international community, and this serves as the foundation for monitoring the nation's independence. Among the various cultures that exist in Indonesia is Bungo, which was developed and generally adopted by the inhabitants of Jambi province. Jambi's significant role in history, along with Bungo Regency being part of Jambi Province, has led to the development of a variety of cultures in Bungo community, which are heavily influenced by Minangkabau and Jambi tribes.

These cultures should be adequately preserved, particularly considering the fact that the current wave of modernization has the capability to completely diminish customs and culture of Bungo Malay. In an effort to uphold the traditions of Jambi Bungo Malay culture, Bungo Regency government continues to maintain customary institution as a platform for exploring, facilitating, preserving, and developing customs and culture of Jambi Bungo Malay that still exist presently, for example, the tradition of appointing a Bapak Angkat (foster father) (Berdasarkan & Di, 2025), (Dison, Mahendra, & Purwendi, 2022)

Customary institution is an institution established by a community. This establishment is typically developed to strategically accommodate the aspirations of members of an indigenous community. Furthermore, the institution has been observed to play a very significant role in enforcing customary sanctions against customary violations, as well as in resolving disputes between members of the indigenous community and customary territories. It also helps in resolving disputes between indigenous communities and the government. In the institution, resolutions are carried out wisely and judiciously, guided by customary norms based on syarah (Islamic law) and kitabullah (Qur'an), as well as customary rules that govern all aspects of community life. This also includes governance, as the customary adage goes.

*“Alam Nan Barajo, Rantau Nan Berjenang.
Nagari Anan babathin,
Lubak Nan Berpenghulu
Kampung Nan Bertua, Rumah Nan Bertengganai”*

The meaning of this adage is that "customs, habits, and customary institution in a community play a very important role in social interaction and can mobilize community participation across various fields of activity." Customs, habits, and customary institution based on syara, which is rooted in kitabullah, need to be explored, nurtured, preserved, and developed, as these factors will significantly contribute to the smooth functioning of government, development, and community, while also strengthening national resilience and promoting customary institution. This forms the basis for the present research titled "The Role of Bungo Malay Customary Institution (LAM) in Exploring, Fostering, Preserving, Maintaining, and Developing Customs and Culture of Bungo Malay."

Research Focus

As previously outlined in the background of the research, and based on initial observations, this topic was selected as the focus of scientific inquiry. The research is centered on examining the role of Bungo LAM in exploring, developing, maintaining, and preserving customs and culture of Bungo Malay community, as well as identifying the challenges faced by the institution in carrying out these efforts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural theory was adopted for this exploration with the intention of providing a lens through which to examine cultural and social phenomena from the present, past, and future. According to Malinowski, as cited in (Putri, 2023), cultural contact led to a higher, more active culture influencing a lower, more passive one.

Cultural contact is invariably reflected in the shift in cultural values during the era of information globalization, where Westernization surfaced as a dominant force shaping human thought patterns. Western culture became synonymous with modernization, while Eastern culture was often regarded as traditional or conservative. As a result, people not only adopted Western science and technology as part of respective cultural identity but also imitated Western lifestyles as a whole, often without substantial evaluation. Ironically, despite being viewed negatively, Western culture was absorbed indiscriminately upon its arrival in the East.

Talcott Parsons' action theory, as discussed by (Zuhriah, 2022), proposes that culture is composed of two primary components, including (1) Cultural System and (2) Social System. Cultural System refers to the abstract elements of culture, comprising thoughts, ideas, and concepts, including themes of thinking, belief systems, and customs. In this system lie components such as "Cultural Value System" and "Norm System," which are made concrete through norms upheld by community institutions. The function of Cultural System is simply to structure and reinforce human behavior and action. On the flip side, Social System consists of human activities and interactions that arise through interpersonal relationships in a community. These actions are patterned, interrelated, and observable, rendering Social System more tangible than Cultural System. While Cultural System governs and organizes behavior through values and norms, these same norms are institutionalized through social interaction.

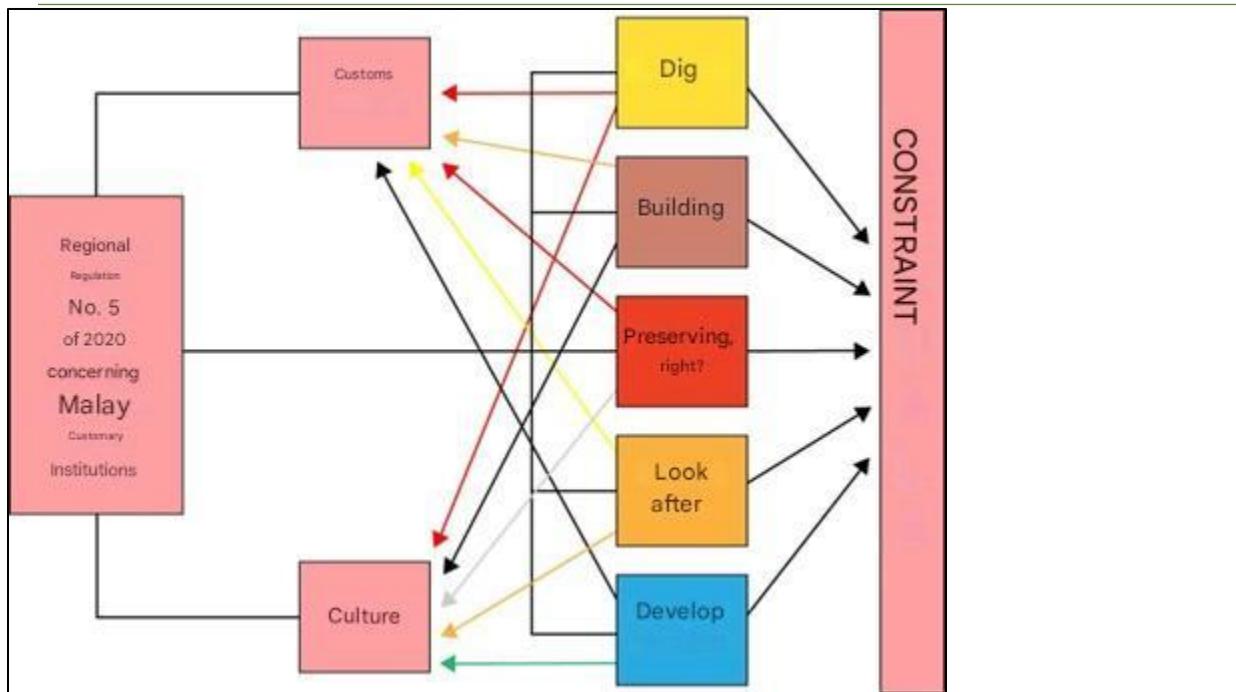


Figure 1. Framework of thought

Relevant Research

Based on the review of existing literature carried out during the course of this research, numerous explorations have examined the role of LAM. For instance, Maryati Bachtiar emphasized the inclusiveness of customary institution in resolving customary land conflicts, as stated by (Miranti & Yulinopriyani, 2021), (Bachtiar, 2018), (Manik, 2019). Collins et al. (2021) also emphasized the significant role played by these institutions of Bengkulu Malay community in enforcing customary criminal law. Similarly, Kasmita Widodo (2023) observed how the institutions facilitated values and norms that served as social capital in the community. Other scholars have focused on the respective roles of the establishments in cultural preservation, including Devi, Hadi, & Madhan (2022), Purmawanti, Rozi, Nurdianti, Mulyani, & Ameilia (2024), Azaria (2014), and Supian, Putri S M (2017). Regardless of the various explorations already conducted concerning the subject matter, this research goes beyond cultural preservation to emphasize additional dimensions such as exploration, fostering, and development of customs and culture, particularly in Bungo Regency, which comprises 17 sub-districts.

METHOD

The present investigation was carried out using an exploratory qualitative method. According to Creswell, as cited in Mackiewicz (2018), exploratory qualitative research is used to investigate and understand the perceptions of individuals or groups toward a social or human problem. Creswell further explained that this type of research aims to generate foundational knowledge and insights in areas that have not been extensively studied. It seeks to build an understanding of novel concepts and perspectives in under-researched fields. The method typically includes open-ended questions and is complemented by observational techniques. Following the exploratory phase, the research adopted a phenomenological design. As Creswell (in Mackiewicz, 2018) stated, phenomenological research, which is rooted in philosophy and psychology, aims to explore the lived experiences of individuals in relation to a particular phenomenon, as stated directly by participants. In this case, the research applied a qualitative, exploratory, phenomenological design to gather data in a coherent and meaningful way.

Out of the 17 sub-districts in Bungo Regency, 4 were selected as research sites, namely Pelepat, Bathin VII, Jujuhan, and Tanah Sepenggal Lintas. These areas were selected because each is home to indigenous communities with well-established philosophies and customary laws that guide the preservation of respective adopted traditions. In these communities, *Rio* (customary leader) holds authoritative power over the management of customary practices. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews using purposive sampling, as well as observations and focus group discussions (FGDs). Furthermore, interviews were conducted with a wide range of participants, including community members, policymakers, village leaders, Non-Governmental organization (NGO) representatives, members of customary institution (LAM), indigenous leaders, government officials, media personnel, academics, and other stakeholders. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held with community leaders, village authorities, and

traditional management institutions. In this exploration, data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously in accordance with the framework introduced by Miles and Huberman until data saturation was reached to ensure thorough interpretation. The analytical process included data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. To validate the results, triangulation was used alongside member checks, reconfirming data accuracy with informants (Sugiyono in Riani Elisabeth & Kusdian Novanti, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Bungo Malay Customary Institution

Article 3 of Bungo Regency Regulation Number 6 of 2020 concerning Bungo LAM outlines the primary objectives of customary institution, including a. To explore, nurture, preserve, maintain, and develop the customary and socio-cultural values of Bungo Malay community as a foundation for strengthening and affirming their cultural identity. b. To protect and uphold the traditional and constitutional rights of Bungo Malay Indigenous Community, along with the socio-cultural values, in order to enhance the physical and spiritual well-being of the community.

According to the applicable Regional Regulations, the structure of LAM is tiered, comprising hamlet-level, sub-district-level, and regency-level institutions. Each level operates under a clearly defined scope of authority and responsibility appropriate to its jurisdiction. Insights gathered from FGD with Mr. Rifai Abtes showed that Bungo LAM was officially established in 2006. Bungo Malay customs, Jambi, comprise a wide array of elements that influence community life. These include adat bersendi syara' (customs grounded in Islamic law), seloko adat (customary proverbs and advice), a matrilineal kinship system, traditional ceremonies, as well as other cultural practices and values passed down across generations. In an interview, Mr. Rifai Abtes, who served as the Secretary of Bungo LAM, explained that Bungo customs are categorized into three distinct components, namely cultural, ethical norms, and customary law aspects.

Exploring

The word *menggali* (exploring) in Bungo Malay culture is embodied in the expression *Batang Terendam*, which refers to the revival of customs and traditions that are nearly extinct or at risk of disappearing. However, the presence of Bungo LAM enables the community to explore its rich cultural heritage, one that still holds relevance and value for future generations. These customs and traditions uphold meaningful values that can be passed down as social capital, shaping the identity and resilience of the nation.

In an interview with Mr. Aswadi, Head of the Pelepat District Bungo LAM, the figure explained that the concept of "exploring" is not limited to reviving forgotten customs, but also includes revitalizing the revived customs. More importantly, it includes uncovering the intrinsic values embedded in the culture. For example, *Lubuk Larangan* tradition reflects deeply rooted values such as cooperation and environmental sustainability (Sunaryo, 2016; Julita, Syafrialdi, & Hertati, 2022; Norsidi, 2017; Ilyas & Permatasari, 2018; Handayani, Djunaidi, & Hertati, 2018). Similarly, in marriage customs, the *foster father procession* serves as a ceremonial link that mediates, connects, and strengthens kinship ties (Jaya, Chaniago, & Zikron, 2022; Fitri Yanti & Saputri, 2024).

What distinguishes Bungo from other regions is *Seloko Adat*, a customary ritual performed by *Nini Mamak*, *Bathin*, or *syara'* (religious) officiants, who offer marital guidance to the bride and groom. This ceremony may occur either before or after the wedding, depending on the situation as well as the availability of the couple and *syara'* figure. However, the true meaning of *Seloko Adat* cannot be fully grasped without sincere reflection, engagement with its cultural depth, dialogue with elders, particularly *Ninik Mamak*, and attentive learning from nature (Interview with Rifai Abtes, 2025).

Fostering

To foster customs and culture of Bungo Malay community, Bungo LAM organized a training session on traditional customs simulation. This training, which is specifically designed for mothers, is considered very important, since mothers serve as the primary influence on respective children's education in the household. The training is held only once a year across four sub-districts. Three years ago, a Traditional Learning House was established to further this mission. As part of the initiative, a book has also been published that explores cultural anxiety associated with wearing traditional Bungo Malay attire (Interview with Mr. Hasan, Head of Bungo LAM).

Fostering customs and culture entails the preservation, development, and reinforcement of a community's values, traditions, and cultural practices. This process comprises a range of activities, including education, the conservation of cultural heritage, and community empowerment. The overarching goal is to uphold cultural diversity and strengthen communal identity.

As Mr. Hasan further explained, Bungo LAM promotes traditional customs and culture through both formal and informal educational efforts. In formal settings, lessons on local customs are incorporated into *Mulok* (local content curriculum) taught in schools. Meanwhile, in informal settings, LAM provides counseling on cultural values and customs, particularly targeting the younger generation, children, and teenagers (Rahmat, 2008).

Preserving

The preservation of customs and culture is a very important effort toward protecting and maintaining a community's cultural heritage, including its values, traditions, language, arts, and other traditional practices. This effort is particularly essential for keeping cultural identity, enhancing social bonds, and passing cultural richness to future generations (Zainudin Hasan et al., 2024).

Based on the information obtained from an interview conducted with Mr. Mahli, the participation of all levels of the community is essential to preserving customs and original culture of Bungo. For example, the inclusiveness of *Bathin* and all *syara'* officiants when conducting *seloko adat* wedding ceremony for the bride and groom.

On another occasion, during an interview conducted with Mr. Zainal Arifin, the figure stated that preserving customs and culture of Bungo Malay could be achieved through various means. A significant means stated in this regard includes learning the regional language spoken in Bungo. Furthermore, it is important to study *krinok* crafts and art as part of cultural expression. Cultural preservation can also be achieved by researching the history and philosophy behind these customs, including the values each embodies. Wearing traditional clothing at major events such as the Independence Day celebrations is another form of respect for tradition. Accordingly, another form of preservation is cooking and enjoying traditional foods such as *Kue Muso*, *Takik Beruk*, *Galama*, *Kue Padamaran*, and *Kue Gandus*. In the current era of social media, Mr. Zainal Arifin also emphasized the importance of disseminating information about customs and culture of Bungo Malay through digital platforms to increase awareness.

In order to effectively preserve Bungo customs and traditions, collaboration with the local government is essential. This was evidenced by the statement of Mr. Nasrun, who elucidated that without the active inclusiveness of the local government, efforts to preserve Bungo Malay customs and culture would be incomplete. Government inclusiveness is considered essential for strengthening and supporting various community initiatives, thereby maintaining the sustainability of local culture (Interview with Mr. Nasrun, Sub-district Head of Pelepat District).

Maintaining

To maintain traditional customs and culture in Bungo, several key steps should be taken. As stated in a previous research, it is essential to include all levels of community, including traditional leaders, the younger generation, and the local government, in these maintenance efforts (Hamiru, Darmanto, Joko Snaryo, Poiran, Nanang Al Hidayat, Nova Elsyra, & Permana, 2022)

Several efforts have been made to maintain customs and culture of Bungo Malay community, including the use of social media. Community leaders, known as *tukoh* in Bungo, wear traditional attire and enhance the role of Bungo LAM while keeping up with contemporary developments. These initiatives aim to avoid appearing outdated or overly rustic. Furthermore, in the region, traditional houses are used as venues for various large events and activities related to indigenous customs, as stated by Mr. Rifai Abtes.

Developing

To develop and preserve traditional customs and culture in Bungo Regency, several strategic steps can be carried out. These include conducting a cultural inventory, providing youth training, organizing cultural festivals, and integrating *Mulok* into the educational curriculum. Additionally, the use of social media for preservation efforts and the creation of a website dedicated to Bungo Malay culture can also be implemented (Ulul Azmi, 2018; Ilmu & Seni, n.d.).

Based on an interview with H.M. Chotib, a major step already carried out by Bungo LAM to develop Bungo customs and culture includes community empowerment. This development is achieved through the Traditional Learning House activities, held every 2 weeks. Additionally, Bungo LAM also collaborates across sectors with local governments and other institutions concerned with Bungo Malay culture. Regardless of the associated potentials, cultural development in the educational world still faces obstacles, particularly related to funding and the availability of teaching staff to teach culture and customs.

In efforts to explore, foster, preserve, maintain, and develop the traditional and socio-cultural values of Bungo Malay, several obstacles remain. The major obstacle in this context is that the majority of people still lack an understanding of how to preserve customs and culture. Furthermore, the lack of *Mulok* in schools poses a significant obstacle. Its implementation is hindered by limited funding, and not all teachers possess adequate knowledge of customs and traditions, necessitating specialized training, which also requires additional funding. Another issue is the lack of written documentation on customs and culture of Bungo Malay, resulting in a lack of official documents to serve as a reference. Lastly, the rapid influx of foreign cultural influences through the internet, particularly social media, is further weakening the existence of local culture (Interview with Mr. Rifai Abtes, Secretary of Bungo LAM).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Bungo LAM was found to perform its duties effectively, although not yet fully optimal. The suboptimal performance was observed to be particularly evident in the exploration of Bungo Malay customs and culture, which still requires improvement. However, in terms of fostering and maintaining customs, Bungo LAM showed optimal performance. This was reflected in the various activities it has carried out routinely and consistently. Regardless of this observation, efforts to develop Bungo Malay customs and culture still faced obstacles, particularly in funding and

limited human resources committed to cultural preservation. Several obstacles were encountered in exploring, fostering, preserving, maintaining, and developing the traditional as well as socio-cultural values of Bungo Malay. A major challenge included the fact that many people lacked an understanding of how to preserve customs and culture. Furthermore, no *Mulok* programs specifically designed to teach Bungo Malay culture in schools were found. The failure to implement this program was generally attributed to budget constraints and the fact that not all teachers had adequate knowledge of customs and traditions. Based on this understanding, teacher training is urgently needed, but this also requires significant costs. Another obstacle is the lack of written documents that systematically record customs and culture of Bungo Malay. As a result, the majority of cultural knowledge is passed on orally and is at risk of being lost. Equally important, the rapid influence of foreign cultures through the internet and social media has also shifted the younger generation's interest in local culture.

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