

**Original Research Article**

## The Role of the Sebyar Tribal Head in Preserving Local Wisdom: Customary Law in Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the role of the Sebyar Tribal Chief in preserving local wisdom in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province, as well as to identify and analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors for the Sebyar Tribal Chief in carrying out his role in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province. The type of research used is qualitative. The focus of this research is the role of the tribal chief in local wisdom, viewed from the following aspects: as a policy maker, as a strategist, as a communication tool, as a dispute resolver, as a therapist, and the supporting and inhibiting factors for the Sebyar tribal chief in carrying out his role in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province, viewed from internal and external factors. The number of informants in this study was 10 people. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques included data collection, data condensation, and data validity. The study results indicate that internally, leadership strength, support from the indigenous community, and collective awareness are the main supporting factors. At the same time, infrastructure limitations, generational differences, and a lack of administrative and communication training are the main obstacles. From an external perspective, support from the local government and NGOs and global awareness of indigenous peoples' rights encourage the role of the tribal chief. However, inconsistent policies, lack of response from companies, and stigma against indigenous peoples pose challenges. Overall, these findings indicate that the success of implementing the role of the Sebyar Tribal Chief depends heavily on the synergy between the internal strengths of the indigenous community and consistent external support, as stipulated in the Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019.

**Keywords:** Village, Local Wisdom, Customary Law, Indigenous Community.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

A person who gains prominence within a tribe or communal group is called a tribal chief. However, many people perceive tribes as groups of people who still live far from society. Generally, some tribal communities are associated with biological populations living in the wild. They separate themselves from the outside world. Formal rules that apply in a country are related to the social role of tribal leaders. In tribes or groups that follow tribal thinking, the position of tribal chief is critical and not arbitrary. This is the difference between those classified as tribes and those who have accepted modernity or are accustomed to civilization. (Nawipa *et al.*, 2020). The entire community pays attention to what the tribal chief does because it is his responsibility to

handle customary affairs and resolve possible conflicts. The lack of knowledge and appreciation of leadership values exists in the diversity of cultural values in Indonesia, potentially leading to a lack of appreciation for national and local cultures, resulting in a disconnect from their cultural roots. This will result in an inferiority complex, namely, feeling inferior to the organization's decisions and losing trust in the original culture, which can lead to the erosion of national identity (Sahertian, 2021). In general, tribes in Papua have diverse social structures and cultural organizations that are important for their social and cultural life. Based on their respective cultures, these systems control how community members interact with each other in their daily activities. This also applies to conventional political leadership structures.

The Bigman leadership system, also known as the Pria Berwibawa system, the Ondoafi system, the Kingdom system, and the mixed system, is one of the four leadership systems recognized by the Papuan people (Yaroseray, 2019). One of the districts in West Papua Province, Indonesia, is Teluk Bintuni. Various economic activities are concentrated near the coastline and bay in Teluk Bintuni District, where the Papua terrain is home to various mining, forestry, and maritime businesses. Due to the abundance of industrial activities, Teluk Bintuni has become the wealthiest district in Indonesia based on the Regional Domestic Product (RDP) per capita metric. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Teluk Bintuni is the wealthiest district in Indonesia, with an RDP per capita of IDR 487.41 million (in Aditiya, 2021).

Local wisdom and values are moral, wise, valuable, and insightful. This knowledge is applied and upheld by all community members as a result of the past and must always be used as a guide in life. The values and knowledge passed down from ancestors through a long process of local wisdom become a guiding principle for life and preserve culture. (Paulangan Yunus Pajanja, 2021). Quaritch Wales defines local wisdom in Rahyono (2009:7-8) as "*the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of a people have in common as a result of their experience in early life*." This indicates that the intelligence possessed by a group of people (ethnic group), derived from their life experiences, and expressed in the cultural characteristics of their community, is known as local wisdom. A particular culture within a particular community becomes the subject of local wisdom. Thus, local wisdom is also a study of a particular culture. This aligns with what Haba (2007:11) said: local wisdom refers to the various cultural riches that grow and develop within a society. The objectives of this study, based on the existing problems, are as follows: To identify and analyze the role of the Sebyar Chief in preserving local wisdom in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province and identify and analyze the supporting and hindering factors for the Sebyar Village Chief in fulfilling his role in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province.

Benefits of the Research regarding of the author's research, it is hoped that this procedure will have a direct and substantial positive impact on the function of tribal leaders in preserving traditional knowledge. The following are some of the benefits that can be obtained, both conceptually and practically:

The results of this research are expected to contribute to theoretical understanding and enrich implementation theories that can be used as a basis for critiquing the role of the Sebyar tribal chief in preserving local wisdom in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province, through a study of social reality, thereby serving as a reference for the

development of the implementation of the role of the village chief. Decision-makers in traditional villages, particularly the local government, to serve as a reference in making more effective decisions on implementing the Village Regulation to preserve local wisdom and strengthen the role of indigenous communities. The community needs to gain knowledge and increase awareness about the importance of preserving local wisdom and the role of customary law in regional development. Traditional leaders, particularly those of the Sebyar tribe, this study provides a reference for fulfilling their roles in preserving local wisdom and implementing local regulations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The "role" is a set of socially expected standards possessed by individuals. (2007: 845 in the Indonesian Dictionary) "A role is one of the primary responsibilities that must be fulfilled." The term 'role' is often used to refer to the status or position of an individual. Role theory is the primary theory in this dissertation. According to the Indonesian Dictionary, a role can refer to a comedian in a makyong performance, an actor in a film, or the behavior of a member of society. A role is a set of human expectations about how individuals should act and behave in certain situations based on their social position and obligations.

A "role" is a set of behavioral rules expected of an individual. Every day, almost everyone has to play many different roles. These human roles often cause conflicts. For example, female elementary school teachers must teach social studies daily as part of their professional duties. However, spouses are also responsible for family matters. In the evenings and at night, she takes care of the children at home and other household chores, such as cooking for the children and husband, helping the children with homework, cleaning, and maintaining the cleanliness of the rooms, furniture, etc. This is often called a dual role, occurring in almost all professions. (Abu Ardillah, 2022). Classical sociologists such as Ralph Linton, Jacob Moreno, and George Herbert Mead first used the term "role" in their writings during the 1930s and 1940s. In his symbolic interactionist perspective, Mead (1934) focused on the roles of specific actors, how roles develop in social interactions, and the various cognitive concepts used by social actors to understand and interpret behavioral cues for themselves and others. (Prayudi *et al.*, 2019).

According to role theory, people behave differently. They can be expected to do so based on the situation and social background, which is generally emphasized as one of the most significant aspects of social behavior (Prayudi *et al.*, 2019a). The basic premise of this theory is that people are systematically part of several social positions that have expectations for their behavior and the behavior of others. Expectations also include a person's beliefs about their behavior and beliefs about what is considered to originate from or be

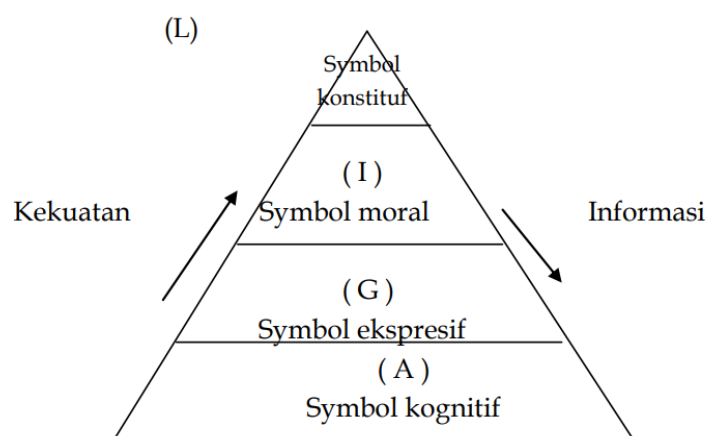
associated with others. Moreno's (1934) thinking began with the relationship between role expectations and behavior, the social conditions that give rise to those expectations, and how others' expectations are perceived and understood to influence behavior.

A role is the dynamic aspect of an office or position. A person has fulfilled their position if they have complied with their obligations and rights. "A role is a set of behaviors that others expect from a person based on their status," said Barbara Kozier. Several specialists have defined roles. A role is defined as the dynamic component of a position (status). A person plays a role if they carry out their duties and rights by their position (Hidayaturrahman, Yahya, Wisman, *et al.*, 2020). According to this interpretation, a role is the behavior or conduct of a person that reflects the standards embodied in their social position. Roles are related to work. People are expected to carry out tasks and fulfill obligations related to their work. A set of expectations imposed on people in certain social positions is a role. Social norms determine their position, which means they must fulfill the tasks expected of them by society in their families, jobs, and other areas. In a role, there are two types of

expectations: society's expectations of role holders or the responsibilities of role holders, and society's expectations of role holders or newcomers to the role, which connect them in carrying out their duties or responsibilities. Roles can be seen as part of the structure of society, so that the structure of society can be seen as an interconnected model between role holders and their environment.

The previous interpretation is based on a systematic theoretical framework. Based on the ideas presented in T. Parsons' book *The Social System*, Parsons argues that each person's behavior (system of actions) is a living system, consisting of several interrelated systems, including personality, culture, social systems, and behavioral organisms. Culture is a set of socially inherited ways of connecting humanity with its ecological environment. Technology, organization, economy, politics, socio-religious practices, and beliefs are aspects of this community's way of life.

Another way to view culture is as a system of shared meanings and symbols. See its structure in the image below:



**Image 1: Culture as a Symbolic System Viewed Through a Hierarchy-Cybernetics**

In the diagram above, the two arrows indicate the process of connecting or feedback between functional assumptions. Subsystems at or above the hierarchy function to manage information. They work simultaneously to provide input about energy or power for reciprocal balance. The acculturation phase usually comes after the assimilation process. Changes in social norms and interpersonal communication are known as acculturation. Some also define acculturation as the process of cultural contact between groups that leads to cultural integration.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1 Research Location

This study was conducted on the Role of the Sebyar Tribal Chief in Preserving Local Wisdom (A

Study of the Role in the Customary Law Community in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province).

#### 3.2 Informants

According to Moleong (2015), research informants are individuals who truly understand the issues being investigated and are used to provide information about the background and conditions of the study, according to Wijaya (2018). In this study, the village chief determines the existence of noble values contained in local wisdom in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua Province. The research informants in this study are individuals selected and responsible for the role of the Sebyar Village Chief in preserving local wisdom in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province.

**Table 3.1: Research Informants**

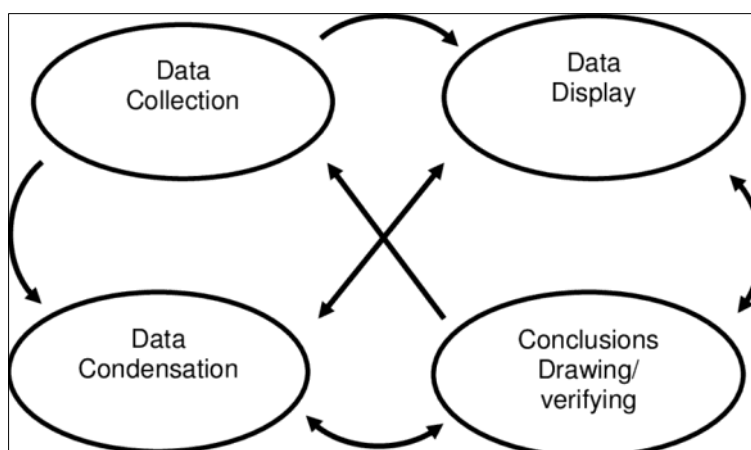
No	Position	Number
1	District Head of Tomu	1
2	Sebyar Tribe Chief	1
3	Traditional Leader	1
4	Religious Leader	1
5	Secretary of Tomu District	1
6	Community Leader	1
7	Community	3
8	Head of Youth Organization	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: Primary data, 2024

### 3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, surveys, documentation, and other contexts. On the other hand, this is the process of verifying data or claims obtained using other methods. The results of interviews may differ or correspond to information obtained previously because this is a validation process. One must introduce oneself, explain the purpose of the visit, provide an overview of the interview material, and ask questions to ensure that the interview proceeds

smoothly. (Mudjia, 2011). After several steps have been taken, the final step is to draw conclusions from the analysis and compare them with findings in the field. The researcher will conclude the Role of the Sebyar Tribal Chief in Preserving Local Wisdom in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency (A Study of the Role in the Customary Law Community in Tomu Village, Tomu District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province).

**Image 2: Data Analysis Figure**

Source: Miles Hubberman and Saldana, 2014

## IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Research Results

One of the regencies in West Papua Province is Teluk Bintuni. With Bintuni as its capital, this area was established by Law Number 26 of 2002. Covering an area of 18,658 km<sup>2</sup>, Teluk Bintuni Regency consists of 11 districts, 95 villages, and two urban villages. Fifty-three thousand five hundred sixty-four people are living there. The regency capital is in Bintuni District, and Teluk Bintuni Regency is at the center of West Papua Province. Geographically, Teluk Bintuni Regency is located between the latitudes of 1°57'00" and 3°11'26" South and 132°44'59" - 134°14'49" East.

Teluk Bintuni is known as the largest oil and gas producer in Papua and possesses local characteristics

worthy of development. The district is located in West Papua Province, established under Law No. 26 of 2002, comprising 24 districts/sub-districts with a total area of 18,637 km<sup>2</sup>. Bintuni Bay has a population of 82,404 as of 2023. Bintuni Bay is geographically located along the border, directly adjacent to several districts in West Papua Province, making it economically significant.

**Table 4.1: Education in Bintuni Bay**

Elementary School/Equivalent	21.20
Junior High School/Equivalent	24.89
High School and Above	47.26
No Certificate	6.65

Source: Bps.go.id

In Teluk Bintuni Regency, 47.26% of people aged 15 years and above have completed high school or equivalent education. The percentage of the population



aged 15 years and above who do not have a high school diploma is 6.65%. Teluk Bintuni Regency has entered the 2021-2026 development period. The targets and objectives of the development vision for this last period remain focused on realizing a safe, prosperous, and dignified Teluk Bintuni, which is to be achieved through the third mission, namely improving the quality of basic education and health services. In the 2021-2026 RPJMD, the development agenda in education was not a primary focus of discussion, so no information was obtained regarding the latest development targets in this field. Reflecting on the development targets in education up to 2022, the focus remains on improving the quality of basic services in education.

The indicators of concern are, first, achieving a literacy rate of 97 percent, with a specific target of 97 percent for the indigenous Papuan population (OAP) and second, targeting an average length of schooling of 8.5 years (school-age population enrolled in the second or third grade of junior high school), with a specific target of an average length of schooling for indigenous Papuans (OAP) of 5.5 years (school-age population enrolled in the fifth or sixth grade of elementary school) and third, targeting an expected length of schooling of 12.75 years (attending school up to the third grade of senior high school), with a specific target for the average length of schooling for indigenous Papuans (OAP) reaching 10.60 years (attending school up to the first or second grade of senior high school).

**Table 4.2: of the Population's Occupations in Bintuni Bay**

Services	52
Agriculture	33
Manufacturing	15

**Source:** Bps.go.id

The composition of the working population in the service sector has exceeded 50 percent. The workforce in Bintuni Bay has dominated the service sector with a percentage of 52.35 percent. The significant proportion in the service sector indicates that the population of Teluk Bintuni is no longer heavily reliant on the agricultural sector, where the composition of the population working in agriculture is 33.35 percent. The remaining 14.79 percent are employed in the manufacturing industry.

The statement by the Sebyar Tribal Chief, Mr. Haji Aci Kosepa, is closely related to Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019, specifically Article 5, which regulates the role of tribal chiefs in conveying and responding to the aspirations and complaints of indigenous peoples. This article emphasizes the importance of the tribal chief as an intermediary in the decision-making process and the communication of issues related to the customary territory, including the indigenous community's rights. The Sebyar Tribal Chief, in this context, is responsible for ensuring that any issues

arising within the community are communicated to higher authorities, including the government and other external parties. In this context, the tribal chief does not merely act as a liaison but also as a policy formulator, ensuring that decisions taken take into account the interests of the indigenous community and the traditional territory under their leadership.

The same was also stated by Mr. Syamsul Inay, as the District Head of Tomu, as follows:

"Yes, it is true as the tribal chief said that every issue is first discussed with the tribal chief. The role of the tribal chief is very important in fighting for the rights of indigenous communities, whether related to customary land ( ), the commitments of companies, or development demands."

Mr. Syamsul Inay's statement is highly relevant to the Local Regulation of Teluk Bintuni Regency No. 1 of 2019, particularly Article 5, which emphasizes the important role of the village chief in conveying and advocating for the indigenous community's rights. This article stipulates that the tribal chief acts as a liaison between the indigenous community and external parties, including the government and companies, in addressing issues related to customary territories, the rights of indigenous communities, and development. This statement underscores the importance of the tribal chief in formulating policies and decisions that advocate for the interests of indigenous communities. Thus, tribal chiefs act not merely as messengers of complaints but also as policy formulators advocating for the well-being of indigenous communities.

However, Mr. Bilal Inay, as a traditional leader, stated the following:

"If there are issues, the tribal chief takes policies such as ensuring that the community receives fair compensation, as seen in the efforts to secure payments from companies like LNG Tangguh, which amounted to Rp32.4 billion for six explored wells. Additionally, the tribal chief actively ensures the development of infrastructure, such as housing, which must meet agreed-upon standards, including the provision of facilities like electricity and clean water. The Village Head also plays a crucial role in relations between the indigenous community and the government, such as in the formation of the district and the resolution of traditional land issues."

The statement by the Indigenous Leader reflects the implementation of Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019, in which the chief plays an active role in ensuring fair compensation for the use of natural resources, by Article 11(4) on the authority of indigenous institutions. The Village Chief is also involved in infrastructure development that improves the welfare of the indigenous community, by Article 3, letter b. Additionally, their involvement in district formation and the resolution of customary land disputes aligns with

Article 3 letters f and g, which emphasize recognizing and protecting indigenous communities' rights in development and dispute resolution. Thus, the tribal chief plays a vital role as a policy maker in maintaining a balance between the needs of the indigenous community and regional development, as well as serving as a liaison between the indigenous community and external parties such as the government and companies.

The District Secretary of Tomu, Mr. Sapari Tonoy, stated as follows:

"The tribal chief has submitted a demand to complete the construction of houses that are still pending and to coordinate with various parties, including the local government and relevant companies, to ensure that the community's rights are fulfilled. Despite some challenges in communicating with the district government, Mr. Sapari remains committed to ensuring that the community's demands are heard and responded to appropriately by the government. His efforts are not limited to compensation and housing construction but also include improvements to other infrastructure, such as roads and schools, which are urgently needed by the community. Overall, your role as a tribal chief includes advocating for the rights of indigenous communities, monitoring the implementation of company commitments, and managing natural resources.

The interview is closely related to the Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019, in which the chief advocates for the rights of indigenous communities, including demands for housing construction, infrastructure improvements, and monitoring of company commitments. This aligns with Article 3(b), which emphasizes the well-being of indigenous communities; Article 11(4), which grants indigenous institutions the authority to represent the community; Article 9(1), which recognizes the rights of indigenous communities; and Article 13(2), which considers the principle of social justice in the implementation of customary law. The tribal chief functions as a policy maker who not only fights for the rights of indigenous peoples but also ensures that policies and decisions made by the government and companies are relevant to the needs of indigenous peoples and take into account the preservation of their culture and natural resources.

The tribal chief serves as a mediator in decision-making involving the community and the government. They act as a communication bridge to convey the community's aspirations to the authorities, while guiding policies that affect their community. The tribal chief also encourages political participation among citizens by providing an understanding of the importance of involvement in the democratic process. With this role, the tribal chief not only maintains social harmony through customs but also helps create policies that align with the local community's needs.

## 4.2 Discussion

This discussion reviews the important role of the Sebyar tribal chief in preserving local wisdom and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in Tomu District. Based on interviews and observations, the tribal chief plays a complex role, covering social, political, cultural, and economic aspects. He acts as a policy and strategy maker, communication tool, conflict mediator, and social therapist in the community. The discussion also highlights internal and external challenges, such as infrastructure limitations and insensitivity from external parties toward traditional values. However, there are also supporting factors, such as a strong traditional structure and support from the government and NGOs. This comprehensive discussion provides an overview of the strategic position of the tribal chief as a guardian of local values and an agent of change for indigenous communities amid the tide of development. In the Sebyar indigenous community in Tomu District, the presence of the tribal chief is not merely seen as a traditional symbol but as a central figure with strategic authority in formulating policies that directly impact the lives of indigenous communities. This study found that the role of the Sebyar tribal chief, particularly in the person of Mr. Haji Aci Kosepa, reflects a highly complex and multidimensional function. He is a guardian of traditional values and culture and a policy maker who bridges the gap between the indigenous community and external parties such as the government and companies.

This strategic role aligns with the provisions of Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019. Article 5 states that the tribal chief can convey and respond to the aspirations and complaints of the indigenous community. However, more than that, the tribal chief plays an active role in formulating and overseeing policies that directly affect the interests of his community. In practice, every complaint or need of the community is first conveyed to the tribal chief, who then formulates it into a systematic narrative and adapts it to customary norms and principles before forwarding it to external parties. Interview results indicate that the tribal chief functions as a communication bridge and a filter for community aspirations. He sorts and organizes aspirations based on the community's real needs and principles of justice. This is evident in the tribal chief's efforts to secure compensation of Rp32.4 billion from the Tangguh LNG company for six exploration wells. In this case, the tribal chief acted as a mediator and policy maker based on the interests of the Sebyar indigenous community. Beyond natural resource compensation, the village chief actively advocates for infrastructure development such as housing, roads, electricity, and clean water. Through collaboration with the local government, the village chief ensures that development projects align with the needs and aspirations of the indigenous community. This role strengthens the village chief's position as an agent of change through diplomatic, social, political, and legal approaches.

The involvement of tribal chiefs also extends to the political and regional governance spheres, such as forming new districts and resolving customary land conflicts. This is reinforced by Article 3(f) and (g), as well as Article 11(4) and Article 13(2) of Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2019, which grants traditional chiefs and customary institutions formal authority to participate in public decision-making. Thus, traditional chiefs are not merely cultural figures but also leaders with legal legitimacy in strategic decision-making. These findings confirm that tribal chiefs are vital in formulating policies based on local wisdom. They can unite cultural forces, community aspirations, and formal government mechanisms into a unified movement that fights for the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples. With their unique position, tribal chiefs are important in maintaining a balance between cultural preservation and sustainable development demands. This role makes tribal chiefs not only representatives of tradition but also influential and visionary architects of local policy.

This study highlights the role of tribal chiefs in the indigenous communities of Teluk Bintuni Regency, particularly in the context of local wisdom as the basis for formulating strategies for cultural preservation and indigenous land management. The study results show that tribal chiefs not only perform symbolic functions in the traditional structure, but also have a very strategic and multidimensional role in the lives of indigenous communities. One important finding is the role of the Sebyar tribal chief, Mr. Haji Aci Kosepa, who is a concrete representation of how tribal chiefs combine traditional values with the needs of sustainable development. He manages a customary area that includes two large tribes, Namban and Kemeran, rich in natural resources such as mangrove forests, land, and sea. In this context, the tribal chief formulates strategies based on prudence, local wisdom, and customary values to ensure fair and sustainable management of natural resources.

The strategies formulated by the tribal chief are deeply rooted in an understanding of the spiritual and social values that prevail in the traditional community. This is in line with the provisions of Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019, particularly Articles 1, 6, 9, and 11, which recognize customary rights, the position of indigenous peoples, and the authority of customary institutions in managing and representing their communities. The tribal chief leverages this legitimacy to formulate participatory and community-based approaches in addressing external challenges such as development projects or natural resource exploitation. Furthermore, the tribal chief also plays an important role in preserving traditional symbols and cultural values. Traditional ceremonies such as piring resa-resa and guci are part of the cultural diplomacy developed by the tribal chief to strengthen community identity and solidarity. These symbols are not merely cultural artifacts but serve as social communication tools reflecting values of peace, harmony, and respect. This is further supported by the

statement of the District Head of Tomu ( ), who noted that although traditional values are not written down, they remain spiritually and socially binding.

The socio-political dimension, the tribal chief mediates between the indigenous community and the government. This position makes the tribal chief key in ensuring that government policies align with customary norms. He voices the aspirations of the indigenous community in formal and informal forums, while ensuring that development does not erode the cultural identity of the customary law community. This role demonstrates that the tribal chief has diplomatic capacity rooted in local wisdom and traditional legitimacy. The strategies designed by the tribal chief are not limited to preserving traditions and managing resources, but also include educating the younger generation about traditional values. This education is carried out through traditional rituals and the transmission of oral knowledge. Thus, the tribal chief plays a role in ensuring the continuity of indigenous communities' cultural identity and social structure amid the tide of modernization and globalization. The overall role and strategy of the tribal chiefs place them as central actors in maintaining a balance between cultural preservation, natural resource management, and indigenous community development. Through an approach based on local wisdom, the tribal chiefs have succeeded in constructing a development narrative that does not neglect their communities' spiritual and social values. This role is not only relevant to the context of Teluk Bintuni but also serves as an important model for strengthening the governance of indigenous territories in other regions across Indonesia.

This study reveals that the tribal chief plays a central role in preserving, conveying, and passing on local wisdom through his communicative function within the customary law community in Teluk Bintuni Regency. The tribal chief is a symbol of customary authority and a communication actor who bridges the gap between the indigenous community and the outside world, particularly the government and companies. Interviews with various community leaders, such as traditional leaders, PKK mothers, Karang Taruna chairpersons, and general residents, show that the Head of the Tribe is central in conveying ancestral values. He is the guardian of living cultural heritage, ensuring that modernization preserves customary norms such as marriage customs, land inheritance, spiritual rituals, and conflict resolution. From a communication perspective, the role of the Village Chief encompasses two main directions: internal and external. Internally, he conveys messages and traditional values from the older to the younger generation, ensuring the community remains connected to its cultural roots. The Village Chief also communicates important information such as announcements of traditional meetings, death notices, and community decisions. Externally, the chief acts as the official spokesperson for the indigenous community

to the government and companies operating in the customary area. He voices the aspirations of the community, particularly those related to land rights, adequate housing, basic infrastructure, and environmental preservation. This is in line with the provisions of Teluk Bintuni Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019, Article 9, paragraph (2), and Article 11, which recognize the rights of indigenous communities to convey their needs through customary institutions and designate the chief as the official representative in relations with external parties.

However, significant challenges arise when there is a communication gap between the Village Chief and government officials or companies. Many aspirations conveyed through the Village Chief are not adequately addressed. This situation highlights policymakers' weak response and attention toward the legally recognized traditional communication mechanisms. This gap weakens the chief's position as the community's representative and affects the community's trust in the existing communication system. Sometimes, the community's voice is only used as a formality in the company's agenda, without real realization in the field. This condition poses a challenge for the chief in conveying and fighting for the aspirations of his community.

The chief's communication function also depends heavily on the available media and communication tools. In many customary areas, limited information infrastructure, such as telecommunications networks, hinders the expansion of communication. In this context, a Chief's strong interpersonal communication skills, a diplomatic approach, and negotiation skills are important assets. Given this reality, it can be concluded that the local wisdom embodied by the Head of the Tribe is not merely a passive cultural value but an active communication tool that continues to thrive and play a role in customary law communities' social, political, and economic dynamics. However, for this function to operate optimally, there is a need to strengthen the communication capacity of the Head of the Tribe through training, policy support, and active government involvement in creating an equal and participatory dialogue space. The Head of the Tribe is a guardian of culture and the primary communicator in maintaining information transparency and representing the indigenous community. Therefore, in the context of sustainable and inclusive development, the presence and voice of the Head of the Tribe must be valued and meaningfully involved in every decision-making process that impacts the indigenous community.

Research findings indicate that tribal chiefs play a central role in dispute resolution mechanisms within the indigenous communities of Teluk Bintuni Regency, particularly in the Sebyar indigenous community. This role is symbolic and recognized legally and socially, as stipulated in the Customary Law of the Teluk Bintuni

Regency No. 1 2019. The village chief is the primary mediator who enforces customary law and maintains social stability and harmony within the community. In practice, conflict resolution is carried out through traditional deliberation based on the principles of restorative justice and local wisdom. The conflicts addressed include land disputes, family disputes, and inter-tribal conflicts. Resolution is carried out by considering social, spiritual, and historical aspects, where customary sanctions such as payment of dowry, compensation, or symbols of peace, like the handover of a child, are often used. This reflects that customary law is not only a means of enforcing norms but also a mechanism for preserving collective values and social balance. Furthermore, tribal chiefs also have responsibilities in managing customary territories, demonstrating the ecological and administrative dimensions of customary leadership. Thus, the existence of tribal chiefs as guardians of local wisdom strengthens the conflict resolution system rooted in the culture and identity of indigenous communities, while also bridging the relationship between indigenous communities and the government in realizing contextual and sustainable social justice.

Research findings indicate that the role of tribal chiefs in indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni Regency goes beyond purely administrative functions. Tribal chiefs act as social and cultural therapists who integrate local wisdom to maintain community social, emotional, and spiritual balance. In facing complex social dynamics, such as family conflicts, child replacement, or collective trauma due to eviction and resource exploitation, the tribal chief acts as a mediator and healer who uses an empathetic and dialogical traditional approach. This role aligns with the provisions of Local Regulation No. 1 of 2019, particularly Article 11(4)(c) and (d), which emphasize the role of traditional institutions in cultural protection and conflict resolution. The tribal chief not only imposes customary sanctions but also facilitates the process of collective healing through restorative mechanisms, such as the provision of dowry or compensation aimed at restoring social relations. In addition, they play an important role in fighting for the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, bridging communication between communities, the government, and external parties such as companies, especially regarding land, access to water, and electricity. In everyday practice, tribal chiefs help manage the collective pressures faced by the community by creating spaces for reflection through traditional rituals, emotional support, and spiritual strengthening. This demonstrates that tribal chiefs are central to building social resilience, preserving cultural identity, and fostering harmony within indigenous communities. Through a locally rooted approach, tribal chiefs serve as agents of transformation, ensuring the sustainability of traditional values and the overall well-being of their communities.



## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, analysis of the research results, and discussion of the research results presented in the previous chapter, the researcher can draw the following conclusions:

The Role of the Sebyar Tribal Chief in Preserving Local Wisdom; The Sebyar tribal chief has a vital role in maintaining and preserving the local wisdom of his community. He is not only a symbolic traditional leader, but also an important figure who fights for the community's rights, preserves culture, and builds communication between residents, the government, and companies. The tribal chief formulates policies, develops cultural preservation strategies, resolves conflicts, voices the community's aspirations, and acts as a calming and strengthening force when facing pressure or social issues. He serves as a bridge connecting traditional values with the ever-changing realities of modern life. However, of course, all of this cannot be done alone. The role of the tribal chief will be even stronger if supported by the indigenous community itself, the government, and companies operating in their area. This synergy is essential to ensure that local values remain alive and the Sebyar indigenous community can continue to thrive without losing its identity.

He is not merely a symbol of tradition but also a leader who makes policies and sets the direction for development in line with the community's needs. The tribal chief serves as a link between the community and the government and companies, advocating for the community's rights, particularly regarding natural resources and infrastructure development. Overall, the tribal chief is an important figure who preserves customs, unites the community, fights for their rights, and ensures that development is in harmony with the culture and needs of the indigenous community. He serves as a bridge between the past and the future, between tradition and development, for the sake of the welfare and harmony of his community.

Supporting Factors for the Sebyar Tribal Chief in Preserving Local Wisdom. Internal Factors : The success of the Sebyar tribal chief in carrying out his role cannot be separated from strong support within the indigenous community and the external environment. Internally, charisma, authority, and wise leadership that is biased towards the people's interests make the tribal chief a respected and trusted figure. The traditional structure, which remains potent and synergistic with traditional leaders, further strengthens the implementation of their functions in various aspects of community life. External Factors : Support from the local government, NGOs, and global recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples provides more space and legitimacy for the tribal chief to fight for the aspirations of his community. With this combination of factors, the Sebyar tribal chief can play a strategic role in preserving

local wisdom while fighting for the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples amid various modern challenges.

Challenges Faced by the Sebyar Tribal Chief in Preserving Local Wisdom. Internal Factors : Internal factors that hinder the implementation of the role of the Sebyar tribal chief include infrastructure limitations such as poor road access and communication networks, making coordination with external parties ineffective. Additionally, a shift in values among the younger generation, who are increasingly distancing themselves from traditional customs, creates a cultural divide. Furthermore, a lack of administration, negotiation, and public communication training makes it difficult for the village chief to interact with bureaucracy and companies. External factors that hinder the Sebyar tribal chief include inconsistent government policies that hinder the protection of customary rights, low corporate sensitivity to local culture, which often triggers conflicts, and cultural communication difficulties due to differences in values, language, and mindsets that disrupt the effectiveness of dialogue and negotiations.

Based on the conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested:

Training and guidance in administration, negotiation, and political communication are needed so tribal chiefs are better prepared to deal with modern bureaucracy and companies. Local governments should prioritize the development of basic infrastructure in traditional areas, including road access, clean water, electricity, and communication networks, to enable traditional leaders to fulfill their roles more effectively. There is a need for cultural education programs involving the younger generation to prevent them from becoming disconnected from their traditional roots and to ensure they can continue traditional roles in the future. The government must establish consistent and rights-friendly policies toward indigenous communities and ensure the involvement of traditional leaders in all planning and implementation processes of development programs. Companies operating in indigenous territories must improve their understanding of local culture and involve tribal leaders in decision-making processes that affect indigenous communities to avoid conflicts. Synergy between tribal leaders, the government, NGOs, and the international community must be strengthened to create a sustainable support system for cultural preservation and protecting indigenous peoples' rights.

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