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The Belabaja Philosophy in Realizing Sustainable Peace: A Phenomenological Study of the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance in Alor Regency

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to understand and analyze the meaning of the Belabaja philosophy in realizing sustainable peace in the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance community in Alor Regency. The object of the study focuses on the practice, values, and meaning of the Belabaja ritual as a customary mechanism in reconciling social conflicts and forming the collective identity of the Alor-Pantar coastal community. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework of this study is based on sociological conflict theory and symbolic interactionism, which views conflict as an inherent part of social dynamics. **Literature review:** The literature review discusses social conflict as an inherent social process within plural societies and highlights the importance of local wisdom in conflict resolution and reconciliation. Previous studies on customary law, ritual-based reconciliation. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with traditional and community leaders, and documentation of traditional practices, then analyzed qualitatively to capture the lived experiences and social meanings attached to the Bela Baja ritual. **Results:** The results of the study indicate that Belabaja functions as a traditional oath ritual that transforms subjective awareness of solidarity into objective awareness of social brotherhood, thus effectively preventing recurring conflicts and strengthening social cohesion across groups. **Implications:** The implications of this study confirm that the integration of local wisdom such as Belabaja contributes to the achievement of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Resilient Institutions) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities). **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in the phenomenological analysis of Belabaja as a foundation for sustainable peace and collective identity in the traditional alliance system.

Keywords: philosophy, sdgs, reconciliation, conflict, traditional alliance.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of social conflict in Indonesia has historically been triggered by differences in ethnicity, religion, economic interests, and political demands, which have manifested in various riots and horizontal conflicts, such as the May 1998 riots, the Ambon, Poso, Sampit, Aceh conflicts, and the Papua conflict, which is still in the process of reconciliation [1][2]. Conflicts also often occur on a local scale, such as conflicts between students, university students, and youth between villages, both in urban and rural areas, which often have an impact on disrupting social stability and the economic activities of local communities, even causing loss of life [3][4]. Similar conditions were also found in East Nusa Tenggara Province, including in Kalabahi City, Alor Regency, which social media often labels as an area prone to social conflict between youth and the community.

Interestingly, the people of Alor Regency actually have local wisdom values that have been deeply rooted historically as a mechanism for managing conflict, including the philosophy of Taramiti Tominuku (we are all brothers) and Kakari Opung Anang Foto Fatang (family relations between mountains and beaches) [5]. These values arose from historical social conflicts between mountain and coastal communities, particularly between the Abui and Munaseli tribes, which then gave birth to traditional alliances in both the mountainous and coastal areas of Alor and Pantar Islands [6][7][8]. This alliance not only serves as a basis for social solidarity but also plays a crucial role in the process of conflict reconciliation and the formation of a collective identity within the Alor community.

One of the main foundations for the formation of this traditional alliance is a customary agreement known as Bela Baja (the blood-drinking tradition), which is strengthened through inter-tribal and inter-kingdom marriages. Bela Baja serves as a morally and socially binding mechanism for reconciling social conflicts and is passed down across generations as a guideline for living together among the Alor indigenous people [9][10]. Over time, the practice of Bela Baja has undergone a transformation in line with the social changes of modern society, from a traditional oath involving drinking blood to symbolic forms of reconciliation such as animal slaughter and communal meals as a manifestation of peace and strengthening social solidarity.

In the context of sustainable development, the philosophy and practice of Bela Baja have strong relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) which emphasizes the importance of a peaceful, inclusive, and just society [11]. Bela Baja serves as a traditional social institution that promotes restorative justice, community-based conflict resolution, and strengthening social cohesion. Furthermore, the practice of cross-regional solidarity and reciprocal access to resources following customary agreements reflects the values of SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 11 (Sustainable Communities), where social harmony is the primary foundation for the social and economic sustainability of local communities [12][13]. Thus, Bela Baja can be understood as a local wisdom-based peacebuilding model that makes a real contribution to achieving the sustainable development agenda.

Several important sources indicate that Bela Baja, or the tradition of blood drinking, has undergone a long evolution. Bela Baja has become a model for conflict reconciliation, uniting the opposing tribal kingdoms that once flourished in the Alor-Pantar islands over a very long period [8][6]. However, in scientific observations, these values have decreased along with the social changes of modern society which are increasingly diverse and complex. The values of Bela Baja which were previously always followed by a traditional oath of drinking blood together by traditional leaders followed by a joint oath of the entire community representing each traditional Alliance began to experience a social shift with peace agreements in the form

of slaughtering cows or buffaloes which were eaten together in a close and family atmosphere as a manifestation of reconciliation and conflict resolution that occurred in Alor district.

A number of previous studies have examined social conflict in Indonesia from a structural and sociological perspective, highlighting both the causal factors of conflict and its impact on social stability and development [14][15][16]. Other studies also discuss conflict as a social phenomenon that has both destructive and constructive potential in improving the social performance of certain groups [17][18][19]. However, studies on conflict in Alor Regency generally still focus on descriptions of conflict between youths and its social implications, while local wisdom such as Bela Baja is more often positioned as a cultural symbol without in-depth analysis of its meaning, social function, and relevance in the context of sustainable development.

One of the interesting phenomena of the blood drinking agreement (Bela Baja) which is still maintained by the people of Alor Regency, is the agreement that occurred between the clever king on Pantar Island and the Kedang King on Lembata Island (Lomlein) after the conflict between King Munaseli, the Pandai King and the Kedang King and the Agreement Between King Baranusa and the Alor King has bound the value of solidarity between the Kedang people and the clever people from generation to generation until today. This blood drinking agreement has given rise to a strong value of solidarity between the clever people on Pantar Island and the Kedang people on Lembata Island [19].

The above conditions have a sociological impact on the Kedang community who sail to Alor Island if they are stranded on the Pandai coast and experience a lack of supplies, they are allowed to take necessities from the gardens owned by the Pandai community without paying, and vice versa, the Pandai community who sail to Flores Island and are stranded on the Kedang coast and experience a lack of supplies, they can take supplies from the gardens of the Kedang community without paying. The research gap of this study lies in the absence of a study that comprehensively examines Bela Baja as a model of conflict reconciliation based on local wisdom through a phenomenological approach and links it to the SDGs framework, especially SDG 16. The novelty of this study lies in the effort to position the Bela Baja philosophy not only as a traditional tradition, but as a living social institution and is relevant as a model of sustainable peace that contributes to the global discourse on sustainable peace and indigenous community-based development.

Although the people of Alor Regency possess a rich heritage of local wisdom in managing social conflict, contemporary social realities demonstrate that these values have not been fully internalized effectively in the lives of the younger generation. Modernization, urbanization, increased social mobility, and the penetration of digital media have transformed patterns of social interaction, particularly among students, college students, and youth. These changes have also influenced the way conflict is interpreted and resolved, shifting from customary mechanisms based on deliberation and solidarity to more open, spontaneous, and potentially destructive conflict patterns. This situation demonstrates the gap between the philosophical values of Bela Baja as a guideline for conflict reconciliation and the social practices of contemporary Alor society.

In this context, Bela Baja faces not only the challenge of preserving it as a cultural tradition, but also its relevance as a social instrument in responding to the complexities of modern conflict. The shift in the form of reconciliation from the traditional blood-drinking oath to more flexible symbols of peace reflects a process of cultural adaptation, but also indicates a reduction in the normative meaning and social binding power of Bela Baja itself. If not studied and understood thoroughly, this transformation has the potential to weaken Bela Baja's

function as a sustainable conflict resolution mechanism, particularly in addressing the escalation of horizontal conflicts involving the younger generation.

On a broader level, these challenges align with the global challenges faced by many multicultural societies in building sustainable peace. International reports indicate that horizontal conflict, identity-based violence, and weak local social institutions are major obstacles to achieving SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. In this context, development approaches that rely solely on formal state instruments are often insufficiently effective without engaging the social and cultural mechanisms that exist within communities. Therefore, strengthening local wisdom as part of a peacebuilding strategy is a crucial agenda item in the global sustainable development discourse [17][18][19].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Conflict and the Dynamics of Community Interaction

Social conflict is an inherent part of the dynamics of social interaction and cannot be separated from the social process itself. Georg Simmel viewed conflict as a form of social interaction that has an integrative function, because through conflict, social boundaries are affirmed, group identities are formed, and adjustment mechanisms within the structure of society are formed [20][21]. This view is reinforced by Lewis A. Coser through the functional conflict theory which emphasizes that conflict is not always destructive, but can strengthen internal group solidarity and encourage social change if managed through mutually agreed norms and institutions [22][23]. However, conflicts that are not institutionalized and lack clear resolution mechanisms have the potential to escalate into social violence that disrupts the fabric of society.

In a structural perspective, Ralf Dahrendorf explains conflict as a consequence of the unequal distribution of power in social structures [24], where subordinate groups attempt to challenge the dominance of the ruling group to gain access to resources and social legitimacy. Meanwhile, Soerjono Soekanto emphasized that conflict in pluralistic societies is often triggered by differences in interests, values, and social status that are not balanced by processes of accommodation and cooperation [25]. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, Herbert Blumer emphasized that conflict is also the result of differences in the interpretation of symbols, identities, and social actions in everyday interactions [26][27]. Therefore, social conflict needs to be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by power relations, identity construction, and the dynamics of social interaction, so that its management requires a contextual and sustainable approach.

Local Wisdom and Social Conflict Reconciliation

Local wisdom is understood as a system of values, norms, and social practices that grows out of a society's historical experience in maintaining social balance and harmony. Clifford Geertz views culture, including local wisdom, as a system of meaning that serves as a guide for action for communities in dealing with various social problems, including conflict [28][29]. In the context of conflict resolution, Johan Galtung emphasized the importance of a positive peace approach, namely peace that not only eliminates violence, but also builds social justice and harmonious relationships [30][31]. Local wisdom plays a role as a positive medium for peace because it prioritizes reconciliation, restoring social relations, and strengthening shared values, rather than simply formally ending conflict.

Several conflict resolution experts emphasize that customary-based conflict resolution mechanisms have strong social legitimacy because they are rooted in the values of trust and community moral bonds. Lederach emphasized that sustainable peacebuilding must involve local actors and utilize the cultural resources that exist within the community [32]. From this perspective, local wisdom functions as an informal social institution capable of bridging the interests of conflicting groups through deliberation, traditional symbols, and reconciliation rituals.

Sustainable Peace and the Sustainable Development Goals Perspective

The concept of sustainable peace developed from a critique of peace approaches that focused solely on ending physical violence. Johan Galtung distinguished between negative peace, the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, a social condition characterized by justice, equality, and harmonious social relations [31][30]. Sustainable peace demands the transformation of social structures that perpetuate injustice and structural violence, so that conflict does not re-emerge in new forms. From this perspective, peace is not understood as a static condition, but rather as a social process that is continuously built through just and inclusive interactions.

In the global framework, the concept of sustainable peace is institutionalized through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which emphasizes that peace, justice, and inclusive governance are the main prerequisites for sustainable development [11]. Various development studies emphasize that protracted social conflict is a serious obstacle to achieving development goals, as it undermines social cohesion, weakens institutions, and increases inequality. Therefore, the SDGs position peace not as the ultimate outcome of development, but as a foundation that supports the achievement of other goals, such as poverty alleviation, inequality reduction, and sustainable community development.

Peacebuilding experts such as John Paul Lederach emphasize that sustainable peace can only be achieved through a participatory and contextual approach, involving local actors and utilizing cultural values and local wisdom as social resources [32]. From this perspective, indigenous community-based peacebuilding practices have a strategic role in supporting the SDGs agenda at the local level, as they can build trust, strengthen informal social institutions, and promote restorative justice.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is a qualitative research method, with a phenomenological research type [33][34]. This type of Phenomenological Research looks at the subjective experiences experienced and carried out by informants who have been involved in the ritual activities of the Bela Baja custom as well as the community who feel the results of the post-Bela Baja custom oath from generation to generation both in the Alor, Pantar and Lembata islands become something meaningful. Qualitative research prioritizes meaning, namely the research process is more directed towards cycles than linear. In this study, data collection and data analysis run simultaneously, with more emphasis on content than the breadth of the research, and the researcher himself as the key informant or main informant. Data collection is carried out using a triangulation approach; participatory observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The collected data are then analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques to understand the meaning, concepts, and social phenomena of the data obtained from

interviews, and observation and documentation in the data reduction process to answer the conclusions of the scientific study on the substance of the study [35].

Table 1. Research Method Used in This Study

Aspect	Description
Type of Research	Phenomenological qualitative research. This study explores the lived experiences and subjective meanings of informants involved in the Bela Baja customary ritual and communities affected by the post-oath tradition across generations.
Approach	Qualitative approach emphasizing meaning, interpretation, and understanding of social and cultural phenomena related to the Bela Baja custom.
Research Objective	To understand the meaning, social significance, and community perception of the Bela Baja customary oath ritual as experienced by participants and communities in Alor, Pantar, and Lembata.
Rationale for Approach	A phenomenological qualitative approach is used because the study focuses on subjective experiences, cultural meanings, and interpretations held by community members regarding the Bela Baja ritual tradition.
Key Figures Analyzed	Informants who have participated in the Bela Baja ritual, customary leaders, community elders, and members of communities affected by the oath tradition.
Main Data Sources	Primary data from interviews and participatory observation; secondary data from documentation related to the Bela Baja custom and local cultural records.
Method of Analysis	Qualitative data analysis including data reduction, interpretation, and drawing conclusions from interview transcripts, observational notes, and documentation.
Theoretical Framework	Phenomenological theory focusing on lived experience, meaning construction, and interpretation of cultural practices within society.
Focus of Analysis	The meanings, concepts, and social phenomena associated with the Bela Baja customary oath and its influence on community life across generations.
Expected Outcome	A deeper understanding of the cultural significance, social meaning, and continued relevance of the Bela Baja ritual tradition in the communities of Alor, Pantar, and Lembata.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Historical Social Conflict of Traditional Alliance

The research overview shows that the people of Alor Regency in this modern era are always in a circle of social conflict between villages that is almost evenly distributed. Based on the results of field observations, these social conflicts occur in the younger generation who historically have close kinship lines both genetically and socially with the traditional alliances of Abui 4 villages and Galiu 5 villages. The findings of interviews with community leaders and village officials show that social conflicts that occur in Kalabahi City are often identified with tribal identities so that even the smallest conflict can have a big impact by involving village communities bound in solidarity of kinship alliances in the mountainous and coastal areas [35].

Social conflicts between youth in Kalabahi City often involve government officials and security forces in the conflict resolution process through persuasive and preventive approaches. However, based on interviews with police officers and local traditional leaders, these resolutions are only incidental mitigation, because within a few months the conflict recurred with the same problem pattern, mainly due to drunkenness among youth who were free from the control of customary and religious institutions. The results of social observations indicate that this condition caused the conflict to develop and spread to the areas of traditional alliances, thus impacting the paralysis of economic activities in the Kalabahi City area.

From a historical perspective, as revealed in in-depth interviews, conflict within the traditional alliances on Alor and Pantar Islands is not a new phenomenon. However, these conflicts are subjectively managed and mitigated through a transformation of values toward social solidarity, symbolized by the philosophies of Taramiti Tominiku, Kakari Opung Anang Foto Fatang, and Sota Tofang Sahi Fani Tofang Sahi. These three traditional philosophies, according to traditional elders, are oriented toward strengthening the values of brotherhood between mountain and coastal communities. Therefore, based on traditional agreements passed down through generations, a commitment to brotherhood was established through the Steel Defense Oath, which the traditional alliance community interprets as an oath to Drink Blood, a mechanism for reconciliation and prevention of ongoing conflict.

Further research shows that the philosophy of Bela Baja in the socio-historical traditional alliance is always identified with the main symbol of reconciliation of social conflicts between tribes in the Alor and Pantar islands, where traditional governments (tribal kingdoms) once grew and developed. The results of interviews with traditional leaders and local historians confirmed that these social conflicts are an important part of folklore that serves to emphasize the identity and social status of tribes in the social stratification of Alor society. Local government documents record that the first alliance conflict occurred between the Abui Kingdom in the mountainous region of Alor Island and the Munaseli Kingdom in the coastal area of Pantar Island, which are the two oldest kingdoms in the Alor-Pantar region. This conflict, based on local historical literature, was won by the Munaseli Kingdom.

After the Abui Kingdom conflict, the Abui community was divided into four small kingdom communities from the same descendants, which included the Kolana kingdom, the Mataru kingdom, the Pureman kingdom and the Batu Lolong kingdom, while in the coastal area of the Pasca Coastal community within the Munaseli kingdom, the Munaseli community was divided into five small kingdom communities in the coastal areas of Pantar Island and Alor Island, namely the Pandai Kingdom, the Baranusa kingdom, the Balagar kingdom, the Bali-Alor Flower Kingdom and the Malua-Kui kingdom. Several historical literatures explain that the emergence of traditional alliances after the conflict was carried out through the Bela Baja Traditional Ritual or the oath to drink blood together to maintain social solidarity in reducing social conflicts between alliances from large tribes that grew and developed in the Alor island and Pantar island regions of Alor district [35].

Research Overview Shows that the Bela Baja Ritual was once performed between Pandai and Lembata after the conflict between the Pandai Kingdom and the Munaseli Kingdom. As revealed in the narrative of key informants, the conflict was triggered by political cooperation between the Pandai King and the Kedang King who attempted—and succeeded in—weakening the Munaseli Kingdom. The results of field observations and testimonies from local communities indicate that this event then gave birth to a bond of brotherhood across regions that is still felt to this day by the Kedang and Pandai people. In daily social practice, as confirmed through interviews, this bond is manifested in a customary agreement that people who sail and run out of provisions are allowed to take provisions from local residents' gardens and fields without having to ask for permission or pay, in accordance with the Bela Baja ritual oath agreed upon by the Pandai King and the Kedang King.

Likewise, in the Pandai, Baranusa, Balagar, Malua-Kui and Bunga Bali-Alor communities bound in the Galiau Watang Lemang Alliance, the kingdoms on the coast of Alor-Pantar also carried out conflict reduction and built social solidarity in resisting Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch colonialism. This was also done through the Bela Baja ritual ceremony or the oath to drink blood together to prevent social conflicts between alliances that had been agreed upon through the ritual of drinking blood together. The result was that during the journey of the

Alliance there were no social conflicts that had an impact on war and bloodshed between alliances during the colonial period until the independence period.

In the Alor Island region, several literatures explain that after the collapse of the Abui Kingdom, 4 tribal kingdoms emerged in the Alor mountain region, including the Kolana Kingdom, the Pureman Kingdom, the Mataru Kingdom and the Batu Lolong Kingdom. While in the coastal area there are 2 tribal kingdoms, including the Malua-Kui Kingdom and the Bali-Alor Flower Kingdom. A total of 6 kingdoms on the island of Alor have historically experienced conflicts, but the conflict has been quelled over a long period of time through a ritual of drinking blood together that the 6 communities are bound in bonds of brotherhood and kinship, and to maintain this brotherhood and kinship after the Bela Baja ceremony, a marriage process occurs where each noblewoman from each tribal kingdom is married to the King and nobles from each alliance built by the 6 tribal kingdoms in the mountainous and coastal areas of Alor Island.

Within the scope of the Bali-Alor Flower Kingdom, the traditional alliance was built on three forms of community alliances united in a scope of solidarity, namely the Alor tribal community, the Pura tribal community and the Adang tribal community whose geographically current territory covers the North West Alor District and the entire capital city of Kalabahi. These communities became the strength of the founding of the Bali-Alor Flower Kingdom alliance. Several historical literatures state that the unification of these 3 alliances went through the stages of the Bela Baja ritual between key figures from each alliance leader agreed to perform a blood drinking ceremony, while simultaneously binding kinship ties through intermarriage between the Alor Tribe nobility, the Pura tribe and the Adang tribe, which was then traditionally known by the Alor people as the term Alor Three Villages (Alurung Lafo Tallo), Pura seven villages (pula lafo Pito) and Adang ten villages (adang Lafo karto) [35].

The research also shows the existence of the Bela Baja tradition in the Kalabahi City area, carried out by two communities in the Northwestern Alor sub-district and the community in the Southwest Alor sub-district, namely the Dulolong Village community and the Welai Village community. As expressed by Welai traditional leaders in interviews, the Bela Baja agreement binds a hereditary brotherhood relationship between the two villages as “traditional brothers” who have the obligation to protect, love, and respect each other in everyday social life.

This agreement binds the brotherhood between the people of Dulolong village and the Welai community from generation to generation that the two villages are brothers, so they need to protect each other, love each other and respect each other. This agreement was made because Welai village was once one of the areas of government of the Alor kingdom which was led by 2 Kapitan (District Heads) who came from Dulolong, who also had a strong blood relationship with the people of Welai village, namely Kapitan Hamapu Koho and his son Kapitan Djafar Koho. The steel defense agreement carried out by the Welai traditional leaders and Dulolong traditional leaders has created a strong value of harmony between the Dulolong and Welai communities from generation to generation.

The research overview shows that along with social changes, the Bela Baja ritual has experienced a degradation of values and its implementation in reconciliation and conflict resolution in the complex modern social life of Alor society. Social conflicts that occur between the younger generation are only built on mutual agreements witnessed by government officials and security forces. The Bela Baja agreement carried out through drinking blood together has been replaced by the slaughter of animals whose meat is then served at peace celebrations to be eaten together in a family and brotherhood atmosphere, which some people consider that the act of slaughtering animals is not the best solution for conflict resolution,

however, the historical social picture of Bela Baja needs to be passed down from generation to generation to the younger generation of Alor, so that the strong understanding of the Young generation of Alor about the Values of Solidarity, both mechanical and organic solidarity that have been instilled by their ancestors can be maintained for the progress of the Alor Regency Government to be more advanced and developed [22][23].

The Meaning of the Philosophy of Bela Baja in Conflict Reconciliation and Sustainable Peace

The research overview shows that Bela Baja or Bela Basah is a traditional oath that holds a sacred position in the social structure of the Alor-Pantar indigenous community. This ritual is carried out by two or more tribal or traditional chiefs through the symbolic act of drinking blood from a severed finger together as a form of peace pledge. Bela Baja functions as a traditional peace agreement born from conflict or war between villages that has resulted in a large number of casualties. Therefore, Bela Baja cannot be understood as a mere ceremonial event, but rather as a social mechanism to stop the cycle of violence and restore social relations. From a conflict theory perspective, Coser explains that social conflict, if managed through institutional mechanisms and shared values, can become a means of reconstructing social relations [22][23]. In this context, Bela Baja plays a role as a local institution that manages conflict constructively, while also being in line with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and community-based peace mechanisms [11].

Bela Baja is performed by two warring communities as a collective commitment to end hostilities and prevent future conflict. The promise or oath to drink blood, passed down through generations, carries strong moral and spiritual dimensions, where violation of the oath is believed to bring social and cosmological consequences in the form of disaster. This belief reinforces social compliance and normative control within society. Durkheim emphasized that collective rituals serve to strengthen social solidarity and collective conscience [36][37][38]. Thus, Bela Baja can be understood as a social ritual that builds mechanical solidarity and maintains social cohesion in the community. The values of the Bela Baja oath are then maintained across generations in the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance community in the coastal areas of Pandai, Baranusa, Balagar, Bunga Bali-Alor, and Malua-Kui, so that emerging social conflicts no longer escalate into mass violence, but are resolved wisely and judiciously. This practice is relevant to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through strengthening social cohesion based on local wisdom [12].

From a local mythological perspective, the Bela Baja agreement, or the traditional oath of drinking blood, is a form of local wisdom born from a narrative of brotherhood and internal conflict. The folklore of the coastal communities of Alor-Pantar tells of a conflict between two figures from the same lineage, namely Mauwolang and Aki Ae, who clashed over a woman named Wai Wuno Sire. This conflict sparked revenge and bloodshed, but was successfully resolved through the Bela Baja agreement as an early model of reconciliation and conflict resolution. Levi-Strauss views mythology as a symbolic system that reflects how society manages social contradictions [39]. In this context, the Bela Baja mythology serves as a pedagogical narrative that transmits the values of peace, conflict management, and brotherhood across groups from generation to generation.

Several previous studies have also shown that local wisdom-based reconciliation mechanisms are highly effective in building sustainable peace. Lederach emphasizes the importance of indigenous peacebuilding, an approach to peace that stems from local values and social structures [32]. The findings of this study reinforce this view by demonstrating that

Bela Baja is not only a cultural symbol, but also a social instrument that functions as a conflict resolution tool, social control, and a foundation for sustainable peace.

Further research shows that after the conflict and his marriage to Wai Wuno Sire, Mauwolang had seven descendants consisting of five sons and two daughters. In the mythology of the Alor-Pantar coastal community, Mauwolang's two daughters were later married to King Munaseli, while his five sons spread to various coastal areas and became great kings, namely Lata Mauwolang as King Pandai, Bara Mauwolang as King Baranusa, El Mauwolang as King Balagar, Tulimau Wolang as King Bunga Bali-Alor, and Lau Mauwolang as King Malua-Kui. These five kingdoms are traditionally known as Galiau Watang Lema, namely an alliance of great kings in the Alor-Pantar coastal area that formed the initial foundation of the political, social, and cultural alliance of the coastal community. From a political anthropology perspective, this structure reflects what Fortes and Evans-Pritchard call a segmentary lineage system, where genealogical ties become the main basis for the formation of power and social solidarity [40][41]. This model demonstrates that kinship is not merely a biological relationship, but rather an institutional instrument in maintaining social stability and community governance, in line with the spirit of SDG 16 on strengthening inclusive and local value-based social institutions [11].

This mythology also tells the story of the Bela Baja traditional oath ritual or blood-drinking pact carried out by Mauwolang and his five sons as a collective commitment to maintain brotherhood, solidarity, and political unity among them. However, this pact was not symbolically established with Mauwolang's two daughters who were already bound in a power relationship with King Munaseli. The symbolic inequality in this traditional pact later became a trigger for conflict and power struggles throughout history, especially between Mauwolang's descendants and King Munaseli as the husbands of their two sisters. The conflict reached its peak when King Pandai asked for help from King Kedang (Lembata) to defeat King Munaseli through a traditional war between the Pandai Kingdom and the Munaseli Kingdom in the coastal area of Pantar Island. From the perspective of social conflict theory, Dahrendorf emphasized that conflict often arises due to the unequal distribution of power within the social structure. Thus, this conflict is not merely personal or mythological, but reflects the structural dynamics in power relations between traditional elites.

However, this social conflict ultimately did not lead to prolonged social destruction, but was resolved through the Bela Baja ritual as a mechanism for reconciliation and customary conflict resolution. This confirms Lederach's view that sustainable peace in traditional societies is more effectively built through local mechanisms with cultural and moral legitimacy [32]. Reconciliation based on Bela Baja not only ends armed conflict but also reconstructs social relations, strengthens cross-community solidarity, and builds a more stable social order. In the context of sustainable development, this practice is relevant to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) because it demonstrates how local wisdom can become a foundation for sustainable peace, social cohesion, and stability in the coastal communities of Alor-Pantar.

The research overview shows that the social conflict in the form of a war between King Pandai and King Munaseli ultimately ended through the implementation of the Bela Baja oath ritual or blood oath involving three main actors, namely King Munaseli, King Pandai, and King Kedang. This traditional ritual became an important turning point in the history of conflict in the coastal area of Alor-Pantar, because it gave birth to a collective agreement that was morally and socially binding that the Kedang and Pandai communities were positioned as brothers who were obliged to help each other in conditions of shortage, disaster, or other social pressures. To this day, the Bela Baja values are still alive and practiced in the daily lives of the

Kedang and Pandai communities, especially in the form of cross-regional social solidarity and mutual assistance. From the perspective of the sociology of conflict, this mechanism is in line with the view of Lewis Coser who stated that conflict does not always end destructively, but can produce new social integration if managed through mutually agreed norms and institutions. The practice of Bela Baja in this context demonstrates the role of local wisdom as an instrument of reconciliation that contributes directly to the achievement of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through strengthening customary institutions as legitimate and sustainable peace mechanisms.

An interesting phenomenon of the meaning of the Bela Baja philosophy in the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance community in the Alor-Pantar coastal region is its ability to form strong, intergenerational social solidarity. According to Mangkop Baso, King of the Baranusa Traditional Government the presence of key figures such as Maulaha Laha Blegur (Pandai), Boli Tonda Liurai (Baranusa), Bakulaha Salasa (Bunga Bali-Alor), Pui Soma Atamalei (Malua-Kui), and Handi Leki Kari Kaluma (Balagar) is a concrete representation of the strength of the Galiu alliance bound by the ritualistic values of Bela Baja. This bond is not only symbolic, but functions as a social glue that maintains the stability of relations between coastal kingdoms. Durkheim called this form of solidarity mechanical solidarity, namely a social bond built on the basis of shared values and collective beliefs [36][37][38]. In the context of sustainable development, this customary-based social solidarity is also relevant to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) because it strengthens social cohesion and resilience of local communities in the face of conflict and social change [12].

The Bela Baja Agreement developed into a socio-political force within the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance in the face of external pressures, particularly Portuguese and Dutch colonialism. The values of brotherhood and solidarity institutionalized through Bela Baja served as a symbol of collective resistance against the divide and rule policies implemented by colonial powers. From a social historical perspective, this reinforces Scott's view of the moral economy of the peasantry, where collective values and local solidarity form the basis of resistance to external domination [42]. In the modern socio-political context of Alor Regency, the philosophy of Bela Baja not only plays a role as a cultural heritage, but also as social capital according to Putnam, which is able to prevent social fragmentation and strengthen national nationalism [43][44]. Thus, the values of Bela Baja contribute significantly to promoting sustainable peace, strengthening social cohesion, and the integration of the Alor community within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, in line with the agenda of SDG 16 and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) which emphasize the importance of partnership and solidarity in sustainable development.

The symbolism of Alor–Pantar within the scope of customary governance represents a historical continuation of the Bela Baja ritual values that first grew and took root within the Galiu Watang Lema Traditional Alliance. The establishment of the Alor–Pantar customary government was traditionally built on a foundation of social solidarity derived from the Bela Baja values, which function as a collective mechanism to mitigate social conflict resulting from differences in ethnic background, religion, and inter-group relations. Throughout its history, Alor Regency was once viewed as a model of tolerance and socio-cultural and religious moderation in East Nusa Tenggara. However, in contemporary developments, these values have experienced degradation, marked by increasing conflict between village youth in Kalabahi City, which has not been fully resolved comprehensively. This phenomenon indicates a weakening of social cohesion, as Putnam suggests that declining social capital can have a direct impact on increasing horizontal conflict [43][44]. From the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals, this condition emphasizes the urgency of reinforcing SDG

16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through the revitalization of traditional institutions and local wisdom values as the basis for sustainable peace [11]. Therefore, the younger generation of Alor needs to be brought back to a historical and normative understanding of the values of Bela Baja as a symbol of the strength of social solidarity of the Alor–Pantar community.

Table 2. Conceptual Analytical Framework of the Bela Baja Philosophy in Conflict Reconciliation and Sustainable Peace

Aspect	Key Explanation	Theoretical Basis	SDGs Relevance
Bela Baja Philosophy	Sacred blood-oath ritual used to end war and create peace between tribes.	Coser – Conflict Theory	SDG 16
Social Solidarity	Ritual strengthens collective values, brotherhood, and social cohesion.	Durkheim – Mechanical Solidarity	SDG 11
Mythological Foundation	Originates from the myth of Mauwolang and Aki Ae conflict resolved through Bela Baja.	Levi-Strauss – Myth Structure	Cultural peace values
Galiau Watang Lema Alliance	Five coastal kingdoms formed a political and social alliance based on kinship.	Fortes & Evans-Pritchard – Segmentary Lineage	SDG 16
Conflict Reconciliation	Bela Baja functions as a traditional mechanism for reconciliation and conflict resolution.	Lederach – Indigenous Peacebuilding	SDG 16
Contemporary Relevance	Local wisdom strengthens social cohesion and prevents youth conflict.	Putnam – Social Capital	SDG 11 & 16

The research results show that in the coastal areas of Alor Island, particularly in the Alor Barat Laut District, the ritual values of Bela Baja are still seen as an effective model of reconciliation and social conflict resolution between the Alor, Adang, and Pura communities. This practice has given rise to customary alliances such as Alorung Lafo Tallo, Pura Lafo Pito, and Adang Lafo Karto, which have become symbols of cross-identity social agreements. In the communities of Alor Tiga Kampung and Pura Tujuh Kampung, this bond is expressed through the traditional expression "Kakari Opung Anang Foto Fatang," while in the Adang community it is known through the traditional utterance "Sota Tofang Sahi Fani Tofang Sahi," both of which emphasize the values of brotherhood, equality, and collective responsibility. Within the framework of conflict resolution theory, this practice aligns with the indigenous conflict resolution approach which emphasizes the effectiveness of local, customary-based mechanisms in creating legitimate and sustainable peace [45][46][47]. When a conflict broke out between Alor, Adang, and Pura youth in the Northwest Alor region, the conflict was relatively quickly resolved through customary mechanisms, emphasizing the social values of the Bela Baja ritual, which have been passed down through generations. This contribution not only strengthens SDG 16 but also supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by preserving local wisdom and strengthening social cohesion in the coastal communities of Alor-Pantar.

In the Alor Barat Laut sub-district, social conflicts have occurred between village youth, both among Alor youth, among Adang youth, and between Alor youth and Adang youth. Interestingly, these conflicts were not resolved through legal channels, but rather through customary settlement mechanisms involving all social elements, including traditional leaders,

community leaders, religious leaders, government officials, and the police. This conflict resolution process prioritized the values of Bela Baja, which have been structured and institutionalized in the social life of the Alor Barat Laut community alliance for generations.

These values serve as an effective social control mechanism in mitigating conflict and building long-term peace based on social solidarity, which is interpreted and symbolized through the Bela Baja ritual. This finding aligns with Durkheim's view of the role of collective values and symbols in maintaining social cohesion and reinforces the relevance of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which emphasizes the importance of inclusive institutions and local mechanisms in creating sustainable peace [37][48][11]. However, other phenomena from the results of research and field surveys indicate that Kalabahi City is currently an area that is relatively vulnerable to social conflict between village youth. The conflict cases involving the youth of Pantar, Batu Tanata, Wetabua, and Welai Villages reflect the weakening of collective identity awareness towards the values of traditional solidarity such as Taramiti Tominuku, Kakari Opung Anang Foto Fatang, and Sota Tofang Sahi Fani Tofang Sahi, as well as the declining understanding of the younger generation towards the philosophical values of Bela Baja.

Although these conflicts are often resolved through customary agreements, they are still temporary and have the potential to recur within a short period of time. This condition indicates a discontinuity of cultural transmission, as Bourdieu argued, suggesting that the failure to reproduce cultural values across generations can weaken a community's social capital [49][50][51][52]. In fact, socio-historically, kinship and brotherhood relations between villages have been established by ancestors through the Bela Baja ritual, such as the blood-drinking agreement between the Welai and Dulolong communities, many of whose descendants still reside in Kalabahi City. This finding reinforces Boege and Lederach's view that local wisdom has great potential as a foundation for conflict reconciliation, but requires revitalization and contextual adaptation to remain relevant in modern social dynamics [45][46][47][32]. In this context, the revitalization of the Bela Baja values also contributes to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by strengthening social cohesion in urban areas.

The philosophy of Bela Baja in the reconciliation of the traditional Galiau Watang Lemang alliance conflict in the indigenous community of Alor Regency, obtained the main finding that the philosophy of Bela Baja has been deeply adapted in the social life of the Alor Islamic community. This value forms an individual's subjective awareness of the importance of social solidarity, which then develops into a collective objective awareness of brotherhood across social groups to prevent horizontal conflict on an ongoing basis. The process of internalizing this value is in line with Durkheim's concept of collective conscience and the peacebuilding from below approach (Lederach), which emphasizes the importance of local actors and cultural values in building long-term peace [36][37][38][32]. Thus, the Bela Baja philosophy not only serves as a cultural heritage, but also as a strategic instrument for social development relevant to the SDGs agenda, particularly SDG 16 and SDG 11, in strengthening peace, social justice, and community sustainability in Alor Regency.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Bela Baja philosophy has substantial relevance to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Through the traditional oath ritual and the values of social solidarity embedded within the Galiau Watang Lema Traditional Alliance, Bela Baja functions as an indigenous peacebuilding mechanism capable of preventing prolonged social conflict and strengthening harmonious social relations among

communities in Alor Regency. The customary reconciliation process based on collective commitment and moral responsibility reflects a community-based model of restorative justice that supports inclusive and sustainable peace.

In the context of SDG 16, Bela Baja contributes significantly to strengthening local institutions and creating peaceful societies through culturally rooted conflict resolution mechanisms. The involvement of traditional leaders, community elders, religious figures, and local governments in customary reconciliation demonstrates the integration of informal institutions with social governance systems. This collaborative process strengthens trust, social legitimacy, and collective participation in maintaining stability and justice within society. Furthermore, Bela Baja also aligns with SDG 11 by promoting sustainable communities through the preservation of local wisdom, collective identity, and social cohesion. The traditional values of brotherhood such as Taramiti Tominiku, Kakari Opung Anang Foto Fatang, and Sota Tofang Sahi Fani Tofang Sahi function as social capital that binds diverse ethnic and cultural groups into a unified social structure. These values encourage mutual assistance, tolerance, and solidarity, which are essential foundations for sustainable urban and rural communities [49][50][51][52].

In addition, the philosophy of Bela Baja supports SDG 17 through strengthening partnerships and cooperation among customary alliances, local institutions, and broader communities across Alor, Pantar, and Lembata regions. The intergenerational transmission of peace values reflects the importance of collective collaboration in sustaining social harmony. Therefore, the revitalization of Bela Baja not only preserves cultural heritage but also contributes strategically to achieving sustainable development through indigenous knowledge, social solidarity, and community-based peacebuilding practices in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the Bela Baja philosophy is a local wisdom that serves as the main foundation in building and maintaining sustainable peace in the traditional alliance community of Galiu Watang Lema in Alor Regency. Through a phenomenological approach, this study found that the Bela Baja oath ritual is not merely understood as a symbolic customary practice, but rather as a value system that forms a collective awareness of brotherhood, social solidarity, and a moral commitment to avoid violence. This philosophy has proven effective as a mechanism for reconciliation and social conflict resolution, both at the historical level between traditional kingdoms and in contemporary social dynamics between community groups. This study shows that the Bela Baja values have strong relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, specifically SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), through strengthening inclusive peace and social solidarity based on local culture. However, the findings also reveal a serious challenge in the form of a degradation of the younger generation's understanding of the Bela Baja values that contributes to increasing social conflict among village youth in urban areas such as Kalabahi. Therefore, this study recommends the revitalization and re-internalization of the Bela Baja philosophy through cultural education, the active participation of traditional governments, and the integration of local wisdom values into development policies and conflict resolution. These efforts are key to ensuring that the Bela Baja philosophy not only survives as a cultural heritage but also functions effectively in realizing sustainable peace in Alor Regency.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally and collaboratively to the preparation and completion of this research article. Their contributions included research design, data collection, analysis, supervision, funding support, manuscript translation, editing, and final evaluation of the paper. Each author participated actively according to their respective expertise and responsibilities during every stage of the research process. Furthermore, all authors carefully reviewed, discussed, and approved the final version of the manuscript before submission and publication in the selected academic journal successfully.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research article. The study was conducted independently, objectively, and professionally without any financial, institutional, or personal influence that could affect the interpretation of the findings. The authors also confirm that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not currently under consideration for publication in another journal. Ethical standards and academic integrity were maintained throughout the entire research and publication process responsibly.

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