

Practices of local democracy and *power sharing* in the indigenous community of Kampung Kuta



Praktek demokrasi lokal dan pembagian kekuasaan pada komunitas adat Kampung Kuta

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

<p>Keywords Local Democracy; Power Sharing; Indigenous Community;</p>	<p>ABSTRACT This paper aims to explain local democracy in indigenous communities. To understand how local democracy is practiced in indigenous communities, it is necessary to trace how power is distributed in these communities. This study uses qualitative research methods that allow for in-depth exploration of local democracy and power distribution in the Kuta indigenous community. The practice of democracy in indigenous communities is not only present in formal mechanisms regulated by the state, but also through informal mechanisms rooted in tradition and local wisdom. In indigenous communities, regulations in various aspects of life are not only part of the functioning of formal government but also become a realm of regulation based on local customary values. Meanwhile, the democratic values of indigenous Indonesian communities generally stem from a spirit of togetherness and kinship. The tradition of deliberating to resolve issues, followed by consensus-based decision-making, is a manifestation of these values of togetherness and kinship. An important finding of this study is that the formal power structure in Kampung Kuta is divided into two structures, namely the formal structure run by the village government and the informal structure run by the customary leader, which includes the kuncen, customary elders, and village elders. The results of the study show that the practice of local democracy in Kampung Kuta can balance the division of formal and informal power, which serves to maintain community identity, strengthen social life, and ensure the sustainability of cultural values. This confirms how local democracy can adapt to traditional values.</p>
<p>Kata Kunci Demokrasi Lokal; Power Sharing; Masyarakat Adat;</p>	<p>ABSTRAK Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tentang demokrasi lokal pada kehidupan masyarakat adat. Untuk memahami bagaimana demokrasi lokal dipraktikkan dalam kehidupan masyarakat adat itu, perlu dilacak bagaimana pembagian kekuasaan berlaku dalam kehidupan masyarakat tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif yang memungkinkan penggalan hasil penelitian secara mendalam terkait demokrasi lokal dan pembagian kekuasaan pada masyarakat adat kuta. Praktek demokrasi pada masyarakat adat tidak hanya hadir dalam mekanisme formal yang diatur oleh negara, tetapi juga melalui mekanisme informal yang berakar pada tradisi dan kearifan lokal. Pada masyarakat Adat, pengaturan dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan tidak hanya menjadi bagian dari berjalannya fungsi pemerintahan formal tetapi juga menjadi ranah pengaturan yang diselenggarakan berdasarkan nilai-nilai adat setempat. Sementara itu, nilai demokrasi masyarakat asli Indonesia itu sendiri secara umum bersumber dari semangat kebersamaan dan kekeluargaan. Tradisi bermusyawarah untuk mengatasi suatu persoalan yang kemudian diikuti dengan pengambilan keputusan secara mufakat merupakan manifestasi dari nilai</p>

	<p>kebersamaan dan kekeluargaan tersebut. Temuan penting penelitian ini bahwa struktur formal kekuasaan di Kampung Kuta terbagi ke dalam dua struktur, yaitu struktur formal yang dijalankan oleh pemerintah desa dan struktur informal yang dijalankan oleh ketua adat yang meliputi kuncen, tetua adat dan sesepuh kampung. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktek demokrasi lokal di Kampung Kuta dapat menyeimbangkan pembagian kekuasaan formal dan informal yang berfungsi menjaga identitas komunitas, memperkuat kehidupan sosial dan memastikan keberlanjutan nilai-nilai budaya. Hal ini dapat menegaskan bagaimana demokrasi lokal dapat beradaptasi dengan nilai adat.</p>
<p>Article History Send 15th May 2025 Review 19th July 2025 Accepted 03th Sept 2025</p>	<p>Copyright ©2026 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora) This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-SA license. Akses artikel terbuka dengan model CC-BY-NC-SA sebagai lisensinya.</p>



Introduction

Democracy became an important concept in Indonesia's political and state life after Soeharto's authoritarian regime ended in 1998. Apart from referring to western conceptions of democracy, democracy in Indonesia is built on indigenous Indonesian values. These values are local values and wisdom that are spread throughout Indonesia (Pamungkas et al., 2023). Therefore, Indonesia's rich pluralism has influenced how Indonesian democracy is built. Thus, it can be said that Indonesian democracy is built by local democracy.

Local democracy, in some cases, can be traced from the social and cultural values that apply and are practiced by local communities (Asrinaldi, 2017). In state life in the context of local governance, local democracy also guides how the governance of common life at the local level is organized and managed. In addition to exploring how democracy is implemented in the formal realm, namely in the government process, democracy that applies in the daily lives of local communities is also very important to explore (Joyce & Forsyth, 2022), this is important to understand how the building of substantial democracy applies in Indonesia.

Democracy, both formal and substantial, is nationally built on the values of people with various socio-cultural backgrounds. (Asrinaldi, 2017) notes that there are around 300 ethnicities in Indonesia with various cultures, which in turn influence the practice of democracy in Indonesia. In connection with these various cultures, cultural values are still strongly held by some people in Indonesia, especially local communities. On various occasions, many aspects of community life apply local values (Usfunan & Yustus Pondayar, 2022). These cultural values are seen to be applied as a guide for the community in running their lives. This view is supported by Yuliawati and Sarofah (Yuliawati et al., 2024), in their study on Kampung Naga, Tasikmalaya observed that indigenous communities uphold ancestral customs and cultural identity while engaging in democratic processes. Even though modernization and external influences are increasing, traditional values still serve as social compass though not always in political alignment. The study revealed that civil engagement exist strongly, yet voter preferences are increasingly shaped by personal considerations rather than collective or traditional directives (Hawkes, 2001).

Conceptually, B. Mayo argues that democracy is basically based on several values such as resolving disputes peacefully and institutionally; ensuring the implementation of peaceful change in a changing society; organizing a regular change of leaders; limiting the use of violence to a minimum; recognizing and considering the existence of diversity in society which is reflected in the diversity of opinions, interests and behavior; and

guaranteeing justice (Ni'matul Huda, 2019). Meanwhile, Nurcholis Madjid (Erwin, 2018) explained that democracy is based on seven norms, namely awareness of pluralism, deliberation, honest and healthy consensus, cooperation, fulfillment of economic aspects, moral considerations, and a supportive education system.

As is well known, local democracy is not only visible in the life of the state and local government processes, but also embedded substantively in the daily life of indigenous communities, including indigenous peoples (Hinojosa, 2013). Local democracy is practiced in the lives of indigenous peoples, it is necessary to trace how power sharing applies in the lives of these communities (Agarin & McCulloch, 2020). The practice of democracy itself is not only seen in the life of a state institution but can also be seen in the daily life of a community that is managed with certain values, including customary values (Fajri, 2022). In addition, (Iskandarsyah Siregar, 2023) argues that democratic values based on kinship and consensus such as “*musyawarah*” still guide decision making in ethnic communities. The concept of democracy in indigenous societies is vividly exemplified by the *noken* system in Papua, where political power and representation follow traditional norms rather than state run electoral systems, highlighting how deeply cultural institutions shape governance at local level (Kayame, 2022).

Democracy itself means society and *kratein* so that it can be interpreted as regulating society. In Indigenous communities, regulation in various aspects of life is not only part of the running of formal government functions but also the realm of regulation organized based on local customary values (Alcantara & Morden, 2019). Meanwhile, Indonesian democracy is a form of democracy that is adapted to the traditions of the indigenous people of Indonesia, namely democracy that upholds the value of togetherness and kinship as often expressed by Mohammad Hatta. The tradition of deliberation to overcome a problem which is then followed by consensus decision making is a manifestation of the value of togetherness and kinship. Moreover, (Rahmanul Hakim et al., 2023) underline that policy making within indigenous communities is guided by values like deliberation and *gotong royong*, demonstrating that democracy in these settings is primarily a communal cultural practice rather than and institutional formalism (Chandra & Triwidaryanta, 2022).

This research aims to obtain a conceptual explanation of local political practices in indigenous communities to trace how substantial democracy in Indonesia can be formed. This is important because substantial democracy in Indonesia is built on local values that are diverse and spread throughout Indonesia. This research takes a locus on the practice of local democracy in the indigenous community of Kampung Kuta in Ciamis Regency, apart from

being seen to strongly uphold customary values and traditions, the people of Kampung Kuta often use deliberation mechanisms in solving problems in the midst of their lives, especially customary life.

Research on local democracy has always been related to the practice or process of governance at the local or regional government level (McGoldrick, 2020). This means that the available explanations of local democracy are more in the realm of formal democracy or even procedural democracy, such as the explanation from Al-Hamdi Rido who explained more about the process of selecting local elites (Regents and DPRD) in Central Lampung (Hamdi, 2011) ,(Haris Mubarak, 2011)who explained related to Bureaucratization in the Autonomy Era in Jambi, or (Asrinaldi, 2017)who emphasized the strong role of the state in the implementation of local democracy in West Sumatra. Meanwhile, there have not been many explanations related to the practice of local democracy at the level of substantial democracy, which sees democracy not only in the realm of the state and government processes but also in the daily lives of the community, especially communities that still uphold existing values.

From the research problems described above, the formulation of this research is how the practice of local democracy is reflected in *power sharing* in the indigenous people of Kampung Kuta, Ciamis Regency. The results of this research will be published in an accredited national journal to enrich conceptual explanations related to local democracy in terms of substantial democracy.

Etymologically, democracy comes from the Greek *demos* which means people and *kratos* or *kratein* which means government, so that in simple terms democracy can be interpreted as government by the people. The concept of democracy first emerged in the practice of city states or *polis* in Greece and Athens in 450 BC and 350 BC. In his time Pericles, an Athenian statesman defined democracy by putting forward several criteria, namely: government by the people with full and direct popular participation; equality before the law; pluralism; and respect for a separation and private territory to fulfill and express individual personality (Sunarso, 2018)

Meanwhile, Dahl in his book notes several criteria for democracy as a political idea, namely: equality of voting rights in determining binding collective decisions; effective participation, i.e. equal opportunities for all citizens in the collective decision-making process; truth-telling, i.e. equal opportunities for everyone to provide an assessment of the course of political and governmental processes in a logical manner; final control of the agenda, i.e. the exclusive power for the community to determine which agenda should and

should not be decided through the governmental process, including delegating that power to other people or institutions representing the community; and inclusion, i.e. the inclusion of the community includes all adults in relation to the law (Sunarso, 2018).

The most important thing about democracy is the limitation of power, this is the same as expressed by April Carter (1985: 25) who succinctly, concisely and precisely defines democracy as the limitation of power. Furthermore, there are values that must be met in defining democracy, namely; resolving disputes peacefully and voluntarily, ensuring peaceful change in an ever-changing society, regular replacement of rulers, the use of as little coercion as possible, recognition and respect for the value of diversity, upholding justice, advancing science and respect and recognition of freedom (Miriam Budiardjo, 2008)

From several concepts that continue to develop related to democracy, there are several things that need to be underlined, especially related to the context of this research. First, democracy is closely related to the issue of guaranteeing space for citizens to participate in order to formulate their rights. Second, equal rights, especially in participating in decision-making. Third, the universal values of democracy interact with local values that support each other, from which we can see differences in the implementation of democracy according to the characteristics of the locality, including the practice of democracy in indigenous communities (O'Sullivan, 2011).

In relation to the practice of democracy, more advanced developments are seen in the regions (Guevara-Hernández et al., 2011). This is due to the interaction of universal democratic concepts and values with local values in certain regions or localities. In the practice of democracy in the formal realm or in state life and government processes, political life shows its own dynamics. Moreover, the occurrence of conflicts that are part of the democratization process in the regions in some cases proves that conflicts in the political process do not only occur at the national level but also appear in the local realm (Elfverson & Sjögren, 2020).

Democracy can be said to be the identity of the nation when seeing democracy as a reflection of the fusion of cultural values spread throughout Indonesia. Local democracy is a manifestation of cultural values that accommodate diversity (Sinding Bentzen et al., 2019). Thus, local democracy is important to be understood and practiced in every region in Indonesia. As is well known, local democracy is not only visible in state institutions and government processes, but also in the daily lives of indigenous communities. In Jambi, *Seloko adat* function as political and social control tools among the Malay community, reinforcing democratic norms of deliberation and moral conduct demonstrating how cultural

traditions actively strengthen local political practices (Cresswell, 2014). Meanwhile in Jambi, democratic values are embedded within customary law, like local leadership, legal customs, and community conflict resolution reflect democratic principles in both government and adat domains (Yudi Armansyah, 2017). This illustrates that democratic principles in Indonesia are practiced substantively through cultural norms as well as formal institutions.

Substantially, there are several things that can be seen in examining how democracy works in the local realm, including participation, decision-making mechanisms and restrictions on power. In formal or institutional political life, local democracy can be seen from several indicators, namely

1. Participation is the essence of democracy. This means that the determination of public officials is carried out through a democratic mechanism, namely by direct election of political officials rather than using a representative mechanism. For example, the direct election of regional heads in its implementation will improve the quality of representation because the community can determine its own leaders. The direct involvement of the community in the process of electing regional heads can strengthen the legitimacy of the regional heads themselves;
2. Decision-making mechanisms through direct regional elections can make people in the regions freely determine prospective leaders who are considered capable of solving problems in their regions. The community will choose their own leaders, which in the process will prove whether the regional head candidates are indeed in accordance with the criteria for leaders as their representatives in voicing the aspirations and interests of the community;
3. Limits on power are required to avoid distortions in the exercise of community sovereignty. People can be involved in choosing their leaders, which can increase the element of democratization at the local level. Thus, direct elections are carried out with certain restrictions in accordance with applicable legislation (Lili Romli, 2017).

In the process, this research will take the essence of the formal substance of the three indicators (participation, decision-making mechanisms, and limitation of power) of the concept of local democracy, as a basis for examining the daily lives of the people in Kampung Kuta, Ciamis Regency. Because we believe that everyday life cannot be separated from the concept of politics, although not formally, but still in line with the concept of local democracy.

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach to understand the practice of local democracy and power sharing in the indigenous community of Kampung Kuta, Ciamis District. Qualitative methods are appropriate for exploring social phenomena in depth, especially when the focus is on meaning, values, and lived experiences that cannot be quantified. The data collected were primarily descriptive in nature, consisting of oral narratives, written records, and observed behaviors. The primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participants observations, and document analysis. Secondary data were also used to complement field data, including government reports, local regulations, and literature on indigenous governance (Cresswell, 2014).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling with consideration for their knowledge and active involvement in community decision making. The key informants included traditional leaders (Kuncen), community elders (Punduh), village officials, and youth representatives. This method ensures that those with the most relevant experiences and insights are included. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing verification. This approach allows researchers to continuously refine categories and themes as data are collected and interpreted.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study used triangulation techniques by cross-verifying data from interviews, observations, and documents. Additionally, member checking was conducted by returning preliminary findings to selected informants for confirmation and clarification. This enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

This research uses a qualitative method that aims to obtain data in the form of descriptions of speech, writing, and behavior, as well as an emphasis on the subjective aspects that can be observed from the people (subjects) themselves, when the findings cannot be obtained from statistics (quantitative). Another reason for this method is the stability of the researcher based on previous research experience. The approach taken uses a phenomenological approach.

Result and Discussion

Kampung Kuta is a hamlet with the name Kuta Hamlet located in Karangpaningal Village, Tambaksari Subdistrict, Ciamis Regency. Kuta Hamlet is then better known by the outside community as Kampung Kuta, a village with traditional and cultural characteristics

that are still held firmly by its residents. Karangpaningal Village itself is a village that has six hamlets, namely Margamulya Hamlet, Cibodas Hamlet, Ciloa Hamlet, Pananggapan Hamlet, Pohat Hamlet and Kuta Hamlet. Kampung Kuta consists of 2 RW and 4 RT as its smallest government unit. Kampung Kuta has the following boundaries, The north is bordered by Cibodas Hamlet, The west is bordered by Margamulya Hamlet, The south and east are bordered by Cijolang River (Central Java border).

The village is about 55 km east of the capital of Ciamis Regency and approximately 177 km from the capital of West Java Province. The road access to Kampung Kuta is quite good and can be reached by vehicles both two-wheeled and four-wheeled. Kampung Kuta is geographically located somewhat separate from other settlements or villages in Karangpaningal Village, this is because geographically Kampung Kuta is located in a valley where the valley is surrounded by steep cliffs. Kampung Kuta has a fairly unstable soil structure with altitudes varying from 463 to 1500 meters above sea level. Kampung Kuta is an area with hilly land and valleys with about 95% consisting of highland areas and 5% lowlands. The area of Kuta Hamlet is 185,195 hectares which consists of ancepan land, sacred forest, lakes, settlements, rice fields, plantations and others. The following table illustrates the land area and land use in Kampung Kuta.

Table 1. Land Area of Kampung Kuta and its Use

Land Use	Area (Ha)	Percentage
Sacred Forest	32.886	17,76
Housing and yard	9.733	5,25
Sawah	44.395	23,97
Plantation	89.831	48,51
Frontier land	2.184	1,18
River	5.851	3,16
Lake	0,315	0,17
AMOUNT	185.195	100,00

Source: Bandung Cultural Preservation Center, Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture 2014

From the table above, it can be seen that most of the land in Kampung Kuta is rice fields. Most of the rice fields in Kampung Kuta are rain-fed rice fields because the contours of the land are hilly. In Kampung Kuta there is land that gets special treatment called *Leuweung Karamat* (Sacred Forest). The area of the sacred forest itself reaches 32,886 hectares or 17.76% of the total area of Kampung Kuta. According to the caretaker, the forest has never been measured, the integrity and sustainability of the forest is also really maintained with various customary value systems that exist and apply in Kampung Kuta. In fact, anyone who wants to enter the sacred forest must get permission from the caretaker. Meanwhile, the settlements and yards in Kampung Kuta are 9,733 hectares. Regarding the area of land designated for settlements, there are no customary rules as in Kampung Naga Tasikmalaya, so that the area of the yard is getting smaller every day because the amount of land used for settlements is increasing.

To date, there are 136 houses in Kampung Kuta that have distinctive characteristics. Related to the houses in Kampung Kuta, it can be said that the houses in Kampung Kuta are different from other houses in other hamlets in Karangpaningal Village. Therefore, the houses in the settlement of Kampung Kuta can be said to be traditional houses considering the characteristics that exist in these houses. These houses in Kampung Kuta have maintained their authenticity for generations. This is because related to the house, the people of Kampung Kuta are still very obedient and obedient to the customary laws that apply and are passed down from generation to generation from their ancestors. Although it is actually very easy to find raw materials to make permanent houses because they are widely available, they prefer to continue using their original houses as a place of residence.

The houses in Kampung Kuta are all stilt houses without walls with a square shape. The average size of the houses is about 6 x 10 m or 10 m². The roof used in the houses of the people of Kampung Kuta is not made of roof tiles or metal materials (zinc) but made of thatch leaves and palm fiber. Roof tiles should not be used because if they break, they will pollute the soil. In addition, the prohibition of using roof tiles is because the people of Kampung Kuta obey the direction of the ancestors *ulah ngajadikeun istana jadi astana* (do not make the house a grave). If the roof is made of roof tiles made from soil, it is like humans living in a grave. The walls of houses on stilts are made of woven *bilik* (woven from thinly sliced bamboo) or plywood or wood. However, the people of Kampung Kuta are allowed to use glass for windows. The floors of the houses are made of *palupuh* (split bamboo) or planks.

Meanwhile, to meet the needs of clean water, especially for drinking, bathing, washing and toileting, the people of Kampung Kuta do not dig wells. This is because digging wells is also included in the taboos that apply to the people of Kampung Kuta. For clean water needs, the people of Kampung Kuta drain clean water from springs using bamboo or plastic hoses. Most of the restrooms are located behind the house next to a fish pond, so that the water disposal is channeled into the pond and then flows into the rice fields. There are several springs that are utilized by the people of Kampung Kuta to meet their clean water needs, including *Ciasihan*, *Panyipuhan*, *Cinangka* and *Cibangbara* springs. According to the people of Kampung Kuta, these four springs never dry up even during the dry season. For housing facilities and equipment, in general, it is not much different from the areas around Kampung Kuta. Electricity and road facilities have also been available since 1996. This is because although they live in the midst of traditional values and rules, the people of Kampung Kuta do not close themselves off from the outside world (Yuliawati & Widiastuti, 2019). During the observation conducted in the context of this research, it was seen that the people of Kampung Kuta had electronic equipment such as televisions, mobile phones and even some of the people of Kampung Kuta already had transportation equipment such as motorbikes. The purchase system in acquiring a motorcycle has also recognized the credit system through credit financing institutions. This is an explanation that the people of Kampung Kuta are very open to values from the outside world as long as they do not conflict with the values of ancestral customs and traditions.

According to the data available in Karangpaningal Village, the population of Kampung Kuta is 325 people, consisting of 159 male residents and 166 female residents. According to traditional elder Sanmarno (who is often called Ki Warja), the number of residents in Kampung Kuta is relatively fixed, neither increasing nor decreasing. The following is data on the population of Kampung Kuta based on age group and gender:

Table 2. Kampung Kuta Population by Age Group and

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0 - 15	40	35	75	23,1
16 - 20	19	21	40	12,3
25 - 54	81	86	167	51,4
Above 55	19	24	43	13,3
	159	166	325	100

Source: Karangpaningal Village Government

The residents of Kampung Kuta make their main livelihood as farmers. They cultivate rice fields and plant rice with a rain-fed system with traditional equipment. Related to the system of cultivating agricultural land, especially rice fields, the people of Kampung Kuta also hold customary values and rules that have been passed down from generation to generation. These customary values and rules are then used as guidelines in cultivating rice fields or agricultural land. In addition to earning a living as a farmer and working on rain-fed rice fields, the people of Kampung Kuta also make palm sugar (*gula aren*) or commonly called *gula kawung* and sell it as an additional income. The process of making *kawung sugar* requires cooperation between family members. The fathers take nira from the *kawung* (palm) tree or what is often called *nyadap*, while the mothers heat the results of the *nyadap* in a furnace until it thickens and then molded using sugar molds.

As explained in the previous section, Kampung Kuta is a traditional village characterized by tradition. The distinctiveness of this tradition is very visible from the shape of the house which is different from the houses in the surrounding area. According to the village elder (Ki Warja), Ambu Rama Raksa Bima Kalijaga was the first person to live in Kampung Kuta, then the King of Galuh during the time of Prabu Siliwangi once planned to establish a palace as the center of the King of Galuh's kingdom in Kampung Kuta but it did not happen. Therefore, the hills surrounding Kampung Kuta are believed to be relics of the palace construction plan. These hills include *Mount Semen*, *Mount Kapur*, *Mount Barang* and *Mount Batu Soko* or *Mount Gede*. Regarding the origin of Kampung Kuta, there are no authentic records or writings based only on the narrative of traditional elders without the support of accurate data. Based on the narrative of traditional elders, there are two versions of the story of the origin of Kampung Kuta, namely Kampung Kuta during the Galuh Kingdom and Kampung Kuta during the Cirebon Kingdom.

In a classic fairy tale or story known by the Sundanese people, it is said that in the Land of Sunda there is an area called *Nagara Burung*. The area called *Nagara Burung* is often associated with Kampung Kuta because *Nagara Burung* in Sundanese means a country or kingdom that is not finished or canceled. Kampung Kuta is believed to be an area that was originally going to be the center of the Galuh Kingdom but was canceled or not finished because it moved to Karangamulyan. According to the narrative of traditional elders, it is said that in the early days of the establishment of the Galuh Kingdom with its king named Prabu Anjar Sukaresi wandering with several bodyguards to find a suitable area to be the center of the royal government. During the wanderings, Prabu Anjar Sukaresi and his guards arrived at a river called Cijolang. At that time Prabu Anjar Sukaresi saw an area across the

Cijolang River that was quite interesting and suitable to be the center of the kingdom. Therefore, Prabu Anjar Sukaresi ordered his guards to build a resting place and rest in that place. After Prabu Anjar Sukaresi reviewed the place he saw across the Cijolang River, he ordered his guards to immediately move across the river to open the area that would be the center of the kingdom by removing the temporary resting place first. The former temporary resting place is now called *dodokan* by the people of Kampung Kuta and its surroundings, which means the king's seat or resting place.

After spending days in the area that was to be the center of the kingdom, Prabu Anjar Sukaresi went around the area and saw that the area was surrounded by high cliffs. Seeing this condition, Prabu Anjar Sukaresi then thought that the area was narrow enough to be the center of the kingdom and could not be expanded because it was limited by high cliffs. Therefore, Prabu Anjar Sukaresi decided to cancel the construction of the royal center in that place and left it. This area later became a village called Kampung Kuta. Long after Prabu Anjar Sukaresi left, this area became a big concern for two kingdoms during the spread of Islam, namely the Cirebon Kingdom and the Mataram Kingdom. This was because the rulers of the two kingdoms received *wangsit* from their ancestors to protect and maintain the area left by Prabu Anjar Sukaresi. The King of Cirebon sent his trusted man named Raksabumi to stay in Kuta with the aim of protecting and maintaining the integrity of the Kuta area. The King of Cirebon instructed Raksabumi to go to Kuta immediately because word had gotten out that the King of Mataram was also sending his envoys to settle in Kuta. Both kings advised their envoys to relent if there were already envoys from other kingdoms in Kuta but were not allowed to return to their respective kingdoms. Therefore, the envoys from both kingdoms tried hard to arrive in Kuta first.

It is said by traditional elders that the envoys from the two kingdoms arrived in the Kuta area almost simultaneously, but then the envoy from the Mataram Kingdom left the Kuta area. At that time Raksabumi immediately built a settlement around the lake, which became known as *Pamarakan*, which means a place to catch fish by drying the water first in Sundanese. Eventually Raksabumi became the leader of Kampung Kuta and guarded and maintained Kampung Kuta until his death. After his death, Raksabumi was buried in Cibodas and was known as Ki Bumi. Raksabumi is considered the forerunner of the ancestors of Kampung Kuta and his leadership is passed on from generation to generation. The entire community of Kampung Kuta adheres to Islam. This is as told by the Customary Chief (Warsim), all residents of Kampung Kuta are Muslim, as adherents of Islam, the residents of Kampung Kuta strive to be obedient in carrying out the teachings of Islam and try to do

God's commands and stay away from His prohibitions. As for the means to carry out the teachings of Islam, the people of Kampung Kuta use the Jami Mosque which is located opposite the village hall. In addition to the Jami Mosque as a place to carry out the rituals, in the area of Kampung Kuta there is also a mushola which is located adjacent to *Bale Sawala*. *Bale Sawala* is a place or building used by the people of Kampung Kuta to deliberate and discuss various issues in their social life.

Strengthening the values of Islamic teachings in the Kampung Kuta community is pursued through religious rituals. The Islamic religious leader who is also the imam of the jami mosque (Ustadz Udin) always tries to socialize the teachings of Islam to the people of Kampung Kuta. Ustadz Udin always invites the people of Kampung Kuta to perform the five daily prayers in congregation at the mosque, fast in the month of Ramadan, pay zakat, and sacrifice. In addition, the jami mosque always organizes rituals for Islamic holidays such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Maulid Nabi, Nuzulul Qur'an and also organizes Friday prayers every Friday. What is carried out by religious leaders in Kampung Kuta is motivated by the condition of the people of Kampung Kuta, which is still difficult to distinguish between the rules of Islamic teachings and customary values. In terms of this belief system, in addition to believing and practicing the teachings of Islam, the people of Kampung Kuta also believe that the mini ala, especially Kuta, is controlled and controlled by the spirits of *karuhun* (ancestors) and supernatural beings known by the people of Kampung Kuta with names such as *Ambu Rama Bima Raksa Kalijaga*, *Prabu Mangkurat Jaga*, *Sang Mentil Putih* and *Kyai Bima Raksa Nagara*. The spirits of the ancestors and supernatural beings inhabit sacred places such as *Leuweung Gede*, *Leuweung Ki Bumi*, *Mount Panday Domas*, *Mount Barang*, *Mount Semen*, *Mount Batu* and *Ciasihan* spring.

The people of Kampung Kuta believe that the spirits of *karuhun* and the supernatural beings mentioned above play a role in controlling the life of the entire Kampung Kuta so that customary rules are basically intended so that the *karuhun* and supernatural beings feel cared for and not angry because they are disturbed. There are several customary rules that are closely related to the belief system in the people of Kampung Kuta, including rules for pregnant women and childbirth called *abet*, rules related to the implementation of circumcision, gusaran and marriage, rules for burying bodies, rules for determining *Kuncen*, rules related to daily behavior, livelihoods and building houses, prohibitions on digging land and prohibitions on performing puppet art. The people of Kampung Kuta believe that if there is a violation of these customary rules, there will be a catastrophe that will not only befall the person who violates it but also affect the entire community of Kampung Kuta. Therefore,

the people of Kampung Kuta always maintain and obey these customary rules and ensure that these customary rules are not violated by anyone.

Still related to the belief system, besides believing in customary rules that are implemented to respect *Karuhun* and keep supernatural beings from being disturbed, the people of Kampung Kuta also carry out various traditional rituals such as *Nyuguh*, *Hajat Bumi*, *Babarit*, *Saman*, *Nebus Weteng*, *Ngarupus*, *Nyangkreb* and *Teya*. The *Nyuguh* ceremony or ritual is held as an expression of gratitude because the people of Kampung Kuta have been given sustenance and prevented from all disasters. The *Nyuguh* ritual procession is in the form of giving offerings to the spirits of the *Karuhun* and the ruler of *Leuweung Karamat*. The series of rituals at the *Nyuguh* ceremony culminated at the eastern end of the Kampung Kuta area right on the banks of the Cijolang river. The *Nyuguh* ceremony is held every year in the month of Maulud. Meanwhile, the *Hajat Bumi* ceremony is a ritual held between September and November. This ritual begins the planting season. The *Hajat Bumi* ritual aims to ask the *Karuhun* to give blessings and protection to the plants that will be planted. The *Hajat Bumi* ritual is centered in the village hall. In this ritual, each family brings tumpeng or bundles of rice and side dishes along with several other foods to the Hamlet Hall. After gathering at the hamlet hall, *Kuncen* starts the ritual by burning incense and praying. After that, all residents of Kampung Kuta who were present ate the dishes that had been collected. As for the *Babarit* ceremony, the process is not much different from the *Hajat Bumi* ceremony, but the *Babarit* ceremony ritual aims to ask for safety and freedom from all forms of natural disasters.

All three ceremonies or rituals are carried out within the Kampung Kuta area. This is different from the *Saman* ceremony or ritual. The *Saman* ritual is carried out by the people of Kampung Kuta but takes place outside the village area. The *Saman* ritual itself is held in the cemetery located in Cibodas Hamlet on the day before the fasting month. The *Saman* ritual begins with burning incense and reading prayers by the *Kuncen* and then proceeds to clean all the graves in the cemetery. The *Saman* ceremony or ritual is held in a cemetery outside the village area because in Kampung Kuta itself there is a prohibition to bury the dead within the Kampung Kuta area. Therefore, if a resident of Kampung Kuta dies, the body is buried in the cemetery. A society, whether a modern society or a traditional society, has a system that is then agreed upon as a rule for the benefit of life together. Just like in various regions in Indonesia, Kampung Kuta is a society with formal arrangements and leadership that leads to legal-formal government arrangements. However, in addition to formal governance, in Kampung Kuta, as in various places inhabited by indigenous peoples,

there is also informal governance and leadership, which of course is heavily influenced by traditional values passed down from generation to generation.

As explained in the previous section, Kampung Kuta is administratively a hamlet that is included in the Karangpaningal Village government area. Thus, the formal leader within the scope of the *hamlet* is the head of the hamlet or what the local community calls the *Lurah*. The *dusun* head or *Lurah* is a formal leader who is appointed and dismissed by the village government or in this case, the village head. In Kampung Kuta, apart from the formal government system, there are also non-formal leadership patterns that carry out their respective roles and functions. The non-formal leaders in Kampung Kuta are traditional leaders, traditional elders and *kuncen*. These customary leaders are appointed by lineage and have the main task of preserving customary values and ancestral traditions. Customary chiefs, elders and *kuncen* are informal and traditional leaders who have enormous influence among the people of Kampung Kuta. All that these non-formal leaders say in the form of advice and instructions in living life is obeyed by the people of Kampung Kuta. Their role is felt to be more influential when compared to formal leaders in the daily lives of the people of Kampung Kuta. These non-formal leaders are considered to be able to bring the people of Kampung Kuta into a life that is aspired together such as realizing a balanced, harmonious and harmonious life to achieve mutual prosperity. Non-formal leaders in this case, customary leaders play an important role in maintaining and preserving customary values, regulating how to run the life of the people of Kampung Kuta in accordance with applicable customary values, including giving various advice to the people of Kampung Kuta so that no one who is part of the Kampung Kuta community violates customary values. In addition, these traditional leaders also carry out their role in providing their views related to government regulations. In the view of the customary elder (Ki Warja), all regulations both from customary values and from the government must be obeyed because they are considered as rules that are equally derived from ancestors that will bring the community to a better direction.

Among the non-formal leaders or customary leaders, *Kuncen* is at the top of the leadership structure, this is because *Kuncen* is considered a figure who is able to communicate with the ancestors. It is through the *Kuncen* figure that the values and customary instructions from the ancestors are conveyed to the people of Kampung Kuta. The figure of *Kuncen* in Kampung Kuta is not chosen by an election process but is determined by several requirements, including: *The Kuncen* must be a direct descendant of the previous *Kuncen*, *The kuncen* must be a man, *Kuncen* must be physically and mentally healthy,

Kuncen must be an adult both physically and psychologically, *Kuncen* must obey and abide by traditional values including the taboos imposed on him.

Kuncen in Kampung Kuta according to the customary elder (Ki Warja) has gone through several generations. Here are the *Kuncen* in Kampung Kuta from generation to generation:

Table 3. Name *Kuncen* in Kampung Kuta

Generation Of <i>Kuncen</i>	Name of <i>Kuncen</i>
First <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Bumi
Second <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Danu
Third <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Maena
Fourth <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Rasipan
Fifth <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Rasipan
Sixth <i>Kuncen</i>	Aki Sarno (Maman)

Source: Research Finding

The duties of the *Kuncen* of Kampung Kuta include escorting visitors who want to enter the sacred forest. This is because *Kuncen* is a figure who knows in detail related to the intricacies of the sacred forest and *Kuncen* as a spiritual representation of the ancestors. Besides that, *Kuncen* is also tasked with assisting the customary leader in carrying out community duties. Therefore, *Kuncen* plays a very important role in maintaining the values of traditions and customs so that they are not lost to the times.

Conclusion

Although indigenous peoples in Indonesia have a power structure that is centralized in each of their respective traditional leaders, it does not necessarily close the discursive spaces when the group or indigenous community reaches the point where it must make a decision, especially those related to the pattern of life together in the indigenous community. Kampung Kuta is one of the indigenous villages inhabited by communities that adhere to traditional values. These customary values are always respected, maintained and used as guidelines in carrying out their daily lives. When looking at Kampung Adat Kuta in terms of power structure, of course, it is no different from other indigenous communities in Indonesia, which is centered on the customary leader. The power structure in Kampung Kuta is divided into two structures, namely the formal power structure and the informal power structure. The formal power structure is filled by government actors. Meanwhile, the informal power structure is filled by three actors who carry out their respective roles, namely

the customary leader, village elders/customary elders and *Kuncen*. Just like the state or government, the informal power structure also carries out regulatory functions in various aspects of the life of the people of Kampung Kuta. However, the power structure works in the realm of regulation that is organized based on local customary values.

In the realm of regulation, there are indeed some things that become the absolute authority of the actors who occupy the top of the informal power structure, but the tradition of deliberating to overcome a problem which is then followed by consensus decision making is something that is often done among the people of Kampung Kuta. This proves that local democracy with distinctive characteristics and inherent to the people of Kampung Kuta works in the midst of the lives of the people of Kampung Kuta. This study has several weaknesses. First, the analysis of the power structure in Kampung Kuta is primarily descriptive and focused on the perspectives of local leaders, which may not fully capture the dynamics of power relations at the grassroots level. Second, the study is limited to one indigenous community, which makes difficult to generalize findings to other indigenous communities in Indonesia or other countries. Based on this weaknesses, future studies may consider conducting comparative research involving multiple indigenous communities to provide a broader understanding how local democracy and power sharing practices operate in diverse cultural contexts.

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