

## Reading South Bangka from Within: An Ethnographic Exploration of Cultural Practices and Social Structures

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### Abstract

This study aims to understand how the cultural practices and social structures of the South Bangka community are formed, sustained, transformed, and maintained in the contemporary social context. Using an ethnographic approach, this study examines cultural dynamics such as traditional customs, religious rituals, household economics, gender relations, kinship systems, and social changes resulting from modernization, migration, and industrial expansion. This study also examines local social structures, including kinship relations, informal hierarchies, patronage, economic structures, and power relations that bind individuals and groups in everyday social life. The results show that the cultural practices of the South Bangka community are flexible but still maintain core values such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, social harmony, and respect for ancestors. Modernization does not necessarily eliminate tradition but encourages the community to adapt cultural practices to the needs of the times. In addition, social structures have been shown to play an important role in shaping patterns of interaction, role distribution, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Interpersonal and group relationships are built through kinship networks, village communities, religious associations, and work relationships, all of which influence social stability and the formation of collective identity. This study concludes that cultural practices and social structures in South Bangka are closely interrelated.

**Keywords:** South Bangka, Ethnography, Cultural Practices, Social Structure

### 1. INTRODUCTION

South Bangka Regency is a region characterized by a complex ethnic composition, traditional practices, and social structure, resulting from historical processes of migration, trade, and interaction between local and migrant groups. This is reflected in local practices and traditional knowledge related to resource management, disaster mitigation, and traditional medicine, which remain relevant to community resilience. Beyond their relevance, rituals and customary practices—such as *Nganggung*; *Hikok Helawang*; *Kawin Herdek*—serve as mechanisms for social reproduction, fostering collective solidarity, affirming group identity, and functioning as arenas for the negotiation of values, whether for cultural preservation or commodification projects (Qomariah, 2025; Jamil, 2024). Alongside major traditions, micro-practices such as local languages; proverbs; household rituals; festive customs; and the preservation of social history and norms are relevant for understanding the continuity and cultural changes in South Bangka (Astuti, 2025). Various values and traditions stem from interactions between the

‘indigenous community’ and the presence of migrants as newcomers, who have collectively shaped the society of South Bangka today.

Partial urbanization and the mining/plantation economy have triggered labor migration into and out of the region, affecting household structures, ritual patterns, and local solidarity systems, thereby giving rise to the phenomenon of a “circulating culture” in which cultural elements move and change. Interactions between local ethnic groups (e.g., Bangka Malay, indigenous communities such as the *Lom/Mapur*) and immigrant groups (Javanese, Bugis, and others) have given rise to diverse processes of identity negotiation: assimilation, acculturation, and patterns of selective tolerance that shape social life at the village and subdistrict levels (Erlangga, 2021; Jamil, 2025). Undeniably, as local communities and newcomers intermingle through various processes, this influences the current social structure in South Bangka, where a combination exists between traditional stratification based on lineage, customary status, and the influence of religious leaders, and new stratification based on capital ownership, access to education, and migration networks.

In addition to interactions among various ethnic groups, the values held by the community are vulnerable to the erosion of knowledge among the younger generation (Lestari, 2025). They play an ambivalent role due to their interaction with social media, leading them to adopt a modern lifestyle that may well bring innovation to traditional practices such as the reinterpretation of symbols and the revitalization of festivals in new formats. Therefore, formal education practices and local curricula have the potential to serve as spaces for the transmission of this culture. Other potential avenues include local media and digital platforms (including community accounts on social media), which can contribute to the dissemination and recontextualization of local culture— such as selfies, event documentation, and tourism promotion— all of which alter how people perceive and present their collective identities. These phenomena not only demonstrate cultural adaptation but also reveal value conflicts, shifts in identity, and power negotiations across generations and among ethnic groups; however, the integration of local knowledge into daily education.

Socioeconomic changes and the spread of modernization (mass media, formal education, labor migration) have influenced traditional cultural practices in South Bangka. Some traditions have been preserved, while others have changed or declined in intensity. This phenomenon of changing traditions not only reflects cultural adaptation but also reveals value conflicts, shifts in identity, and power negotiations across generations and among ethnic groups. To capture the dynamics unfolding in the context of South Bangka, an in-depth ethnographic study is required (Agustin, 2024). Ethnographic studies focused on everyday practices can uncover layers of meaning that remain invisible through quantitative surveys; thus, a deep qualitative approach becomes a methodological necessity for this topic.

Furthermore, shifts in values within cultural practices are often influenced by regional identity policies (branding, cultural festivals), and a critical analysis is needed to

assess whether these policies are based on the will of the local community or merely on the will of those in power. The role of traditional leaders, religious figures, and formal institutions— from the village to the subdistrict level— as shapers of social norms needs to be explored, particularly how they mediate, manage, and shape value conflicts, manage change, and shape local cultural policies. Interventions often conflict with local values, creating a risk that these values may erode and disappear if policies are not sensitive to such issues. Opportunities to strengthen cultural practices are often linked to economic value, which unfortunately carries the risk of commodification and the loss of cultural values themselves. The debate over preservation versus modernization raises crucial questions: Who determines which cultural practices are “worthy” of being preserved, modified, or even eliminated? how can such values be considered “reasonable” by the community in South Bangka? and finally, who benefits from preserving, modifying, or eliminating cultural practices, particularly within the South Bangka context? To answer the questions raised above, an analysis will be conducted using Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, which examines how power operates through the determination of values and social consent (Siswati, 2018).

Previous studies have presented findings based on ethnographic research conducted in several villages and hamlets in South Bangka. In this study, the authors conducted research at the South Bangka Regency level. The study of “**Reading South Bangka from Within: An Ethnographic Exploration of Cultural Practices and Social Structures**” combines classical ethnography to capture the meanings attributed to cultural practices by the communities of South Bangka with a participatory approach. Against a backdrop of ethnic diversity, the dynamics of modernization, and a wealth of traditional practices, South Bangka offers a rich empirical setting for ethnographic research. Furthermore, a hegemony analysis is conducted to examine how actors, groups, or institutions holding power determine which cultural practices should be preserved, modified, or even eliminated—and how such decisions are accepted by the communities of South Bangka. Practically, this study aims to provide recommendations on preservation strategies that are inclusive, adaptive, and equitable, avoiding top-down decision-making that erodes local authority.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a significant body of research on the culture of South Bangka, including ethnographic studies of cultural dynamics. In an ethnographic study by Agustin (2024), it is noted that one of the cultural practices of Hikok Helawang in Irat Village, South Bangka, has been preserved because it serves a social function as a mechanism for uniting and maintaining the identity of the local community amidst the dynamics of modern life. Meanwhile, in the inter-ethnic sphere, Bangka (including South Bangka) is known for the harmonious relations between the Malay and Chinese ethnic communities. Destriadi (2022) notes that the two groups have fostered acculturation reflected in social rituals, local cuisine, and interfaith harmony practices that have developed naturally

without social coercion. In social anthropological studies, the local cultural phenomena in South Bangka—which consider the emergence of cultural symbols from the interaction between Malay and Chinese communities—not only reflect aesthetic values but also reveal how communities interpret their collective identity and social relationships (Yuliarni, 2024). This demonstrates an inclusive social structure with an emphasis on respect for differences (Destriadi, 2022).

Furthermore, ethnographic research examining the relationship between the ancestral traditions of the Bangka community and Islamic values as the foundation of their customs has not been overlooked. In this context, Saputra (2024), observing customary practices in Kemuja Village, Bangka, interprets these customs not merely as symbolic rituals but also as a social foundation that shapes their collective behavior and norms. According to him, Islamic values have, in fact, become deeply rooted in local traditions and have been passed down to the present day (Saputra, 2024). This is one of the factors influencing the social structure of South Bangka society, as customary norms in various aspects of community life remain intact. In her latest study, Dewi (2025), on customary law in Bangka, notes that customary norms not only regulate social relations among residents but also play a role in local conflict resolution mechanisms and the management of natural resources. Such inter-ethnic social interactions in South Bangka can serve as a community strategy to strengthen social harmony and integration within the framework of national unity. This aligns with the ethnographic research by Satya (2016) on the social context in Bangka, which indicates that social interaction encompasses the recognition of equality among ethnic groups as well as respect for each group's cultural practices (Satya, 2016).

However, Dewi (2025) revealed that the customary norms of the local community in Bangka face a critical reality and are even rendered ineffective by the presence of state law. Customary conflicts arising from such interests pose a challenge to the stability of the community's social structure. For instance, this is underscored by the analysis of the mapping of ethnic conflicts in Toboali, South Bangka, by Barkah (2016), which identified land disputes as the primary trigger of the conflict. In this regard, customary institutions, as local social structures, should ideally play a role in mitigating and preventing the outbreak of conflicts. On the other hand, the era of globalization further complicates a tradition if not wisely filtered. Adnan (2009) argued that one of the defining characteristics of postmodern society is the shift toward a more consumerist lifestyle, resulting in the blurring of cultural boundaries between elite and mass group. This phenomenon is further illustrated in Tanjung's (2023) research on the *Besaoh* tradition among farmers in Telak Village, West Bangka and as well as Herdiyanti's (2017) study on the traditional *mandi belimau* ritual in Jeda Bahrin Village, Bangka. Both studies conclude that a declining level of community engagement and enthusiasm in preserving local traditions.

Based on the literature review above, the ethnographic approach in the study of South Bangka culture is not limited to rituals and social norms alone, but also to how

communities interpret and assign meaning to social change. Previous research has tended to view cultural practices merely in terms of their functionality and harmony, rather than as a form of local power. Since a tradition possesses distinctive characteristics that are deeply ingrained and passed down through generations in a community, this study employs hegemony theory. This theory, popularized by Antonio Gramsci, conceptually views cultural practices and the social structure of local communities not merely as social values, but as processes through which traditions are formed, sustained, and negotiated in the face of changing times. As explained by Tami (2021) in her book, the position of hegemony theory within a cultural context is a struggle between old and new cultural positions (Tami et al., 2021:32). Consequently, an in-depth exploratory study is needed within the South Bangka community regarding how they maintain their identity while simultaneously negotiating social change in contemporary life amidst modernization, migration, and economic pressures.

### 3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using ethnographic methods. This approach was selected because the study focuses on a deep understanding of cultural practices, social structures, interpersonal relationships, and the dynamics of cultural change in South Bangka community. The ethnographic method enables researchers to directly engage the daily lives of the community members, while exploring cultural symbols, rituals, and the meanings socially constructed within the community (Hammersley, 2019; Spradley, 2006; Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted in several villages in South Bangka Regency that still actively practice cultural practices such as *Kawin Herdek*, *Hikok Helawang*, and *Tari Tigel*. The locations were selected using purposive sampling based on cultural relevance and representation of social structures (Neuman, 2014). Informants were selected using purposive sampling → traditional leaders, religious leaders, cultural practitioners, and village officials. Snowball sampling → additional informants based on recommendations from residents with a total of 8 informants (Miles, M. B., Huberman, 2014).

The data sources consist of primary data, namely participatory observations of traditional rituals (*Kawin Herdek*, *Hikok Helawang*, *Tari Tigel*), in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, young women who preserve culture, village heads, and residents, as well as field notes, visual documentation, and audio recordings. Secondary data consists of journals, theses, and research reports on the culture of South Bangka, as well as village documents, local government archives, local historical records, and online media articles on cultural traditions (Patton, 2002; Bogdan, 1993).

Data collection techniques through participatory observation involved researchers directly participating in community activities to understand interaction patterns, social roles, and the meaning of rituals (Kawulich, 2005). In-depth interviews were semi-structured interviews conducted to explore informants' perceptions, experiences, and knowledge of cultural practices and social structures (Rubin, 2012). Finally,

documentation is obtained from photographs, videos, village archives, traditional manuscripts, and relevant online sources to validate the results of observations and interviews (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis techniques were conducted inductively through three stages. First, data reduction, which involved grouping data into themes: cultural practices, social structures, social relations, traditional values, and modernization. Second, data presentation, which involved compiling data into ethnographic narratives, thematic tables, and descriptions of cultural contexts. Finally, conclusions are drawn iteratively based on triangulation and comparison of anthropological theories (Miles, M. B., Huberman, 1994).

#### **4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Cultural Practices of the South Bangka Community**

Cultural practices in South Bangka remain alive as a series of rituals, ceremonies, and daily customs that collectively reproduce social values such as mutual cooperation, gratitude, and community solidarity, which are very evident in the tradition of *nganggung* and traditional wedding rituals. The *Nganggung* tradition, as a typical example, serves a dual purpose: functionally, it organizes food distribution at social events; symbolically, it reproduces social relationships and norms of solidarity. Local studies show that *Nganggung* is still practiced even though its material form has adapted (Andieni, 2024).

The results of the interview with DOD as the Cultural Supervisor of the South Bangka Education and Culture Service said that, A number of local traditions such as *Hikok Helawang* (post-harvest ceremony/social hospitality), *Kawin Herdek* (mass weddings in several villages), and various ritual dances have become characteristic of South Bangka culture, demonstrating the direct link between economic activities, annual cycles, and cultural practices of the community. *Hikok Helawang* and similar rituals are still observed in several villages as collective rituals (Interview DOD, 2024).

Many traditional wedding rituals, including *Kawin Herdek*, are still preserved as a way of affirming community identity and facilitating interfamily ties, but their practice has undergone compression, cost adjustments, and sometimes selection of ritual elements for the sake of contemporary efficiency (Jamil, 2024; Rhamadhan, 2025). Some traditional practices have undergone material transformation. Traditional tools or clothing (e.g., wooden trays, serving hoods, woven fabrics) have been largely replaced by modern items (plastic, synthetic fabrics), but their symbolic significance is often preserved by cultural practitioners as a sign of continuity (Bunga, 2025; Ridwan, 2024). The integration of religious values into local rituals (e.g., incorporating prayers before *nganggung* or reinterpreting the *Tangkal* ritual) has become an important adaptive strategy for customs to be accepted by religious communities, helping to maintain the legitimacy of traditional practices in the modern era (Juniati, 2024).

Traditional dances, such as the *Tigel* Dance, illustrate how ritual cultures that were once sacred are now also aesthetic objects displayed on public stages and at cultural festivals, shifting their social function from internal rituals to public attractions. Field

studies show a decline in sacred functions as well as revitalization efforts to keep the dances alive (Haliza, 2025).

The practice of hereditary marriage (mass marriage) illustrates the mechanisms of solidarity and social redistribution in rural communities, while also functioning as an institution that binds extensive kinship networks. This practice persists because of its role in maintaining social relations among residents. A case study in Serdang Village and its surroundings documents the preservation and meaning of this ritual (Jamil, 2024).

On the other hand, the modernization process in terms of road access, communication, formal education, and social media has accelerated the influx of new cultures, exposing the younger generation to other lifestyle choices. The result is ambivalence, with some practices being preserved, some being commercialized, and others experiencing erosion. A review of local literature confirms the role of infrastructure and migration in cultural change.

The results of the interview with MRW as a historian of South Bangka said that, Changes in cultural practices are not always linear or homogeneous; there are adaptive patterns in which communities reformulate rituals to be relevant to contemporary economic and political needs, for example, packaging dances or festivals as potential cultural tourist attractions while retaining certain symbolic elements. Mechanisms of cultural transmission, from intergenerational, family, to informal schooling, are disrupted when young people move to cities for study or work. The loss of ‘in-situ learning’ leads to a decline in ritual skills (e.g., playing traditional instruments, reciting pantun) and a weakening of collective memory about old customs (Interview MRW, 2024).

Local institutions such as traditional leaders, village elders, mosque administrators, and festival organizers play a central role in selecting cultural elements that are considered worthy of preservation. These decisions are often the result of negotiations between traditional values and modern demands (tourism, funding, political legitimacy). The commodification of culture is a real phenomenon, with ritual events that were once private undergoing transformations in format, duration, and audience in order to be “suitable” for promotion. This has sparked debate about authenticity, whether what is being performed represents authentic practices or is the result of engineering for public consumption.

The results of the interview with SMD as the South Bangka Traditional Leader said that, Ethnic relations in South Bangka, between local Malays and immigrant groups (mostly Chinese, Bugis, and others), have resulted in hybrid cultural practices. Some traditions have been influenced by intercultural elements in music, food, and ceremonial arrangements. These negotiations of identity can result in harmony but also potential conflict when it comes to access to resources or symbolic representation (Interview SMD, 2024).

Religious views also shape changes in cultural practices. In many Malay communities in South Bangka, customs and Islam are intertwined, with ritual transformations often occurring through syncretic processes or, conversely, through

normative reinterpretations that filter out elements of custom considered to be contrary to dominant religious values.

The results of the interview with SMYT as the South Bangka Women's Traditional Leader said that, Women, despite being in a patriarchal structure, play an important role in maintaining cultural practices. They often become receptive guardians of ritual knowledge, traditional food artisans, or social event managers. However, women's opportunities to determine cultural narratives are often limited, making gender dynamics an important theme in cultural preservation analysis (Interview SMYT, 2024). Cultural practices related to nature, such as harvest rituals or fishermen's prayers for safety, are affected by environmental changes (coastal degradation, seasonal changes, land use change). When livelihoods change, complementary rituals related to ecological rhythms also lose their functional context. (Ardiyansa, R., 2024).

Local initiatives such as youth groups, art studios, and cultural NGOs are increasingly active in conducting documentation, workshops, and revitalization programs. These forms of intervention help to save elements that are nearly extinct, but they can also become a path to the institutionalization of culture that changes the origins of the practices. Formal education and local curricula can be tools for preservation when local content is included. A number of theses and studies at regional universities show efforts to teach traditional dance and indigenous skills through extracurricular programs. However, the scope and sustainability of these programs vary between regions (Anggraini, C., 2018).

Regional cultural policy (county/city policy) influences what is recognized as 'heritage' and how budgets are allocated. The setting of the cultural agenda often reflects the interests of the local elite, so cultural practices that are not politically or economically 'profitable' risk being neglected. Ritual practices are also seen as an arena for the reproduction of social capital through the exchange of guests, banquets, and collective processions, with individuals and families maintaining social networks that are useful for access to work, capital, or social support. Thus, the preservation of rituals is not merely a matter of symbolic value, but also a matter of socio-economic pragmatism.

The results of the interview with AT as a representative from the South Bangka Education and Culture Office said that, the adaptation of rituals is sometimes facilitated by the diaspora: migrants from South Bangka send back financial capital, ideas, and media (videos, photos) that help to 'revive' traditions in their hometowns. Social media has also become a space for promoting local festivals and gathering support. The battle of narratives about "what should be preserved" often arises between the older generation, who emphasize continuity, and the younger generation, who tend to seek economic and aesthetic relevance. This issue requires a space for intergenerational dialogue so that change does not trigger a sudden erosion of identity (Interview AT, 2024).

Ethnographic field studies underscore the importance of participatory methods. Researchers who collaborate with communities can document practices, train successors, and help develop community-based preservation models, which are more likely to result

in sustainable and locally accepted strategies. Participatory ethnographic approaches and collaborative research offer a way to design more sensitive preservation strategies. Researchers can work with communities to document practices, create local educational materials, and develop culture-based economic development models. Normatively, cultural preservation in South Bangka must consider intergenerational and intergroup social justice. Programs that only pursue tourism attractions or economic gains can reinforce inequality if the benefits are not shared fairly.

Some cultural practices are preserved through periodic (annual or seasonal) rituals. The frequency and continuity of these rituals are indicators of cultural health. If rituals are still performed regularly by local communities without external intervention, it is likely that these practices remain socially relevant. On the other hand, there are other practices that have been adapted into creative economic products, such as dance performances at tourist events or the sale of traditional foods at festivals. These changes provide economic benefits but risk impoverishing the original meaning of the rituals. Academic intervention and cooperation programs between universities/NGOs and local communities play a role in formulating preservation models that respect the cultural ownership of the community, rather than simply documenting and then “taking” representations for the benefit of outside parties.

The cultural practices of South Bangka occur through a combination of symbolic reproduction and daily rituals. They change in form and material, but are often preserved through the recontextualization of meaning, religious integration, the role of women, youth initiatives, and culturally sensitive institutional support. The continuity of these practices depends on the ability of communities and stakeholders to balance the preservation of values with the need for contemporary adaptation. South Bangka cultural practices continue because of the community's practical and emotional attachment to rituals and the social networks that support them. They change in response to modernity, economics, and politics, and are maintained through a combination of internal (traditional leaders, families, communities) and external (NGOs, academics, public policy) efforts. Effective preservation efforts will place communities as the main actors in determining their cultural future.

### **Social Structure of South Bangka Society**

The social structure of South Bangka society has historically been shaped by the intection of local Malay customs, migration patterns involving immigrants' communities such as the Chinese, Bugis, and Javanese, and the way the community organized its economy based on pepper farming and fishing. Local ecological and economic conditions determined who had access to resources, which in turn became the basis of social status. The kinship system and family networks are the primary foundation of the social structure. Extended families, clans' affiliations, and bilateral kinship relations significantly influence patterns of social support, inheritance of assets, and marriage

arrangements. Therefore, an individual's position in the family network has a direct impact on their ability to form broader social relationships.

Traditional leaders, mosque imams, and formal village leaders (village heads) form three complementary axes of authority. Traditional leaders interpret customary norms, imams maintain religious legitimacy, while village heads manage bureaucratic affairs. Together, they influence the legitimacy of community decisions and conflict resolution.

The results of the interview with SMD as the South Bangka Traditional Leader said that, the practice of mutual assistance (collective work) and reciprocity mechanisms strengthen social capital, such as celebrations, communal harvests, and community service, producing a network of reciprocal obligations that guarantee assistance in times of crisis. This type of social capital neutralizes some economic inequalities through practical solidarity (Interview SMD, 2024).

Economic stratification is clearly evident between land/boat owners and laborers: farmers who own large tracts of land or boat owners have access to capital and networks that give them higher status in the local hierarchy. Patron-client relationships emerge in the form of economic support accompanied by social loyalty. Customary values that are “based on syarak” (manners synergized with Islam) form moral norms that influence social reputation. Individuals who are considered religiously devout or who have certain ritual roles gain moral influence that affects their social position. Local rituals and traditions such as *Kawin Herdek* (mass marriage) demonstrate how social structures are manifested in collective practices. Such events strengthen kinship networks, demonstrate village solidarity, and distribute status through community participation. Field studies and local publications document the continued existence of *Kawin Herdek* in Serdang Village (Jamil, 2024; Wulandari, 2024).

The results of the interview with DOD as the Cultural Supervisor of the South Bangka Education and Culture Service said that, The *Hikok Helawang* tradition, which is associated with post-harvest rituals in several villages, shows how agrarian structures shape the social calendar. The implementation of rituals provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships between residents and reaffirm the role of families/hamlet heads in coordinating collective activities. Local documentation shows *Hikok Helawang* as a practice that is still alive and socially meaningful. Ritual arts such as the Tigel Dance reveal the symbolic dimensions of social structures. The dance, which was once sacred, has now become an indicator of the cultural status of the village, a bond for women as guardians of tradition, and a source of collective pride. Local research describes the transformation of the function of the Tigel Dance in the context of globalization (Interview DOD, 2024).

Results of interviews with ARY as a member of the community that, Inter-ethnic interactions (Malay–Chinese–Bugis–Javanese) form patterns of social alliances based on economics and space. Traders facilitate local market networks, while Malay families maintain their traditional roles. This pattern is generally stable but vulnerable to

competition for resources, which can cause friction. Gender is an important dimension: women often serve as guardians of domestic and ritual practices, as well as managers of traditional foods, thus occupying a key position in cultural reproduction despite patriarchal structures that limit public decision-making. Several local studies have noted an increase in the role of women in community organizations (Interview ARY, 2024).

Results of interviews with YS as a member of the community and educator that, Formal education has shifted the source of legitimacy for social positions such as teachers, scholars, and educated youth, who now enjoy a more respected social position alongside traditional leaders. This shift has changed the pattern of authority in community decision-making. Migration (seasonal or permanent) has formed a new social stratum. Successful migrants who send remittances often return home as sponsors of celebrations and ritual practices, so that their external economic capital gives them higher social status in their hometowns (Interview YS, 2024).

The modernization of infrastructure (roads, telecommunications, internet) has facilitated the dissemination of information and expanded social networks, but it has also weakened some traditional institutions because the younger generation has been exposed to alternative values and lifestyles. The commodification of culture (festivals, dance performances for tourism) affects social relations. Communities gain economic benefits but must also negotiate who has the right to perform the culture, how rituals are simplified, and who receives economic compensation. This raises debates about authenticity and cultural ownership.

Results of interviews with IAP as a member of the community that, the bureaucratization of customs through regional policies and local regulations standardizes certain cultural practices. Local government documents reflect formal efforts to recognize cultural symbols (such as traditional clothing), which has an impact on how symbolic status is produced institutionally. Conflict resolution mechanisms tend to prioritize deliberation among traditional leaders and religious leaders, who are involved in restoring social relations through consensus. These procedures demonstrate the existence of social institutions that maintain the cohesion of community structures (Interview IAP, 2024).

Social structures also influence access to public services. Extended families connected to the local elite have easier access to assistance programs or development projects, while marginalized groups are often excluded. These dynamics reproduce social inequality. The dynamics of the village social space in terms of hamlet division, house location, and land networks can influence who interacts more intensely. Spatial proximity strengthens daily social relationships and accelerates the transmission of norms and involvement in collective work.

The results of the interview with MRW as a historian of South Bangka said that, Harvest celebration rituals or sea rituals act as a mechanism for reifying structures in relation to the roles of certain actors (traditional leaders, responsible families, etc.), affirming social hierarchies while providing opportunities for these actors to strengthen their social legitimacy. Kinship and patronage networks come into play when collective

needs arise, such as medical expenses, weddings, and disasters, where extended families and patron-client relationships mobilize support. Therefore, personal relationships often determine access more than formal rules (Interview MRW, 2024).

The results of the interview with AM as a community and female customary leader said that, Modern economic pressures (commodity prices, market competition) encourage changes in social strategies, prompting families that were once dependent on a single livelihood to diversify economically, which changes patterns of social dependence and positions within the local structure. The role of social media and the diaspora help spread modified versions of village culture, such as videos, photos, and stories from migrants, which reconstruct the image of the community and sometimes bring resources (support, donors) that influence the status of the group performing the rituals (Interview AM, 2024).

Conservation efforts involving academics, NGOs, and local governments have given rise to community-based conservation models. This collaboration can strengthen the capacity of local organizations to manage cultural heritage and improve the distribution of economic benefits from cultural activities. The social structure of South Bangka is shaped by interactions between customs, religion, economics, and migration. This structure then influences relationships between individuals and groups through mechanisms of kinship, patronage, customary authority, and collective participation. Contemporary changes (modernization, policies, migration) reformulate social positions and relationships, but local institutions continue to play a key role in negotiating continuity and change.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The culture and social structure of South Bangka society constitute two interrelated and interdependent systems. Cultural practices such as *Kawin Herdek*, *Hikok Helawang*, *Tari Tigel*, harvest ceremonies, and traditions of mutual cooperation not only serve as expressions of cultural identity, but also as social arenas in which social structures are realized, negotiated, and sustained. Through these practices, the community reinforces the norms, values, and kinship ties that form the basis of social cohesion.

The social structure of the South Bangka community has been shaped by a combination of historical factors, local Malay customs, Islamic values, economic stratification, and interethnic interactions. The main strength of the social structure lies in kinship networks, local patronage, and the legitimacy of traditional and religious leaders who regulate daily social relations. This structure determines who participate in rituals, who possesses symbolic authority, and how conflicts are managed and resolved within the community.

In the context of contemporary social change, the cultural practices of the people of South Bangka have not disappeared, but have instead changed through the negotiation of values between tradition and modernity. Education, migration, social media, and local government policies have encouraged cultural revitalization and transformation, such as the commodification of traditions for tourism, the change in the function of rituals from

sacred to performance, and the increasing role of the younger generation in cultural preservation. Nevertheless, social structures remain the foundation that determines the direction of these changes: they regulate who has the authority to modify culture, how the distribution of cultural benefits is regulated, and how collective identity is maintained.

Overall, the discussion demonstrate that culture and social structures play a dual role: as a legacy that connects society with the past, and as a tool for adaptation that enables communities to face current challenges. Cultural practices survive because they are supported by a resilient social structure, while social structures remain relevant because they are continuously reproduced through rituals, traditions, and various forms of collective activity. Together, they form the resilience, identity, and social cohesion of the South Bangka community amid the increasingly rapid currents of social change.

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