

Tolak Balak Local Traditions of Sea Rituals in the Sabu Tribe of East Nusa Tenggara in the Midst of Modern Culture

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Abstract

The *Tolak Balak* ritual is an important tradition performed by the Sabu tribe in East Nusa Tenggara to ask for protection and safety from evil spirits. This ritual has been going on for a long time and is an important part of the *Jingitiu* religious beliefs. However, the impact of modernization has caused some major difficulties. This article looks at how the *Tolak Balak* ritual is adapting to the rapidly evolving social, cultural, and technological changes in Sabu society. Although modernization and technological advances make it easy, they also affect the way this tradition is performed and how the younger generation perceives it. This study shows that Savunese people can maintain the essence and meaning of the *Tolak Balak* ritual by changing and updating its implementation even though the changing times are destroying it. In addition, the article links this tradition to broader conversations about the preservation of local cultural heritage amidst modernization and globalization. This article provides insight into the importance of the *Tolak Balak* tradition for the people of Savu and shows how local traditions can survive and thrive in the face of today's challenges.

Keywords: Local tradition, Sabu tribe, *Tolak Balak*, modernisation, Indigenous People of Southeast Asia



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Introduction

The traditional Tolak Balak ceremony in the interior and rural areas of Indonesia is still widely practiced and preserved. However, the existence of local traditions such as the “Tolak Balak” ritual in a modern context is threatened with extinction. This is as stated by Can & Güneş, (2024), that currently, the world is on the verge of crisis in the economic, political, socio-cultural, and spiritual fields. Even in the context of Southeast Asia, local cultures face the pressure of global integration resulting in tensions between tradition and modernity (Sanmee, 2024). On the one hand, local cultural traditions are a treasure of civilization that needs to be preserved, but on the other hand, they are considered outdated and, therefore, unattractive to the younger generation. These traditions tend to be dominated by the older generation, who emphasise rituals to exorcise evil spirits. Ellis (2004) argues that local traditions such as the *Tolak Balak* rite are unique rituals that are considered to bring good luck to rural communities, especially in preserving the forest environment in a sustainable manner. They use forest resources as ingredients in ceremonies to ward off evil spirits and diseases, taking what is necessary without destroying nature, guided by a healer or shaman (Farmer, 2004).

This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and is still practiced in certain communities today. One example is observed among the Jingitui community of the Sabu tribe in East Nusa Tenggara. This ritual is often performed during significant life cycle events, such as weddings, births, house blessings, and sea alms ceremonies (Lailiyah et al., 2023). Practitioners of the *Tolak Balak* tradition believe that performing these ancient rituals can protect and benefit their families and homes. They also hold that these practices can drive away evil spirits and invoke blessings from their ancestors (Hidajat, 2016; Syam et al., 2023).

Shamans and traditional leaders play a central role in the *Tolak Balak* ceremonies, which are regarded as effective in warding off evil spirits. The tradition remains valued by those who wish to preserve their cultural heritage and maintain connections with the mystical forces believed to influence their lives (Hidajat, 2016). In rural communities, families transmit knowledge of this ritual from one generation to the next, ensuring its continuity today. The *Tolak Balak* tradition serves as a lasting reminder of the power of cultural practices (Mujibudin, 2025) and the persistence of enduring beliefs amid societal progress (Boring, 2012; Chaniotis, 2006).

Preserving and maintaining local customs has become increasingly important in today's rapidly changing world. Rich cultural heritages passed down through generations are at risk of being forgotten as modern lifestyles continue to prevail. Upholding local traditions contributes to sustaining a strong sense of belonging and identity within tribal communities (Allen et al., 2021). Rituals of the past enable current generations to recall history and engage with the values of their ancestors (Segara et al., 2023).

As Ives and Kidwell (2019) explain, local rituals and traditions are direct expressions of ancestral values and beliefs rather than merely symbolic acts. These rituals bridge the past

and the present. In contemporary times, the *Tolak Balak* ritual remains relevant, functioning as a conduit between past and present and promoting a more inclusive and harmonious society (Mustolehudin et al., 2024).

Previous research has examined the tradition of *Tolak Balak* from various perspectives. The Sabu Tribe, with its strong local traditions and located in the western part of Sabu Island in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), maintains close connections with marine culture, given that the island is surrounded by the sea. This relationship is reflected in rituals such as *Tolak Balak*, which are performed to drive away evil spirits and ensure the safety of island inhabitants. Studies on the cultural traditions of the Sabu tribe have largely focused on Jingitui religious syncretism and Islam–Christian relations (Moru, 2022).

Lampe (2021) states that traditional ceremonies in maritime cultures serve as spaces where ethnically diverse groups of seafarers interact, fostering awareness of the importance of recognizing maritime culture in the archipelago. Research has shown that maritime culture can facilitate cultural acculturation, as observed in the Bajo coastal communities (Rahman et al., 2023). In addition, maritime culture provides mechanisms for social control through various sea-related ceremonies (Maulidyna, 2021).

Research conducted by Indrahti and Andita Meirina (2021) indicates that traditional coastal ceremonies help protect nature and cultivate a spirit of communal cooperation in environmental preservation. According to Adeliya and Fateah (2024), the *Tolak Balak* ceremony in Sabu carries symbolic significance for nature conservation. This ceremony is performed within the maritime cultural tradition, using prayers recited in the local language.

Customary practices are also maintained by the Savunese community to safeguard both nature and social harmony (Widjaja, 2022). Ly et al. (2023) explain that the Savunese adhere to customary principles passed down orally through generations. Saputra et al. (2019) further note that local wisdom regarding the tradition of bad luck in the Savunese community serves to promote social harmony, support local religious systems, and strengthen social structures. These findings demonstrate that ritual discourse has become an integral aspect of traditional social institutions.

This study examines how the *Tolak Balak* ritual adapts to cultural and technological changes. In this context, it is essential to understand the interaction between local traditions and international cultural flows. The study specifically focuses on the beliefs and social conditions of the Seba-Sabu Raijua community, as well as the challenges posed by modernization to the practice of the *Tolak Balak* ritual at Seba-Sabu Raijua Beach. The purpose of this study is to expand knowledge of the ancient culture preserved and safeguarded by the Jingitui religious community of the Sabu tribe in East Nusa Tenggara.

Research Methods

Qualitative methods were employed to conduct research on the Sabu tribe in East Nusa Tenggara (Dillon, 2003; Lune, Howard, & Berg, 2017). The main purpose of this study

is to gain an understanding of the customs and beliefs of the Sabu tribe, who continue to practice the *Tolak Balak* tradition at Seba-Sabu Raijua Beach. In daily life, members of the Sabu community who adhere to the ancestral Jingitui religion still preserve the *Tolak Balak* ritual.

Data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, and desk research. Key informants included religious leaders, traditional leaders, and government officials from the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Sabu Raijua Regency. Field observations were conducted at Seba-Sabu Beach to witness the ritual directly. Researchers also examined socio-religious aspects through literature review, gathering information from books, journals, dissertations, and other relevant sources (Danandjaja, 2014).

This is not the first study on the rituals of the Sabu people who follow the Jingitui ancestral religion. Duggan (2009) noted that adherents of the local Jingitui religion were feared to be declining due to widespread conversion to Christianity; however, at the time of the research, the ancestral religion maintaining these ritual practices was experiencing growth. This is evidenced by the fact that this community remains larger than other religious groups, such as Islam. Quantitatively, the number of adherents is as follows: Jingitui ancestral religion, 5,087; Christians, 87,284; Catholics, 2,724; and Muslims, 934 (Logo, 2023). Data from the Civil Registry Office of Sabu Raijua Regency confirms that the Sabu community continues to strongly adhere to Jingitui beliefs and practices, including the *Tolak Balak* ritual.

The analysis of the bad luck ritual practices is based on primary data (observations and interviews) and secondary data from relevant previous research. This approach aligns with the objectives of qualitative research, which aim to understand phenomena within their natural social context, prioritizing communication and interaction between the researcher and the studied phenomenon (Lune, Howard, & Berg, 2017). Researchers followed five main steps in analyzing the data: clustering, reduction, elimination, grouping, and validation. Initially, notes were made on relevant informants and field observations. Subsequently, data pertinent to the research themes were selected, sorted, and categorised. Triangulation of data from multiple sources, including additional informants and written documents, was conducted to ensure the validity of the findings.

The Sabu Tribe: Culture, Beliefs, and Maritime Traditions

A small community known as the Sabu Tribe is located on the island of Sabu in Indonesia. The island lies in the East Nusa Tenggara province and is part of the Lesser Sunda Islands. According to Duggan, Geneviève, and Hägerdal (2018), most Sabu people possess a unique language, customs, and way of life. The community relies heavily on agriculture and fishing for their livelihood, and traditional customs and beliefs play a central role in their daily lives. Despite living in remote areas, the Sabu people have successfully maintained their cultural identity and traditions, which have been passed down from generation to generation.

In terms of socio-religious history, the Sabu ethnic population initially embraced the Jingitiu belief, originating from an ancient ritual system that existed prior to Dutch colonialism (Duggan, Geneviève, & Hägerdal, 2018; Wellfelt, 2020). Soao (2021) notes that this ancient belief dates back to the massive migration of South Indians to Savu in the 3rd and 4th centuries and is considered the foundation of the Savu ethnic identity.

These ancient beliefs, rooted in nature and ancestor worship, played a crucial role in shaping the culture and customs of the Savunese people (Timo et al., 2022; Widjaja, 2022). With the arrival of colonial powers, the region's religious landscape underwent significant changes. The introduction of Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam, indirectly influenced local beliefs. Nevertheless, despite the adoption of Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam, the community continues to preserve the customs and local wisdom of the Sabu people. Elements of Jingitiu belief remain present in daily life, particularly in the honoring of ancestors through rituals and ceremonies, as expressed by Deo Leo, a traditional leader of the Sabu tribe.

The Sabu community continues to uphold various traditional rituals, including the *Tolak Balak* ceremony at Napia Seba Beach, which aims to ward off misfortune from the sea and protect Jingitiu residents from all forms of distress (April 2025).

This tradition has been practiced for centuries and transmitted by their ancestors. The island of Sabu is surrounded by the ocean, which has become a vital source of life. The sea provides sustenance, trade opportunities, and spiritual connection, making it central to the Sabu people's culture. Fishermen venture into the waters daily to secure their livelihood, and ceremonies performed along the shore or on the water underscore the sea's cultural significance. For the Savunese, the ocean symbolises their identity and connection to both nature and material resources (Billore & Hägerdal, 2019).

For the Sabu people, the sea is not only a source of sustenance but also a symbol of resilience and adaptability. They have navigated numerous storms and dangerous waters, yet their bond with the ocean has helped them endure adversity. The ocean provides inspiration and motivation, reminding them of the strength and power within. It permeates their lives, shaping habits, beliefs, and principles. According to Duggan, Geneviève, and Hägerdal (2018), the ocean serves as both a spiritual and physical boundary, connecting the Sabu people to nature and their ancestors.

The *Tolak Balak* tradition, passed down through generations, is closely linked to the beliefs of the Savunese people. According to Taggok and Hawari (2021), this tradition enables the people of Savu to express gratitude and respect for the sea while maintaining a strong relationship with this vital element. During the *Tolak Balak* ceremony, goats, roosters, rice, water, and cooking utensils are prepared as offerings (Adeliya & Fateah, 2024). The elders seek protection and prosperity from the sea, demonstrating their devotion through prayers and ritual performances. When the community gathers, they share stories of their ancestors' journeys and reinforce their enduring connection to the sea, which continues to provide sustenance. The *Tolak Balak* tradition functions both as a cultural custom and a means for the people of Savu to reaffirm their identity and bond with nature.

The ceremony serves as a reminder of their origins and the importance of respecting and valuing the natural resources that sustain their way of life. According to Syukur (2022), it is a profound spiritual experience, filled with reverence and gratitude for the blessings the sea provides. The Sabu people experience a sense of peace and harmony as boats carry their offerings into the ocean, confident that their prayers are heard and their ancestors are watching over them. The *Tolak Balak* ceremony remains a living tradition, continuously strengthening the connection between the community and the sea for generations to come.

***Tolak Balak* Ritual at Napia Sabu Sea Estuary**

The sacred *Tolak Balak* tradition has been passed down through generations in this village. The ceremony is believed to appease the sea spirits and protect the community from harm. During the ritual, village elders and shamans perform a series of prayers, chants, and offerings. Every step of the ritual is carried out with great care and reverence, as villagers believe that any mistake may anger the sea spirits and bring misfortune to the village. The *Tolak Balak* ritual holds profound significance in the village's culture and belief system, and all participants treat it as a respected and solemn tradition (Hidajat, 2016).

According to Margarita (April 2024), the ceremony functions both to reject bad luck and to prevent various negative supernatural forces from returning to the land, thereby safeguarding human agriculture and livestock.

The *Tolak Balak* ceremony is conducted during the day, when the sun is at its peak. It involves relatively few participants and is considered a small-scale tradition within the Sabu community. The ceremony is led by a traditional elder named Deo Leo. The day before the ritual, preparations for the ceremonial tools are made, as explained by Nando, a cultural leader on the island of Sabu. These tools include chickens, sheep, rice, water, and cooking utensils (interview with Nando, April 2024).

On the appointed day, Friday, April 19, 2024, at 10:00 WITA, participants began to gather at the Napia estuary to perform the *Tolak Balak* ceremony. The estuary is located approximately five minutes by motorcycle from Seba-Sabu Rajjua Harbor. According to the author's notes, nine people participated: one traditional elder, one cook named Beni Deo, and other members of the Sabu tribe.

The participants arrived at Napia Beach carrying male goats, roosters, rice, cooking utensils, and a dining mat made of palm leaves. Once assembled, the elders and community members sat in a small circle under a palm tree by the estuary. Dressed in simple traditional clothing, the elders provided explanations to the participants about the ceremony.

The ritual began with the slaughter of the rooster. According to Jingitui belief, the chicken is killed by stabbing directly into its heart. After plucking the feathers, the rooster is prepared for cooking. In this ceremony, the chicken is boiled with only salt, without any other spices. Once the rice is cooked and the chicken is ready, the meat is cut into small pieces. Portions of chicken head, rice, and small pieces of meat are placed on a plate made of woven palm leaves. The elders then offer prayers over the food, which is placed in a

sacred location within the bushes at the mouth of the Napia Sea. After the offerings are made, the rice is shared and eaten together by the participants.

Afterward, the male goat was slaughtered, its hair cleaned, and the meat cut into small pieces. Once the goat meat was cooked, the head of the goat was blessed by the traditional leader through prayers in the Sabu language. Following this, the customary leader and the Sabu tribe community present at the ritual shared the meal together. The goat meat that had been prayed over during the ceremony could also be taken home, cooked with spices, and eaten with family members. The following items are considered uborampe in the *Tolak Balak* ritual.

Although the ceremony of rejecting bad luck is simple, it carries deep symbolic meanings for the Sabu people. The primary purpose of the *Tolak Balak* ceremony is to ward off misfortune from the sea, protecting Jingitiu residents from various dangers. For the Sabu people, the sea is a vital source of livelihood, as the island community is entirely surrounded by it. The rice placed in woven palm leaf containers holds significant symbolic meaning.

In Sabu tribal culture, rice is a potent symbol in this ritual. As a representation of blessing and fertility, it reflects the wish that the surrounding nature and community continue to enjoy abundance and prosperity. Each grain of rice arranged in the woven leaves represents a prayer offered to the forces of nature and ancestral spirits.

The *Tolak Balak* ritual is performed to prevent calamities or disasters that might affect the community. After the rice in the woven leaves is placed, the ceremony typically continues with the recitation of prayers or mantras seeking protection from spirits considered responsible for maintaining the balance of nature. The ritual is usually carried out collectively, making it not only a spiritual practice but also a means of fostering solidarity among community members (Jana et al., 2024; Julianto et al., 2021).

The persistence of the *Tolak Balak* tradition among the Sabu tribe demonstrates its sustainability; even in the modern era, the ritual continues to be preserved. Despite living in a society increasingly influenced by technological advancements, the people of Sabu Raijua still perform *Tolak Balak*. Such rituals help maintain cultural identity and sustain a spiritual connection with nature and ancestors (Sibarani, 2018).

The *Tolak Balak* tradition in Sabu Raijua embodies numerous cultural, social, and spiritual values. By using rice and woven leaves as ritual media, this ceremony allows the people of Sabu Raijua to communicate with natural and spiritual forces while upholding their traditional values (Hakim, 2022; Sahrul et al., 2024). It also demonstrates how the community maintains a connection to nature and their ancestors despite living in a modern world. The *Tolak Balak* ritual plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, strengthening social bonds, and fostering a sense of solidarity among the people of Sabu Raijua.

The *Tolak Balak* ceremony is a sacred tradition with profound significance for its practitioners. The symbolic gestures and spiritual beliefs associated with the ritual are thought to bring blessings and protection to the Sabu tribe, who adhere to ancestral religious practices (Segara et al., 2023). However, this ancient tradition faces potential threats from modern lifestyles, particularly among younger generations who may not be introduced to local

customs.

Impact of Modernisation on Traditional Practices

Challenges to the *Tolak Balak* tradition are becoming increasingly apparent in the face of modernisation (Timo et al., 2022). As technology advances and globalisation spreads, people's values and beliefs are tested. Younger generations, exposed to new ideas and ways of life, may question the relevance of ancient rituals and customs. Traditional practices that once held significance may now appear outdated or unnecessary in today's fast-paced world. Community elders face the difficult task of preserving their cultural heritage while adapting to changing times. The impact of modernisation on the *Tolak Balak* tradition is a complex issue that requires careful consideration and thoughtful dialogue among all members of the Sabu tribal community.

As the younger generation becomes more vocal in questioning traditional practices, tensions within the community may intensify. Some may argue that maintaining outdated customs will stifle progress and hinder a society's ability to thrive in a rapidly evolving world (Davis, 2022). Others may fear that abandoning these rituals will result in a loss of cultural identity and connection to their ancestors. Striking a balance between honouring the past and embracing the future is a delicate task that requires open-mindedness and a willingness to consider differing perspectives. The *Tolak Balak* tradition, once a unifying force within the community, now stands at a crossroads, with its survival dependent on the ability of its members to find common ground.

While the younger generation pushes for change and modernisation, the older generation continues to uphold the traditions and values passed down by their ancestors. The tension between these groups has created divisions within society and risks tearing it apart if no resolution is reached. Moving forward requires compromise from both sides, blending the old with the new in a manner that respects the past while embracing the future. Only through collaboration and mutual understanding can the *Tolak Balak* tradition continue to thrive and evolve in a changing world.

The younger generation, in particular, appears less interested in participating in the *Tolak Balak* tradition, as observed during the ceremony at the Napia Sabu estuary, which shows limited involvement from young people. Many young members of the Sabu tribe perceive the tradition as outdated and irrelevant to modern life (Lun & Bond, 2013). This lack of enthusiasm exacerbates the resentment felt by elders, who view it as a rejection of their heritage and a disregard for the sacrifices of their ancestors. As this generational gap widens, it becomes evident that finding common ground is no simple task. However, with open communication and a willingness to listen to each other, there remains hope for reconciliation and a renewed sense of unity within the community.

These traditions should be connected to modernisation, where local culture can play a key role in sustaining the marine ecosystem. As expressed by Padege (interview, April 2024), this ritual can return all supernatural forces that damage and endanger the land and

villages to their rightful place in the sea.

It is therefore essential for the younger and older generations to understand each other's perspectives and motivations. The younger generation must recognise the importance of preserving cultural heritage and respecting their ancestors, while the older generation must appreciate the changing times and the need for adaptation (Khairutdinova et al., 2022). By coming together to discuss differences and identify ways to bridge generational gaps, they can work towards a future that honours the past while embracing the present. Achieving this requires patience, empathy, and a willingness to compromise, yet the potential benefits of a united community make the effort worthwhile.

Such collaborative efforts also foster a sense of unity and belonging among community members, strengthening bonds and cultivating a shared identity. By engaging in dialogue and actively listening to one another, both generations can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives. Through mutual respect and understanding, they can create a more inclusive and harmonious community that values both tradition and progress (Wardhani et al., 2023). Striking this balance paves the way for a brighter and more sustainable future for all.

Cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations should be treated with care and consideration. Community members must remain vigilant and proactive in safeguarding their heritage against external forces that may seek to erode or diminish its significance. By staying informed and united in preservation efforts, communities can resist such influences and maintain the integrity of their unique identities (Durney, 2023). Collective action in protecting heritage serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of cultural preservation and the enduring value of time-tested traditions.

In addition to external threats, internal challenges within communities can also jeopardise cultural heritage. Disagreements over the practice or interpretation of traditions, coupled with shifting values among younger generations, may create tensions and divisions. Open and respectful dialogue is crucial to overcoming these differences and finding common ground in preserving a shared heritage. By fostering unity and cooperation, communities can surmount internal barriers and reinforce their commitment to protecting their cultural identity for future generations.

This can be achieved through initiatives such as cultural education programmes, inter-generational storytelling, and collaborative projects that celebrate and showcase traditional practices. Actively involving all community members in the preservation and promotion of their heritage cultivates a sense of ownership and pride, thereby enhancing unity and resilience in the face of external challenges (Tahara et al., 2023). Moreover, fostering inclusivity and diversity within communities helps bridge gaps and nurtures a greater appreciation of the richness and complexity of shared cultural heritage. Ultimately, through collective efforts to safeguard their cultural identity, communities can ensure that their traditions and values continue to thrive and evolve in ways that are meaningful and relevant to future generations.

Efforts to Preserve *Tolak Balak*

The practice of *Tolak Balak* has played a vital role in preserving this significant aspect of cultural heritage. Through collaborative initiatives and grassroots organising, community members have come together to ensure that the knowledge and traditions associated with *Tolak Balak* are transmitted to future generations. By organising workshops, festivals, and educational programmes, these initiatives have raised awareness and fostered appreciation of this unique ritual practice. Furthermore, efforts to document and archive the history and significance of *Tolak Balak* are essential to ensure that this cultural tradition remains vibrant and relevant in the contemporary world. As a result of these collective endeavours, *Tolak Balak* has not only survived but flourished, becoming a source of pride and identity for the Sabu tribal community in particular (Supradewi, 2020).

The ongoing practice of *Tolak Balak* has also attracted the attention of researchers and scholars, leading to further exploration and understanding of its cultural significance. Through academic studies and publications, the ritual has gained recognition beyond the local community, contributing to its preservation and promotion on a broader scale. This increased visibility has additionally attracted tourists and visitors keen to witness the unique spectacle of *Tolak Balak*, further cementing its status as a cherished tradition in the region. The enduring legacy of *Tolak Balak* stands as a testament to the resilience and richness of the community's cultural heritage.

The sustained interest in the ritual has inspired researchers and scholars from diverse disciplines to examine its origins and meanings more closely. This interdisciplinary approach has illuminated the historical and social context of *Tolak Balak*, revealing connections with other cultural practices and traditions in the region. Consequently, the ritual has become the subject of academic research and discussion, further enriching our understanding of its cultural importance. Moreover, the increased academic attention has fostered collaboration with local communities to document and safeguard the practices associated with *Tolak Balak*, ensuring that future generations can experience and value this vital cultural tradition (Stasulane, 2019).

Such collaboration has not only helped preserve the knowledge and practices surrounding *Tolak Balak* but also cultivated a sense of pride and ownership among community members. Through these partnerships, new insights and perspectives have emerged, challenging previous assumptions and stereotypes about the ritual and its participants. By working together, academics and local communities have developed a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of *Tolak Balak*, highlighting its enduring relevance and significance in the modern world.

Integration of *Tolak Balak* into Tourism and Cultural Programmes

The Sabu tribal community collectively needs to promote its unique heritage to a wider audience. By sharing the story behind *Tolak Balak* and inviting visitors to participate in

the celebration, the community can showcase its traditions and values to outsiders. This not only helps generate interest in the community's culture but also provides economic opportunities for local businesses and artisans. Furthermore, integrating *Tolak Balak* into tourism and cultural programmes facilitates cross-cultural exchange and understanding, as visitors can learn about the importance of tradition and its role in community identity (Kadri, 2022). Overall, the inclusion of *Tolak Balak* in such initiatives helps preserve and promote the community's cultural heritage while fostering relationships with people from diverse backgrounds.

Increased visibility and appreciation of *Tolak Balak* can cultivate a sense of pride and validation among community members who have long practiced and upheld this tradition. It also serves as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and values to younger generations, ensuring that the tradition continues to thrive. Through these tourism and cultural programmes, communities can display the beauty and distinctiveness of *Tolak Balak* to a wider audience, thereby generating curiosity and admiration for their cultural practices. As more people become aware of and engaged with *Tolak Balak*, the community can experience growth in tourism revenue and opportunities for cultural exchange, further solidifying its position within the global cultural landscape (Truna, 2021).

Moreover, by actively engaging visitors and sharing their traditions, communities can foster a stronger sense of pride and ownership over their cultural heritage. This engagement encourages greater preservation efforts and enhances community cohesion. As *Tolak Balak* gains recognition on a global scale, opportunities for collaboration with other cultures and communities may arise, enriching the cultural exchange and diversity. In this way, tourism and cultural programmes benefit the community not only economically but also socially and culturally, helping to ensure the continued vitality and relevance of *Tolak Balak* for future generations (Bui et al., 2020).

By promoting sustainable tourism practices and creating opportunities for local participation in preserving and sharing their cultural heritage, *Tolak Balak* can continue to develop and evolve in a manner that respects its traditions and values. Encouraging community involvement in cultural initiatives also strengthens social bonds and fosters a greater sense of belonging and pride among residents. When communities work collectively to safeguard and promote the unique heritage of *Tolak Balak*, they set an example for other cultures seeking to preserve their traditions in a rapidly changing world. Through collaboration and cooperation, *Tolak Balak* can not only safeguard its past but also build a more vibrant and inclusive future for all who identify with it (Adeliya & Fateah, 2024).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how the *Tolak Balak* ritual of the Sabu community in Seba-Sabu Raijua, East Nusa Tenggara, has evolved in response to cultural and technological developments. It highlights the interplay between rich local traditions and the broader currents of globalisation and modernisation. Despite the pressures of social and technological

change, the people of Savu, particularly adherents of the Jingitui religion, have successfully maintained and sustained this ritual as a central aspect of their cultural identity.

Although modernisation poses challenges, the *Tolak Balak* ritual—deeply rooted in the local beliefs of the Sabu people—continues to function as a symbol of the persistence of tradition and local wisdom. At the same time, aspects such as the implementation of the ritual, the dissemination of information, and the younger generation's understanding of traditional values are increasingly influenced by technology and global cultural trends.

This study illustrates that the Sabu community has managed to preserve and adapt the *Tolak Balak* ritual without losing its core essence, despite the pressures of modernisation. It underscores the importance of passing on an understanding of this balance to future generations, ensuring that technological progress does not come at the expense of cultural heritage. The ritual serves not only as a religious ceremony but also as a vital means of connecting the past, present, and future of the Savunese community, reinforcing their identity and continuity across generations.

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