

Kaombo-Ombo: Wabula Maritime Heritage as Customary Coastal Defense in ASEAN Marine Governance

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Abstract: *This paper discusses Kaombo-Ombo, a maritime tradition among Wabula community in Buton Regency in Southeast Sulawesi. Kaombo-Ombo is considered as customary coastal defense in terms of non-traditional maritime security and ASEAN Marine Governance approach. Though there is no doubt about its role as customary wisdom and a way of conserving natural wealth, Kaombo-Ombo is regarded as a means to handle non-traditional maritime insecurity such as overfishing, destructive fishing activities, degradation of coastal ecosystems, and conflicts over marine resources. By using a qualitative literature-based case study with a socio-legal analytical perspective, this paper investigates how Kaombo-Ombo uses customary rules, institutions, community surveillance, and punishment for ensuring the health of coastal ecosystem. It reveals that Kaombo-Ombo follows Elinor Ostrom's recommendations on managing common pool resources in terms of clear boundaries, collective choice, communal monitoring, and graduated sanctions to promote social compliance. In addition, the paper argues that Kaombo-Ombo can be applied within ASEAN Marine Governance approach through its participatory and sustainable community-based management of the sea. Therefore, Kaombo-Ombo is not just customary wisdom; it is customary coastal defense approach to promote maritime security at various levels.*

Keywords: *Kaombo-Ombo; Customary Coastal Defense; Non-Traditional Maritime Security.*

INTRODUCTION

Kaombo-Ombo is a coastal customary practice followed by the Wabula Indigenous People in Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. This traditional practice was developed during the era of Buton Sultanate in the 14th century. The term kaombo refers to marine tenancy rights held by the Wabula while ombo refers to prohibitions on people from entering, disturbing, or conducting prohibited activities in the area for a certain time frame (DINNA DAYANA LAODE MALIM, 2022). Historically, Kaombo-Ombo ensured preparation for urgent needs of the royal court and the kadie. However, at present times, Kaombo-Ombo can be understood as local knowledge that reflects a coastal governance system involving rules, institutions, and monitoring mechanisms aimed at maintaining ecological conditions and preserving marine resources within the customary area.

Wabula District is a coastal region with diverse marine biota. Coral reef ecosystem, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds represent three main ecosystems of this coastal territory. Specifically, coral reefs occupy an area of 554.2 ha, mangrove forests cover 49.4 ha, and seagrasses occupy an area of approximately 709.8 ha (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019). Altogether, marine resources found in Wabula occupy an area of around 47,140 hectares (La Ode Fitriyadi Nur Syawal & Moh Abdi Suhufan, 2022). The previous studies indicate that Kaombo marine resource management system provides periods of restricted resource use that allow marine species such as fish, top shells, and sea cucumbers to breed, ensuring that their utilization remains sustainable. This point can be substantiated through survey findings revealing that the coral reefs, seagrass, and mangroves remain in excellent condition and have a relatively high count (La Ode Fitriyadi Nur Syawal & Moh Abdi Suhufan, 2022).

The chosen topic is essential in today's world as the concept of the maritime domain has shifted from being strictly military-oriented to also considering the problem of environmental degradation, resource harvesting, access struggles, the vulnerability of the coast inhabitants, as well as the inefficiency of marine governance. According to Christian Bueger, the notion of maritime security intersects with numerous others, including marine safety, the blue economy, and human resilience (Christian Bueger & Timothy Edmunds, 2024). In this regard, Kaombo-Ombo can be seen as a non-state provider of coast security, addressing environmental degradation, uncontrolled harvesting of resources, and ineffective marine governance through local norms and traditions.

Research into Kaombo-Ombo in Wabula is presented in the scientific paper "Patterns of Marine Resource Utilization Based on Local Wisdom among the Wabula Community in Buton Regency" written by Tamar Mustari, Sulhan Manaf, and La Ode Abdul Munafi. Specifically, the research reveals that the Wabula community possesses a certain type of local wisdom that can be described as Kaombo – a term meaning marine areas secured by customary law. For an area known as Kaombo, it is forbidden to use marine resources in order to ensure the sustainability of marine life reproduction (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019). The violation results in customary sanctions. The Wabula customary jurisdiction is protected by Buton Regent Regulation No. 13 of 2018. Thus, the research proposes that local institutions be strengthened as the model for the sustainable management of marine resources. However, its limitation is it is not that comprehensive to examine Kaombo from the point of view of the traditional coastal defense against non-traditional maritime challenges.

"Strengthening the Resilience of Coastal Communities through the Customary Law System: The Case of Wabula Customary Sea Governance" is another study conducted by Salam and Slamet. The paper highlights the positive influence of community governance on the resilience of coastal communities. Maritime customary norms enable the reduction in overfishing since 78 percent of traditional fishermen observe them (Salam & Slamet, 2026). In the study, Kaombo-Ombo is not considered a traditional means of coastal defense against non-traditional maritime threats. Moreover, the practice of Kaombo-Ombo is not associated with the regional marine governance strategy. The research makes up for this gap as it examines Kaombo-Ombo as a traditional coastal defense system which provides Indonesia with maritime security and ASEAN marine governance.

Hasriyanti, Evita, Samiyem, and Samsu Taufiq Hidayat examine the Ombo-Kaombo practice within the context of the local wisdom of the Wabula community regarding sustainable marine resource management through their article entitled "Ombo-Kaombo as a Form of Local Wisdom of the Wabula Community in Sustainable Marine Resource Management." Hasriyanti et al. argue that refraining from utilizing the marine resources for some period and the sanctions imposed in response to the violation practices contribute to the conservation of the marine environment (Hasriyanti et al., 2024). The limitation of the article in question is its focus on the issue of sustainable marine resource management alone without addressing whether Ombo-Kaombo can be considered as traditional coastal defense against non-traditional maritime threats.

The article titled "Engaging Customary Law to Improve the Effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas in Indonesia," by Trialfhianty, Quinn, and Beger examines various customary laws in relation to the management and conservation of marine resources. It focuses on the interaction between customary management and conservation and the potential contribution of customary law in achieving conservation objectives (Trialfhianty et al., 2025). Its limitation lies in incomprehensiveness to consider Ombo-Kaombo in Wabula as one of the traditional maritime practices that have served as coastal defense against non-traditional maritime threats. However, Kaombo-Ombo can be described as local wisdom, as a means of resource conservation, and as a custom regulating maritime rights. Despite the above-stated, Kaombo-Ombo has not been analyzed sufficiently as a means of non-traditional maritime security. Prior research studies have failed to associate Kaombo-Ombo with notions such as non-traditional maritime security and community-based coastal defenses. Contemporary discussions regarding maritime security do not involve the threat to the seas posed solely by state military forces. Instead, non-traditional maritime threats include exploitation of resources, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, etc.

The significance of the current study is the analysis of the role Kaombo-Ombo practice played in terms of coastal defense against non-traditional maritime threats. Threats including marine resource exploitation, destructive fishing activities, environmental degradation, and poor coastal surveillance cannot necessarily be addressed on the part of the state. Therefore, Kaombo-Ombo practice can be viewed as a means of coastal defense due to the use of customary laws, control over resource extraction, and protection of the environment. Conservation practices qualify as security-related mechanisms only when they are institutionally connected to identifiable threats and involve organized forms of access control, monitoring, rule enforcement, sanctions or conflict resolution. Consequently, Indigenous communities could be viewed as non-state actors who contribute to the resilience of the coastal ecosystems, society, and institutions.

The problem is that Kaombo-Ombo has been perceived exclusively as a means of resource conservation, a form of customary law, and local wisdom of the Wabula. A further limitation is the lack of studies that have connected Kaombo-Ombo to concepts such as traditional coastal defense, non-traditional maritime security, community-based marine governance, and ASEAN Marine Governance. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

1. How does Kaombo-Ombo operate as a traditional coastal defense against non-traditional threats to maritime security in the Wabula coast?
2. What ways does the Wabula Indigenous community embrace the concept of community-based marine governance?
3. How does Kaombo-Ombo relate to the evolution of ASEAN Marine Governance?

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Explain how Kaombo-Ombo operates as a traditional coastal defense against non-traditional threats, such as resource exploitation, destructive fishing practices, environmental degradation, and ineffective coastal surveillance and monitoring systems.
2. Elucidate on how Kaombo-Ombo embodies the community-based marine governance concept through traditional authorities, community participation, community monitoring, and community enforcement or punishment measures.
3. Discuss the relationship between Kaombo-Ombo and the ASEAN Marine Governance concept, with an emphasis on how Kaombo-Ombo represents the community-based model of ASEAN Marine Governance, which is characterized by inclusion, participation, sustainability, and respect for indigenous coastal communities.

METHODS

The present research applies a qualitative literature-based case study with a socio-legal analytical perspective. This perspective makes it possible to analyze law in relation to documented social processes rather than focusing solely on legal norms and regulations. It means that the analysis cannot rely only on traditional definitions of maritime security. Instead, there is a need to examine how existing literature and documentary sources describe the ways local institutions control marine resources and how these practices relate to ASEAN regional marine governance. Thus, the socio-legal perspective provides an appropriate analytical lens for examining the relationship between normative arrangements and documented social practices in coastal communities (Umar Sholahudin, 2017). The literature-based case study is applied to focus specifically on the Kaombo-Ombo system of the Wabula Indigenous community in Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, based on existing scholarly and documentary evidence. This approach allows the study to develop an in-depth understanding of Kaombo-Ombo within its specific social and institutional context (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). Thus, in addition to examining Kaombo-Ombo as a conservation practice and customary law, the study analyzes its documented mechanisms in relation to coastal community protection and non-traditional maritime security.

The study relies on secondary data obtained from literature and documentary sources relevant to the Kaombo-Ombo case. These sources include scientific journal articles, books, reports from national and international organizations, marine governance studies, customary law materials, and community-based research. To support the legal and regional analysis, the study also examines relevant legal and policy documents, including Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, Buton Regent Regulation No. 13 of 2018, and Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 26 of 2014. At the regional level, the analysis draws on ASEAN policy documents, including the ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Marine Living Resources and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. Reports from international organizations, such as the IPCC (2022) report on climate change impacts on marine ecosystems, are used to provide broader environmental context. Scientific articles and books addressing community-based marine governance, local wisdom, maritime customary law, and maritime security in Southeast Asia are further used to support the conceptual analysis of the Kaombo-Ombo case (Undari Sulung & Mohamad Muspawi, 2024).

According to (Lexy J. & Moleong, 2004), the data is subjected to analysis using the following sequence: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process of data analysis according to the author can be explained as follows:

First, in the data reduction stage, relevant information from the selected literature and documentary sources was identified and organized into several analytical categories, including resource exploitation, destructive fishing practices, environmental degradation, coastal surveillance and monitoring, marine resource management within the Kaombo-Ombo system, ecosystem protection, and social resilience in the Wabula community.

The next stage applied the perspective of non-traditional maritime security to examine how the documented mechanisms of Kaombo-Ombo contribute to addressing ecological and social vulnerabilities that may affect maritime security. In this context, maritime security is understood not only in relation to protection from conventional threats but also in relation to resource sustainability and the resilience of coastal communities. Kaombo-Ombo is interpreted as a form of customary coastal defense only where its documented mechanisms contribute to reducing non-traditional maritime vulnerabilities through resource-access control, community monitoring, customary enforcement, ecosystem protection, or the strengthening of coastal community resilience.

The following stage applied the community-based marine governance perspective to examine how traditional authorities, customary rules, community participation, community monitoring, enforcement and sanctions, and social legitimacy shape the management and protection of marine resources. The documented institutional arrangements of Kaombo-Ombo were also compared with Ostrom's principles of common-pool resource governance, with correspondence identified only where supporting documentary evidence was available.

There are certain limitations to this study. Firstly, the study relies entirely on secondary data and does not include field observations or direct interviews with members of the Wabula Indigenous community and other relevant stakeholders. To mitigate this limitation, the study draws on scholarly works, books, and institutional reports that contain findings from previous field research on the Wabula community and the Kaombo-Ombo system. Second, the study does not provide a direct ecological assessment of the sustainability of marine resource management practices within Kaombo-Ombo. Therefore, ecological conditions are examined through findings reported in relevant empirical studies and credible institutional sources, with evidence from multiple sources compared. Third, interpreting Kaombo-Ombo as customary coastal defense may involve conceptual and normative bias because the practice has primarily been documented as customary law, local wisdom, and marine resource conservation. To minimize this limitation, conservation practices are not automatically classified as customary coastal defense. The interpretation is limited to documented mechanisms that demonstrate a connection with the reduction of non-traditional maritime vulnerabilities, particularly through resource-access control, community monitoring, customary enforcement, ecosystem protection, and coastal community resilience. The analysis is therefore grounded in the selected documentary evidence and interpreted through the perspectives of non-traditional maritime security and community-based marine governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kaombo-Ombo as Customary Coastal Defense from the Perspective of Non-Traditional Maritime Security

Generally, maritime security concerns issues about old threats to a nation's security. This involves attempts by the state to defend itself from various forms of danger from other states including invasion, armed attack, or coercion by another state through its military might (Ayu Laksmi Saraswati & Ni Komang Desy Arya Pinatih, 2020). However, recent trends in the global seascapes indicate the need for protection from new forms of danger to the seas involving ecological destruction and resource overuse. The concept of security has also been transformed from merely ensuring defense from any external danger to ensuring security and environmental integrity of the state. Destruction of the environment and resource overuse may result in reduced livelihood, food security, and resilience of coastal communities (Akim & Tika Tazkya Nurdyawati, 2021).

The perspective of Christian Bueger on maritime security provides an adequate framework of analysis in the context of the case study. His perspective is based on three pillars, which include the blue economy and human resilience, sea power, and marine safety (Christian Bueger & Timothy Edmund, 2024). Each of the security actors has various dimensions depending on the nature of conditions and threats involved. In this case, the threat is emanating from the blue economy, which includes overfishing, destructive fishing, and deterioration of marine economies.

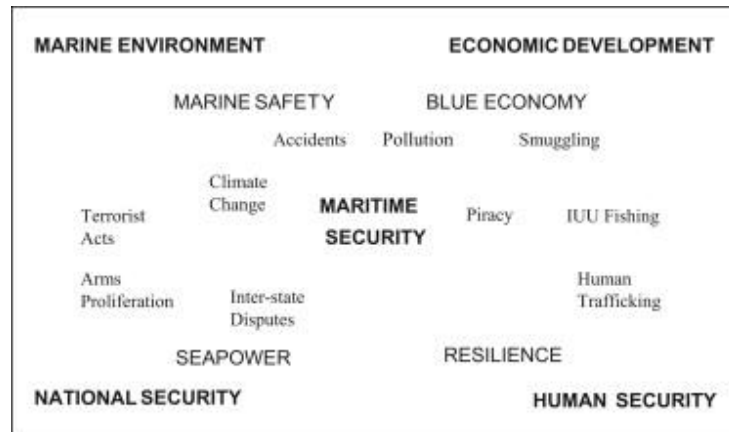


Figure 1. Maritime security matrix

Figure 1 illustrates the maritime security matrix used to frame the relationship between marine safety, the blue economy, sea power, and human resilience.

Maritime security challenges today include overfishing, poor fishing practices, and marine ecosystem destruction. If left unresolved, these can result in disputes related to resource utilization. The problems affect not only people but also marine biodiversity and may negatively influence the sustainability of marine resources, fishermen's income stability, and resilience of coastal communities.

For instance, in 2022, half of Indonesia's fish stock is overfished. It caused various problems including poor reproduction, unbalance in marine ecosystem, disruption of food chain, and even extinction of certain species (Dieva Ahmad Habibie et al., 2024). Destructive fishing practice damages coral reefs, which poses threats to existence of numerous sea creatures. According to a research conducted by Mahmudin, Chair Rani, and Hamzah, fish abundance around coral reef that was destroyed was significantly lower compared to that near intact coral (Mahmudin et al., 2020).

Disputes concerning access to coastal resources would limit communities' possibilities to use those resources necessary for living. In Kei Islands, degrading of the fisheries and depletion of fish stock resulted in rising tensions and conflicts between coastal communities due to competition for access to marine resources (Yamazaki et al., 2018). All the abovementioned problems might negatively affect coastal community economy. Therefore, Kaombo-Ombo can prevent these issues in Wabula Village.

Contemporary coastal defense goes beyond securing land from any military attack; it includes safeguarding the environmental roles upon which the livelihoods of communities depend. The concept correlates with human security, according to which human safety, economic opportunities, and environmental integrity form security components (Richard Jolly & Deepayan Basu Ray, 2006). Kaombo-Ombo defense practice in Wabula is a good illustration of such an approach towards defending the coast that not only preserves the environment but serves as a form of preventative defense strategy. It is achieved through resource governance improvement, monitoring, and conservation of the ecosystem.

Community-Based Governance in the Kaombo-Ombo Practice of the Wabula Community

Two types of Kaombo areas are identified among the Wabula group; namely kaombo saumuru and kaombo awaktuu. First, kaombo saumuru refers to a marine area that is permanently prohibited for exploitation, given that it is considered sacred. The kaombo saumuru area is believed to be inhabited by spiritual beings whose activities might endanger human existence. Meanwhile, the second one, kaombo awaktuu, refers to areas that are subject to closure or opening at specific points of time (Tamar

Mustari et al., 2019). Normally, kaombo awaktuu areas are situated in the coastal regions and are utilized by fishers.

Based on local custom, naming a marine area as kaombo awaktuu begins with musyawarah sara, meaning customary discussion. Aspects covered in musyawarah sara include setting the boundary of the marine area declared kaombo for a specific period of time, specifying the species of marine life that are prohibited for catching during kaombo status, as well as determining the violation penalties in the area. When all agreements have been made, the marking process of kaombo awaktuu boundaries will be conducted by sumukanoombo, who is responsible as a customary official in the region. Usually, monitoring the kaombo area is handled by members of the community. However, it is the task of a customary official called sumukanoombo (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019).

Consequences that follow when the regulations are violated are sanctioned through traditional means. The punishments include warnings, trial conducted at Galampa (the hall where meetings of Wabula take place), fines either in cash or in fish form, ban on fishing either temporarily or permanently from traditional water bodies, and social exclusion. The customary council that has the power to implement this sanction is known as sara, and it is headed by parabela (DINNA DAYANA LAODE MALIM, 2022). Failure to pay fines leads to the generation of debts that become generational. The purpose of implementing sanctions is to minimize conflict in the community and to end harmful practices related to exploiting marine resources in Wabula.

In the event that the violation emanates from those outside of Buton, the procedure used will be slightly different. In accordance with Etnoekologi Nelayan, the typical offenders are the Bajo people, fishers from Sinjai Regency, and fishermen from Bulukumba. They report violations to sarano adati and the village head (Andri Adri Arief, 2022). The two groups hold discussions that lead to the determination of sanctions to be applied. If there is imposition of fines worth the value of the marine species caught, and the individual fails to pay the fines, the case is handed over to the police.

According to Elinor Ostrom from a community guided approach, communities could use their common-pool resources effectively through clearly defined boundary, appropriate rules, monitoring systems, graduated sanctions, recognition of community organization, and effective communication (Elinor Ostrom, 1990). In this case, the common-pool resources refer to the sea natural resources used jointly. The management of Wabula community's marine natural resources is done following all the eight indicators according to Ostrom. Table 1 illustrates how these eight indicators correspond to the Kaombo-Ombo practices followed by the Wabula community:

Table 1. Elinor Ostrom principles and Kaombo-Ombo practice

No.	Elinor Ostrom Principle	Meaning of the Principle	Kaombo-Ombo Practice
1	Clearly defined boundaries	The parties that have the right to withdraw resources from a CPR and the boundaries of the CPR are clearly defined.	Kaombo-Ombo designates certain marine areas as zones that are temporarily closed or restricted for various marine activities, whether through kaombo saumuru or kaombo awaktuu (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019). In addition, parties other than the Wabula community are also subject to this customary law (Andri Adri Arief, 2022).
2	Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions	The CPR rules are consistent with the local conditions of the community.	Kaombo-Ombo clearly regulates the types of biota that may not be harvested and determination of sanctions by the village head (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019) (DINNA DAYANA LAODE MALIM, 2022).
3	Collective-choice arrangements	The involvement of people affected by governance rules in formulating those rules.	The designation of kaombo awaktuu is carried out through musyawarah sara, which discusses area boundaries, protected biota, and sanctions that involves the society (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019).
4	Monitoring	Monitoring the condition of the CPR and the individuals who use the CPR.	Monitoring is carried out by the local community and a customary official known as the sumukanoombo (Tamar Mustari et al., 2019).
5	Graduated sanctions	Violators are subject to different sanctions	Customary sanctions may include verbal warnings, customary trials at the Galampa, monetary fines or confiscation of catches, restrictions on access to

No.	Elinor Ostrom Principle	Meaning of the Principle	Kaombo-Ombo Practice
		according to the level of violation committed.	customary waters, and social exclusion (DINNA DAYANA LAODE MALIM, 2022).
6	Conflict-resolution mechanisms	The existence of conflict-resolution mechanisms among resource users and decision-makers.	Violations are brought to customary forums, including customary trials at the Galampa. If the violator comes from outside Wabula, the case may be reported to the village head or even to the police (DINNA DAYANA LAODE MALIM, 2022).
7	Minimal recognition of rights to organize	The authority of the customary community is not challenged by external parties.	The existence of the Wabula customary law community and customary-based management of coastal and marine resources is recognized through Buton Regent Regulation Number 13 of 2018 (Pemerintah Daerah Buton, 2018).
8	Nested enterprises	The existence of multiple levels of governance institutions.	Kaombo-Ombo is implemented by the Indigenous community, Sara/Sara Kadie, Parabela, Wati, Sumukanoombo, the village head, and even the police (Andri Adri Arief, 2022).

The use of the aforementioned customary arrangement is not only environmentally sustainable but also helps to regulate fishing in the region. From their research, Safrin Salam and Agus Slamet argue that about 78% of local fishermen adhere to the regulation concerning fishing areas and the types of equipment allowed to use. The result is conservation of the fish stock, reduction in overfishing, and an increase in the earnings of the fishermen. Customary law is followed by the people because they find the laws just and reflective of community values.

The Relevance of Kaombo-Ombo to ASEAN Marine Governance

The Kaombo-Ombo system in place for the Wabula community is important not only within the country but also in terms of marine governance in Southeast Asia and specifically ASEAN Marine Governance. ASEAN is a region which borders the sea and faces great challenges in sustainable governance of the marine ecosystem within its jurisdictions. The marine environments of Southeast Asia suffer from challenges such as IUU fishing, destruction of the coastal environment, and coastal population struggling with overexploitation of the resources available (SEAFDEC, 2015). Because the region boasts one of the world's most complex marine ecosystems, governance practices should incorporate law-based approaches and acknowledge the involvement of coastal communities of indigenous backgrounds in such activities.

Currently, several frameworks such as the ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Marine Living Resources and the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Maritime Cooperation have been established within the framework of ASEAN. They have the goal of conserving the marine environment, protecting biodiversity and ensuring sustainability in governance of ASEAN coastal-marine areas. Nevertheless, their implementation has failed to involve the active contribution of coastal communities in the governance process. Kaombo-Ombo offers a good alternative practice as it satisfies three principles increasingly emphasized in sustainable marine governance.

First, as for engagement, Kaombo-Ombo reveals that, in addition to being a subject of policies, Indigenous coastal communities are active stakeholders in marine resource management policies. The process of *musyawarah sara* in naming *kaombo awaktuu* is a deliberative process that enables all community members to have their say (Mustari et al., 2018). As it was mentioned above, community participation is emphasized in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint.

Second, as for participation, the community-based monitoring process conducted by the *sumukanoombo* along with the whole community demonstrates that community-based governance can be implemented successfully despite not being completely based on the actions of the state authorities. Approximately 78 percent of traditional Wabula fishers adhere to the rule stated in customary law (Salam & Slamet, 2026). Jentoft, quoted by Bavinck, states that customary laws are obeyed as they are fair, consistent with the local values, and developed through cooperation with the locals.

Finally, when discussing sustainability, one should consider the condition of the ecosystems. 554.2 ha of coral reefs, 49.4 ha of mangrove forests, and 709.8 ha of seagrass beds (La Ode Fitriyadi Nur

Syawal & Moh Abdi Suhufan, 2022) demonstrate that a locally-driven process yields impressive and sustainable results. It provides a good example for the implementation of marine conservation initiatives in other ASEAN countries (Subianto, 2023).

The relevance of Kaombo-Ombo to ASEAN marine governance can be located more specifically within regional instruments that promote sustainable marine-resource management, community participation, and coastal resilience. Rather than constituting an ASEAN governance model in itself, Kaombo-Ombo demonstrates locally embedded practices such as participatory rule-making, community monitoring, resource-access restrictions, and customary enforcement that may complement ASEAN commitments to sustainable and inclusive marine governance.

At the regional institutional level, the relevance of Kaombo-Ombo would depend on existing ASEAN sectoral mechanisms dealing with coastal and marine environmental management, fisheries governance, and community resilience. These mechanisms provide potential entry points for sharing community-based monitoring practices, incorporating customary knowledge into coastal-management programmes, and strengthening the participation of local communities in marine-resource governance. The role of such ASEAN mechanisms would therefore be to facilitate policy learning and exchange of good practices rather than to formally reproduce the Wabula customary system across Member States.

If Indigenous coastal communities have strong and formally recognized forms of governance such as Buton Regent Regulation Number 13 of 2018, they would be much better equipped in tackling external factors such as foreign IUU fishers and corporations that are exploiting their marine ecosystem. This is because environmental degradation to the extent of threatening lives in the area could be classified as maritime security in terms of the environmental perspective. In essence, Kaombo-Ombo's effectiveness in ensuring that Wabula marine ecosystem remains stable goes beyond conservations since it promotes maritime security in Southeast Asia.

Kaombo-Ombo, therefore, does not exist in Wabula Island just as a local culture but rather a form of coastal defense that is crucial for the achievement of sustainable marine governance in ASEAN. The environmental protection, social resilience building, and community-based surveillance mechanisms incorporated in Kaombo-Ombo make indigenous cultures go beyond mere conservation of resources. Instead, they emerge as actors of maritime security in Southeast Asia.

Despite its significance as a form of governance system, Kaombo-Ombo experiences various difficulties that can undermine the system as an applicable governance structure. Table 2 presents several issues that can provide lessons for ASEAN Marine Governance regarding the relevance of Kaombo-Ombo:

Table 2. Challenges of Kaombo-Ombo and relevance for ASEAN

No.	Challenge	Facts on the Ground	Relevance for ASEAN
1.	Weakening of Wabula customary institutions	Customary authority has been taken over by the village government and sanctions are no longer enforced because village policies often contradict local traditions and trigger conflict (Nur Syawal, 2022).	Customary concepts can be replicated by ASEAN only if local authority still has real legitimacy and strength.
2.	Decline of maritime culture across generations	Younger generations are leaving coastal areas for cities, causing local wisdom values to fade and intergenerational knowledge transmission to be disrupted (Buenavista & Purnobasuki, 2023).	The threat of disrupted customary knowledge chains is also felt by coastal communities across ASEAN, especially in Indonesia.
3.	Illegal fishing vessels and fishers from outside the area	Purse seine vessels from South Sulawesi operate illegally in zones I-II, and fish aggregating devices are installed only 1.5 km from the coast, far below the 16 km limit (Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 26/2014).	Customary communities are the first line of defense against IUU Fishing, but their capacity is limited without state support and cross-border ASEAN cooperation.
4.	Climate crisis and overfishing	The IPCC (2022) projects that 99% of coral reefs will bleach in 2030-2050, and 38% of Indonesia's fish stocks have exceeded the recovery capacity of national ecosystems.	Customary systems need to be supported by stronger ASEAN regional climate commitments so that local adaptation can be meaningful at a broader scale.

No.	Challenge	Facts on the Ground	Relevance for ASEAN
5.	Intergenerational extinction of the fisher profession	The number of national fishers decreased by 9.5% in one year, from 2.64 million to 2.39 million in 2018-2019.	Customary systems are losing their human foundation. The ASEAN agenda must include the economic welfare dimension of fishers so that community-based governance remains alive.

However, indigenous governance at the community level cannot operate independently; it requires consistent institutional support, appropriate cross-sectoral policies, protection from external forces, and a commitment from the region on climate change. In the context of ASEAN, the Kaombo-Ombo principle tells us that integration of indigenous knowledge systems into the broader regional governance process does not simply mean recognizing its existence. Rather, we need to ensure the creation of the institutional structures for the continued relevancy of such a system.

CONCLUSION

Based on empirical evidence, Kaombo-Ombo is a custom-based coastal defense mechanism that can address non-conventional maritime risks. Such risks may consist of overexploitation of sea resources, unsustainable fishing methods, coastal ecological degradation, and conflicts regarding natural resources utilization. In this case, the Kaombo-Ombo concept employs a set of community-based access regulations, monitoring, and penalties to enhance social and ecological resilience among coastal communities. Thus, in practice, the Kaombo-Ombo phenomenon exemplifies community-based marine governance through meaningful participation, sound traditional institutions, and monitoring and regulation measures that enjoy social legitimacy. Consequently, Kaombo-Ombo represents a model of sustainable community-based marine resources management. As such, Kaombo-Ombo is highly applicable in the development of ASEAN Marine Governance since it provides a community-based model of sustainable marine governance. Hence, Kaombo-Ombo is a reflection of indigenous wisdom of the Wabula community and can be viewed as an adat-based coastal defense strategy.

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