

**The Representation of *Mengkanau* Cultural Identity in Central Bangka:
A Stuart Hall Perspective****Alfi Yusrin, Fitri Umayah ✉, Intan Trikurniati, Syta Sahla, Clarera Widiarsi**

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 23 September 2026 Approved 08 October 2026 Published 10 October 2026 Keywords: The <i>Mengkanau</i> Tribe, Stuart Hall, Murok Jerami, Cultural Identity, History	This research aims to describe and analyze the representation of the cultural identity of the <i>Mengkanau</i> tribe in <i>Namang Village</i> , Central Bangka, through history, traditions, cultural symbols and traditional language using Hall's 1997 representation theory. Although previous research has examined local traditions and cultural preservation, the representation of <i>Mengkanau</i> cultural identity through historical narratives, <i>Murok Jerami</i> traditions, cultural symbols, and traditional language has not been widely researched. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, with data collection through field observations, interviews with traditional leaders, documentation and literature study. Data were analyzed thematically and interpretively. Research findings show that <i>Mengkanau</i> cultural identity is represented through oral narratives regarding the origins and graves of ancestors including the figure of <i>Abok Pateh</i> and the Murok Jerami tradition; cultural symbols such as white clothes, <i>Cuken</i> , and seven stalks of rice; as well as traditional terms such as <i>ume</i> , <i>asok</i> , and <i>mengelo</i> . This identity continues to be passed on to the younger generation, despite changes in several traditions, as reflected in the reduced practice of Taber Kampung and the replacement of traditional houses with miniature ones. This study contributes to the documentation and understanding of <i>Mengkanau</i> cultural identity by highlighting how this identity is represented, inherited and transformed across generations.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a wide variety of languages, cultures, ethnic groups, and traditions that form an important part of the nation's identity. Each region has its own cultural characteristics that have been passed down from generation to generation since ancient times. Local culture is not only a form of cultural heritage but also plays a role in helping communities recognize, express, and preserve their identities. However, amid the rapid pace of globalization, the existence of local cultures faces various obstacles caused by technological

advancements, social changes, and the strong influence of foreign cultures.

This has led to changes in the way people think, behave, and interpret culture in some communities. Local culture is an identity that must be preserved because it represents the history, values, and character of a community (Adde et al., 2025). One local culture worth studying is found in Central Bangka Regency, specifically among the *Mengkanau* people in *Namang Village*, who possess a wide variety of traditions and cultural practices that reflect their community's identity. Indonesia is a country with a rich diversity of languages,

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cultures, ethnic groups, and traditions, all of which are an important part of the nation's identity. Each region has its own cultural characteristics that are passed down from one generation to the next. Local cultures are not only a form of cultural heritage but also play a role in helping communities recognize, express, and preserve their identities.

In the *Bangka Belitung* Islands specifically in Central Bangka Regency there are a variety of local traditions that are still known and practiced by the community, such as *Murok Jerami*, *Ruwah Kubur*, *Tangkal*, *Ngiluk Durin*, *Nganggung*, and *Mauludan*. These various traditions reflect the values, beliefs, and customs passed down from generation to generation in the community's daily life. One tradition closely tied to the cultural life of the people of *Namang Village* is *Murok Jerami*. This tradition is not merely a cultural activity but also carries meanings and values relevant to the lives of the local community.

Research on the culture and traditions of *Bangka Belitung* has been conducted extensively, but it generally focuses on a single tradition or specific cultural aspect, such as *Murok Jerami*, *Tangkal*, *Ruwah Kubur*, *Nganggung*, and *Mauludan* (Anjelika et al., 2025; Juniati et al., 2024; Detia Yati et al., 2023; Permatasari et al., 2022; Rismawaty & Deria, 2021).

Research specifically examining the *Mengkanau* community in *Namang Village* as a cultural identity encompassing language, customs, traditions, and cultural symbols remains limited. Previous research by Anjelika et al. (2025), for example, has examined the *Murok Jerami* tradition, emphasizing the meanings and values embedded in its practice.

However, that study focused primarily on the *Murok Jerami* tradition as a cultural practice and did not explore more broadly its relationship to the overall cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people. Therefore, *Murok Jerami* can serve as an important component in understanding the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people; however, this identity must be viewed in conjunction with other cultural elements.

The *Mengkanau* people are a local community living in *Namang Village*, Central Bangka Regency. The cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people is reflected in various cultural

elements, such as traditions, language, customs, historical narratives, cultural symbols, and knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

These elements not only reflect their customs but also form part of how the community understands and expresses who they are as a cultural group. Although some studies have examined certain local traditions, detailed research that comprehensively explores the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people remains limited. Research on *Murok Jerami*, for example, explores the meaning and value of a specific tradition but does not specifically explain how these cultural elements collectively shape and represent the identity of the *Mengkanau* community. This highlights a research gap that warrants further investigation, particularly regarding how the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people is represented through the various cultural elements still preserved by the community there.

Therefore, this study aims to represent and identify the identity, culture, traditions, and language of the *Mengkanau* tribe amid the passage of time and social change. This study employs Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity. This theory was chosen because, according to Hall, cultural identity is shaped by processes of representation, history, experience, language, and social interaction. Cultural representation is the process of conveying the meaning of identity through various cultural practices and social interactions carried out by a community (Sholichah et al., 2023). The traditions and cultural elements possessed by a community can serve as indicators of how the *Mengkanau* people understand and represent their identity.

Research on the representation of the *Mengkanau* tribe's cultural identity is important because of the limited number of previous studies that have comprehensively examined the cultural identity of this community. Social changes and the development of modern life also affect the continuity of various cultural practices passed down from previous generations. This study will address two main research questions: which cultural elements represent the identity of the *Mengkanau* tribe, and how the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* tribe is represented. This study argues that the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people is represented through traditions, language,

cultural symbols, and historical heritage. These cultural elements demonstrate how the *Mengkanau* people shape and maintain their cultural identity from Hall's perspective.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for describing and analyzing representations of the *Mengkanau* people's cultural identity through traditions, language, traditional attire, symbols, and cultural practices observed in the field. Creswell & Creswel (2023) explain that qualitative research focuses on description and interpretation, rather than on numbers. This study was conducted in Namang Village, Central Bangka Regency, and consisted of four stages: field observation, data collection, data analysis, and data synthesis.

This study involved five Informants selected using purposive sampling that is, intentionally selecting individuals with firsthand knowledge of the history, traditions, and cultural life of the *Mengkanau* community. The five Informants were: a traditional leader, a traditional chief, the village head of Namang, and two native residents of Namang who are descendants of the *Mengkanau* tribe. The traditional figure and the traditional leader were chosen for their authority regarding traditional knowledge and the practice of the Murok Jerami tradition. The village head was chosen for his understanding of the community's social and administrative context.

The two residents were chosen to provide the perspective of ordinary community members regarding how traditions, language, and identity are lived out and understood in daily life. Thus, the Informants represent perspectives from the customary, governmental, and community levels. Data was collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review. Field observations and interviews were conducted over four days in Namang Village, Central Bangka Regency, to gain an understanding of the cultural life of the *Mengkanau* community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five Informants to gather information about traditions, language, traditional attire, cultural symbols, and the evolving identity within the

community. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed into text files for analysis. Documentation consisted of photographs and audio recordings of the interviews and cultural activities, which were used as supporting data to reinforce the findings from the observations and interviews.

The literature review serves as secondary data and an analytical tool, not as a substitute for field data. Additional information was obtained from scientific sources available online, including journal articles and other academic publications on the *Mengkanau* people, the culture of Bangka Belitung, and Hall's theory of representation. These sources were used for three purposes: to provide historical and cultural background on the *Mengkanau* community, to construct a theoretical framework for interpreting the data, and to compare and verify information obtained from Informants. The data were analyzed thematically and interpretively using Hall's theory of representation.

The analysis involved identifying data related to cultural elements of the *Mengkanau* community, grouping the data into themes that emerged from interviews, observations, and documentation, and then interpreting them while taking into account the social and cultural context of the community. The representation approach was used to examine how the *Mengkanau* community's cultural identity is constructed and interpreted through the Murok Jerami tradition, language, traditional attire, symbols, and other cultural practices.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from various Informants and documentary sources. In addition, the results of data analysis and interpretation were reviewed by fellow researchers to minimize the possibility of subjectivity in the analysis process (Tunggele, 2022). The results of the analysis were then compiled into research findings that served as the basis for the discussion on the representation of the *Mengkanau* people's cultural identity through tradition, language, and culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *Mengkanau* people are an indigenous group originating from the Bangka Belitung Islands, specifically in the village of *Namang*, West Bangka Regency. Interviews with Informants reveal that the history and genealogy of the *Mengkanau* people are not preserved in a single, complete written record, but are instead scattered throughout the community, passed down through oral traditions from one generation to the next, and preserved in physical traces such as ancient graves and maps from the Dutch colonial era. The following presents the research findings, organized into four subsections: the history of the *Mengkanau* people's origins and genealogy; the *Mengkanau* people's ritual identity and traditions; cultural symbols and language; and finally, the transmission, preservation, and transformation of culture.

History and Origin of the *Mengkanau* Tribe

Findings indicate that the historical origins of the *Mengkanau* people are closely tied to the region known as *Mengkanau*, which serves as a key reference point for the formation of their cultural identity. Based on interviews with local Informants, the *Namang* community is part of the *Mengkanau* Malay ethnic group, whose ancestors once lived in the *Mengkanau* region, approximately 2.5 kilometers from the current village center. The term "*Mengkanau*" originally referred to the name of the region where the community lived and was later associated with the identity of the *Mengkanau* Malay people. The region was chosen as a settlement site because it provided access to water sources and *kelekak* a mixed orchard of fruit trees and timber trees.

These environmental resources support the community's daily life and contribute to the development of their settlement and cultural practices. From the perspective of Hall's theory of representation, the historical relationship between the community and the *Mengkanau* region contributes to the formation of cultural identity by providing a shared frame of reference regarding the community's origins, environment, and collective history.

According to the Informant, the *Mengkanau* people's settlements were spread out across the forest and gardens to protect young girls from the

threat of Dutch colonizers; thus, adult men would only return to the village on Fridays to perform Friday prayers before heading back to the gardens.

The historical identity of the *Mengkanau* people is reflected in oral narratives about their ancestors and the graves of important figures. The village chief explained that the *Mengkanau* area is associated with the grave of Abok Pateh:

Mengkanau itu nama daerah, di sini memang ada makam atau kuburan, ceritanya yang pertama itu Abok Pateh. Narasumber 1, Juli 22, 2026.

'*Mengkanau* is the name of the area, where there are graves, including the grave of Abok Pateh. Informant 1, July 22, 2026.'

This statement explains that ancestral graves are considered part of the *Mengkanau* tribe's historical identity, as these graves connect the *Mengkanau* tribe's geographical territories through oral stories passed down through generations. From the perspective of Hall's constructivism, the meaning of "*Mengkanau*" is constructed through oral traditions that link a specific place to ancestral history. According to Naik (2025), oral traditions play a role in passing down and transmitting historical memory, identity, and moral values across generations. Based on the Informant's account, the name "*Mengkanau*" itself refers to a region containing several ancient graves, one of which is the grave of Abok Pateh.

Therefore, *Abok Pateh's* grave is more than just a burial site. The grave serves as a marker of the community's historical memory. The Informant further explained that *Abok Pateh* is described as a *demang* (regent) whose territory stretched from *Simpang Rimba* to *Penyak* and *Koba*, and that the name "*Mengkanau*" is mentioned as part of *Abok Pateh's* domain.

This information is corroborated by statements from traditional leaders, who also mentioned the existence of the graves of *Patih* and *Ake Kuros* figures believed to have managed the area in the past. Both sources stated that the path leading to these graves used to be a narrow trail, or what is known as a *Lorong Tikus*, located in the *Mengkanau* area, before the region eventually gained better road access.

The Village Head of *Namang* also explained that, based on old maps left behind by the Dutch,

there are several place names associated with *Mengkanau*, namely Batu Habar, Belilik, and Lempuyang. According to stories passed down through generations, the early settlers entered this area via the Lempuyang River, which lies between Tanah Merah Village and the 147th Battalion area, and along the river's course there are also several ancient graves. The old route connecting Lempuyang, the *Namang* Mosque, and Belilik as mentioned was only officially opened as a road in 1983, marking the point when the previously relatively isolated *Mengkanau* region began to connect with the surrounding areas.

This finding is also consistent with the concept of reflective representation, as proposed by Hall (1997), who states that language and various cultural symbols serve to reflect meanings that already exist within a group's social reality. Place names such as *Mengkanau*, *Batu Habar*, *Belilik*, and *Lempuyang*, which are recorded on old maps, serve as symbols representing the historical traces and, at the same time, the cultural boundaries of the *Mengkanau* people. Thus, the history of origins obtained from Informants serves not only as a record of the past but also as the foundation of an identity representation that serves as a shared reference for the *Namang* community today. Consequently, language is closely tied to culture, and it is not merely a neutral tool of communication; through daily social interactions, language can shape and convey personal identity as well as our perception of the world around us (Morais & Martins, 2025).

Statements from traditional leaders complement this picture by explaining that before the Pelawan Forest also known as a protected forest was designated, the area did indeed resemble a settlement, and there were still quite a number of descendants of the *Mengkanau* tribe living there, although most have since moved away or passed away over time. One of the distinctive features that defines the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people is their counting system, which starts from zero unlike the counting systems commonly used by surrounding communities. According to him, this is one of the traces of a way of life that has not yet fully adopted modern counting patterns.

Representations of the *Mengkanau* Tribe's Ritual Identity and Traditions

The findings indicate that the ritual identity of the *Mengkanau* people is reflected through inherited traditions that connect community identity, ancestral knowledge, and social values. In *Namang* Village, this cultural identity is closely tied to the presence of the *Mengkanau* Malay community and the traditions passed down from previous generations. Based on an interview with the Village Head of *Namang*, the community shares historical and cultural ties with the *Mengkanau* Malay people. This connection is reflected in the traditions, local knowledge, and social practices that continue to be recognized and observed by the community. These findings indicate that *Mengkanau* cultural identity is maintained through the ongoing recognition and practice of inherited traditions. From Hall's perspective, these traditions function as cultural representations through which the community gives meaning to its history, values, and collective identity.

One of the traditions mentioned in the interview is *Murok jerami*. The village head of *Namang* noted that Abok Jawit always leads the *Murok jerami* ritual and suggested that the researcher conduct further interviews with him to obtain more in-depth information about the ritual. This statement indicates that *Murok jerami* is still regarded as part of the cultural knowledge of the *Namang* community, even though information about the ritual's process and meaning was not fully explained in the interview with the Informant. Thus, *Murok jerami* can be understood as a cultural marker that needs to be studied through Informants who have firsthand knowledge of its practice.



Figure 1. Show the *Murok jerami* Tradition as an Expression of the Menkanau Tribe's Identity

Source: Redaksi (2023), “*Pesta Adat Murok jerami Suku Mengkanau, Sukunya Urang Namang*”

The identity of the *Murok jerami* ritual can also be understood within the context of the *Namang* community's tradition of passing down customs. In an interview, the village chief explained that most of the traditional elders of the *Mengkanau* tribe have passed away. Certain knowledge within families continues to be passed down from generation to generation. For example, the interviewee's father and grandfather were once known in the community as the people to turn to for help when someone was sick. They would recite prayers over water, which was then used in the healing process. This practice demonstrates that cultural knowledge is not only preserved in the form of stories but is also practiced and passed down through intergenerational relationships.

These conditions demonstrate that the cultural identity of the community in *Namang* Village is shaped through the interplay of tradition, ancestors, community, and the process of knowledge transmission. Khairana & Rasyid (2023) indicate that rituals can serve as a means of cultural communication that conveys the community's values, meanings, and collective identity. Through the performance of rituals, social bonds among community members can also be strengthened, while cultural values continue to be passed down and adapted to changes in community life. In the context of *Namang*, this perspective can be linked to the existence of *Murok jerami* as one of the traditions that remains well-known and is associated with community leaders who possess knowledge regarding the performance of this ritual.

In addition to *Murok jerami*, the interview also revealed other traditions that demonstrate the connection between local identity and religious values. Taber Kampung, for example, was once practiced by walking around the village while reciting the *tauhid*. However, this tradition is now rarely observed due to differing viewpoints among religious leaders. This situation shows that traditions do not always persist in the same form. Their continuity can be influenced by changes in public opinion and the process of adapting to evolving religious values.

A similar phenomenon can be observed through the concept of *kepunan*. The village chief explained that the community used to believe that food or drinks offered by a host should be tasted in small amounts as a sign of respect. This practice is viewed as an influence from an older culture that later blended with Islamic culture. The interviewee himself chooses to understand *kepunan* as a form of respect for others, rather than as a mystical belief. This explanation demonstrates that the cultural identity of the *Namang* community is dynamic, as elements of the old culture can be reinterpreted in accordance with the values accepted by the community today.

In cultural studies, such changes do not mean that a tradition loses its identity. Setiyani et al. (2024) demonstrate that ritual practices can undergo a process of transformation, thereby becoming part of a community's cultural identity within a new context. Traditions can be preserved when a community assigns new meaning to these practices. Therefore, *Murok jerami* can be viewed as part of a cultural identity whose existence must be understood through the practices, participants, values, and social context of the *Namang* community.

Efforts to preserve cultural identity are also evident in the village chief's work to reintroduce the heritage and knowledge of past generations. While the original traditional houses of the *Mengkanau* tribe no longer exist, their forms have been represented through miniature versions of limas houses and community halls. These community halls were once used as places for the community to gather and hold discussions before undertaking important activities, including before the rice-planting season. These miniatures were created so that younger generations can still recognize the form of the *Mengkanau* people's traditional houses. This demonstrates that when the physical manifestations of culture begin to disappear, communities can use other forms of representation to preserve cultural memory.

Murok jerami can be understood as an important aspect of the *Namang* community's cultural identity that warrants further study. Research on this ritual is important to understand its implementation process, meaning, cultural value, and the role of *Murok jerami* in community life. Interviews with key figures who have firsthand

knowledge of the ritual can provide a more comprehensive understanding of *Murok jerami*'s place as part of the traditions and cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* Malay people.

Murok jerami can be regarded as one of the elements of the *Namang* community's cultural identity, linked to the continuity of the local traditions of the *Mengkanau* Malay people. This identity is shaped through inherited knowledge, the presence of figures who understand the rituals, and the community's efforts to preserve traditions amid social and religious changes. Recent research also indicates that rituals can function as "identity in action" that is, an identity that is continually shaped and negotiated through the community's cultural practices. In *Namang Village*, the presence of *Murok jerami*, *Taber Kampung*, the concept of "*kepunan*," traditional healing practices, and memories of the traditional longhouse demonstrate that the community's cultural identity is not confined to the past.

This identity continues to be recounted, remembered, and interpreted in the community's daily life to this day. Although some traditions have undergone changes and some of this knowledge has begun to diminish due to the passing of traditional elders, various forms of memory and knowledge of cultural traditions will remain an integral part of *Namang* society.

Cultural Symbols and Language as Representations of the *Mengkanau* Cultural Identity

The findings indicate that the cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people is represented through various cultural symbols and the use of the local language. From Hall (1997) perspective, representation is the process of constructing meaning through language, signs, and symbols. Therefore, the cultural elements found in the traditions of the *Mengkanau* people not only serve practical functions but also carry meanings related to their identity. One cultural symbol found in the *Murok jerami* tradition is the use of seven stalks of rice. These stalks are selected, placed in a small cradle, smoked, and blessed before being stored as seeds for the next planting season. In this context, rice is not merely an agricultural product but can also be interpreted as a symbol of life,

sustainability, and the transmission of agricultural knowledge.

In addition, there are white traditional garments and the *Cuken*. These traditional garments are worn during rituals and traditions practiced by the *Mengkanau* tribe.



Figure 2. A cultural symbol represented by the traditional white clothing of the *Mengkanau*
Source: Instagram @desawisatanamang, in Adhi (2023)

The "*Cuken*" itself is a type of cloth used by the *Mengkanau* people. A *Cuken* is a cloth or towel wrapped around the head to protect it from the heat; it is also used to wipe away sweat and dry the body after bathing. The use of this traditional item serves as a visual symbol representing the *Mengkanau* cultural identity. This aligns with Munir et al. (2026), who demonstrate that meaning and representation can be constructed through language, visual elements, and symbols within a social context.

The local language also plays a vital role in representing *Mengkanau* cultural identity. Several terms, such as *ume*, *asok*, *lampetian*, *pengidam padi* and *pelantar* are used to describe traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. These terms indicate that the local language is not only used for communication but also preserves the community's knowledge and experiences. This finding aligns with Damarratri et al. (2026), who demonstrate that the local language can function as a marker of cultural identity.

Efforts to preserve the ancestral language are also evident in the use of the term *mengelo* to refer to sweet potatoes. The village head of *Namang* explained that terms from the ancestral language were intentionally reintroduced so that the community would remain familiar with their ancestral language. Thus, cultural symbols and the local language are intertwined in representing the *Mengkanau* cultural identity. Cultural symbols

express identity through traditional objects and practices, while the local language preserves the community's cultural knowledge and memory.

The Transmission, Preservation, and Transformation of the Culture of the *Mengkanau* Tribe

Cultural transmission

The findings show that cultural transmission among the *Mengkanau* people occurs through direct participation, intergenerational relationships, and the continued practice of traditional activities. This process enables the knowledge, values, practices, and traditions of previous generations to be recognized and understood by subsequent generations. Oktovan et al. (2021) explain that cultural transmission occurs through socialization, enculturation, and internalization. Meanwhile, this transmission can take place through direct participation in cultural activities.

This concept is exemplified by cultural transmission among the *Mengkanau* people. Based on an interview with Informant 2, a traditional leader, one of the purposes of the *murok jerami* ceremony is to ensure that future generations remain aware of the origins of the *Mengkanau* people and can understand the traditions passed down by their ancestors. Informant 2 stated that the purpose of this tradition is to:

generasi mendatang dapat mengetahui asal-usul masyarakat suku Mengkanau serta memahami tradisi asli yang diwariskan dan terus dilestarikan. Narasumber 2, Juli 22 2026.

‘future generations can learn about the origins of the *Mengkanau* tribe and understand the indigenous traditions that have been passed down and continue to be preserved. Informant 2, July 22, 2026.’

This statement indicates that the *Murok jerami* serves not only as an annual ritual but also as a means of passing on knowledge about the *Mengkanau* people's identity and history to future generations. This transmission also occurs through the community's direct involvement in the ritual. Informant 2 explained that the *Murok jerami* ceremony involves several traditional leaders with distinct roles, ranging from the traditional chief and deputy chief to the members who prepare the

ritual paraphernalia. Through this involvement, the ritual is not merely preserved as oral knowledge but is also actively practiced. This aligns with the findings of Oktovan et al. (2020) that hands-on practice is one of the means of passing on culture.

In addition to traditional leaders, the younger generation also plays a role in the process of cultural transmission. Research by Mani et al. (2026) found that the younger generation serves as the successor to a tradition by actively participating in traditional activities, learning cultural values, and utilizing technology to document and introduce traditions. These findings are highly relevant to the *Mengkanau* tribe, as the presence of the younger generation is one of the factors that can ensure traditions remain known and are passed on. Thus, the process of cultural transmission does not rely solely on traditional leaders but also requires the involvement of the younger generation as future custodians.

Cultural Preservation

The preservation of the *Mengkanau* tribe's culture is evident primarily through the continuation of the *Murok jerami* tradition. According to an interview with Informant 2, the *Murok jerami* is held once a year, around January or February. The ritual begins with the rice harvest, during which only the seven tallest stalks are selected; these are then placed on a small swing, smoked, and blessed with prayers. After the ritual concludes, the rice is stored as seed for the next planting season. The continuation of these steps demonstrates that the community still upholds the core elements of the *Murok jerami* tradition.

Preserving culture is not only about maintaining traditions but also about preserving the values and knowledge still embedded within them. Mani et al. (2026) states that the community serves as the guardian of traditional values, the practitioner of customary ceremonies, and the teacher and role model for the younger generation. Based on this perspective, the performance of the *Murok jerami* ritual by traditional leaders of the *Mengkanau* tribe can be understood as a form of preservation, as these leaders play a role in safeguarding knowledge regarding the procedures and meanings of the ritual.

The preservation of *Mengkanau* culture is also carried out through the involvement of the

younger generation. Adiputra et al. (2025) states that the younger generation serves as key actors who not only act as successors of cultural heritage but also as innovators who bridge local wisdom with modern developments. This is evident in the *Murok jerami* ceremony, which actively involves the community and the younger generation, ensuring that the tradition remains known and passed down.

In addition to the “*Murok jerami*,” cultural preservation is also carried out through the arts and supporting traditions. Informant 3 explained that before:

ritual utama terdapat Tari Sambut, Tari Dambus, dan berbalas pantun, serta cerita mengenai awal mula menanam padi.
Narasumber 3, Juli 22 2026.

‘The main rituals include the Greeting Dance, Dambus Dance, and responding to rhymes, as well as stories about the beginning of planting rice. Informant 3, July 22 2026.’

This activity demonstrates that the preservation of the *Mengakanau* tribe’s culture encompasses various forms of art and traditions. This preservation also extends to aspects of the culture that have undergone changes. One such example is the traditional house of the *Mengakanau* tribe, which no longer exists in its original form. In an effort to preserve cultural memory, the community has created miniature versions of the traditional house so that the current generation can still recognize its form. This aligns with the findings of Adiputra et al. (2025), who emphasize that the integration of tradition preservation and technological adaptation can serve as a dynamic solution to counter the threat of cultural homogenization.

Cultural Change

The culture of the *Mengakanau* tribe has also undergone changes over time. One example of this is the Taber tradition (the symbolic cleansing or purification of the village, typically performed using specific materials that hold cultural and spiritual significance), which is now rarely practiced due to differing viewpoints among religious leaders.

Furthermore, the original traditional houses of the *Mengakanau* tribe are no longer found and

have been replaced by miniature replicas as a means of introducing the culture to the next generation. This demonstrates that change does not necessarily mean the loss of identity but rather represents a process by which society adapts to the changing times. Oktovan et al. (2020) note that one of the challenges in cultural transmission stems from the rapid pace of globalization, which marginalizes traditional arts.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the identity of the *Mengakanau* people does not exist as a fixed, ready-made legacy, but is continually reshaped through representational practices that continue to this day, in line with Hall’s notion that cultural identity is a process, not a final product. Oral narratives about *abok pateh* and the ancient graves, for example, do not merely recount the past, but are actively used as a shared reference to explain who the *namang* community is today. A similar pattern is evident in *murok jerami*, which continues to be practiced as an annual ritual while also serving as a deliberate means of passing down knowledge of origins to the next generation, as confirmed by the Informants themselves. Thus, this study demonstrates that tradition is not merely an object of observation but also a tool that communities consciously use to construct identity.

This study also demonstrates that social change does not necessarily erase cultural identity. The fading of the Taber Kampung practice due to differing religious views, the shift in the meaning of “*kepunan*” from a mystical belief to a form of respect, and the loss of the original form of traditional houses which now exist only as miniatures all demonstrate that the *Namang* community does not preserve its culture in a static manner but rather renegotiates its meanings to ensure they remain relevant to current social and religious conditions. This reaffirms the research’s conclusion that cultural identity is dynamic, not static.

In terms of symbols and language, the study found that elements such as white clothing, *Cuken*, seven stalks of rice, and local terms like *ume*, *asok*, and *mengelo* serve as more than just practical markers. These elements preserve and convey the community’s collective knowledge, thereby

demonstrating that language and cultural symbols are the primary channels through which *Mengkanau* identity can be interpreted and understood.

Thus, the objectives of this study have been achieved. The cultural identity of the *Mengkanau* people has been successfully documented and analyzed as an active process of representation not a passive legacy and has endured precisely because the community continues to reinterpret it amid changing times. Nevertheless, this study remains limited because it did not include direct interviews with ritual practitioners such as Abok Jawit; consequently, our understanding of the procedures and deeper meanings of the Murok jerami ritual is not yet complete. Further research that includes these Informants will provide a more comprehensive answer to the research questions posed here.

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