

Sama Dilaut "People of the Sea"



**Living with Sea Nomads
Erik Abrahamsson**



**Sama Dilaut – or
"Bajau Laut" - live in
Philippines, Indonesia,
Malaysia and Brunei.
Historically they have
been sea nomads and
the children were
literally born on the
sea.**





Sama Dilaut are very proud. They have their own language, their own culture and traditional clothes. They hold on to their identity even if they are living in big cities or on isolated islands. They call themselves for "Sama", which means "we".





During 2010-2015 I have been living with Sama Dilaut in Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. In a period of 15 months I have been fishing and diving, and learnt the basics of their language, Sinama.



Philippines



The first visit took place in Davao City in Mindanao, Philippines, where Sama Dilaut have been living for 40 years – when they escaped pirates in the Sulu Sea.





In the Sama-community there are more than 300 people. The children have a beautiful childhood with traditional games. Only twenty years ago the whole community was water based.





To get their food they don't go to the shopping mall, but to the bottom of the sea, using homemade spearguns. They possess knowledge and skills that have been ignored for decades. One day, if ecological crisis come over us, their knowledge might be invaluable.



The children have great underwater vision.



The blowfish is the only fish that Sama Dilaut don't sell in the market. It's the second most poisonous animal in the world (after The Golden Frog) and has caused many deaths in the Philippines. However, Sama have eaten it for centuries.



It was a memorable experience to follow fishing. Sama have a great stamina and they can dive over and over again for hours. In the middle of each tour we gather on the boat and cook the fish. The feeling of freedom is intensive.



**About 15 years ago
they only needed
to fish 2-3 hours a
day to get enough
fish, but now they
have to stay for 7-9
hours on the sea.**

**Only the most
skilled fishermen
can still make a
living from the sea.**



**The fishing is
very good and
here you can find
some of the best
coral reefs in the
world.**



**The best
spearfishers
can stay up o
four minutes
under water.**





In the ocean outside of Semporna you can still find hundreds of sea nomads. They live on boats and make a living exclusively from fishing. They move from island to island and can freely pass the border of the Philippines – due to their status as indigenous people.

The boat to the left is home for a family of seven people. They have been living on the sea for generations.



The fresh diet gives them a perfect health. Here you can barely find any overweight people or lifestyle related illnesses.



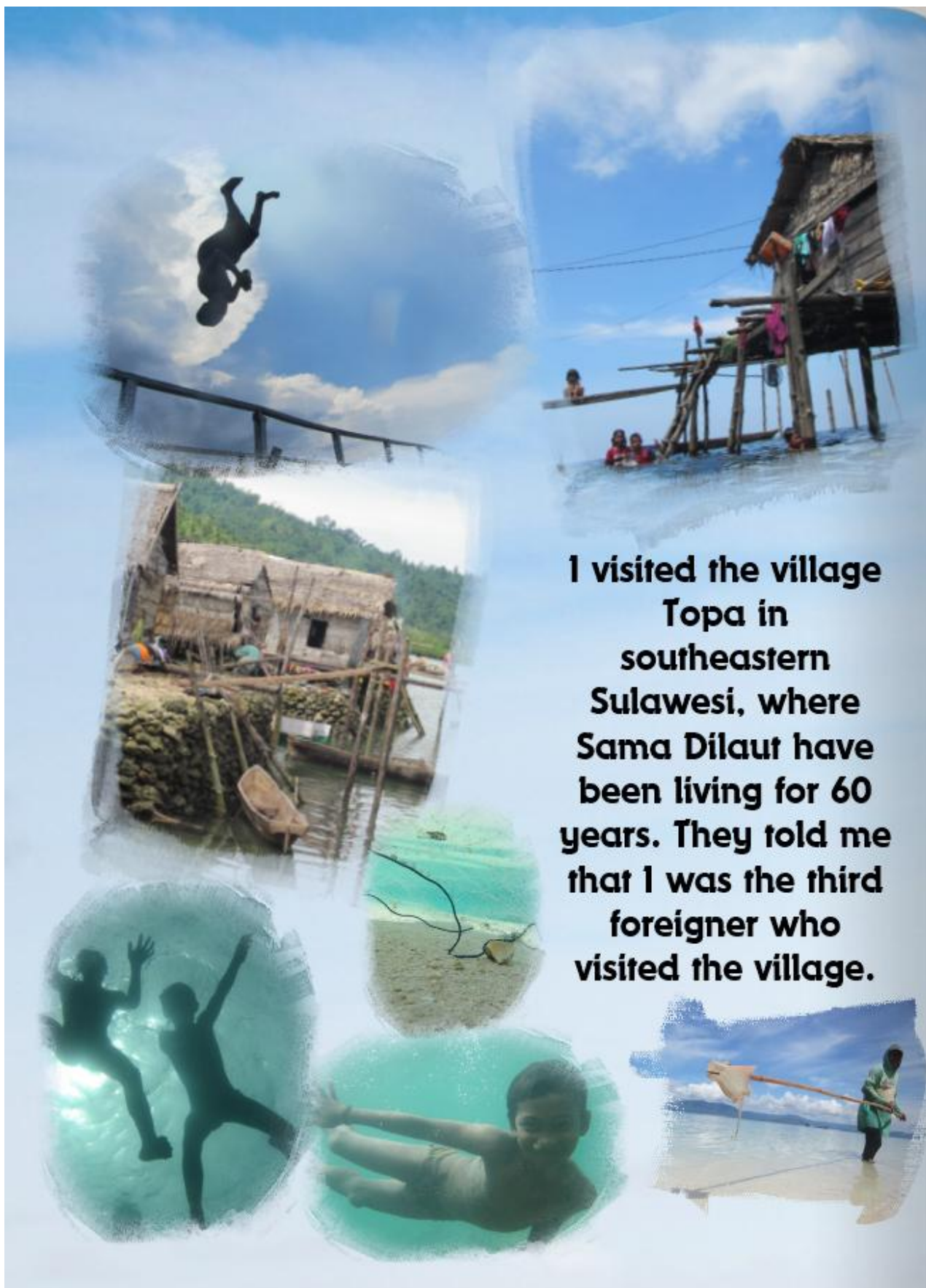
But even if Sama Dilaut are survivors they are facing discrimination. They are seen as dirty and uncivilized.

Indonesia

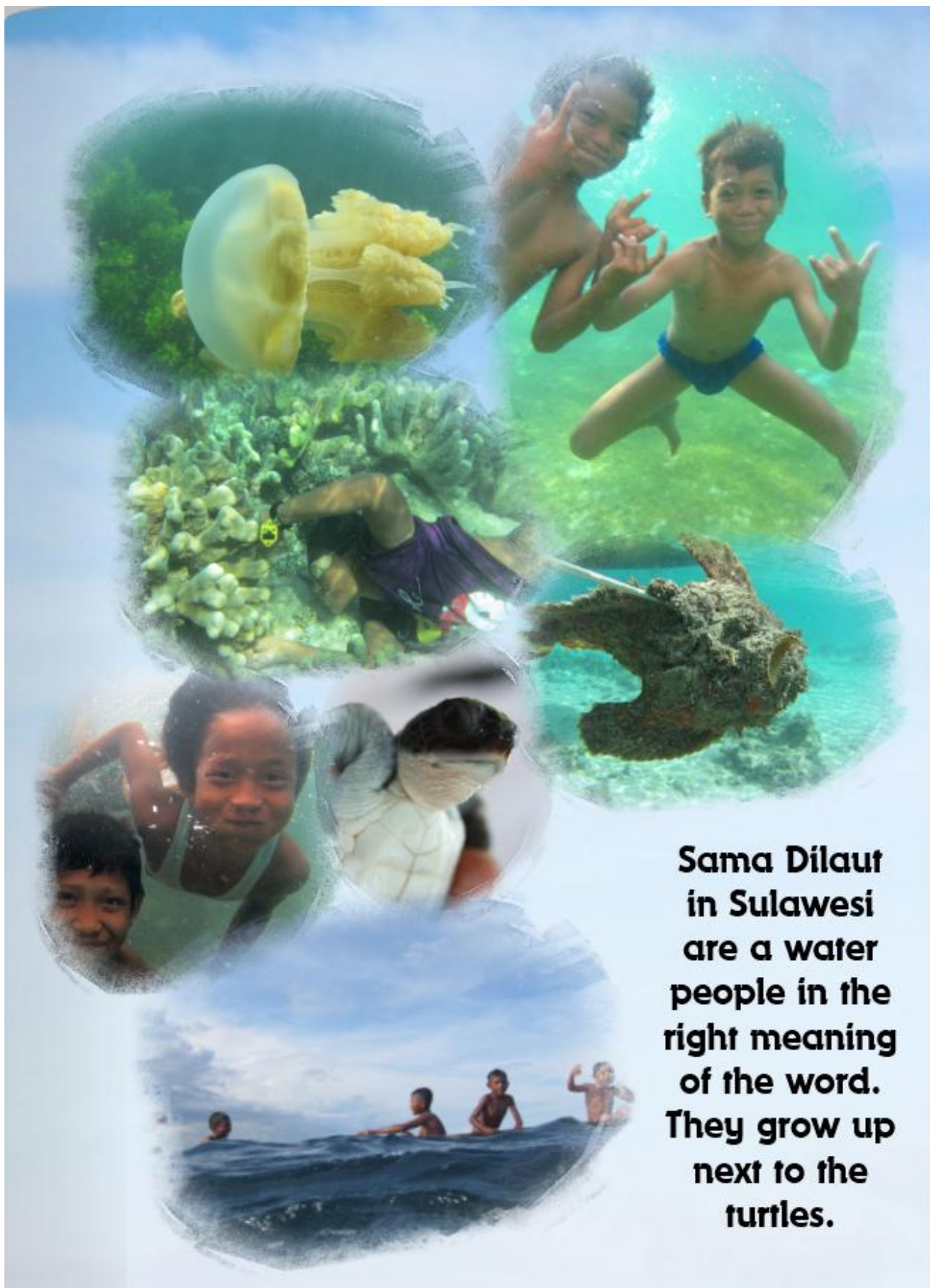


On the island of Sulawesi in eastern Indonesia, Sama Dilaut have been living for more than 400 years. They speak a different dialect than their remote relatives, but their lifestyle is the same.





**I visited the village
Topa in
southeastern
Sulawesi, where
Sama Dilaut have
been living for 60
years. They told me
that I was the third
foreigner who
visited the village.**

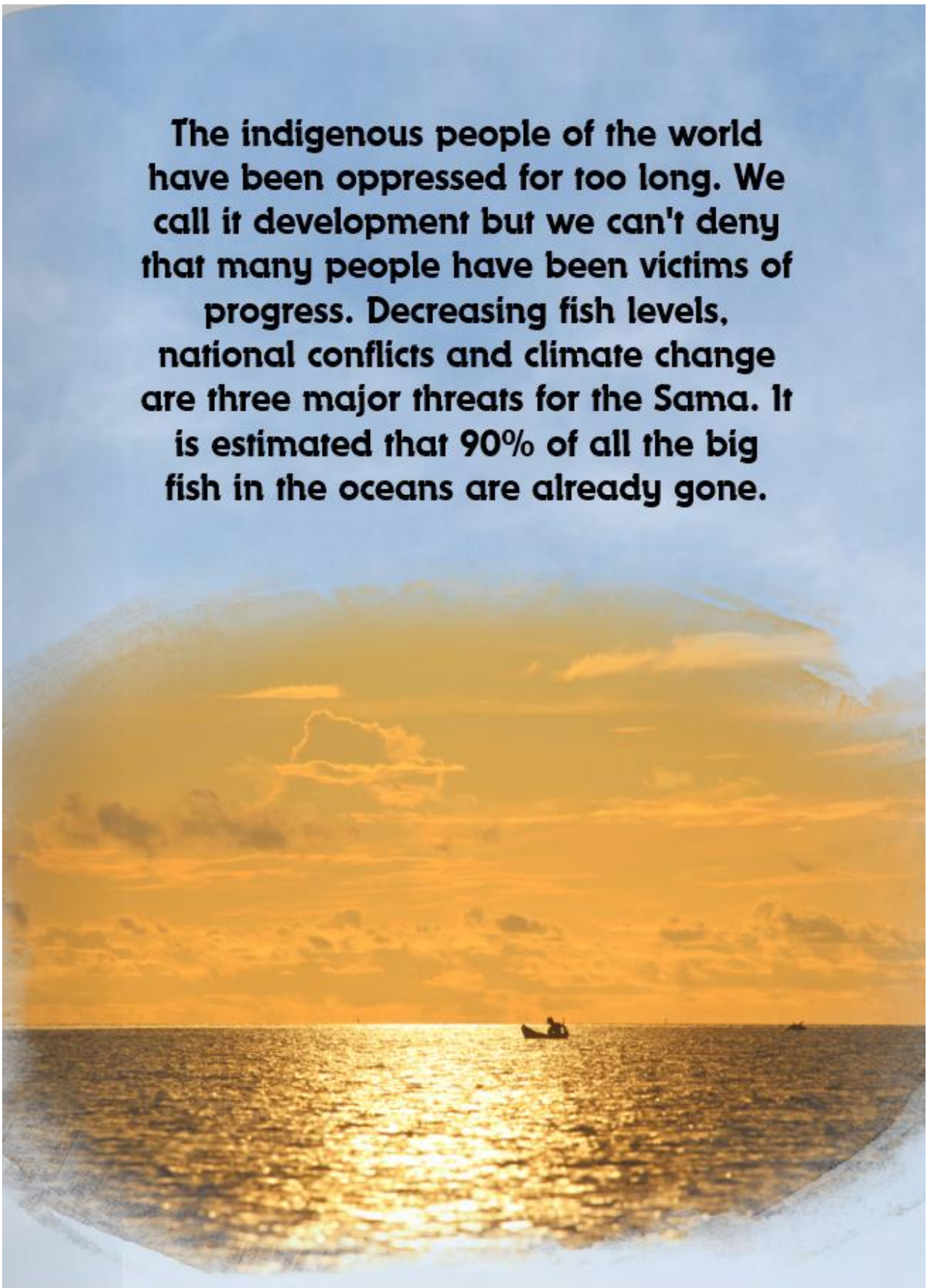


**Sama Dilaut
in Sulawesi
are a water
people in the
right meaning
of the word.
They grow up
next to the
turtles.**



To be a "Sama" is a learning experience not taught in schools. Their simple lifestyle and beautiful culture has to be protected. The Sama Dilaut need to be assured self-dependence and get exclusive right to fishing grounds which they have traditionally utilized.

The indigenous people of the world have been oppressed for too long. We call it development but we can't deny that many people have been victims of progress. Decreasing fish levels, national conflicts and climate change are three major threats for the Sama. It is estimated that 90% of all the big fish in the oceans are already gone.







Why are the indigenous people, the Sama, going to suffer from the mistakes and greediness of others? It is time for national governments, companies and consumers to take responsibility. Save the indigenous world!

**Thanks to Sama Dilaut
in Philippines, Malaysia
and Indonesia!**



**Magsukol,
kitam bagay,
ako pabalilk!
/Kuja Erik**





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