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-  des sciences de Tunis-FST #5
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Transmitting Values Through *Maudu' Lompoa*: Vernacular Ritual and Character Education in Pluralistic Indonesia

Fatwatul Ikhwan¹, Irfan Arifin², Aswar³, Fajar Aswat⁴, Ahmad Jabal⁵

^{1, 2, 3} Visual Arts Education, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received June 16, 2026

Accepted September 02, 2026

Published September 15, 2026

Keywords:

Character Education;
Maudu' Lompoa;
Religious Pluralism;
Vernacular Ritual;
Structuralism.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates *Maudu' Lompoa*, an annual Islamic-vernacular ritual in Cikoang Village, South Sulawesi, to examine how local ritual structures transmit socio-cultural and moral values in a pluralistic society. Employing an ethnographic qualitative-descriptive design, data were collected through participant observation across the 18-day ritual cycle, documentary analysis, and in-depth interviews with 12 purposively selected informants (customary leaders, ritual committee organizers, female craft artisans, youth representatives, and lay villagers) to ensure empirical adequacy and saturation. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model and interpreted through a novel tripartite theoretical synthesis combining Peircean triadic semiotics, Lévi-Straussian structuralism, and Lickona's character education framework. The findings reveal that the ritual's preparatory and implementation stages encode recurring binary oppositions (sacred/profane, raw/cooked, individual/collective, land/sea) and operate as an informal, experiential curriculum. Moral values—discipline, patience, gratitude, sincerity, collective responsibility (gotong royong), and respect—are habituated through embodied communal labor rather than formal instruction. By bridging vernacular religious practice and moral education, this study demonstrates how local rituals cultivate shared character values without erasing cultural distinctiveness, offering an analytical framework for value transmission in multicultural contexts while addressing challenges of modernization and commercialization.

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Corresponding Author:

Fatwatul Ikhwan,
Visual Arts Education, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia
Email: fatwatulikhwan.240011301011@student.unm.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Ritual traditions occupy a central place in the religious and social life of Muslim communities across the Indonesian archipelago, where Islamic teaching has historically been absorbed into, and expressed through, pre-existing vernacular idioms (Nasrulloh & Kholis, 2025; Tarlam et al., 2025). Among the most elaborate of these syncretic celebrations is *Maudu' Lompoa* (literally, "the Great Maulid"), an annual commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad SAW performed by the

community in South Sulawesi (Batara & Musyaqqat, 2023; Ruja & Pratama, 2019). The term derives from *maudu'*, a local rendering of *maulid* ("birth"), and *lompoa*, meaning "great" or "grand" (Hendra et al., 2018; Yamin et al., 2019). Tradition holds that the celebration was introduced in the seventeenth century by Sayyid Jalaluddin al-Aidid, an itinerant preacher identified by local genealogical accounts as a twenty-ninth-generation descendant of the Prophet (Asis, 2025; Fauziyah et al., 2026; Yulianto, 2023). What began as a modest, family-based act of devotion has, over nearly four centuries, grown into a communal festival that draws thousands of participants and combines Qur'anic recitation, panegyric poetry, ritual food offerings, and a distinctive decorated-boat procession (Rahman & Amal, 2026).

Scholarship on Southeast Asian Islamic rituals has extensively documented the syncretic blending of normative Islamic theology with local indigenous practices (Adinugraha & Al-Kasyaf, 2025; Fuadi et al., 2024). Similar dynamics are observed globally in vernacular Islamic practices, such as the *Mawlid* traditions in North Africa and South Asia, where devotional celebrations serve as vital sites for reinforcing communal identity and localized expressions of piety (Buchori & Lailiyah, 2025; Lebbai et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, studies on ritual traditions—such as the Coka Iba ceremony of East Halmahera (Asri & Abdullah, 2026; Karim, 2015) or the Grebeg Maulud in Java (Hapsari & Hilmi, 2026; Karim & Raya, 2022)—have largely focused on historical descriptive accounts, structural functionalism, or political economy. While these studies highlight how rituals maintain social integration, they frequently treat ritual symbols in isolation or evaluate character formation solely within formal schooling environments.

Consequently, a critical conceptual gap remains in existing literature: how do the underlying structural mechanics and sign systems of vernacular religious rituals function as an informal, experiential pedagogy for character formation in modern, pluralistic societies? Previous research on *Maudu' Lompoa* (Amelia et al., 2024; Asis, 2025; Fauziyah et al., 2026; Syarif et al., 2026) has primarily documented its historical narrative and economic impact, falling short of explaining the systemic cognitive and affective mechanisms through which moral values are habituated across generations.

To address this gap, this study proposes a novel tripartite conceptual analytical framework that synthesizes Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic model (representamen, object, interpretant) (Filipowicz, 2025), Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory of binary opposition (de Castro, 2025), and Thomas Lickona's character education model (moral knowing, moral feeling, moral action) (Arif et al., 2023; Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023). Read through Peirce (Bonfantini, 2026), ritual artifacts like the *julung-julung* (miniature pinisi boat) and *baku' maudu'* (woven basket) are not mere decorative objects but semiotic signs linking material culture to religious cosmology. Lévi-Straussian structuralism reveals how recurring binary oppositions (sacred/profane, raw/cooked, individual/collective, land/sea) organize these signs into a deep structural grammar of sanctity (de Castro, 2025). Lickona's model provides the bridge to educational theory, demonstrating how participation in this structural sequence

cultivates moral knowing, feeling, and action through habituated, embodied practice (Asror & Asrohah, 2026).

The scientific novelty of this manuscript lies not merely in an ethnographic re-documentation of *Maudu' Lompoa*, but in the formulation and application of this integrated tripartite framework as a transferable conceptual tool for analyzing vernacular rituals as living pedagogies. Guided by this theoretical synthesis, this study addresses four research questions: (1) How did *Maudu' Lompoa* originate and evolve historically in Cikoang? (2) What constitutes its contemporary ritual procession? (3) How do Peircean semiotics and Lévi-Straussian structural oppositions reveal their embedded religious and cultural values? (4) How are character values habituated through the ritual, and what implications do they hold for moral education in pluralistic societies?

2. METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative-descriptive design anchored in an ethnographic research paradigm. Ethnography was chosen because it enables researchers to access the emic perspective of the Cikoang community—understanding ritual practices as meaningfully lived and articulated by the custodians and participants themselves. The descriptive-analytical orientation allowed for a thick description of ritual sequences while applying theoretical lenses to unpack hidden symbolic structures.

Fieldwork was conducted in Cikoang Village, Mangarabombang Sub-district, Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi, spanning the full 18-day ritual cycle of the 2024 celebration (October–November 2024), supplemented by preliminary and follow-up field visits. To ensure empirical adequacy and address methodological rigor, informant selection was expanded beyond customary elite leaders to represent a broad cross-section of community stakeholders. A total of 12 key informants were selected via purposive and snowball sampling strategies, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Informant

Informant Code / Name	Role / Demographic Profile	Key Contribution / Focus Area	Data Collection Method
Tuan Pajo' (INF-01)	Hereditary Sayyid Community Leader (Male, 68)	Oral history, genealogical lineage, spiritual theology (Syariat-Makrifat)	In-depth Interview
Saparadudin Dg Imang (INF-02)	Ritual Committee Chairperson / Customary Organizer (Male, 52)	Procedural organization, 18-day schedule, logistics	In-depth Interview
Daeng Sunggu (INF-03)	Senior Female Craft Artisan (Female, 61)	Baku' maudu' weaving technique, purity taboos, women's roles	Semi-structured Interview
Daeng Kanang (INF-04)	Female Food Ritual Participant (Female, 55)	Ammone Baku' rite, ritual ablution, household food preparation	Semi-structured Interview

Informant Code / Name	Role / Demographic Profile	Key Contribution / Focus Area	Data Collection Method
Muhammad Aris (INF-05)	Youth Organization Leader (Male, 29)	Julung-julung construction, youth mobilization, gotong royong	In-depth Interview
Rahmat Hidayat (INF-06)	Young Customary Participant (Male, 24)	Youth perception of tradition, commercialization pressures	Semi-structured Interview
Daeng Baco (INF-07)	Local Fisherman / Boat Builder (Male, 47)	Land-sea symbolism, pinisi schooner replica fabrication	Semi-structured Interview
Daeng Tene (INF-08)	Local Agriculturalist (Male, 53)	A'dengka Ase (rice milling), agrarian symbolism, economic sacrifice	Semi-structured Interview
Imam Desa Cikoang (INF-09)	Local Village Religious Head (Male, 60)	Integration of Qur'anic recitation, Rate' text, Islamic orthodoxy	In-depth Interview
Karaeng Rawa (INF-10)	Customary Institution Representative (Male, 58)	Attoana hospitality protocol, noble lineage relations	Semi-structured Interview
Siti Rahmah (INF-11)	Local School Teacher / Resident (Female, 38)	Value transmission to children, local-content curriculum potential	Semi-structured Interview
Hassanuddin (INF-12)	Local Small Merchant (Male, 44)	Festival economic impact, trade dynamics, commercialization	Semi-structured Interview

Data saturation was achieved by the ninth interview, as subsequent testimonies from informants INF-10 through INF-12 yielded redundant themes regarding ritual procedures, symbolic interpretations, and moral values, confirming empirical sufficiency. Data collection integrated three primary ethnographic techniques: (1) Participant Observation: The research team conducted 24 days of direct field immersion, observing all 10 preparatory rites and 7 implementation rites across domestic compounds, weaving circles, and the Cikoang riverbank. (2) In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews were conducted using an interview guide focused on historical trajectories, symbolic interpretations, and value perceptions. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. (3) Documentary Analysis: Historical archives, genealogical charts (lontara'), ritual program booklets, and prior studies (Hermin et al., 2020) were analyzed for data verification.

To ensure psychometric and qualitative rigor, interview guides and observational rubrics underwent formal qualitative validation. Content validity was established through Expert Judgment Evaluation conducted by two senior academic experts: one specialist in Cultural Anthropology and one scholar in Moral Education. The experts evaluated instrument items for domain clarity, semantic appropriateness, and theoretical alignment using a 4-point Content Validity Index (CVI), achieving an Item-CVI (I-CVI)

range of 0.90 to 1.00 and a Scale-Level CVI (S-CVI/Ave) of 0.95. Reliability and internal consistency were established through inter-coder agreement tests on interview transcripts using Miles and Huberman's formula (Agreement / [Agreement + Disagreement]), yielding an inter-coder reliability coefficient of 88.5%, well above the standard 80% threshold.

Data were processed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Following reduction, reduced data were subjected to a three-tiered analytical matrix: first, Peircean triadic semiotic decomposition (Representamen → Object → Interpretant); second, Lévi-Straussian structural mapping of binary oppositions; third, Lickona's character component mapping (Moral Knowing, Feeling, Action).

Reflexivity was maintained by explicitly acknowledging the research team's positionality as academic researchers from Universitas Negeri Makassar. While familiar with South Sulawesi culture, the team maintained an analytical distance by validating emic interpretations through member-checking sessions with informants. Trustworthiness was reinforced through source and method triangulation. Informed consent was obtained verbally or in writing from all participants. Informants consented to be identified by name/customary title or anonymized via codes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Historical Evolution: From Devotional Practice to Public Heritage

Historical narratives trace *Maudu' Lompoa* to Sayyid Jalaluddin al-Aidid, an Aceh-born Islamic preacher and 29th-generation descendant of the Prophet, who arrived in Gowa in 1632. As Tuan Pajo' (INF-01) narrated: "*Sayyid Jalaluddin taught our ancestors that loving the Prophet must not remain an abstract idea. He instructed us to gather under the tamarind tree, prepare our finest agricultural yield, recite prayers, and remember the Prophet's character through shared work. What we do today follows the path he laid down four centuries ago.*"



Figure 1. Illustration of Sayyid Jalaluddin al-Aidid

Over centuries, the tradition evolved from family-based acts of devotion into a village-wide celebration. Institutional formalization occurred in 1993 through regional

government infrastructure support and the construction of the *Baruga Maudu' Lompoa* ceremonial complex, integrating local customary authority with state heritage promotion.

Empirical Sequence of Preparatory and Implementation Rites

The 18-day ritual cycle comprises ten preparatory rites and seven implementation rites. Table 2 details these stages alongside direct empirical observations.

Table 2. Empirical Sequence of Preparatory and Implementation Rites

Ritual Phase & Local Term	Procedural Description	Empirical Observation & Participant Dynamics
1. Je'ne-Je'ne Sappara	Seawater bath on 10 Safar marking spiritual readiness.	Mass community bathing at seashore; communal prayers led by elders.
2. Annyongko Kanre	Confining native chickens for 40 days prior to sacrifice.	Chickens fed dedicated grain; crowing linked to daily prayer calls.
3. A'dengka Ase	Manual wooden mortar rice milled 4 days prior.	Women mill rice rhythmically in groups; displays physical endurance.
4. Attana' Kaluku	Pressing grated coconut into pure oil 2 days prior.	Slow heating over firewood; handled exclusively by experienced elders.
5. Annyongkolo Kanre	Parboiling rice (nasi bara'ka) to preserve quality.	Rice steamed in large copper vessels; tested meticulously for texture.
6. Ammolong Jangang	Ritual chicken slaughter 1 day prior by customary leader.	Performed with specific Islamic supplications; strict humane cuts.
7. Anno'do Bayao	Boiling, dyeing, and skewering eggs in bright colors.	Youth and children assemble multi-tiered decorative egg trees.
8. Julung-Julung	Constructing miniature pinisi schooner replicas.	Men collaborate in building wooden frames; decorated with sarongs.
9. Tapa'-Tepa'	Weaving protective coconut-leaf basket liners.	Women weave intricate patterns ensuring food protection.
10. Apare' Baku'	Weaving palm-leaf food baskets (baku' maudu').	Artisans weave multi-tiered baskets using traditional tools.
11. Ammone Baku'	Filling baskets with cooked rice, chicken, and eggs.	Performed strictly by ritually pure women following ablution.
12. A'belo-Belo Kanre	Adorning baskets and boat frames with paper flowers.	Youth adorn boats with vibrant textiles, flags, and ornaments.
13. Anggantara Kanre	Processional transport of offerings to riverbank.	Men shoulder heavy boats (bembengang) in festive procession.
14. PannarImam Kanre	Formal reception of baskets by Anrong Guru leaders.	Customary leaders receive offerings at Baruga ceremonial hall.
15. A'Rate / Azzikkiri	Two-hour Arabic panegyric chant recitation.	Chanted in unison by elders and sayyid leaders in high reverence.
16. Attoana	Formal hosting and feast reception for guests.	Guests seated on woven mats; served lavish traditional platters.
17. A'bage Kanre	Redistribution of blessed food offerings to all.	Orderly and joyful distribution of food and decorated eggs to public.



Figure 2. *Je'ne-Je'ne Sappara* purification bath



Figure 3. *Anno'do Bayao* -- decorated boiled eggs



Figure 4. Community members constructing the *julung-julung* boat replica



Figure 5. Weaving the sides of the *Apare' Baku* food basket

Objective Empirical Findings: Semiotics and Binary Oppositions

Applying Peircean semiotics and Lévi-Straussian structuralism reveals how empirical ritual elements map onto sign structures and deep binary oppositions, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Semiotics and Binary Oppositions

Ritual Sign / Artifact	Peircean Representamen & Object	Peircean Interpretant (Emic Meaning)	Lévi-Straussian Binary Opposition
Seawater Purification (Je'ne-Je'ne)	Representamen: Ocean water Object: Spiritual cleansing	Purity of body and soul before entering Maulid month	Profane vs. Sacred / Dirty vs. Clean
Confined Chicken (Annyongko Kanre)	Representamen: Caged native fowl Object: Devotional sacrifice	Control of worldly desires; reminder of daily prayer	Bound vs. Free / Flesh vs. Spirit
Milled Rice (A'dengka Ase)	Representamen: Mortar-pounded grain Object: Agrarian sustenance	Gratitude to God for agricultural harvest	Raw vs. Cooked / Nature vs. Culture
Decorated Egg (Anno'do Bayao)	Representamen: Dyed egg on skewer Object: Potential life & genesis	Rebirth of faith; spiritual vitality of Prophet's light	Empty Shell vs. Fertile Life
Miniature Schooner (Julung-Julung)	Representamen: Pinisi boat replica Object: Maritime ancestry & ark	Vehicle of salvation navigating worldly struggles	Land vs. Sea / Domestic vs. Universe
Woven Basket (Baku' Maudu')	Representamen: Lontar-palm basket Object: Vessel of blessing	Communal unity and contained sacred provision	Individual vs. Collective
Pure Food Handler (Ammone Baku')	Representamen: Abluted woman Object: Intention of purity	Sanctity of food as spiritual nourishment	Impure vs. Pure
Panegyric Chant (A'Rate')	Representamen: Arabic verse recitation Object: Prophet's legacy	Deep veneration and spiritual illumination	Human vs. Divine

In addition, informants mapped the *Kanre Maudu'* food offering onto four progressive stages of Islamic mysticism: Syariat (Rice = basic legal foundation), *Tarekat* (Chicken = disciplined path of worship), *Hakikat* (Coconut oil = inner purification), and *Makrifat* (Egg = gnosis and ultimate truth).



Figure 6. Basket-filling (*Ammone Baku'*) procession



Figure 7. *Bambeng* (left) and *julung-julung* (right) being carried to the Cikoang riverbank



Figure 8. The *A'Rate/Azzikkiri* recitation invoking blessings for the *Maulid*



Figure 9. Guests being hosted during *Attoana*



Figure 10. *A'bage Kanre Maudu'* -- food redistribution to the community

Character Values Mapping Across Lickona's Tripartite Model

Table 4 outlines the objective mapping of character values observed across the ritual cycle onto Lickona's three moral domains.

Table 4. Outlines the Objective Mapping of Character Values

Character Value	Embodying Ritual Practice	Lickona Domain & Behavioral Indicator
Discipline & Perseverance	40-day chicken care; manual mortar rice milling	Moral Action: Executing prolonged physical labor without shortcuts. Moral Feeling / Action: Internalizing delayed gratification during preparation.
Patience (Sabar)	Multi-stage coconut pressing and parboiling	Moral Knowing / Feeling: Aligning inner intent with sacred duty.
Sincerity (Ikhlas)	Basket filling under strict ritual purity (ablution)	Moral Action: Cooperating across generations to complete communal tasks.
Collective Responsibility (Gotong Royong)	Collaborative boat building and basket weaving	Moral Feeling: Expressing collective thankfulness for divine provision.
Gratitude (Syukur)	Offering agricultural and maritime yields	Moral Knowing / Action: Demonstrating social deference and generous hosting.
Respect & Hospitality	PannarImam deferential reception; Attoana guest hosting	

Qualitative Narrative Integration: Emic Ethnographic Voices

To bring the emic narratives to life, field interviews illustrate how participants experience moral transformation. Daeng Sunggu (INF-03), a female craft artisan, described the inner disposition required during basket weaving:

"Weaving the baku' maudu' cannot be done with an angry heart. If you are impatient, the lontar palm leaves will split and the pattern will warp. You must perform ablution, sit with patience, and pray. The basket holds food blessed for the Prophet; your hands must reflect that purity."

Similarly, Muhammad Aris (INF-05), representing the youth organization, highlighted how boat construction instills collective responsibility among young villagers:

"Building the julung-julung brings young people together. We work late into the night cutting timber, stretching sarongs, and decorating the hull. No one receives payment. We learn that our individual pride is nothing compared to carrying the village honor together on the riverbank."

These voices confirm that moral values are not taught as abstract concepts but are enacted through habituated communal labor.

Discussion

Synthesis of Semiotic-Structural Mechanics and Moral Pedagogy

The empirical findings confirm that *Maudu' Lompoa* functions as a cohesive semiotic and structural system that transforms material labor into moral pedagogy. By integrating Peirce's semiotic triad with Lévi-Strauss's binary oppositions, the analysis demonstrates how physical artifacts (representamens) mediate abstract cosmic truths (objects) into internalized moral dispositions (interpretants). Unlike formal classroom instruction that relies on cognitive transmission of ethics, *Maudu' Lompoa* achieves moral habituation through embodied participation. This validates Lickona's theory in a non-formal setting: moral knowing (understanding sacred obligations), moral feeling (reverence, gratitude, patience), and moral action (gotong royong, basket filling) co-occur simultaneously during ritual performance (Anisa et al., 2026; Diaz, 2026; Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023).

Comparative Analysis with Archipelago and Global Vernacular Islam

When contrasted with existing literature on archipelago Islamic rituals, *Maudu' Lompoa* shares core syncretic features while displaying unique structural mechanisms. In the *Coka Iba* tradition of East Halmahera (Alhadar, 2024), religious values are encoded through masked dances and Barzanji recitations, emphasizing spatial protection and ancestral honor. In Java's *Grebeg Maulud* (Permadi & Yantari, 2024), the focus centers on royal court patronage and the distribution of *gunungan* rice mounds symbolizing sovereign benevolence. In contrast, *Maudu' Lompoa* is characterized by a decentralized, household-based preparatory cycle (18 days) that mobilizes the entire village prior to the public feast. Internationally, similar dynamics are observed in South Asian Mawlid assemblies (Abbasi, 2026) and North African Sufi festivals (Siddiqi, 2024), where localized material offerings (sweets, banners) bridge normative Islamic theology with vernacular cosmology. What sets *Maudu' Lompoa* apart is its dense maritime semiotic vocabulary—specifically the *julung-julung* pinisi replica—which bridges land and sea environments, resolving the structural opposition between domestic agrarian production and oceanic trade.

Modernization, Commercialization, and Critical Contradictions

While government tourism support since 1993 has enhanced infrastructure, field observations reveal critical tensions between sacred preservation and commercialization. Increased tourism exposure has led to spectator-driven commodification. Youth participant (INF-06) noted: "Sometimes outside visitors treat our sacred procession merely as a photo background. They push into the *Baruga* during the A'Rate' chant, disrupting the quiet reverence of the elders."

Furthermore, financial inflation has heightened the economic burden of preparing elaborate *baku' maudu'* baskets, leading some households to incur debt to maintain social prestige. This reveals a critical contradiction: while the ritual promotes moral values of sincerity and simplicity, commercialized status competition risks eroding its spiritual foundation. Safeguarding strategies must balance tourism promotion with community-led sacred boundaries.

Implications for Character Education in Pluralistic Societies

In Indonesia's multicultural landscape, where character education is often criticized for being overly didactic and textbook-centered (Affandi et al., 2024; Albina et al., 2026), *Maudu' Lompoe* offers a living model of vernacular character formation. Eck's framework of pluralism emphasizes active engagement across cultural boundaries (Akhtar, 2026). By engaging youth in cooperative labor rooted in shared values of gratitude, patience, and solidarity, the ritual demonstrates that moral education can be culturally specific in form yet universal in ethical content. Educational policymakers can leverage such vernacular models to enrich local-content curricula (*muatan lokal*) and interfaith civic programs, fostering character through community-embedded experiential learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Maudu' Lompoe* in Cikoang Village functions as a sophisticated vernacular pedagogy that transmits socio-cultural and religious values through habituated ritual practice. By establishing a novel tripartite analytical framework synthesizing Peircean semiotics, Lévi-Straussian structuralism, and Lickona's character education model, the research demonstrates how material signs and binary oppositions encode moral knowing, feeling, and action into an 18-day experiential curriculum. Moral values such as discipline, patience, gratitude, sincerity, gotong royong, and respect are internalized not through formal instruction, but through continuous, embodied participation in communal labor.

Theoretical implications highlight that vernacular rituals possess structural mechanisms capable of sustaining character formation in modern pluralistic societies without stripping values of their cultural specificity. Practically, local governments and educational institutions should integrate these living ritual pedagogies into regional school curricula (*muatan lokal*) and cultural preservation policies. To mitigate the commercialization risks identified, customary authorities (*Anrong Guru*) must retain

governance over ritual boundaries, ensuring that tourism promotion does not overshadow sacred devotional intent. Study limitations include its single-site ethnographic scope and reliance on qualitative interpretive frameworks. Future research should undertake longitudinal studies to track symbolic adaptations over time, conduct comparative analyses across diverse archipelago *Maulid* traditions, and design empirical intervention studies to test the quantitative impact of ritual-based learning on youth moral development.

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