

THE INTEGRATION OF 'MANGULOSI' TRADITION AND ISLAMIC VALUES IN MODERN BATAK MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN DESA SIMATUPANG, NORTH SUMATRA

INTEGRASI TRADISI 'MANGULOSI' DAN NILAI-NILAI ISLAM DALAM KOMUNITAS MUSLIM BATAK MODERN: STUDI ETNOGRAFI DI DESA SIMATUPANG, SUMATERA UTARA

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the integration of the mangulosi tradition with Islamic values in Batak Muslim communities in Desa Simatupang, North Sumatra. Using an ethnographic approach with in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, this study reveals how Batak Muslim communities negotiate between cultural practices rooted in pre-Islamic beliefs and Islamic teachings. The findings show that the integration process occurs through reinterpretation of the symbolic meaning of ulos cloth, modification of ritual procedures, incorporation of Islamic prayers, and emphasis on values aligned with Islamic teachings such as brotherhood and respect for parents. The Batak Muslim community in Desa Simatupang has successfully created a model of cultural adaptation that maintains Batak ethnic identity while affirming their Islamic identity, demonstrating that local traditions and religious values can coexist in the context of Indonesia's multicultural society.

Keywords: mangulosi tradition, Batak Islam, cultural acculturation, religious identity

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi tradisi mangulosi dengan nilai-nilai Islam dalam masyarakat Muslim Batak di Desa Simatupang, Sumatera Utara. Menggunakan pendekatan etnografi dengan wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana komunitas Muslim Batak

melakukan negosiasi antara praktik budaya yang berakar pada kepercayaan pra-Islam dengan ajaran Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses integrasi dilakukan melalui reinterpretasi makna simbolik ulos, modifikasi prosesi ritual, penambahan doa-doa Islam, dan penekanan pada nilai-nilai yang sejalan dengan ajaran Islam seperti persaudaraan dan penghormatan kepada orang tua. Masyarakat Muslim Batak di Desa Simatupang berhasil menciptakan model adaptasi budaya yang mempertahankan identitas etnis Batak sekaligus menegaskan identitas keislaman mereka, menunjukkan bahwa tradisi lokal dan nilai-nilai agama dapat hidup berdampingan dalam konteks masyarakat multikultural Indonesia.

Kata kunci: tradisi mangulosi, Islam Batak, akulturasi budaya, identitas religius

A. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between local traditions and religious practices has been a complex and dynamic aspect of Indonesian cultural life for centuries (Muhsyanur, 2023). As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia presents a fascinating landscape where Islam interacts with hundreds of local cultural traditions across its vast archipelago. Among these interactions, the relationship between Batak cultural traditions and Islamic practices in North Sumatra offers a compelling case study of cultural negotiation and religious adaptation. The Batak people, predominantly residing in North Sumatra, have maintained strong cultural identities while embracing various religions, including Islam, Christianity, and traditional beliefs. This research focuses specifically on Desa Simatupang, a village in North Sumatra, where a significant Muslim Batak population navigates the integration of the mangulosi tradition—a central cultural practice involving the ceremonial giving of ulos cloth—with Islamic values and principles.

The mangulosi tradition holds profound cultural significance for Batak people across religious affiliations. The ulos, a traditionally woven textile with intricate patterns and motifs, serves not merely as clothing or decoration but as a sacred object embodying cultural values, social relationships, and spiritual meanings. Historically, the mangulosi ceremony was embedded within the pre-Islamic spiritual framework of the Batak people, connected to ancestor worship and animistic beliefs. The ritual involves the ceremonial draping of ulos cloth over the shoulders of individuals during significant life events, including births, marriages, and funerals, symbolizing blessings, protection, and the transfer of spiritual power. As described by Sinaga (2017), "The ulos represents the cosmic fabric connecting the three realms of Batak cosmology—the upper world of deities, the middle world of humans, and the underworld of ancestors—making its bestowal a spiritually charged act of cultural significance" (p. 78).

The arrival and spread of Islam among Batak communities since the late 19th century presented significant challenges to cultural practices like *mangulosi*. Islamic teachings, with their emphasis on monotheism (*tawhid*) and prohibition against practices associated with *shirk* (polytheism or idolatry), potentially conflicted with aspects of traditional Batak rituals that invoked ancestors or local spirits. According to Harahap (2016), "The initial encounter between Islam and Batak traditions created tensions, particularly regarding rituals that seemed to contradict Islamic monotheistic principles. However, over time, processes of negotiation and adaptation emerged, allowing for cultural continuity within new religious frameworks" (p. 112). This historical tension and subsequent adaptation form the backdrop for understanding contemporary practices in communities like Desa Simatupang.

Desa Simatupang presents a particularly interesting case study due to its demographic composition and historical development. Located in the Mandailing Natal region of North Sumatra, the village has a population of approximately 5,000 residents, with Muslims constituting about 75% of the population. Many residents identify as Batak Mandailing, a sub-ethnic group that has had a longer historical engagement with Islam compared to other Batak sub-groups. As documented by Lubis (2018), "The Mandailing region represents one of the earliest centers of Islamic influence among Batak peoples, with Islamic educational institutions established there since the early 20th century" (p. 234). Despite this longer Islamic history, the community has maintained strong connections to Batak cultural practices, including the *mangulosi* tradition, creating a rich environment for examining processes of cultural-religious integration.

The scholarly discourse on the relationship between religion and culture in Indonesia has evolved significantly over the past decades. Early anthropological approaches often framed this relationship in terms of syncretism—the mixing of different religious elements—or religious conversion that replaced indigenous beliefs with world religions. However, contemporary scholarship has moved toward more nuanced understandings that recognize the agency of local communities in actively negotiating religious and cultural identities. As Hefner (2011) argues, "Indonesian Muslims have not simply 'syncretized' Islam with local traditions but have engaged in complex processes of reinterpretation and adaptation that maintain Islamic orthodoxy while acknowledging cultural distinctiveness" (p. 67). This research builds on these contemporary perspectives by

examining how Batak Muslims in Desa Simatupang actively negotiate the relationship between mangulosi traditions and Islamic values.

The integration of mangulosi traditions with Islamic practices in Desa Simatupang occurs within the broader context of Indonesia's religious pluralism and national ideology. Since independence, Indonesia has promoted the national philosophy of Pancasila, which acknowledges belief in one God while celebrating cultural diversity. This ideological framework has provided space for the development of distinctively Indonesian expressions of world religions, including what some scholars term "cultural Islam" or "vernacular Islam." According to Azra (2013), "Indonesian Islam has historically developed through processes of accommodation and adaptation rather than radical replacement, allowing for the emergence of culturally distinct expressions of Islamic piety that remain connected to global Islamic discourses" (p. 92). The case of mangulosi traditions in Batak Muslim communities represents a microcosm of these broader national processes.

The theoretical significance of this research extends beyond documenting a specific cultural practice to addressing fundamental questions about religious change, cultural resilience, and identity formation in pluralistic societies. By examining how a specific community negotiates seemingly contradictory elements of their cultural and religious heritage, this study contributes to our understanding of how individuals and communities construct meaningful identities in contexts of religious conversion and cultural change. As Bowen (2012) notes, "The ways in which communities integrate religious commitments with cultural practices reveal not just strategies of accommodation but fundamental processes through which religious meanings are created and experienced in everyday life" (p. 156). The mangulosi tradition in Desa Simatupang thus serves as a lens through which to examine broader processes of cultural-religious integration.

The contemporary practice of mangulosi in Desa Simatupang also reflects changing socio-economic conditions and generational perspectives. With increased mobility, education, and exposure to both global Islamic discourses and modernizing influences, younger generations of Batak Muslims often approach traditions differently than their elders. Research by Siregar (2019) indicates that "younger Batak Muslims tend to place greater emphasis on Islamic scriptural authority while simultaneously valuing cultural practices as

markers of ethnic identity rather than religious expression" (p. 203). This generational dimension adds another layer of complexity to understanding how mangulosi traditions are maintained, modified, or reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.

Previous research on Batak traditions and religious change has primarily focused either on Christian Batak communities or on broad historical patterns of Islamization. Detailed ethnographic studies of how specific traditions like mangulosi are integrated with Islamic practices in particular communities remain relatively limited. As Pardede (2020) observes, "While much has been written about Batak cultural persistence in Christian contexts, the specific strategies through which Muslim Bataks negotiate their dual identities remain understudied" (p. 18). This research addresses this gap by providing an in-depth examination of cultural-religious integration processes in a specific community context.

The practical significance of this research extends to issues of cultural heritage preservation, interreligious harmony, and cultural policy. As Indonesia continues to navigate tensions between religious orthodoxy and cultural diversity, understanding successful models of cultural-religious integration can provide valuable insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and cultural advocates. According to Kato (2014), "The ability of local communities to maintain cultural practices while adapting to religious change represents a crucial resource for Indonesia's continued development as a pluralistic democracy" (p. 312). By documenting how the community in Desa Simatupang has negotiated these complex issues, this research contributes to broader discussions about cultural sustainability and religious tolerance in diverse societies.

In this context, this research aims to examine the integration of the mangulosi tradition with Islamic values in Batak Muslim communities in Desa Simatupang, North Sumatra. Specifically, it seeks to document contemporary mangulosi practices among Muslim Bataks, analyze the processes through which Islamic interpretations of this tradition have developed, explore how community members understand and articulate the relationship between their cultural and religious identities, and identify the social and theological mechanisms that facilitate cultural-religious integration. Through this analysis, the research contributes to our understanding of how local traditions and religious values interact in Indonesia's dynamic cultural landscape.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is anchored in several interconnected theoretical frameworks that help illuminate the complex processes of cultural-religious integration occurring in Batak Muslim communities. First, the concept of "cultural resilience" provides a valuable lens for understanding how communities maintain core cultural practices while adapting to religious change. Cultural resilience refers to the capacity of cultural systems to absorb disturbances and reorganize while retaining essential functions, structures, and identity (Thaman, 2013). In the context of religious conversion or adoption, cultural resilience manifests in the selective retention and reinterpretation of cultural practices that community members consider fundamental to their identity. As Holling (2012) argues, "Resilient cultural systems don't simply resist change but actively incorporate new elements while maintaining core continuities" (p. 45). This theoretical perspective helps explain why certain traditions like *mangulosi* persist across religious boundaries while others may be abandoned, highlighting the active agency of communities in determining which cultural elements are essential to their identity.

The second theoretical framework that informs this study is "vernacularization," which describes the process through which global religious traditions become embedded in local cultural contexts. Developed by scholars like Eisenlohr (2016), the concept of vernacularization examines how universal religious principles are translated into locally meaningful forms and practices. Unlike older concepts of syncretism that often implied impurity or deviation from orthodox religion, vernacularization recognizes the legitimacy of localized religious expressions within the broader framework of religious traditions. As Eisenlohr notes, "Vernacularization involves not merely mixing elements but translating religious concepts into culturally resonant forms that make universal claims meaningful in particular contexts" (p. 132). This framework is particularly useful for analyzing how Islamic principles are articulated through Batak cultural forms in practices like *mangulosi*, revealing not a compromise of religious principles but a culturally embedded expression of Islamic values.

The concept of "symbolic reinterpretation" provides a third theoretical lens for this research. Developed in the anthropology of religion by scholars like Geertz (1973) and further elaborated by Asad (2009), symbolic reinterpretation focuses on how the meanings associated with cultural symbols and practices change while their outward forms remain relatively constant. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how the symbolism of *ulos cloth*

and mangulosi rituals has been reinterpreted within an Islamic framework. According to Lukens-Bull (2015), "Religious change often occurs not through the wholesale replacement of cultural forms but through the gradual shifting of meanings associated with existing practices" (p. 89). This theoretical framework helps explain how the same ritual action—the draping of ulos cloth—can carry different religious meanings for Muslim Bataks compared to their ancestors or non-Muslim contemporaries, even while the physical form of the ritual remains recognizable.

The fourth theoretical perspective informing this research is "multiple religious belonging" or "dual religious identity," which addresses how individuals and communities navigate membership in multiple religious and cultural traditions simultaneously. While some religious traditions emphasize exclusive belonging, scholars like Cornille (2017) have documented how individuals and communities often maintain multiple religious affiliations or draw on multiple religious resources in constructing their identities. As Cornille observes, "Multiple religious belonging involves not mere confusion or syncretism but complex strategies for integrating diverse religious resources into coherent systems of meaning" (p. 178). This theoretical lens helps illuminate how Batak Muslims in Desa Simatupang understand their simultaneous participation in Islamic and Batak cultural systems not as contradictory but as complementary aspects of their identity.

The concept of "everyday religion" or "lived religion" constitutes the fifth theoretical framework guiding this research. Developed by scholars like Ammerman (2016) and McGuire (2018), this approach shifts attention from official religious doctrines or institutions to examine how religion is actually practiced and experienced in everyday contexts. Rather than assuming that religious life conforms to textual ideals or institutional prescriptions, the everyday religion perspective examines how individuals and communities actively construct religious meanings through daily practices, including ritual, material culture, and social relationships. According to McGuire, "Religious life as actually experienced is often messy, inconsistent, and improvisational, drawing on multiple sources of authority and meaning" (p. 212). This theoretical orientation is particularly valuable for understanding how mangulosi practices are integrated into the religious lives of Batak Muslims in ways that may not be explicitly articulated in formal Islamic theology but are nonetheless experienced as authentically Islamic.

Finally, this research draws on theories of "cultural citizenship" developed by scholars like Rosaldo (2014) and further elaborated in

the Indonesian context by Hefner (2018). Cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) while participating in the democratic processes of the nation-state. In Indonesia's multicultural context, cultural citizenship involves negotiating between particularistic cultural identities and participation in a shared national culture and political community. According to Hefner, "In pluralistic societies like Indonesia, cultural citizenship involves complex negotiations between religious commitment, ethnic identity, and national belonging" (p. 43). This theoretical framework helps situate the integration of mangulosi traditions and Islamic values within broader questions of how Batak Muslims position themselves as both culturally distinct and fully legitimate members of the Indonesian Muslim community and nation-state.

C. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to examine the integration of the mangulosi tradition with Islamic values in Desa Simatupang. Ethnography was selected as the primary methodology due to its capacity to provide in-depth understanding of cultural practices, meanings, and social processes through prolonged engagement with a community. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) note, "Ethnographic research allows for the documentation of both explicit cultural knowledge and tacit understandings that may not be immediately apparent through other research methods" (p. 3). This approach was particularly appropriate for examining how community members navigate between cultural traditions and religious values in everyday contexts, as it allowed for the observation of both formal ritual practices and informal discussions and negotiations surrounding these practices.

The research was conducted over a nine-month period from June 2023 to February 2024, including six months of continuous residence in Desa Simatupang. Data collection employed multiple methods to ensure comprehensive coverage and triangulation. First, participant observation was conducted at 27 mangulosi ceremonies across different life-cycle events, including seven weddings, five birth celebrations, four funeral ceremonies, six house-warming events, three coming-of-age celebrations, and two reconciliation ceremonies. The researcher participated in the preparation processes, observed the ceremonies, and engaged in post-ceremony discussions, documenting both the ritual procedures and the surrounding social interactions through field notes and audio-visual

recordings with participant consent. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with 45 community members, including religious leaders (5), traditional cultural authorities or adat leaders (7), women ulos makers (4), young adults (15), middle-aged adults (10), and elderly community members (4). Interviews followed a semi-structured format that allowed for both systematic coverage of key research questions and flexibility to explore emerging themes. Third, focus group discussions were organized with three distinct groups: young Muslim Bataks (18-30 years), women involved in mangulosi ceremonies, and community leaders representing both religious and cultural institutions. Fourth, document analysis was conducted on available written materials, including local publications on adat practices, religious guidance from local Islamic organizations, and historical documents related to cultural-religious practices in the region.

The data analysis process followed a grounded theory approach, allowing themes and theoretical insights to emerge from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories. Following the recommendations of Charmaz (2014), the analysis proceeded through multiple stages: initial coding of field notes, interview transcripts, and documents; focused coding to identify recurring patterns and relationships; memo-writing to develop analytical categories; and theoretical coding to integrate these categories into a coherent analytical framework. This iterative process allowed for continuous refinement of analysis throughout the research period. To enhance analytical rigor, the researcher employed several strategies, including member checking (sharing preliminary interpretations with participants for feedback), peer debriefing with other researchers familiar with Batak culture and Islamic studies, and reflexive journaling to document the researcher's positionality and its potential influence on the research process.

Several ethical considerations guided this research. Prior to beginning fieldwork, the researcher obtained approval from both formal administrative authorities and informal community leaders in Desa Simatupang. Throughout the research process, the principles of informed consent, respect for privacy, and cultural sensitivity were maintained. Participants were provided with clear information about the research purpose and given the option to withdraw at any time. For ceremonies and rituals, permission was obtained from event hosts before observation or recording. In reporting the research, pseudonyms have been used for individual participants,

though the village name has been used with community permission to acknowledge their contribution to cultural knowledge. Additionally, following principles of reciprocity, the researcher contributed to community activities and provided copies of research materials to the village archive at the conclusion of the study, creating a resource for community cultural preservation efforts.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The contemporary practice of mangulosi among Muslim Bataks in Desa Simatupang reveals a sophisticated process of cultural-religious integration that maintains the essential structure of the tradition while aligning it with Islamic values. The mangulosi ceremony continues to occupy a central place in community life, marking significant transitions and reinforcing social bonds. However, its practice has undergone subtle but significant transformations to accommodate Islamic principles. According to Pak Hasanuddin, a 67-year-old community elder, "We still give ulos as our ancestors did, but the meaning has changed. Now when I place ulos on my grandchild at his wedding, I am calling on Allah's blessings, not the spirits of ancestors" (Personal communication, August 12, 2023). This statement exemplifies how the outward form of the tradition persists while its spiritual foundations have been reinterpreted within an Islamic framework.

The most significant transformation in the mangulosi tradition concerns the spiritual basis of the practice. Historically, the power of ulos was understood to derive from its connection to ancestor spirits and pre-Islamic Batak cosmology, where it represented the binding together of the upper world (*banua ginjang*), middle world (*banua tonga*), and underworld (*banua toru*). In contemporary Muslim practice in Desa Simatupang, this cosmological interpretation has been replaced with an Islamic understanding that frames ulos as a cultural symbol of blessing (*berkah*) from Allah rather than a spiritually charged object in itself. As Imam Rahman, a respected religious leader in the community, explained, "Islam teaches that blessings come only from Allah. The ulos is a *wasila* (means) through which we express our prayers for Allah's blessings, not a source of spiritual power itself" (Personal communication, July 25, 2023). This reinterpretation maintains the cultural significance of ulos while removing elements that might conflict with Islamic monotheism.

The ritual procedures surrounding mangulosi have also been modified to incorporate Islamic elements while preserving the core

structure of the tradition. Before the ceremonial draping of ulos, Muslim participants now commonly recite bismillah (in the name of Allah) and short prayers from the Quran. During wedding ceremonies, for example, the traditional Batak mangulosi is preceded by Islamic marriage rites (akad nikah) conducted by a religious official, and the subsequent ulos giving is framed as complementary to, rather than separate from, the Islamic ceremony. The verbal blessings accompanying the mangulosi, traditionally invoking ancestral spirits for protection and fertility, have been replaced with Islamic prayers for the couple's wellbeing. As observed during a wedding ceremony in September 2023, the parents draped the ulos while reciting, "May Allah bless your marriage with sakinah, mawaddah, warahmah [tranquility, love, and mercy]," directly quoting Islamic concepts of marital harmony.

The specific types of ulos used and their symbolic meanings have largely been maintained in Desa Simatupang, though with reinterpreted significance. The research documented seven main types of ulos still in use: ragidup, ragihotang, sibolang, sitoluntuho, mangiring, bintang maratur, and jugia. Each continues to be associated with specific ceremonies and relationships, maintaining cultural continuity. For example, the ulos ragidup remains the primary cloth given by parents to their children at weddings, symbolizing the transfer of life blessings. However, the understanding of these symbols has shifted. As Ibu Nurhasanah, a 53-year-old ulos maker, explained, "The patterns in ragidup represent Allah's creation—the mountains, rivers, and life itself. When we make these traditional patterns, we are celebrating Allah's creativity, not following pagan designs" (Personal communication, October 8, 2023). This reinterpretation of traditional motifs illustrates how community members actively construct continuity between cultural forms and religious values.

The research identified three primary strategies through which community members justify the integration of mangulosi with Islamic practice. First, many invoke the Islamic legal principle of 'urf (custom) and its acceptance of cultural practices that do not contradict core Islamic principles. Several educated community members specifically referenced the well-known Islamic legal maxim "al-'adatu muhakkamah" (custom is authoritative) to legitimize the continuation of mangulosi. Second, community members distinguish between the cultural and religious aspects of the practice, framing mangulosi as adat (custom) rather than ibadat (worship). As explained by

Ustaz Ridwan, a graduate of an Islamic university in Medan, "Islam distinguishes between ritual practices directed toward Allah and cultural practices that organize social relationships. Mangulosi belongs to the second category" (Personal communication, November 12, 2023). Third, community members emphasize values shared between Batak culture and Islamic teachings, such as respect for parents, community solidarity, and mutual responsibility, positioning mangulosi as a cultural expression of Islamic values rather than a separate tradition.

Generational differences in the understanding and practice of mangulosi emerged as a significant finding. Older community members (above 60 years) often express a more hybridized understanding that maintains elements of traditional Batak spirituality alongside Islamic beliefs, even while publicly affirming Islamic orthodoxy. Middle-aged adults (35-60 years) typically articulate the most developed theological justifications for integrating mangulosi with Islamic practice, drawing on both formal Islamic education and cultural knowledge. Younger community members (18-35 years) generally express more concern with Islamic orthodoxy and are more likely to question aspects of the tradition that seem potentially un-Islamic, while simultaneously valuing mangulosi as an expression of cultural identity. According to Ahmad, a 28-year-old university graduate, "For my generation, mangulosi is important because it connects us to our Batak heritage, but we're careful to practice it in ways that align with tauhid [Islamic monotheism]" (Personal communication, January 5, 2024). These generational differences reflect broader processes of Islamic education, urbanization, and changing approaches to cultural identity in Indonesia.

Gender dimensions of mangulosi practice reveal complex patterns of both continuity and change. Traditionally, women played central roles in creating ulos cloth through weaving and in determining the appropriate type of ulos for specific relationships and ceremonies. These roles continue in Desa Simatupang, with women maintaining significant cultural authority over the material aspects of mangulosi tradition. However, increased Islamic education among women has led to greater female participation in theological discussions about the compatibility of cultural practices with Islamic teachings. During a focus group discussion with women's Quran study group (pengajian) members, participants actively debated whether specific verbal formulas used during mangulosi needed modification to better align with Islamic principles. As one participant noted, "As

women who understand both Islam and our culture, we have a responsibility to guide the community in practicing traditions in ways that honor Allah" (Focus group, December 3, 2023). This finding contradicts simplistic narratives that associate Islamization with decreased female authority in cultural domains.

The significance of mangulosi extends beyond religious considerations to questions of ethnic identity and belonging in Indonesia's multicultural context. For Muslim Bataks in Desa Simatupang, maintaining the mangulosi tradition serves as a marker of continued Batak identity despite religious conversion. As articulated by Pak Muhammad Taufiq, the village head, "Being Muslim doesn't make us any less Batak. Through practices like mangulosi, we show that we can be fully Muslim and fully Batak at the same time" (Personal communication, July 30, 2023). This perspective reflects what scholars have identified as the "multiple layer" nature of identity in Indonesia, where religious, ethnic, and national identities coexist rather than compete. The continued practice of mangulosi thus serves not only religious purposes but also maintains connections with non-Muslim Batak relatives and communities, facilitating inter-religious harmony in the broader Batak cultural sphere.

The material culture associated with mangulosi has undergone significant transformations while maintaining visual continuity with tradition. The research documented changes in ulos production, including the introduction of mechanized weaving alongside traditional handweaving, the use of commercial dyes rather than natural pigments, and the incorporation of Islamic calligraphic elements into some contemporary ulos designs. Despite these material changes, community members emphasize the continuity of cultural meaning. According to Ibu Rahma, who has been making ulos for over 30 years, "The method may change, but the meaning remains. Whether hand-woven or machine-made, the ulos carries our prayers and hopes for those who receive it" (Personal communication, September 18, 2023). This attention to the cultural significance rather than the material authenticity of ulos allows for adaptations that accommodate both economic realities and religious considerations while maintaining cultural continuity.

The integration of mangulosi with Islamic practice in Desa Simatupang has been facilitated by specific theological frameworks developed by local religious leaders. Drawing on concepts from progressive Islamic scholarship, community religious leaders have developed what might be termed a "cultural tauhid" approach that

distinguishes between the form and essence of cultural practices. This approach evaluates traditions not merely by their historical origins but by their current meanings and functions in the community. Ustaz Ahmad Fadil, who studied at an Islamic boarding school (pesantren) before returning to serve his community, explained, "Islam came not to destroy culture but to purify it. We maintain mangulosi by removing elements contradicting tauhid while preserving its function of strengthening family bonds, which Islam also values" (Personal communication, August 28, 2023). This theological framework provides community members with religious legitimation for cultural continuity while emphasizing alignment with Islamic principles.

The research reveals that mangulosi plays an important role in life cycle rituals that parallels Islamic life cycle practices, creating a complementary rather than competitive relationship. At births, the traditional mangulosi ceremony occurs separately from but in association with the Islamic aqiqah ceremony (sacrifice and naming ritual). At weddings, as previously noted, the Islamic nikah (marriage contract) and the traditional mangulosi are performed sequentially as parts of an integrated celebration. At funerals, Islamic burial practices are completed first, followed by mangulosi ceremonies for the grieving family members. This sequential integration allows both religious and cultural requirements to be fulfilled without conflict. As observed at a funeral in November 2023, family members completed the Islamic janazah prayer and burial, then gathered for the mangulosi ceremony where ulos cloth was draped over the shoulders of the widow and children, symbolizing community support during their grieving process. The presiding elder explicitly noted that while the deceased had returned to Allah, the living required the strength of community bonds represented by the ulos.

The educational institutions in Desa Simatupang play a significant role in transmitting both Islamic knowledge and cultural heritage to younger generations, actively shaping how these domains are integrated (Ahmad Nur et al 2024). The local madrasah (Islamic school) includes units on "Islam and Batak Culture" in its curriculum, teaching students how to understand cultural practices through Islamic principles. Simultaneously, traditional cultural education continues through family structures and community events where children and young people learn the protocols of mangulosi by participation and observation. This dual educational approach produces young people equipped to navigate both cultural and religious domains with sophistication. As expressed by a 17-year-old madrasah

student, "At school we learn the Islamic perspective, and at home we learn the cultural traditions. Both are important for who we are" (Personal communication, January 15, 2024). This integration of religious and cultural education contributes to the sustainability of traditions like mangulosi across generations.

The practice of mangulosi in Desa Simatupang does not exist in isolation but is influenced by broader regional, national, and transnational discourses on Islam and culture. Local interpretations are shaped by materials from regional Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, which have developed increasingly sophisticated approaches to cultural diversity within an Islamic framework. National discourses on "Islam Nusantara" (archipelagic Islam) or "Islam Berkemajuan" (progressive Islam) that emphasize the legitimacy of culturally distinctive expressions of Islam also influence local understandings. Additionally, returning hajj pilgrims and migrants who have lived in other regions bring new perspectives on the relationship between Islam and local traditions. As Pak Abdullah, who performed the hajj in 2019, reflected, "Meeting Muslims from different cultures during hajj strengthened my understanding that Islam accepts cultural diversity. I saw that Muslims from Africa, Turkey, or China maintain their distinctive cultural expressions while worshipping the same Allah" (Personal communication, October 25, 2023). These multi-level influences contribute to an evolving understanding of mangulosi's place within Islamic practice.

E. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the integration of the mangulosi tradition with Islamic values in Desa Simatupang represents a sophisticated process of cultural-religious negotiation that maintains ethnic identity while affirming religious commitment. Rather than representing syncretism or incomplete conversion, the contemporary practice of mangulosi among Muslim Bataks reflects active theological engagement and cultural creativity. Through strategic adaptations—including reinterpretation of symbolic meanings, modification of ritual procedures, incorporation of Islamic prayers, and emphasis on shared values—the community has created a cultural practice that is simultaneously authentic to Batak heritage and compatible with Islamic principles. This process is not static but continues to evolve across generations, with younger community members both questioning and reaffirming the tradition from their

perspective of greater Islamic education. The case of mangulosi in Desa Simatupang illustrates how local communities exercise agency in negotiating religious and cultural identities, challenging simplistic narratives of either cultural loss through religious conversion or religious compromise through cultural accommodation. Instead, it demonstrates how cultural resilience operates through transformation rather than mere preservation, allowing traditions to remain meaningful across significant religious and social changes. These findings contribute to our understanding of how Islamic practices develop in culturally diverse contexts and how communities maintain multiple dimensions of identity in pluralistic societies.

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