

Negotiating Tradition and Islam in Indigenous Marriage Rituals of Tabang, Indonesia

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Abstract: The traditional marriage rituals of the people of Tabang, North Sulawesi, retain cultural complexities that reflect the ongoing negotiations between customary law, Islamic values, and contemporary social dynamics. This study aims to uncover how the living law system is integrated with Islamic religious norms in the marriage procession and how social changes reshape the meaning of tradition in the context of Muslim indigenous peoples. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with indigenous and religious leaders, and local documentation studies. The study results show that the Tabang people have built a stable model of cultural acculturation, in which traditional elements are filtered through Islamic values without removing their symbolic and performative structures. However, this process also faces serious challenges due to the entry of modern entertainment practices such as songs of remembrance and youth parties that shift moral and spiritual values in traditional rites. This study confirms that conventional marriage ceremonies in Tabang are not just a cultural practice, but a field of contestation of values and identities that continue to be negotiated. These findings enrich the discourse of cultural studies and legal anthropology by offering a new understanding of how Muslim indigenous peoples manage their cultural heritage in a dynamic and ambiguous modern landscape.

Keywords: customary law, acculturation, local Islam, marriage rites, cultural performativity, indigenous peoples.

Introduction

In cultural studies, customary practices related to the life cycle, especially marriage rituals, play a central role in reproducing the collective identity of a society (Ajami et al., 2015; Narah, 2023). In Indonesia, ethnic and cultural diversity make the marriage procession not only a personal bond between two individuals but also a symbolic arena where negotiations between traditional values and external influences such as religion, the state, and modernity occur (Haryanto, 2019; Yulianto & Lestari, 2025). Tabang Village, located in the Bolaang Mongondow area, North Sulawesi, is one of the concrete examples of how traditional marriage ceremonies function as a vehicle for articulating local cultural heritage that continues to exist in the vortex of changing times. The conventional procession in this village shows the

continuity of customary law and local culture that is internalized in the community's social structure, even when the religious system and state law are also present in the same social space (Geertz, 2017).

The phenomenon in Tabang Village reflects a form of contestation and coexistence between local and global values that come through religion (in this case, Islam) and state regulations. As a community that predominantly embraces Islam, the people of Tabang cannot let go of the practice of marriage from the Sharia norms that are institutionalized in formal laws such as the Compilation of Islamic Law. However, interestingly, society does not necessarily replace customs with religious laws; instead, it takes care of the two in an intertwined social system (Dahwal & Fernando, 2024; Niu & Laidler, 2025). Implementing traditional marriage ceremonies in Tabang displays a complex dialectic between customs rooted in animist belief systems and conventional royal structures, with Islamic principles that tend to be textual and normative. In practice, the community applies cultural selection to customary elements that align with the sharia. It eliminates those considered contradictory, without eliminating the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of the customary rites themselves (Wu et al., 2022).

This convergence between religion and custom does not occur in a vacuum, but results from a long social construction. In studies of legal anthropology and the sociology of religion, this phenomenon is referred to as "symbolic accommodation", which is the process by which traditional and religious institutions align with each other to create a social consensus in communal life (Witte, 2018). In Tabang, traditional processions such as *Mopohabar* (notification), *Monagu* (determination of the day), and *Mogama* (picking up the bride) are not only maintained as symbolic rituals, but also as a means of forming the structure of social relations between families, conveying social status, and affirming the ethnic identity of Mongondow. Even in customary deliberation (*Moyosingog ko adat*), the values of collectivity, social hierarchy, and communal agreement are reaffirmed as living and binding social norms.

Nevertheless, the preservation of tradition does not always take place in harmony. Some of the more contemporary cultural practices, such as folk songs and youth parties, show the infiltration of modern values that can erode the ethical values upheld in society, including religious values and norms of decency (Oni, 2024; Wilson, 2016). This tradition, which initially functioned as a means of entertainment and social solidarity, is now considered by some to open up space for practices that are contrary to religious teachings, such as alcohol consumption, juvenile delinquency, and promiscuous sex (Ekeke & John, 2023). These dynamic raises critical questions about the boundary between cultural preservation and the

need for social reform in a society that continues to move towards modernity and information openness.

This paper aims to dissect the structure and stages of the traditional marriage procession of the people of Tabang Village by placing it in a theoretical framework about cultural acculturation and legal pluralism. Drawing on ethnographic approaches and qualitative analysis methods, this article provides an in-depth understanding of how local communities manage their cultural heritage amid internal and external pressures and how social and religious mechanisms operate in maintaining or even reformulating their indigenous practices.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2018; Elbardan & Kholeif, 2017), which aims to understand the cultural meanings contained in the practice of traditional marriage ceremonies of the people of Tabang Village in depth and contextually. This approach was chosen because the object of study is complex, layered, and rich in social symbols that cannot be explained quantitatively. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the experiences, values, and social structures internalized in cultural practices, especially regarding traditional rites such as marriage (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014).

Specifically, the method used in this study is ethnography an approach commonly used in cultural studies to describe and analyze social practices within a particular community setting (Wolf, 2012). The ethnographic method allows researchers to build a holistic understanding of socio-cultural dynamics through direct involvement in the field, participatory observation, and intensive interaction with informants (Moleong, 2021). This technique is the primary purpose of the research, which is to uncover the symbolic meaning, customary norms, and dialectics between traditions and religions in implementing traditional marriage ceremonies of the Tabang people.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: (1) participatory observation of the traditional marriage procession directly in Tabang Village, (2) in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, and families of traditional procession actors, and (3) study of local documents and archives related to the traditional history and social structure of Bolaang Mongondow. The observation was carried out over three months, covering all traditional ritual stages, from the Mopohabar stage (initial notification) to Pobuian (return to the women's house). The semi-structured interviews provided flexibility in exploring participants' personal narratives, symbolic interpretations, and experiences of these customary practices (Moleong, 2021).

Informants are selected purposively, considering the criteria of experience and adequate customary knowledge. Gender representation, age, and social roles in the community are also considered to obtain diverse perspectives. The validity of the data was strengthened through the triangulation technique of sources and methods, namely by comparing the results of the interviews with direct observation and secondary data from customary law literature, Bolaang Mongondow ethnography, and relevant village government documents.

The data was analyzed using a thematic approach by identifying the field narrative's main patterns, categories, and meanings. The analysis is carried out through three stages: data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Huberman & Miles, 2014). In addition, in interpreting the data, the researcher also uses the theoretical framework of cultural acculturation, rites of passage, and customary law system theory to build a systematic and reflective understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Results and Discussion

Acculturation, Customary Law, and Ritual Dynamics in Traditional Marriage Practices

Implementing customary rituals in traditional societies cannot be separated from the multi-structural value system, namely the accumulation of legal, religious, and cultural norms in one social practice (Geertz, 2017). In the context of the people of Tabang Village, the traditional marriage practice is a concrete expression of the intersection between Bolaang Mongondow customary law, Islamic teachings, and the social structure of kinship that lives in the local cultural space. Therefore, the analysis of the implementation of customary processions cannot be carried out only through a descriptive approach; it also needs to be placed in a theoretical frame that can explain how traditions live, change, and are negotiated in social practice (Sovacool & Hess, 2017).

Customary law, the central normative system in local communities, has long been recognized as part of Indonesia's national legal framework. As emphasized in Article 18B Paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, the existence of customary law communities and their rights are guaranteed as long as they are alive and by the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Yuliartini et al., 2021). Diala (2017) stated that customary law is an unwritten legal system that grows from people's habits, is flexible, and adaptive to social dynamics. In practice, customary law regulates relationships between individuals and becomes an instrument of social solidarity and a marker of collective cultural identity. Therefore, stages such as *Mopohabar* (notification), *Moyosingog ko adat* (customary deliberation), and

Mogama (bride pick-up) not only have a ritual dimension, but also a normative dimension enforced by social consensus.

The integration between customary law and religious law, especially Islam, in the marriage procession of the Tabang people shows a distinctive form of symbolic accommodation. Berry (2005, 2006) stated that in the acculturation process, there is an intensive interaction between two different cultural systems, ultimately resulting in a new synthesis. In the case of the Tabang people, Islamic law exists not as a hegemonic force that replaces customs, but as a normative element that filters, harmonizes, and even affirms certain customary practices. The marriage contract, for example, follows the legal requirements of marriage according to Islam. In contrast, the traditional procession from the marriage to the reception is still carried out within the symbolic framework of the Bolaang Mongondow custom (Bukido et al., 2020; Humaira & Parani, 2025; Winoto et al., 2023). Ali (2011) in his study of Javanese Islam referred to this pattern as a form of religious localization, where religious values are integrated into the local social structure without causing ideological conflicts.

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, traditional marriage should also be read as part of the rites of passage. Van Gennep (2019) explains that transitional rites, such as marriage, are biological or legal and social transformations that reaffirm social order, hierarchy, and group solidarity. Traditional processions in Tabang such as *Pilat in Kokuduk* (the opening of the veil), *Pinogiobawan* (eating together in the room), and *Pobuian* (return to one's parents' home) are performative symbols that articulate a new status, the validity of social ties, and communal legitimacy against changes in individual status. Thus, traditional rituals reflect cultural values and become a means of production and reproduction of social structures.

However, in contemporary social reality, tradition cannot be separated from the challenges of modernity. The transformation of values, the flow of globalization, and shifts in social norms have made some traditional elements experience distortions of meaning. Clifford (2004), in the concept of invented traditions, explain that not all traditions are authentic legacies from the past; some are created or modified to meet contemporary needs. The phenomenon of songs of memories and youthful parties in the marriage of the Tabang people can be seen as a form of cultural innovation that fills the symbolic void in modern society. However, this practice also raises moral ambiguity because, on the one hand, it is considered a collective entertainment (Csordas, 2013). However, on the other hand, it opens up space for deviant behavior such as drunkenness and free relations that are contrary to religious values and customary social norms.

From the entire discourse, it can be concluded that implementing traditional marriage ceremonies in Tabang Village is an ideal example of a hybrid social system formed by the interaction between customary law, religious law, and modern cultural reality. In this system, people not only persist in customs as a form of past heritage, but also resignify traditions as part of a cultural strategy to address the times' challenges. Therefore, the study of this practice is important for ethnographic documentation and building a theoretical model of how local communities shape continuity in change.

Social Structure and Customary Law System in Tabang Traditional Marriage

The implementation of traditional marriage ceremonies in Tabang Village cannot be separated from the social structure of the Bolaang Mongondow community, which still upholds the principles of customary law as a living norm. Customary law in this region is not formally written in the form of codification, but has high normative power and is consistently obeyed by all levels of society (Diala, 2017). In the context of marriage, customary law not only regulates the technical implementation of rituals, but also regulates the structure of social relations between the bride and groom's families, collective rights and obligations between groups, and ways to resolve disputes and build consensus (Busyro et al., 2023; Gluckman & Moore, 2017). This makes customary law a system of rules and a value system that represents the unity of cultural identity, kinship, and honor in the local community.

The social structure of the Tabang community has historically been formed in a layered collective framework. Each customary procession, especially marriage-related, shows the important role of local customary institutions such as traditional elders, community leaders, and family representatives who regulate the rites and ceremonial procedures. Customary institutions act as guardians of value continuity and mediators when there is disagreement between the bride's family (Yulianto & Lestari, 2025). In the process of *Moyosingog ko adat*, which is a customary deliberation held before the wedding day customary institutions will facilitate negotiations regarding the amount of customary property (*mogator*), the number and form of symbolic goods that must be brought, and social rites that must be fulfilled as a form of respect for the woman's family. The agreements reached in these customary forums are morally and socially binding, often even stronger than the formal laws of the state.

Customary law on marriage is also a medium for strengthening the social hierarchy in the Tabang community. For example, the amount of customary property brought by men is greatly influenced by the social status of women, both in terms of education, position, and descent (Napsiah et al., 2024). This phenomenon shows that customary law in Tabang is not only normative, but also symbolic: it

becomes a space for the representation of the values of honor, status, and prestige that are collectively recognized. This is in line with the view of Diala (2017), who emphasizes that customary law is a legal system that does not stand alone, but is inherent in the socio-cultural structure and cultural functions of the local community. Therefore, the implementation of the marriage ceremony is not an individual activity, but a social ritual that unites the entire community in a collective action that is symbolic and sociologically meaningful.

In addition, implementing customary ceremonies shows how customary law lives in the mechanism of inheriting values between generations. The young people involved as technical implementers in the ceremony are taught directly by the elders about the stages and meanings of each procession (Adebola, 2016; Nst & Lubis, 2024). This shows that customary law is not inherited through text, but through social practice and participation. For example, in the *Molongow* (handing over of treasures) procession, the young men are actively involved as ushers in traditional symbols to the bride's house, accompanied by traditional clothing, regional songs, and formal speeches in the Mongondow language. This process strengthens family ties and becomes an effective cultural education instrument for the younger generation (Livermore, 2009). Thus, customary law in the context of marriage in Tabang is a social system integrated with the functions of cultural education, strengthening collective identity, and social legitimacy that continue to be reproduced in the daily practices of the community.

In short, customary law in the marriage of the Tabang people is not just a series of cultural procedures, but a lively and dynamic social system. It forms a network of social authority, mechanisms of collective legitimacy, and cultural narratives rooted in the long history of the Bolaang Mongondow people. Preserving customary law in this context becomes important to maintain cultural identity and understand how local communities construct parallel legal systems and sometimes complement national laws. From the perspective of cultural studies, this system shows that indigenous peoples, such as those in Tabang, can create a space of cultural sovereignty in the private and public realms through indigenous institutions that are strong and relevant to their social needs.

Integration of Islamic Values in Traditional Practices: Acculturation without Disintegration

One of the characteristics that distinguishes the traditional marriage practices of the people of Tabang Village from other regions in Indonesia is the ability of this community to integrate Islamic values into the traditional structure without sacrificing the local cultural identity. This integration process does not occur in substitution or direct replacement. Instead, it occurs selectively and accommodatively, where Islamic values act as a normative filter for customary

elements contrary to religious teachings. The result is a form of cultural acculturation that does not cause social disintegration, but rather strengthens the legitimacy of customs in a Muslim-majority society. According to Berry (2005, 2006), this condition is a form of symbiotic acculturation, in which two different cultural systems make reciprocal adjustments without losing their basic identity.

The implementation of the marriage contract is the most obvious example of the role of Islam in the framework of marriage customs in Tabang. Although the traditional procession is very long and complex, the community still recognizes that the only legally binding stage of religion and state is the marriage contract, which is carried out by the rules of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) (Aziz, 2024; Nasir, 2022; Nasution & Pasaribu, 2023). However, what is interesting is how symbolic elements and customary rituals still surround the contract's procession without necessitating the Sharia's validity. Even in some cases, customs are given space to determine the time, place, and technical procedures for implementing the contract, as long as it does not conflict with the principles of *fiqh munakahat* (Jahar et al., 2024). For example, based on previous customary deliberations, the traditional family decides whether the marriage contract will be carried out at the bride's house or the Office of Religious Affairs (Thalib, 2023). This shows that the space of customary and religious authority does not affirm each other, but complements and strengthens harmonious social structures.

In practice, the influence of Islam is not only limited to the stage of the akad but also permeates the traditional symbols that were rooted initially in animistic belief systems. Elements such as using *Tampelan* (a bullet-repelling iron), blessing water, or reciting traditional mantras in the *Molongow* and *Mogama* processions are now being reinterpreted within Islamic spirituality. Traditional and religious leaders work together to ensure that these symbols do not contradict monotheism, but function as part of respect for ancestors and a means of strengthening friendship between extended families. This change in the meaning of symbols is a form of cultural resignation, a process in which old symbols are given new meanings according to the evolving social and religious context (Clifford, 2004). In the context of the Tabang community, this process is carried out deliberately and communally, not through external intervention or normative coercion.

Furthermore, the integration of Islam into customs also has an impact on social ethics in the implementation of marriage ceremonies. For example, the concept of *pogogutat* (cooperation) originated from local customs and is now framed as a form of social charity and alms recommended in Islam. The community donated basic materials, energy, or funds for the smooth reception as part of social worship, not solely a traditional obligation. This kind of pattern shows that there is a meeting point between traditional values and religious values that reinforce each other in

daily practice. Geertz (2017) calls this phenomenon a form of "religious privatization", in which Islamic values are not only accepted textually, but also culturally processed so that they can be integrated into the social system that has existed for a long time.

However, the success of the integration of Islam into customs in Tabang is not without challenges. Some traditional practices are still theologically in the grey area, such as the nighttime ritual of picking up the bride accompanied by music and dance, or the procession of removing the veil and symbolic kissing in public as a sign of the relationship's legitimacy. Although most people interpret this as a mere symbol, few criticize it from the fiqh perspective, saying that it has the potential to open up space for violations of Islamic *aurat* (intimate parts) norms and manners. However, it is interesting how the Tabang people respond to this criticism not by eliminating the practice, but by shifting the context of its implementation for example, by moving the symbolic procession into a closed space involving only the nuclear family. This kind of adaptive strategy is a concrete example of the resilience of local culture in the face of change without losing its ethical roots and identity.

From all the above explanations, it can be concluded that the integration of Islam into traditional practices in Tabang runs within the framework of inclusive and constructive acculturation. Islam is not a hegemonic force that gets rid of customs, and customs are not an obstacle to the implementation of religious values. Instead, the two move in a dynamic coexistence relationship, adapting to each other to maintain society's social and spiritual harmony. This kind of integration model is relevant to Bolaang Mongondow and its context. However, it can also be used as a theoretical reference in building a cultural system that is plural, just, and oriented towards the noble values of humanity.

Performance and Social Function of Marriage Ceremonies

The traditional marriage ceremony of the Tabang Village community plays a role beyond just the union of two individuals in the marriage bond. In Zaremba (2021) terms, it is a social stage or arena ritual, where collective performances reaffirm a community's social structure, values, and cultural identity. In the context of the Bolaang Mongondow community, a series of marriage processions such as *Pinogapangan* (female family companion), *Pilat in Siripu* (footwear dating procession), and *Pobuian* (return of the bride) are not just symbolic ceremonies, but part of the *rites of passage* which regulates the transformation of a person's social status from single to full member in the family and community structure. This status transition is recognized by the nuclear family and the entire indigenous community directly involved in the implementation of the ritual, thus forming a collective social legitimacy of the relationship that has been religiously and customarily ratified.

In each stage of the ceremony, it is clear how performative elements are used to build a sacred and public atmosphere. The aesthetics of the ritual are presented through the use of distinctive colorful traditional clothing, the use of the Mongondow language in traditional speeches, and the involvement of traditional symbols such as *siripu* (footwear) and *kokuduk* (veil), which each contain their own social and moral message. These symbols are not just visual ornaments, but are representations of values that govern behavior and social relations between individuals (Berry, 2005; Li et al., 2024). For example, removing the footwear before entering the groom's house signifies humility and respect for the new social environment (Haerozi et al., 2023). In this kind of performative tradition, the custom is a mechanism for internalizing values through symbolic actions that are repeated and lived by all ceremony participants.

The social function of this ceremony is also seen from the multigenerational participation in the entire series of activities. The extended families of both sides, including the traditional elders, youth, women, and even children, have specific roles in each stage. These roles have been formed for generations and are transmitted through direct ceremony involvement. This phenomenon reflects what Narah (2023) calls community, a state of social cohesion that goes beyond formal stratification and places all community members in an equal relationship oriented towards shared values. In this community, solidarity is the main force that allows rituals to take place completely and meaningfully. Youth involvement in technical tasks such as decorating the wedding, preparing food, or arranging logistics is seen as a form of cultural learning and strengthening of group identity (Adebola, 2016; Livermore, 2009). Thus, each person becomes part of the social and cultural reproduction process through direct experience in the ritual space.

Furthermore, this ritual practice also strengthens the family structure across lineages. Not infrequently, traditional processions reunite distant relatives who previously rarely interacted. The *Mogama* procession (the pick-up of the bride to the husband's house), accompanied by extended family and traditional elders conveying cultural messages, signifies that marriage is not only private, but also a social contract involving two large family communities (Suleman et al., 2023). Therefore, the value of equality, collective responsibility, and social recognition are the principles that accompany every procession. This makes the traditional marriage ceremony an expressive medium of communal solidarity that cannot be replaced by the state's formal marriage bureaucratic system.

Finally, from the point of view of cultural studies, traditional rituals such as those carried out in Tabang show how culture works performatively in constructing social reality. This ritual is not only the result of the legacy of the past, which is reproduced passively. However, it is an active, dynamic, and continuously

recontextualized social action according to the changing times. By maintaining its performative elements and social functions, the Tabang people show that cultural identity is not just a collection of symbols but a living practice carried out with a strong collective consciousness.

Shifting Values and Challenges in Modern Traditions

In the dynamics of local cultural preservation, one of the biggest challenges indigenous peoples, such as those in Tabang Village, face is the emergence of new practices that, although claimed to be part of tradition, have the potential to shift the noble values contained in previous customary practices. This is evident in the two cultural phenomena that have developed in the last decade, namely the song of memories and the youth party, which usually accompany the implementation of the traditional wedding reception. At the beginning of its appearance, this activity was intended as a form of appreciation for the younger generation's involvement in helping the smooth running of the traditional procession. Music, nightlife, and volunteer performances are seen as expressive mediums to celebrate the celebration's success while strengthening social solidarity across ages. However, in practice, this activity undergoes a significant shift in meaning, from a space of cultural appreciation to a place of free entertainment that often leads to deviant behavior (Haryanto, 2019).

Various narratives from field informants stated that the song of memories and youth parties in some cases became an open medium for alcohol consumption, promiscuity between teenagers, and social conflicts in the form of commotion between youth groups. One of the traditional figures said that "the song of memories has become the entrance to a moral crisis in tradition," indicating that this cultural transformation has an impact not only on the aesthetic dimension but also on the ethical and spiritual foundations of the community. This shift occurred in the context of weak social control from traditional and family leaders and the increasingly dominant popular culture and consumerism that reached remote villages through social media, television, and personal gadgets. Tradition, in this case, loses its control function and sacred meaning, becoming a form of public entertainment detached from the value system sustaining the continuity of traditional practices.

The phenomenon can be understood through the lens of invented traditions theory as put forward by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), who state that traditions are not always authentic past legacies but are often new constructions created in response to specific social changes. These created or modified traditions can be productive if managed within the collective values and goals framework. However, they can also be destructive if not guarded by cultural authorities that function as

guardians of values. In the case of Tabang Village, the cultural innovations that emerged as post-traditional ceremonial entertainment seemed to fill the void of post-marriage rituals. However, because they were not based on strong moral principles, they tended to create space for the fragmentation of values, especially among the younger generation, who began moving away from the traditional and religious spirit the community had upheld.

This condition shows that cultural modernization does not always go hand in hand with improving the moral quality of society (Csordas, 2013). When modernity enters without value filtering, what happens is not renewal (revitalization), but cultural degradation. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a selective revitalization strategy, which is a process of traditional renewal carried out by taking into account religious values, social norms, and the principles of collective morality (Ekeke & John, 2023; Oni, 2024). Cultural elements that are still in line with the principles of social harmony, such as cooperation (*pogogutat*), the use of indigenous languages, and customary symbols in ceremonies, need to be maintained and even strengthened in their roles. Instead, cultural elements that have strayed from their original purpose and open up loopholes for moral deviance must be revisited, even if they need to be replaced with alternative activities that are more educational and constructive.

Thus, cultural preservation cannot be interpreted solely as an effort to maintain the external form of a tradition; it must also include the maintenance of the intrinsic values that are its soul. The challenge of the Tabang people today is not only to defend the customs from extinction, but also to save them from the distortion of meaning caused by the rapid change of the times. In the framework of cultural studies, this requires a collective awareness that culture is a field of value struggle, not just a symbolic heritage that is celebrated without critical reflection.

Conclusion

This research reveals that the implementation of traditional marriage ceremonies in Tabang Village is a complex cultural representation of the value system of the Bolaang Mongondow community. This ceremony contains the function of individual rites of transition and serves as a means of collective articulation of social relations, customary authority, and ethnic identity. Stages such as *Mopohabar*, *Moyosingog ko adat*, and *Mogama* reflect a living and socially binding customary law system, which is not formally codified, but is carried out with high legitimacy by the community. This customary system functions as a regulative mechanism that maintains social harmony, regulates rights and obligations between families, and affirms society's hierarchical structure through symbolic practices carried out from generation to generation. Therefore, implementing traditional ceremonies is not just

a cultural activity, but also a form of institutionalization of values and norms manifested in collective ritual actions.

Another important finding is how the Tabang people have succeeded in forming an acculturation space between customary law and Islamic values in an integrative framework that does not affirm each other. Islam is not a hegemonic force that replaces customs but functions as a value filter, allowing the selection of customary elements by Sharia principles. This is reflected in the social acceptance of Islamized traditional practices, such as strengthening the value of mutual cooperation in the framework of social charity, and eliminating magical elements that are considered contrary to monotheism. However, modernization brings a new challenge in the form of a shift in meaning in some of the entertainment practices that accompany traditional processions, such as songs of remembrance and youth parties, which tend to deviate from the path of cultural and religious values. This phenomenon shows the tension between preserving cultural forms and supervising their content and values.

Based on these findings, the implications of this study show the need for systematic efforts in treating indigenous peoples as a living social system. However, with a selective revitalization approach, ethically and spiritually relevant elements are maintained, and potentially destructive elements of collective morality are replaced. The active involvement of indigenous leaders, religious leaders, and local educational institutions is essential in building critical awareness of the cultural significance of the community. In addition, this research contributes to the study of cultural studies and legal anthropology by showing that customary practices cannot be separated from the social, religious, and identity politics dynamics that surround them. Traditional marriage ceremonies are not the remnants of the obsolete past, but a field of value contestation that continues to transform along with changes in social structures and the challenges of modernity.

This research has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the scope of the study was limited to one village, namely Tabang Village, which, although representative of the Bolaang Mongondow community, does not reflect the overall diversity of customary practices in the North Sulawesi region. Second, the qualitative approach used is interpretive and contextual, so that the results obtained rely on informant narratives and participatory observations that can be subjective. Third, this research has not explored in depth the gender dimension in customary structures and practices, especially related to the position of women in customary rites and broader symbolic power relations. Therefore, follow-up studies are needed to expand the scope of the territory, explore the gender and power framework, and examine the impact of state policies on the sustainability of local customs more comprehensively.

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