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Sacred Resilience and Social Cohesion: The Integration of Islamic Values and Indigenous Tradition in the Ukuala Mahiyat of Mamala, Maluku

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Abstract: Religious traditions in Muslim societies are frequently interpreted through a binary opposition between scriptural Islam and indigenous culture. Such an approach inadequately explains communities in which Islamic commitment and customary identity have become historically interdependent. This article examines *Ukuala Mahiyat*, more commonly rendered in the scholarly literature as *Ukuala Mahiate*, a ritual tradition of the Mamala in Central Maluku, Indonesia, to investigate how Islamic values, indigenous knowledge, embodied ritual, and collective memory interact to produce social cohesion and community resilience. The study employs qualitative video-based ethnographic document analysis, triangulated with published ethnographic research, historical accounts, and scholarship on Islam, ritual, social cohesion, resilience, and Moluccan customary institutions. The findings identify five interconnected mechanisms: the sacralization of communal memory through the mosque and the Islamic calendar; the integration of prayer, Qur'anic symbolism, and *Nyuwelain Matehu* within indigenous ritual knowledge; controlled bodily reciprocity as an enactment of trust and collective discipline; intergenerational reproduction of Mamala identity; and the conversion of customary continuity into adaptive social capacity. Rather than describing the ritual simply as religious syncretism, the article conceptualizes the process as negotiated sacred integration. It proposes sacred resilience as a framework for understanding how communities draw on religiously authorized cultural memory to reproduce belonging, mutual obligation, and adaptive continuity under changing social conditions. The study further argues that the cohesive effects of tradition are neither automatic nor normatively uncontested: bodily injury, commercialization, orthodoxy, generational change, and cultural representation remain sites of negotiation. *Ukuala Mahiate* therefore demonstrates how local Islam can become simultaneously a theology of belonging, an archive of collective memory, and a social infrastructure of resilience.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge; local culture; ritual; sacred resilience; social cohesion.

Introduction

The anthropology of Islam in Southeast Asia has long been shaped by a persistent problem of classification. Religious practices are often positioned along an imagined continuum between an idealized scriptural Islam and a supposedly residual field of local custom, magic, ancestral belief, or syncretism. This binary has been repeatedly challenged by ethnographic scholarship showing that Islam is not merely transferred from a universal doctrinal centre into passive local environments. Rather, Muslim communities interpret revelation, ritual, authority, moral

obligation, and collective identity through historically situated social worlds (Asad, 1986; Bowen, 1993; Geertz, 1973). In the Indonesian archipelago, the relationship between *adat* and Islam has consequently involved accommodation, contestation, reinterpretation, institutionalization, and periodic reform rather than a single linear movement from local tradition toward religious standardization (Beatty, 1999; Hefner, 2011; Woodward, 1989). Mamala, a Muslim customary community on Ambon Island in Central Maluku, offers a particularly revealing case because religious commitment and local identity converge within a highly embodied annual ritual known as *Ukuala Mahiyat* or, in most academic publications, *Ukuala Mahiate*.

Ukuala Mahiate is popularly associated with *baku pukul manyapu*, a controlled reciprocal striking of participants using the ribs or sticks of the sugar-palm. Participants sustain visible bodily wounds, after which *Nyuwelain Matehu*, commonly known as Mamala oil or minyak Mamala, takes a central position in the ritual sequence. Earlier ethnographic studies have demonstrated that the practice is considerably more complex than the spectacle of bodily striking suggests. Its ritual universe connects the construction of a mosque, the figure of Imam Tuni, prayer, the Islamic month of Shawwal, collective memory, customary leadership, coconut oil, palm sticks, bodily discipline, communal identity, and claims about inherited healing knowledge (Andries, 2018; Sulaeman, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2019, 2021). The significance of the ritual, therefore, cannot be adequately understood through the visible moment of striking alone.

Mamala accounts commonly trace the ritual's genesis to the historical memory of mosque construction. In the dominant local narrative, a crucial wooden component was damaged during construction, creating a practical and symbolic crisis for the emerging Muslim settlement. Imam Tuni is remembered as turning to supplication and Qur'anic prayer, after which coconut oil was prepared and associated with the restoration of the broken timber. The later application of the oil to human wounds became incorporated into the annual ritual tradition. Regardless of how these events are evaluated as empirical historical claims, their sociological and anthropological importance is substantial: the foundational narrative connects Islam, collective labour, sacred authority, material problem-solving, and indigenous knowledge within one moral history (Andries, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2021).

The ritual is also temporally integrated with the Islamic calendar. Sources variously describe its performance as occurring on the seventh day of Shawwal, the seventh day after Eid al-Fitr, or the eighth of Shawwal, revealing a minor discrepancy in calendrical description across documentary and scholarly accounts. More important analytically is the consistent positioning of the ritual immediately after Ramadan and the six recommended fasts of Shawwal. Andries records local interpretations that connect this timing with the completion of Ramadan and voluntary Shawwal fasting, while Sulaeman and colleagues understand the ritual cycle as integrating knowledge of Ramadan, the Sunnah fasting of Shawwal, prayer, and inherited customary practice (Andries, 2018). The annual timing consequently embeds local tradition within Islamic sacred temporality rather than placing it outside Muslim ritual life.

This integration matters because the ritual has become a mechanism for constructing what Andries describes as the dual social identity of Mamala: being Muslim and simultaneously belonging to a customary community (Andries, 2018). These identities are not merely superimposed. They are produced through historical negotiation and embodied repetition. Islamic vocabulary gives inherited practice sacred legitimacy, while customary institutions provide Islam with a local language of belonging, kinship, obligation, material symbolism, and historical memory. Such processes complicate the vocabulary of "syncretism," especially when that term implies the mechanical mixture of two previously autonomous religious systems. As Stewart and Shaw observed more broadly, accusations and descriptions of syncretism frequently involve struggles over authenticity and boundary-making (R. Shaw & Stewart, 2003). The more productive question is, therefore, how religious and customary elements are relationally organized and what social capacities emerge from that organization.

The issue becomes particularly significant in Maluku because social cohesion cannot be separated from the region's complex history of religious plurality, customary alliances, colonial disruption, and communal violence. Central Moluccan societies have historically maintained networks of inter-village relatedness through institutions such as *pela* and *gandong*, forms of

covenantal or kinship alliance capable of connecting communities across religious boundaries (Bartels, 2017). Their peacebuilding significance became especially visible after the Muslim-Christian violence that devastated parts of Maluku between 1999 and the early 2000s. Research has since shown that customary institutions can provide symbolic and practical resources for reconciliation, although their effectiveness should not be romanticized or assumed automatically (Al Qurtuby, 2013; Bräuchler, 2009, 2015; Toisuta et al., 2022).

Mamala itself participates in a broader Moluccan social world in which customary identity, Islamic belonging, village institutions, and inter-community kinship overlap. Research concerning Mamala and Lateri, for example, has shown how a locally produced *pela* relationship mediated through football can strengthen Muslim-Christian interaction and social capital (Adriaansz et al., 2019). Studies of *pela gandong* elsewhere in Maluku similarly demonstrate that ritualized kinship can produce forms of civic pluralism, cross-religious communication, and identity transformation (Sulaeman et al., 2021, 2022). *Ukuala Mahiate* is not itself equivalent to *pela gandong*, nor should its effects be assumed to reproduce all functions of cross-religious alliance. Nevertheless, it operates within the same cultural ecology of relational identity in which personhood is understood through obligations to community, ancestors, customary institutions, religion, and place.

This relational environment makes the concept of social cohesion particularly useful. Social cohesion should not be reduced to cultural homogeneity or the absence of disagreement. Chan et al. conceptualize it in terms of trust, belonging, participation, and willingness to cooperate, whereas Schiefer and van der Noll distinguish three central dimensions: quality of social relations, identification with a collectivity, and orientation toward the common good. These dimensions allow ritual to be studied not simply for its symbolism but for the social relationships reproduced through participation (Chan et al., 2006; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). A ritual becomes relevant to social cohesion when it strengthens networks, reproduces belonging, organizes cooperation, establishes reciprocal expectations, or creates shared responsibility.

Resilience adds a temporal dimension to this analysis. Community resilience concerns the capacity of social systems to respond, reorganize, and maintain meaningful functioning under stress or transformation. Norris et al. associate resilience with adaptive capacities such as social capital, information and communication, community competence, and economic resources. Berkes and Ross, meanwhile, emphasize the relationship among community strengths, social-ecological knowledge, agency, learning, leadership, and attachment to place. These approaches move resilience beyond a simple return to a previous condition (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Norris et al., 2008). A resilient community preserves continuity by adapting, interpreting, and reorganizing inherited resources.

Cultural traditions may contribute to such capacity by preserving collective knowledge and providing frameworks through which disruption becomes intelligible. Yet cultural resilience is not merely the unchanged survival of old forms. Tradition is continuously selected, narrated, performed, and renegotiated in the present (Handler & Linnekin, n.d.; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). The persistence of *Ukuala Mahiate* should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that Mamala has remained culturally static. Its continuity depends precisely on its ability to retain authority while responding to changing religious discourse, state regulation, tourism, media exposure, younger generations, and new expectations regarding heritage and bodily safety.

This article develops the term sacred resilience to explain this process. Sacred resilience refers to the capacity of a community to mobilize religiously meaningful cultural memory, ritual practice, moral obligation, and inherited knowledge to reproduce collective belonging and adaptive solidarity across changing circumstances. “Sacred” does not imply that every component of the ritual must be regarded as doctrinally prescribed or universally accepted within Islamic jurisprudence. Rather, it indicates that participants connect communal continuity with a transcendent moral order and that inherited practice gains social authority through its relationship with prayer, Islamic temporality, religious history, and the presence of Allah in communal understanding.

The study addresses three research questions. First, how are Islamic values and indigenous customary knowledge integrated into the symbolic and ritual structure of *Ukuala Mahiate*?

Second, through what social mechanisms does the ritual contribute to collective identity, social cohesion, and community resilience in Mamala? Third, what tensions emerge when an inherited sacred tradition encounters Islamic normative debate, bodily-risk considerations, tourism, modernization, and changing forms of cultural representation? These questions allow the ritual to be examined simultaneously as a religious practice, a cultural memory, embodied social communication, and a resilience infrastructure.

The article makes three contributions. Empirically, it reconstructs *Ukuala Mahiate* through an audiovisual ethnographic source triangulated with earlier ethnographic scholarship rather than treating the highly visible act of reciprocal striking as the total ritual. Theoretically, it connects ritual studies, social cohesion theory, community resilience, indigenous knowledge, and Islamic normative reflection within a unified analytical framework. Conceptually, it proposes sacred resilience as a mechanism through which religiously embedded traditions transform remembered history into collective capacities for belonging, cooperation, continuity, and adaptation. Social cohesion has often suffered from conceptual overextension. It is routinely used to describe trust, equality, solidarity, tolerance, institutional legitimacy, social capital, belonging, shared values, participation, and even general societal well-being. Chan et al. criticize such expansive usage because it makes the concept difficult to distinguish from its causes and consequences (Chan et al., 2006). They propose approaching cohesion through relationships among members of society and between individuals and institutions, emphasizing trust, willingness to cooperate, and a sense of belonging. Their framework is valuable for ritual analysis because it directs attention away from the mere existence of shared culture and toward the relationships that shared practices actually sustain.

Schiefer and van der Noll sharpen this approach by identifying three core dimensions: social relations, identification with a collectivity, and orientation toward the common good. Social relations include networks, interpersonal trust, acceptance of diversity, and participation (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Identification concerns affective attachment and belonging. Orientation toward the common good includes solidarity, responsibility, and compliance with collectively recognized norms. This narrower definition is particularly useful in customary communities because cultural continuity cannot automatically be equated with cohesion. A village may possess shared symbols while remaining internally unequal or conflictual. Cohesion exists when cultural resources become relational capacities.

The relationship with social capital is close but not identical. Coleman defines social capital through social structures that facilitate action, while Putnam emphasizes networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust. Ritual practices can generate social capital by creating repeated encounters and mutual obligations, but social cohesion concerns the quality of collective togetherness produced through those resources (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). *Ukuala Mahiate* can therefore be analyzed as a site where social capital is activated through preparation, participation, authority, spectatorship, kinship, and reciprocal bodily conduct, while cohesion appears in the resulting sense of belonging and common responsibility.

A crucial distinction concerns bonding and bridging relations. Rituals centred on a village identity frequently produce strong bonding cohesion by strengthening internal solidarity. Yet strong internal identity may also generate exclusion toward outsiders. Maluku complicates this opposition because customary systems such as *pela* and *gandong* can create bridging relationships across village and religious boundaries. Bartels (2017) shows that Central Moluccan social organization cannot be understood simply through a Christian-Muslim separation, as customary kinship systems crosscut formal religious categories. More recent research confirms that *pela gandong* and related practices remain important, though contested, resources for interfaith dialogue and post-conflict social reconstruction (Bartels, 2017; Bräuchler, 2009; Sulaeman et al., 2022; Toisuta et al., 2022).

Ukuala Mahiate primarily constructs a Mamala-centered collective identity, but its social setting exceeds the participant group. Public attendance, inter-village networks, return visits by dispersed community members, state involvement, and heritage tourism expand the ritual's audience. Its cohesion therefore operates at multiple scales: among participants, between generations, between customary and religious authorities, across households, between residents and migrants connected to Mamala, and potentially across wider Moluccan networks. This

multiscalar quality is important because cohesion is not a single state. The same ritual can intensify internal solidarity while also serving as a public representation through which a community negotiates its place in a wider society.

Classical sociological theory recognized that ritual generates more than religious symbolism. Durkheim argued that collective ritual renews the moral existence of the group by bringing participants into shared emotional and symbolic experience. Although his theory should not be transferred uncritically to contemporary Muslim communities, the central insight remains relevant: ritual can make the social collectivity experientially present. Participants do not simply believe in community; they enact community through synchronized behaviour, attention, emotional intensity, bodily presence, and shared symbols (Durkheim, 1912).

Turner added the concepts of liminality and *communitas* to explain how ritual can temporarily reorder ordinary social relations. Liminal processes remove participants from everyday routines and expose them to intensified forms of belonging, vulnerability, and transformation (Turner, 1977). *Ukuala Mahiate* has a clear liminal dimension. The ritual follows an exceptional period of fasting and celebration, mobilizes special objects, gathers participants into an arena governed by unusual rules, and transforms ordinarily prohibited violence into temporally bounded reciprocal action. The body becomes a ritual medium through which discipline, courage, vulnerability, trust, and collective identity are publicly displayed.

Bell cautions against treating ritual as the mechanical expression of pre-existing beliefs. Ritualization itself constructs distinctions and relationships. Actions become ritual because communities differentiate them from ordinary behaviour and invest them with structured authority. This perspective is essential for understanding reciprocal striking in Mamala (Bell, 1992). Outside the ritual, deliberately wounding another person would ordinarily carry a different moral and social meaning. Inside *Ukuala Mahiate*, bodily striking is governed by inherited rules, temporality, spatial organization, collective expectation, religious preparation, and treatment practices. Ritualization, therefore, transforms the meaning of physical action without erasing the reality of bodily injury.

Sulaeman and Rijal interpret *Ukuala Mahiate* as ritual communication, while later studies emphasize its non-verbal symbolic structure (Sulaeman, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2021). The palm sticks, wounds, oil, prayer, mosque, customary leadership, and collective gathering constitute communicative signs whose meanings are generated socially. The ritual is consequently a form of embodied discourse. It communicates continuity without requiring every participant to articulate an identical theological explanation. Bodies, objects, sequence, and space carry meaning alongside verbal prayer and historical narration.

This approach helps explain why the ritual persists even when participants may differ in their understanding of its history or metaphysics. Ritual participation need not depend on doctrinal uniformity. People can participate for family obligation, village loyalty, religious commitment, pride, youth identity, ancestral respect, personal challenge, public recognition, or any combination of these motives. Sulaeman et al. indeed identify multiple motivations among participants, including pride, sacred calling, self-testing, recognition, and the desire to sustain public awareness of the tradition. Cohesion therefore emerges not from identical subjective meanings but from coordinated participation within an accepted symbolic structure (Sulaeman et al., 2019). The relationship between Islam and local culture in Indonesia has repeatedly been framed through debates over syncretism. Early anthropological approaches often distinguished more scriptural and more localized religious forms, particularly in Java. Later scholarship demonstrated that such classifications risk treating local Muslims as incomplete practitioners of an external religious norm (Asad, 1986; Bowen, 1993). The problem is not the descriptive recognition of cultural mixture; all historical religious traditions interact with particular languages, institutions, and material worlds. The problem arises when “local” is implicitly equated with deviation and “Islamic” with cultural absence.

Woodward, Bowen, Beatty, and Hefner, despite major differences in their ethnographic settings and arguments, demonstrate that Indonesian Islam is constituted through interpretation, social institutions, political history, ritual, and moral reasoning. Muslim communities do not merely choose between religion and culture. They ask which customs can embody Islamic

commitments, which must be modified, which should be rejected, and how inherited social obligations can coexist with scriptural norms. Such negotiation is a constitutive feature of Islamic life rather than evidence that Islam is only partially present (Beatty, 1999; Bowen, 1993; Hefner, 2020; Woodward, 1989).

Ukuala Mahiate exemplifies this process. Its central narrative does not position indigenous custom in opposition to Islam. The tradition is remembered through mosque construction and the religious authority of Imam Tuni. Prayer is central to the production and interpretation of *Nyuwelain Matehu*. The annual performance follows Ramadan and the Shawwal fasting cycle. The local community thus embeds the ritual in a Muslim sacred chronology and represents its origins through dependence upon Allah rather than through an autonomous ancestral cosmology (Andries, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2021).

At the same time, the form of the ritual is unmistakably local. Palm materials, coconut oil, customary office, village history, bodily performance, inherited ritual knowledge, kinship, and territorial identity cannot be derived as a complete ritual prescription from canonical Islamic sources. The tradition therefore occupies a domain of culturally mediated Islamic practice. Its Islamic character emerges not because every component has a direct scriptural analogue but because local actors interpret the ritual within an Islamic moral universe.

The term syncretism is consequently insufficient if it suggests a stable mixture of "Islam" and a separately bounded "indigenous religion." Stewart and Shaw emphasize that processes labelled syncretic are often accompanied by anti-syncretic boundary work in which actors debate authenticity. In Mamala, a more precise concept is negotiated sacred integration: inherited cultural practices are continuously related to Islamic symbols and norms through interpretation, institutional authority, and communal repetition. The resulting tradition is neither doctrinal Islam translated without transformation nor autonomous custom decorated with Islamic vocabulary (A. Shaw et al., 2009).

This distinction is important for the anthropology of Islam. Asad (1986) proposes understanding Islam as a discursive tradition in which Muslim's reason about correct practice through historically transmitted texts, institutions, and arguments. *Ukuala Mahiate* can be situated within this discursive field precisely because its legitimacy is potentially discussable. Participants and religious authorities can affirm, reinterpret, or critique elements of the practice. Tradition remains Islamic not because it is beyond debate but because its meaning is negotiated within a Muslim moral universe. Indigenous and local knowledge systems are often misrepresented as static bodies of information inherited unchanged from the past. Agrawal challenged the simple division between indigenous and scientific knowledge, showing that knowledge is socially produced, institutionally embedded, and historically dynamic. Berkes similarly conceptualizes traditional knowledge as a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, belief, institutions, and adaptive learning. This perspective is useful for Mamala because *Nyuwelain Matehu* is not merely an object. It is part of a system involving materials, ritual specialists, prayers, inherited procedural knowledge, authority, narratives of efficacy, and rules concerning transmission (Agrawal, 1995; Berkes, 2018).

From an anthropological perspective, the important question is not whether local therapeutic claims can be accepted as biomedical evidence. The ritual literature documents an emic conviction that Mamala oil has special healing significance, particularly when applied after ritual striking (Sulaeman, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2021). Scholarly analysis should neither ridicule such claims nor convert them into unverified medical conclusions. The appropriate analytical task is to examine how therapeutic belief operates socially: it produces confidence, connects the body with sacred history, authorizes inherited knowledge, and links prayer with communal continuity.

Cultural resilience concerns the reproduction of such systems under changing conditions. Resilience cannot mean preserving every inherited form unchanged. Handler and Linnekin argue that tradition is symbolically constructed in the present rather than mechanically transmitted from the past. Hobsbawm and Ranger similarly draw attention to the active production and formalization of traditions, although their concept of "invented tradition" should not be misused to imply that recent reconstruction is necessarily inauthentic. All living traditions require selection and reinterpretation (Handler & Linnekin, n.d.; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

Ukuala Mahiate survives because Mamala repeatedly reproduces its relevance. The tradition has moved from a local customary performance into a publicly documented cultural event, tourist attraction, photographic subject, government-supported heritage practice, and digital representation. Each transition potentially alters the ritual. Public visibility can strengthen cultural pride and provide resources for preservation, but it may also encourage spectacularization, simplification, or the separation of bodily performance from its religious-historical context. Cultural resilience therefore requires not merely visibility but interpretive control. Indigenous knowledge is especially resilient when transmission involves participation rather than textual preservation alone. Young people learn the meaning of a ritual through embodied presence, preparation, observation of elders, participation in communal gatherings, and stories that connect objects with history. This is compatible with Berkes and Ross's emphasis on social learning, leadership, place attachment, and community networks as resilience resources. *Ukuala Mahiate* operates as an annual pedagogical event in which memory is socially rehearsed (Berkes & Ross, 2013).

Resilience scholarship initially developed strongly around disasters, psychology, and ecological systems. Norris et al. (2008) define community resilience as a process connecting adaptive capacities to successful adaptation following disturbance. Their framework emphasizes social capital, community competence, communication, and economic development. Berkes and Ross broaden this by connecting resilience with people-place relationships, community knowledge, agency, leadership, networks, and learning. Religion can intersect with each of these capacities. Shared religious narratives can provide moral meaning, institutional networks, mutual assistance, authoritative communication, and ritual spaces in which distress is interpreted collectively (Berkes & Ross, 2013). Yet religion is not inherently resilience-producing. Religious institutions can generate exclusion, fatalism, hierarchy, or conflict as well as solidarity. Maluku's history demonstrates this ambivalence vividly: religion has been mobilized in violent polarization, but religious leaders and institutions have also contributed to reconciliation (Al Qurtuby, 2013).

The concept of sacred resilience developed here therefore avoids treating religion as an automatic protective factor. Sacred resilience exists when transcendent meaning becomes connected with adaptive social capacities. In Mamala, prayer alone is not what produces resilience, nor is custom alone. Resilience emerges through the relationship among sacred history, institutions, collective participation, social trust, intergenerational transmission, and the capacity to reinterpret tradition under changing conditions. This approach also allows Islamic ethical reflection without reducing anthropology to jurisprudence. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* emphasizes the purposes and welfare-oriented dimensions of Islamic law, commonly articulated around the protection of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (Auda, 2011; Kamali, 2008). Some aspects of *Ukuala Mahiate* resonate with preservation of religion, community, memory, and intergenerational continuity. Yet the deliberate production of wounds generates an important tension with the protection of life and prevention of harm. A maqāṣid perspective therefore should not be deployed merely to certify the ritual as Islamic; it is more valuable as a critical lens exposing the need to balance cultural meaning, communal benefit, religious freedom, and bodily welfare.

The analytical framework developed in this article links four processes: sacred integration, ritual embodiment, social cohesion, and adaptive continuity. Together they constitute what is termed sacred resilience. The first process is sacred integration. Local cultural elements acquire sacred significance when they are positioned within a religiously meaningful historical and moral order. In Mamala, the mosque, Imam Tuni, prayer, Qur'anic recitation, Ramadan, Shawwal, and dependence upon Allah provide an Islamic interpretive horizon. Palm sticks, coconut oil, customary office, collective memory, and embodied performance provide locally rooted forms through which that horizon is materialized. Sacred integration therefore refers to a relational process in which religious and indigenous elements become mutually intelligible.

This process can be represented as: Islamic sacred meanings + customary knowledge + collective historical memory → sacred integration.

The second process is ritual embodiment. Religious-cultural integration would remain abstract if it were not enacted. *Ukuala Mahiate* turns memory into bodily practice. Participants

expose themselves to pain, observe rules of reciprocal striking, submit to communal authority, receive ritual treatment, and become publicly recognizable participants in Mamala tradition. The body becomes the point at which inherited narrative is converted into lived experience.

Sacred integration + repeated embodied participation → ritualized belonging

The third process is social cohesion. Ritualized belonging strengthens cohesion when it produces social relationships, collective identification, and orientation toward common responsibility. Drawing on Schiefer and van der Noll, the framework identifies three corresponding mechanisms. Relational cohesion appears through cooperation, trust, preparation, reciprocity, and networks. Identificational cohesion emerges through attachment to Mamala, ancestral history, Islam, and shared ritual ownership. Normative cohesion develops through a sense that preserving community, honouring inherited obligations, and maintaining social harmony constitute common goods (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017).

Ritualized belonging → trust + identification + reciprocal obligation → social cohesion

The fourth process is adaptive continuity. A cohesive community can mobilize collective resources when circumstances change, but cohesion alone does not guarantee resilience. Sacred resilience requires the capacity to reinterpret tradition. Public tourism, digital representation, religious reform, migration, modern health expectations, state heritage policy, and generational change create pressures to alter the way *Ukuala Mahiate* is practiced and understood. The community remains resilient when it can negotiate these changes without losing the relationships and moral meanings that sustain collective identity.

Social cohesion + cultural learning + institutional adaptation → sacred resilience

Sacred resilience can therefore be defined as:

The capacity of a community to reproduce and adapt collective identity, mutual obligation, and social continuity by mobilizing religiously meaningful cultural memory through institutions, ritual practice, and intergenerational knowledge.

This formulation differs from cultural persistence. Persistence describes survival; sacred resilience describes the relational mechanisms that make survival adaptive. It also differs from religious resilience understood only as individual spirituality. Sacred resilience is collective and institutional. Its resources include ritual specialists, customary authorities, mosques, kinship, objects, narratives, communal labour, intergenerational participation, and public recognition. The framework remains deliberately non-romantic. Tradition can create strong cohesion while also producing exclusions or risks. Internal solidarity may privilege some gender or generational roles. Heritage tourism may transform ritual ownership. Normative Islamic interpretations may challenge elements regarded as culturally inherited rather than scripturally required. The spectacularization of bodily injury may displace the ritual's religious meaning. Sacred resilience therefore includes the capacity for reflexive critique, not simply preservation.

Method

This study employs a qualitative interpretive design combining video-based ethnographic document analysis with critical literature review. The primary audiovisual corpus is the documentary *Ukuala Mahiyat | Atraksi Pukul Sapu Mamala*, produced as a documentary record of the Mamala tradition and publicly distributed through YouTube. The audiovisual source is treated as an ethnographic document rather than as a substitute for long-term participant observation. This distinction is methodologically important. A documentary can preserve sequences of bodily action, objects, settings, interaction, spatial arrangements, public participation, and representations of authority, but it is always a mediated construction shaped by filming, editing, selection, and narrative framing (Caton, 2019; Pink et al., 2016).

The study therefore does not claim to have conducted direct ethnographic fieldwork in Mamala. Statements about participants' motives, religious interpretations, ritual history, and local meanings are not inferred solely from visual appearance. They are triangulated with published research based on interviews, observations, phenomenology, ethnographic communication, and document analysis, particularly the works of Andries, Sulaeman and Rijal, Sulaeman et al., and

Sulaeman et al. (2021). (Andries, 2018; Sulaeman, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2019). The documentary material was contextualized through four bodies of literature. The first consisted of Mamala-specific studies of *Ukuala Mahiate*, ritual communication, social identity, and *Nyuwelain Matehu*. The second comprised scholarship on Moluccan customary relations, including *pela*, *gandong*, peacebuilding, and Muslim-Christian social relations. The third consisted of anthropological and sociological scholarship on ritual, Islamic localization, tradition, and indigenous knowledge. The fourth addressed social cohesion and community resilience.

Source discrepancies were retained were analytically significant. One example concerns ritual timing. Some sources identify the event with the seventh of Shawwal or the seventh day after Eid al-Fitr, whereas others describe the eighth of Shawwal. Rather than constructing artificial certainty, the analysis treats the variation as evidence that calendrical description differs across accounts while the broader ritual location—immediately after Ramadan and the Shawwal fasting period—remains consistent. A second source-critical distinction concerns Mamala and neighboring Morella. Both communities are internationally associated with *pukul sapu*, and public reporting sometimes treats them as a single cultural tradition. Their historical narratives, however, are not identical. Morella strongly links its practice with the Kapahaha resistance and the memory of Kapitan Telukabessy, while Mamala's dominant narrative centres on mosque construction, Imam Tuni, and Mamala oil. This article, therefore, does not transfer the Morella origin story into the Mamala case.

Analysis followed a reflexive thematic procedure informed by Braun and Clarke. Initial codes included mosque, prayer, Qur'anic symbolism, Islamic calendar, oil, palm sticks, body, wound, healing belief, reciprocity, youth, elders, customary leadership, religious authority, participation, spectatorship, pride, identity, memory, tourism, risk, and continuity. These codes were progressively organized into five themes: sacred historical memory; material-symbolic religious integration; embodied reciprocity; cohesion through collective participation; and adaptive cultural reproduction (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Visual and textual evidence were read relationally. The meaning of a palm stick, for example, was not inferred from its physical form alone but examined through previous ethnographic explanations of its ritual position. Similarly, the application of oil was interpreted as a social and religious practice rather than as biomedical proof of therapeutic efficacy.

Several limitations require emphasis. First, documentary analysis cannot reproduce the depth of long-term ethnographic engagement. It does not provide access to unrecorded conversations, dissenting voices, gendered interpretations outside the documented ritual, or changing individual perspectives over time. Second, published ethnographic sources are themselves interpretive constructions and should not be treated as transparent representations of a homogeneous Mamala worldview. Third, the study distinguishes between emic claims and external validation. Community beliefs regarding the efficacy or sacred properties of *Nyuwelain Matehu* are ethnographically significant because they organize ritual practice and collective meaning. They are not presented as experimentally established medical claims. Fourth, conceptual categories such as "indigenous," "customary," "Islamic," and "tradition" are employed analytically while recognizing that local identities may not map perfectly onto international theoretical vocabulary.

Results and Discussion

Sacred Historical Memory: Mosque, Imam Tuni, and the Origin Narrative

The first finding is that *Ukuala Mahiate* is structured around sacred historical memory rather than bodily combat alone. The foundational Mamala narrative links the practice with the construction of the community mosque and a crisis involving damaged timber. Imam Tuni serves as a religious mediator whose supplication transforms an infrastructural problem into a sacred event. Coconut oil, Qur'anic prayer, damaged wood, and the mosque become connected within a narrative of divine assistance and communal accomplishment (Andries, 2018; Sulaeman et al., 2021).

This history performs several social functions. First, it ground's local identity in the establishment of Islamic worship rather than in an autonomous pre-Islamic ritual. The mosque becomes the symbolic centre of both religious and cultural memory. Second, the narrative

sacralizes communal labour. Mosque construction represents collective effort, while the remembered crisis reinforces the idea that community survival requires cooperation, religious trust, and practical knowledge. Third, it provides a charter for repetition. The annual ritual does not simply commemorate an unusual event; it renews a foundational story about how Mamala became a community capable of joining faith, labour, knowledge, and collective action. The result is a form of historical memory in which the sacred and social cannot be separated. Islamic identity is remembered materially through the mosque, while customary identity is remembered through the practices associated with its construction. Religious belonging and territorial belonging therefore reinforce rather than cancel one another.

Nyuwelain Matehu: Material Religion and Indigenous Knowledge

The second finding concerns the centrality of *Nyuwelain Matehu*. Coconut oil is transformed into a ritual object through inherited procedures, religious recitation, customary authority, and historical narrative. Its significance exceeds its physical composition. Within Mamala's ritual system, the oil provides a material bridge between the remembered mosque construction and the wounded bodies of contemporary participants. This relationship exemplifies material religion. Religious meaning is carried not only through doctrines or verbal statements but through objects, sensory practices, substances, places, and bodies. *Nyuwelain Matehu* embodies prayer, ancestral transmission, local resources, and collective confidence. Its application after striking reconnects present participants with the founding narrative. The ritual body effectively becomes a contemporary surface upon which sacred history is rewritten.

From the perspective of indigenous knowledge, the oil also represents transmitted procedural expertise. Knowledge concerning preparation is socially located and connected with recognized custodians. The practice therefore includes not only a belief in efficacy but a structure of authority concerning who possesses knowledge, how it is transmitted, and under what ritual circumstances it becomes meaningful. The healing claims associated with the oil must nevertheless be interpreted carefully. Ethnographic sources consistently document local confidence in its effectiveness, particularly in relation to ritual wounds. Such belief is itself important evidence about social trust and sacred knowledge. It does not eliminate the need for medical evaluation of injuries or establish clinical efficacy. The anthropological significance lies in the fact that participants understand bodily vulnerability through a culturally organized system of trust linking Allah, prayer, inherited knowledge, and collective experience.

Controlled Bodily Reciprocity as a Ritual of Trust

The third finding is that reciprocal striking transforms the body into an instrument of social communication. Participants do not engage in uncontrolled interpersonal violence. The action is temporally bounded, publicly supervised, culturally regulated, and embedded within a ritual sequence. Pain and visible wounds are real, yet their social meaning differs from assault because the participants enter a shared framework of expectation. Reciprocity is crucial. Participants occupy both active and vulnerable positions. To strike is simultaneously to accept the possibility of being struck. This symmetry creates an embodied form of mutual exposure. Trust is therefore enacted through the body: each participant depends on the other to remain within ritual limits and on the wider community to preserve the legitimacy and safety of the event.

The ritual also transforms aggression symbolically. Physical intensity is detached from personal enmity and incorporated into collective performance. This does not mean the practice literally resolves existing interpersonal conflicts, and no such causal claim can be established from the available material. Rather, the ritual models a grammar in which controlled antagonistic action can occur without destroying social relationship. Striking is followed not by vengeance but by treatment, reintegration, and continued belonging. This dynamic helps explain why bodily endurance functions as a public marker of identity. Participation demonstrates willingness to carry communal memory physically. Sulaeman et al. found motives involving pride, self-testing, sacred calling, and public recognition. The participant becomes a visible bearer of tradition, and the body becomes evidence of commitment to collective continuity (Sulaeman et al., 2019).

Islamic Temporality and the Ritualization of Victory

The fourth finding is that the location of *Ukuala Mahiate* within Shawwal gives it a specifically Islamic temporal structure. Ramadan reorganizes daily life through fasting, prayer, discipline, and collective worship. Eid al-Fitr marks the completion of obligatory fasting, while the six recommended fasts of Shawwal extend ascetic discipline into the following month. Local interpretations connect the annual ritual with this cycle of fasting and religious accomplishment (Andries, 2018). This positioning changes the meaning of physical endurance. The ritual occurs after a period in which bodily restraint has already been religiously cultivated. Hunger, thirst, patience, and self-control during fasting form a moral background against which ritualized pain can be interpreted. The connection does not make bodily striking a prescribed Islamic act. Rather, it places local bodily discipline inside a sacred calendar already associated with self-restraint, devotion, and communal renewal. The temporal sequence also reinforces annual repetition. Sacred calendars generate cyclical memory. Each Ramadan and Shawwal renews the possibility of performing the tradition, calling dispersed community members back into a shared temporal horizon. The ritual therefore helps synchronize social memory across generations.

Participation, Authority, and Intergenerational Cohesion

The fifth finding is that cohesion is produced through the wider social organization surrounding the ritual. *Ukuala Mahiate* depends on more than the young men who enter the striking arena. Customary authorities, religious figures, households, custodians of ritual knowledge, spectators, organizers, visitors, and extended kin networks all occupy roles in the event. The ritual is consequently better understood as a community system than as a male performance. This system connects different forms of authority. Religious leadership legitimates prayer and Islamic interpretation. Customary leadership safeguards historical continuity and village obligation. Ritual custodians preserve procedural knowledge. Younger participants provide embodied reproduction. Families and spectators provide recognition. The ritual therefore creates an annual setting in which institutional relationships are publicly rehearsed.

Intergenerational transmission is especially important. Cultural knowledge survives when younger people experience tradition as socially significant rather than merely receiving information about the past. *Ukuala Mahiate* provides such experiential transmission. Young participants encounter elders, historical narratives, material symbols, sacred space, public attention, and bodily commitment within one integrated event. The resulting cohesion has three dimensions. Social relations are strengthened through cooperation and repeated interaction. Collective identification is reinforced through explicit association with Mamala history. Orientation toward the common good appears through the widely shared conviction that the tradition must be preserved as communal heritage. These dimensions correspond closely with contemporary social-cohesion theory.

***Ukuala Mahiate* as Sacred Resilience**

The central argument arising from the findings is that *Ukuala Mahiate* operates as a mechanism of sacred resilience. Its resilience does not arise simply because the ritual is old. Longevity alone can reflect inertia. What matters is the ability of the tradition to convert historical memory into present social capacity. Four transformations are involved. First, remembered crisis becomes moral history. The damaged mosque timber is not remembered merely as a construction problem; it becomes a narrative about prayer, divine assistance, leadership, and collective action. Second, moral history becomes ritual symbolism through the oil, palm sticks, mosque, and annual timing. Third, ritual symbolism becomes social relationship through participation, cooperation, reciprocal trust, and public recognition. Fourth, these social relationships become adaptive resources because they strengthen collective identity and institutional continuity.

This sequence differentiates sacred resilience from cultural conservation. Conservation seeks to protect an object or practice from disappearance. Sacred resilience concerns the capacity generated through practice. A community that performs inherited ritual but loses its ability to cooperate, transmit meaning, or respond collectively to change would display cultural persistence without necessarily displaying resilience. *Ukuala Mahiate* appears resilient because it functions

simultaneously as memory, pedagogy, social organization, embodied identity, and public representation. These layers allow it to survive environmental transformations surrounding the ritual. The same tradition can be interpreted as religious commemoration, local heritage, youth identity, cultural spectacle, indigenous knowledge, and a symbol of Mamala. Its semantic flexibility is a source of adaptive strength.

From Syncretism to Negotiated Sacred Integration

The findings also challenge a simple model of syncretism. If *Ukuala Mahiate* were described merely as a mixture of Islam and indigenous belief, the analysis would imply that these elements existed as separate cultural substances before being combined. Mamala history suggests something more dynamic. Islamic and customary institutions have shaped one another over generations, creating an identity in which the distinction between "religious" and "cultural" is real but relational. Andries characterizes Mamala identity as fluid and dialectically produced through adaptation, relations, and negotiation. This interpretation is more useful than the assumption that the ritual is evidence of incomplete Islamization. The mosque itself becomes an origin point of custom, while customary memory becomes a way of narrating Muslim history. Islam is therefore localized without becoming simply local, and custom is Islamically reinterpreted without disappearing (Andries, 2018).

The term negotiated sacred integration captures this process because it leaves room for disagreement. Integration does not imply perfect theological consensus. Communities can maintain a practice while debating particular elements. Religious reform movements, younger generations, external observers, and Islamic scholars may evaluate ritual injury, healing claims, or inherited symbolism differently. Such debate does not necessarily signal cultural breakdown. It may be part of the mechanism through which tradition remains intellectually and morally alive. This observation is consistent with Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition. Islamic authenticity is produced through argument about proper relations with authoritative pasts, not through cultural uniformity. *Ukuala Mahiate* is therefore analytically interesting precisely because its status can be reasoned about in Islamic terms while remaining deeply rooted in Mamala history (Asad, 1993).

Embodied Pain, Mutual Vulnerability, and Cohesion

Perhaps the most distinctive element of *Ukuala Mahiate* is the use of bodily pain. Ritual theories help explain why painful practices can intensify belonging. Costly participation publicly demonstrates commitment because it requires participants to accept consequences that spectators do not bear. Yet a purely functional explanation would be inadequate and ethically problematic. The anthropological task is not to assume that pain is socially beneficial simply because it is traditional. In Mamala, pain becomes meaningful through reciprocity, boundedness, historical narrative, and treatment. The same action outside the ritual would possess a different moral classification. Ritualization temporarily creates a field in which mutual striking communicates courage and belonging rather than personal hatred. The public nature of the event further converts individual pain into collective observation and recognition.

This creates what may be called ritualized mutual vulnerability. Participants become vulnerable to one another while simultaneously demonstrating confidence that the relationship will survive the encounter. The structure resembles social trust in embodied form. Trust is normally conceptualized cognitively—one person expects another to act predictably. *Ukuala Mahiate* renders such expectation visible through the body. Nevertheless, the resilience value of this mechanism should not obscure questions of safety. Cultural meaning does not render physical injury irrelevant. A contemporary resilience framework should ask whether ritual integrity can coexist with increasingly explicit health safeguards, participant consent, emergency preparation, and responsible public representation. Adaptation in this area need not automatically mean cultural dilution. It may instead demonstrate the capacity of the tradition to sustain meaning while reducing preventable harm.

A Maqāṣid Perspective: Communal Benefit and Bodily Protection

Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah provides a productive secondary lens because it prevents two opposite analytical errors. The first is to reject the ritual merely because its form is not prescribed in

canonical Islamic ritual law. The second is to assume that association with prayer and the mosque makes every element normatively unproblematic. Several dimensions of the ritual can be read in relation to Islamic welfare-oriented principles. The preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) is visible in the centrality of the mosque, Islamic sacred time, prayer, and religious memory. Intergenerational transmission may resonate with concern for family and posterity, while social solidarity reflects *maṣlaḥah* in the sense of communal welfare. The preservation of cultural memory can also strengthen moral education and social responsibility.

However, *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, protection of life and bodily integrity, introduces a critical question. Deliberately producing wounds cannot be justified solely by heritage value. Islamic legal evaluation would need to consider severity of harm, consent, purpose, preventability, custom, benefit, risk, and the availability of safer alternatives. The maqāṣid approach thus reveals an internal ethical tension rather than providing an automatic endorsement. This tension is analytically valuable. Sacred resilience should include the ability of religious-cultural traditions to subject themselves to ethical reflection. A tradition that can only survive by refusing all criticism is fragile rather than resilient. Conversely, a community that can preserve symbolic meaning while re-evaluating risk demonstrates adaptive continuity.

Social Cohesion Beyond the Arena

The social significance of Ukuwala Mahiate extends beyond participants because preparation and spectatorship create wider forms of involvement. Collective rituals generate what Durkheim described as intensified social presence: individuals encounter the community not as an abstraction but as an assembled body. This is particularly relevant in societies experiencing migration, economic change, digitalization, and generational differentiation. The annual ritual provides a point of return. Residents, relatives, visitors, local authorities, and observers encounter Mamala through an event with a recognizable historical narrative. This can reinforce collective identification even among individuals who never enter the arena. In terms of Schiefer and van der Noll's framework, ritual participation and spectatorship strengthen identification with place, social networks, and orientation toward a common heritage.

Yet social cohesion should not be romanticized. Strong village identity can become exclusionary if cultural ownership is framed against outsiders. Sulaeman et al. note that ritual symbolism can be linked with protecting cultural identity from external claims. Cultural ownership is understandable, particularly where communities experience appropriation, but it can create boundary disputes. Cohesion therefore contains both integrative and differentiating dimensions. The wider Moluccan institution of *pela gandong* shows how local identity can move beyond bonding solidarity. Research demonstrates that customary kinship can connect Muslim and Christian communities and provide resources for civic pluralism and peacebuilding (Sulaeman et al., 2022; Toisuta et al., 2022). Mamala's own relations with other communities suggest that strong local identity need not entail religious isolation. The key is whether internal solidarity becomes a foundation for reciprocal external relations.

Ritual Memory in a Post-Conflict Region

Although Ukuwala Mahiate should not be reduced to post-conflict peacebuilding, its location in Maluku gives its cohesion functions broader significance. The 1999–2003 violence demonstrated how rapidly religious identities could become militarized and territorialized. Bräuchler shows that post-conflict actors subsequently turned to local traditions as resources for reconciliation. Yet she also warns that revitalized traditions can be selective, politicized, or exclusionary (Bräuchler, 2009, 2015). This caution is essential. It would be analytically unsound to claim that the persistence of Ukuwala Mahiate directly prevents communal violence. There is no evidence supporting such a simple causal conclusion. Its relevance is more indirect. The ritual sustains a cultural grammar in which identity is relational, authority is distributed across religious and customary institutions, and collective belonging requires repeated cooperation.

Such cultural infrastructures matter because peace is not maintained only through formal agreements. Al Qurtuby demonstrates that Muslim and Christian religious leaders played significant roles in Ambonese peacebuilding. Toisuta et al. similarly emphasize local traditions

of mutual assistance and cross-religious dialogue. Everyday peace requires institutions through which people repeatedly experience others as members of morally significant relationships (Al Qurtuby, 2013; Toisuta et al., 2022). Ukuwala Mahiate contributes primarily to intra-community resilience, but intra-community security can affect broader relations. Communities with stable identities may possess greater capacity to engage others without perceiving every cultural difference as a threat. Conversely, identity insecurity can generate defensive boundary-making. Sacred resilience therefore potentially provides a foundation for broader civic confidence.

Modernity, Tourism, and the Risk of Spectacularization

The continuing popularity of Ukuwala Mahiate creates a paradox. Public visibility helps preserve the tradition by attracting visitors, government recognition, media attention, and younger participants. At the same time, the feature most easily converted into visual spectacle is bodily striking. Cameras naturally focus on wounds, movement, pain, crowds, and dramatic confrontation. The mosque, fasting, prayers, preparation of oil, customary deliberation, and historical meanings are less visually sensational. This imbalance can gradually redefine the tradition for external audiences. Ukuwala Mahiate risks becoming "the extreme broom-fighting festival" rather than a religious-cultural system. Such representation detaches action from cosmology. The public sees violence while the community understands memory, sacred history, and identity.

Heritage policy should therefore distinguish preservation from spectacularization. Successful promotion requires community authority over interpretation. Documentary material, tourism information, school curricula, museum exhibitions, and public events should explain the Mamala genealogy rather than collapsing it into the Morella tradition or presenting both as identical. The distinct relation among mosque construction, Imam Tuni, *Nyuwelain Matehu*, Shawwal, and Mamala identity should remain visible. Digital media intensify this challenge. Short-form clips reward visually dramatic moments, and ritual context can disappear. Yet digitalization also offers opportunities. Community-controlled archives can preserve oral histories, document oil-making procedures, record customary terminology, collect elder narratives, and explain Islamic interpretations to younger audiences. Sacred resilience in a digital environment therefore requires narrative sovereignty as much as ritual continuity.

Intergenerational Transformation

Generational transmission should not be imagined as the simple reproduction of elder knowledge. Young participants encounter different educational, religious, technological, and health discourses from those of earlier generations. Some may value the ritual as Islamic heritage, others as Mamala identity, tourism culture, masculine challenge, family obligation, or social media visibility. Such variation does not necessarily indicate decline. Cultural resilience depends on the ability to absorb new questions. Younger people may ask about historical evidence, medical safety, Islamic jurisprudence, gender participation, environmental sustainability of ritual materials, or commercialization. A tradition capable of answering such questions through dialogue is more resilient than one relying exclusively on unquestioned repetition. Intergenerational institutions are therefore central. Elders preserve memory, but younger people provide future reinterpretation. Religious scholars contribute normative reasoning, while cultural custodians preserve specificity. Educational institutions can document language and history. Health professionals can contribute risk reduction without attempting to erase cultural meaning. The future of Ukuwala Mahiate depends on the ability of these actors to collaborate.

Cultural and Policy Implications

The first policy implication concerns heritage preservation. Ukuwala Mahiate should be preserved as an integrated system of intangible cultural heritage rather than reduced to the striking performance. Documentation should include oral history, mosque narratives, terminology, Islamic calendar connections, *Nyuwelain Matehu*, customary authority, preparation, participation rules, music or verbal forms where present, and intergenerational transmission. Fragmented preservation risks protecting spectacle while losing knowledge. Second, cultural policy should recognize community interpretive authority. Mamala should not merely serve as the location

where outsiders collect images or tourism revenue. Community custodians should play central roles in defining official descriptions, archival categories, educational materials, festival management, and commercial representation. This principle is consistent with contemporary approaches to indigenous knowledge that emphasize participation, ownership, and epistemic agency rather than extraction (Berkes, 2018; Smith, 2012).

Third, heritage development should include health and safety governance. Respect for tradition does not require the absence of risk management. Participant consent, age criteria, safe arena organization, emergency medical access, hygienic wound care, and transparent communication can be strengthened without determining the ritual's theology from outside. Such measures represent adaptive preservation rather than cultural interference when developed collaboratively. Fourth, religious institutions have a constructive role in sustaining dialogue between Islamic normativity and local heritage. Religious evaluation should move beyond a binary of "Islamic" versus "un-Islamic" by examining intention, custom, harm, communal welfare, theological claims, and ritual boundaries. Likewise, cultural advocates should not treat all criticism as hostility toward tradition. Continuous ethical discussion is itself part of living Islamic culture.

Fifth, education is essential. Local schools and Islamic educational institutions can use Ukuwala Mahiate as a case through which students study Maluku history, Islamic ethics, oral tradition, anthropology, public health, cultural heritage, and civic responsibility. Such interdisciplinary education would shift cultural preservation from occasional celebration toward reflective knowledge. Sixth, the broader Moluccan peacebuilding context suggests that heritage programming should connect strong local identities with inter-community relationships. Programs involving Mamala's customary partners and neighboring Muslim and Christian communities can frame cultural diversity as a network of relational traditions rather than isolated village performances. *Pela*, *gandong*, *masohi*, and other forms of Moluccan mutuality provide existing cultural vocabularies for such cooperation.

Finally, tourism policy should measure success by more than visitor numbers. Indicators could include local economic benefit, youth participation, cultural knowledge retention, community control over representation, environmental impact, safety, and inter-village cooperation. Tourism strengthens sacred resilience only when it supports the community's ability to reproduce meaning; it weakens resilience when it turns the community into a performer of an externally defined spectacle.

Conclusion

Ukuwala Mahiate demonstrates that the interaction between Islam and indigenous tradition cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between religious orthodoxy and cultural preservation. In Mamala, Islamic identity and customary heritage have developed together through a ritual system involving mosque construction, prayer, sacred time, ancestral knowledge, material symbols, embodied practices, collective authority, and communal memory. Through its annual performance, historical memory is continuously transformed into a lived expression of collective identity. This integration strengthens social cohesion through several interconnected processes. Collective preparation and participation reinforce interpersonal relationships, while shared historical narratives strengthen attachment to territory and cultural heritage. The ritual's embodied practices cultivate reciprocity, trust, discipline, and shared responsibility. Furthermore, cooperation between customary and religious authorities creates an institutional space in which different forms of community leadership intersect. Intergenerational participation also ensures that cultural memory is transmitted as practical knowledge rather than preserved merely as historical information. The concept of sacred resilience therefore helps explain the continuing relevance of Ukuwala Mahiate. Sacred resilience refers not simply to preserving the past, but to the ability of communities to reinterpret sacred cultural memory as a resource for continuity, cooperation, learning, and adaptation. Nevertheless, cultural significance should not be interpreted as evidence supporting biomedical claims about traditional healing, while the ritual's bodily dimensions raise important ethical and Islamic normative considerations. The study contributes to the anthropology of Islam by emphasizing negotiated sacred integration rather than

static syncretism. It also demonstrates that ritual can sustain social cohesion through embodied reciprocity, collective memory, institutional cooperation, and attachment to place. Future research should employ longitudinal ethnography to examine gender, health, tourism, digital representation, generational change, and the relationship between Mamala identity and wider *pela-gandong* networks.

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