

Preserving Legacy: The Impact of Royal Waqf on Cultural Heritage Conservation in Sumedang Larang

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Abstract

This article investigates the underexplored role of waqf in preserving cultural artifacts within the context of Indonesian waqf regulations, with a specific emphasis on royal waqfs. It examines the distinct contributions of royal waqfs to the preservation of cultural heritage. It offers a contextual analysis within the legal and historical boundaries of Indonesian waqf traditions. This article utilizes ethnography methods, which involve conducting extensive fieldwork consisting of in-depth interviews and direct observations at the Sumedang Larang Palace and the Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation. These methodologies helped to achieve a detailed comprehension of the operating dynamics and conservation procedures of royal waqfs. This article emphasizes two crucial activities that are necessary for the protection of waqf assets: conservation and asset restoration. This indicates that these efforts are crucial for preserving the structural stability and cultural significance of historical artifacts that are handled under royal waqfs. The article also highlights the challenges and approaches required to combine traditional waqf principles with modern preservation requirements. This article enhances the overall discussion on cultural heritage management by suggesting a specific governance model designed for waqf institutions associated with royal families. This resource provides practical knowledge and frameworks that may be customized by waqf managers in different regions of Indonesia. Its goal is to improve the effectiveness of waqf in the protection of cultural heritage. This work is an important resource for policymakers, cultural heritage specialists, and waqf administrators who want to link waqf management with cultural conservation goals.

Keywords: Cultural preservation; Royal waqf; Sumedang Larang; waqf governance.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menginvestigasi peran wakaf yang belum tereksplorasi dalam melestarikan artefak budaya dalam konteks peraturan wakaf di Indonesia, dengan penekanan khusus pada wakaf kerajaan. Artikel ini mengkaji kontribusi nyata wakaf kerajaan terhadap pelestarian warisan budaya. Artikel ini menawarkan analisis kontekstual dalam batasan hukum dan sejarah tradisi wakaf di Indonesia. Artikel ini menggunakan metode etnografi realis, yang berdasarkan pada kerja lapangan ekstensif yang terdiri dari wawancara mendalam dan observasi langsung di Keraton Sumedang Larang dan Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang. Metodologi ini membantu mencapai pemahaman rinci tentang dinamika operasional dan prosedur konservasi wakaf kerajaan. Artikel ini menekankan dua kegiatan penting yang diperlukan untuk perlindungan aset wakaf: konservasi dan restorasi aset. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa upaya ini sangat penting untuk menjaga stabilitas struktural dan signifikansi artefak sejarah dan budaya yang dikelola melalui wakaf kerajaan. Studi ini juga menyoroti peluang dan pendekatan yang diperlukan untuk menggabungkan prinsip-prinsip wakaf tradisional dengan persyaratan pelestarian modern. Artikel ini menyempurnakan diskusi keseluruhan mengenai pengelolaan warisan budaya dengan menyarankan model tata kelola khusus yang dirancang untuk lembaga wakaf yang terkait dengan keluarga kerajaan. Sumber daya ini memberikan pengetahuan praktis dan kerangka kerja yang dapat disesuaikan oleh pengelola wakaf di berbagai wilayah di Indonesia. Tujuannya adalah untuk meningkatkan efektivitas wakaf dalam perlindungan warisan budaya. Karya ini merupakan sumber daya penting bagi para pengampu kebijakan, intelektual budayawan, dan administrator wakaf yang ingin menghubungkan pengelolaan wakaf dengan tujuan konservasi budaya.

Kata Kunci: Pelestarian budaya; pengelolaan wakaf; Wakaf kerajaan; Sumedang Larang.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there is a noticeable shift in society and culture: royal families are becoming less involved in managing their waqf assets, especially those that are connected to traditional values and cultural heritage. This diminishing involvement has significantly weakened the function of royal waqf as a mechanism for cultural preservation, despite its historically vital role in supporting social, educational, and religious activities within local communities (Çizakca, 2000). The diminished attention to these endowments has substantial implications, especially for communities that have traditionally depended on such resources to sustain cultural practices and maintain historical continuity (Graham et al., 2000). In this specific case of the Kingdom of Sumedang Larang, cultural artefacts and traditional customs are progressively diminishing, and newer generations are becoming increasingly estranged from their ancestral history. Addressing this issue is both academically significant and practically urgent, as it fills a critical research gap concerning the intersection between royal waqf and cultural sustainability. It also provides valuable insights for policymakers aiming to protect intangible cultural heritage (World Heritage Centre, 2024). Recent data from the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang (the Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation) indicate that over 60% of waqf assets are currently underutilized, underscoring the need for more effective regulatory frameworks and strategic asset management (Sait & Lim, 2006). This study aims to provide new and sustainable solutions for revitalising royal waqf institutions and leveraging their potential for cultural preservation and community development.

Royal waqf, or charitable endowments established by monarchs, sultans, and members of royal elites, has historically constituted a foundational pillar in the socio-religious and economic architecture of Muslim societies. In Islamic jurisprudence, such endowments are classified as *awqāf al-salāṭīn wa al-umarā'*, referring specifically to waqf instituted by rulers or state officials (al-Zarqā, 1998; Rafiqi et al., 2023). Beyond its function as an expression of religious devotion, royal waqf served multifaceted purposes: it was instrumental in legitimizing political authority, supporting public welfare, and preserving dynastic continuity (Çizakca, 2000; Lamido & Haneef, 2021). In the Ottoman context, royal waqf developed into an extensive institutional system—known as imperial waqf—which financed a wide range of public goods including mosques, madrasas, hospitals, and infrastructure projects, primarily through centrally managed endowments established by sultans and royal women (Orbayy, 2013; Singer, 2002). Waqf played a pivotal role in shaping urban landscapes and promoting socio-economic development across various Muslim-majority empires, extending its influence well beyond the Ottoman period to include the Umayyad, Abbasid, Seljuk, Fatimid, Mamluk, and Timurid eras (Komilov, 2023). In Mughal India, waqf institutions similarly served both religious and political functions, blending Persian-Islamic principles with local Indian traditions. However, this system saw a marked decline during colonial rule, primarily due to legal restructuring and shifts in governance (Qureshi, 1990; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1987).

In Southeast Asia, particularly within the kingdom of Sumedang Larang, Sultanate of Banten, and Aceh, royal waqf assumed a more decentralized character. These endowments were often administered by family-based or community-designated nazhir and were primarily directed toward the support of mosques, Islamic educational institutions, and localized governance structures (Fauzia, 2013; Nafis, 2014; Rafiqi et al., 2023). Unlike the highly bureaucratized waqf systems of the Middle East, many Southeast Asian royal waqf assets currently face underutilization, a condition largely attributable to legal ambiguities, the waning of royal influence, and the absence of modern administrative frameworks (Sadique et al., 2016; Sait & Lim, 2006). While extensive scholarly literature exists on Ottoman and Mughal waqf practices, the waqf traditions of Southeast Asia remain comparatively underexamined, particularly in terms of their potential for cultural heritage preservation and sustainable community development.

(Unesco, 2019). As argued by Lamido and Haneef, the revitalization and modernization of royal waqf institutions hold significant promise for advancing cultural continuity, addressing socio-economic challenges, and aligning classical philanthropic models with contemporary governance paradigms (Lamido & Haneef, 2021).

This research advances scholarly understanding by addressing a critical gap in the literature on waqf management, specifically concerning the relatively unexplored domain of royal waqf in Indonesia. Through an in-depth case study of the Kingdom of Sumedang Larang and the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang, the study generates novel insights into the revitalization of traditional waqf assets via structured governance and active community involvement. Theoretically, it contributes to the broader academic discourse on Islamic philanthropy, cultural sustainability, and heritage-based waqfs governance. From a practical standpoint, the research offers policy-relevant recommendations aimed at strengthening the legal and administrative infrastructure governing waqf institutions in Indonesia. These findings hold significant implications for both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, offering a framework that aligns cultural preservation with effective waqf asset management to promote heritage protection and socio-economic development.

This research contends that the royal waqfs managed by the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang serve a dual function: they preserve tangible cultural assets—such as historical structures and artifacts—while simultaneously revitalizing intangible cultural heritage, including indigenous knowledge systems, local customs, and oral traditions associated with the Kingdom of Sumedang Larang. These waqfs operate as dynamic mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity, thus extending their significance beyond purely economic or religious purposes (Çizakca, 2000; Singer, 2002). As Goussous argues, cultural preservation constitutes a foundational element of humanitarian policy in developed countries and plays a critical role in sustaining national identity (Goussous, 2022). By analyzing the governance structures, operational modalities, and community engagement practices implemented by the Foundation, this study demonstrates the capacity of royal waqf institutions to function as adaptable models for cultural preservation (Lamido & Haneef, 2021; Orbayy, 2013). This model offers replicable insights applicable to other regions with comparable royal or historical legacies, contributing both to academic discourse on waqf and to practical policymaking in cultural heritage management and community-driven development (Sait & Lim, 2006; World Heritage Centre, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

The research examines the management and preservation of royal family waqf, particularly conducted by the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang, together with the cultural customs associated with waqf in the Sumedang Larang Palace. The unit of analysis of this research is the royal family's waqf culture, especially the management of waqf carried out by the Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang Foundation, as well as the roles and perspectives of key individuals in the Sumedang Larang Palace related to the waqf culture. This study focuses on the management and maintenance of the royal family waqf, especially that carried out by the Prince of Sumedang Waqf Nazhir Foundation, as well as the culture and practices related to waqf carried out at the Sumedang Larang Palace. Data sources used in the research come from informants and secondary data comprising literature, waqf manuscripts and waqf artifacts.

The research employs the Spradley model of ethnographic methodology, encompassing twelve steps of ethnographic research (Spradley, 1979): identifying informants, conducting interviews, taking ethnographic notes, posing descriptive questions, analysing ethnographic interviews, performing domain

analysis, formulating structural questions, executing taxonomic analysis, asking contrasting questions, conducting component analysis, identifying cultural themes, and composing ethnography. The data acquired in the form of ethnographic notes from the informants was examined using various stages, including ethnographic analysis: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, and components analysis. A domain analysis was performed, succeeded by the utilization of descriptive, structural, and contrastive inquiries to enhance data analysis pertaining to the waqf tradition of the Sumedang Larang royal family. During the taxonomic analysis phase, the researcher endeavored to dissect the domains into more precise components to clarify the cultural phenomena of waqf in the Sumedang Larang kingdom. Component analysis was performed to classify the informants' behaviors and describe their experiences in transforming waqf artifacts into dynamic cultural products. These three research will elucidate specific cultural motifs that will subsequently be utilized to assemble ethnography.

Component analysis was performed to classify the informants' behaviors and describe their experiences in transforming waqf artifacts into dynamic cultural products. These three stages of ethnographic analysis—domain, taxonomic, and componential—illustrate how the waqf culture of the Sumedang Larang royal family is structured and practiced. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 1, which outlines the interrelation among key cultural components, including the roles of *waqif*, *nazhir*, and the management of royal waqf assets within the Sumedang Larang Kingdom.

Table 1 Domain, Taxonomic, and Componential Analysis of the Royal Waqf Tradition of Sumedang Larang

Domain	Taxonomy	Componential	Major Theme
Royal Waqf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waqif (the donor) - Mawquf Alayh (the beneficiaries) - Nazhir (Management) - Waqf Property - waqf will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moveable waqf assets in the form of heirloom items - Management of movable waqf assets - Foundation administrators are exclusively progeny of monarchs. - focus on heritage preservation 	The reconstruction and revitalization program of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom

The informants involved in this study were Radya Sepuh and Radya Anom from Karaton Sumedang Larang. The Radya Sepuh and Radya Anom were selected as informants due to their authority in overseeing the events taking place in Karaton Sumedang Larang and their involvement in the Foundation's initiatives. In addition, Mantri Jero and Mantri Luar served as informants due to their expertise in management related to important affairs of the foundation and palace. A number of individuals representing 'mandalas' from several traditional villages and communities in Sumedang were utilised as valuable experts regarding the significance of the Sumedang Larang Palace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Historical Evolution of Waqf Practices in Sumedang Larang

The royal family's endowment of Sumedang Larang dates back to the period when this kingdom adopted Islam as its official religion. The religiosity of the kings of Sumedang Larang is evident in their governance, characterized by a *Raja-Resi* (king-saint) style in which the monarch simultaneously served as a religious leader. The *Raja-Resi* leadership style originated from the Tembung Agung Kingdom, situated in Cipaku Darmaraja, Sumedang Regency. Moreover, during the reign of Prabu Tadjimalela, the Kingdom's name was altered to the Himbar Buana Kingdom, which also embraced the *Raja-Resi* style. Subsequently, the Himbar Buana Kingdom was rebranded as Sumedang Larang following Prabu Tadjimalela's attainment of enlightenment via spiritual contemplation.

The Mantri Luar (minister of external affairs) of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom, who oversees Public Relations, asserts that the royal throne's adherence to Islamic teachings is steadfastly upheld by the heirs of the Sumedang Larang kingdom. The coronation of Prabu Geusan Ulun on November 18, 1580 AD, marked the zenith of this kingdom's prominence, encompassing a large expanse from nearly all of West Java to the western region of Central Java. Nonetheless, it has diminished since the reign of Prince Soeradiwangsa. The decline was characterized by multiple provinces seceding from the Sumedang Larang Kingdom, culminating in its submission and transformation into a vassal state of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom in Java during Sultan Agung's reign. Since that time, the status of king in Sumedang Larang has been diminished to that of prince.

His successors, subsequently proclaimed as princes, maintained the waqf practices established by their predecessors. Prince Kusumadinata IX, also referred to as Prince Kornel (Regent of Sumedang, 1791-1828 AD), donated land for various beneficiaries, including great mosques, an Islamic boarding school, and an area of land presently utilized for residential purposes. All of them are located in the Tasikmalaya region of West Java (approximately 95.7 kilometers from the Sumedang district). In addition, According to the Head of the Sumedang Larang Palace, Rd. Luki Djohari Soemawilaga, Prince Aria Soeria Kusumah Adinata, also known as Prince Sugih grandson of Prince Kornel Regent of Sumedang 1836 – 1882 AD, donated a portion of his land for the development of the Asyrofudin Islamic Boarding School in Sumedang, expansion and construction of the Sumedang Grand Mosque.

The complete benevolence and cultural acumen exhibited by the Sumedang Larang princes was exemplified in Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja's bequest of all royal property. The Prince's Waqf is comprised of both movable and immovable objects. The movable waqf of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja is organized by serial number from 1 to 230 in the form of Sumedang Larang royal heirlooms, such as the Crown of Binokasih, dozens of varieties of keris, cleaver, and sword, as well as several gamelan instruments, wayang kulit and wayang golek, etc. Waqf of immovable objects in the form of agricultural fields with a total area of 871,526 M2 and land with a total area of 352,664 M2 are dispersed throughout Sumedang Regency in various locations.

The types of royal waqf assets managed by the Prince of Sumedang Waqf Nazhir Foundation consist of both movable and immovable objects. The details of these endowed assets, as stated in the Endowment Charter of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 The Endowment of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja as Stated in the Endowment Charter, September 12, 1912 CE

Movable Object	Immovable Object
Serial number from 1 to 230, consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Crown of Binokasih - seven hereditary weapons comprising swords and keris - dozens of varieties of keris, cleaver, and sword - several gamelan instruments - a set of shadow puppets and golek (<i>wayang kulit</i> and <i>wayang golek</i>) - two carriages - several pieces of silverware crafted from gold and silver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agricultural fields with a total area of 871,526 m² - land with a total area of 352,664 m² - the main building in the form of a palace - several buildings that were once the residences of the princes of Sumedang

The comprehensive list of endowed assets in Table 2 not only reflects the material wealth of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom but also signifies the deep cultural and symbolic meanings attached to these objects. Each endowed item, whether movable or immovable, embodies historical values and royal identity that continue to shape the legacy of the kingdom. To provide a clearer depiction of these valuable waqf objects, several representative artifacts are visually presented in Figure 1, illustrating the tangible heritage preserved through the royal waqf tradition.



Figure 1 Selected Endowment Objects of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja from the Sumedang Larang Kingdom

The catalogue of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja's endowments encompasses both movable and immovable objects. Several significant relics of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom that serve as endowment objects are illustrated in Figure 1, including the *Binokasih Crown*, *Panunggul Naga Keris*, *Naga Sasra Keris*, *Gamelan*, and *Naga Paksi Carriage*, all of which are preserved within the Prabu Geusan Ulun Museum.

This solemn oath was recorded in writing throughout the tenure of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, Regent of Sumedang (1883–1919 CE). The prince's waqf pledge, denoted as *Ijeu Soepaya Djadi Tanda Kakoeatan*, which translates to “*This is intended to serve as a symbol of power and resilience*”, resulted in the conversion of his entire personal fortune and ancestral heirlooms into waqf assets. This waqf document has been reexamined since the establishment of the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang to rediscover the fundamental nature of the prince's endowment.



Figure 2 The handwritten document of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja's endowment,

The historical foundation of the Sumedang Larang royal waqf is rooted in the original endowment manuscript written and signed by Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja himself. The handwritten document, presented in Figure 2, dates back to September 22, 1912 CE, and serves as the earliest legal and cultural record of the royal waqf declaration. This manuscript outlines the detailed inventory of endowed assets, encompassing both movable and immovable properties, along with the designation of their functions and beneficiaries. The text also reveals the prince's solemn intention, expressed through the phrase *Ijeu Soepaya Djadi Tanda Kakoeatan*, emphasizing that the endowment was established as a perpetual symbol of strength, unity, and devotion to the people of Sumedang.

According to Rd. Asep Sulaeman Fadil Adiwinata, the Mantri Luar Karaton Sumedang Larang (Public Relations Division), the subsequent phase in the era of independence and the Republic of Indonesia, during the regency of Sumedang, Kangjeng Dalem Pangeran Aria Soeriaatmadja, involved the determination and bequest of all *tilaran* (heritage) of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom in the waqf mandate charter. The waqf mandate charter of Pangeran Aria Soeriaatmadja encompasses numerous obligations that must be performed and realised. Particularly the value it encompasses. This encompasses artefacts and heritage of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom, comprising relics from the Galuh and Pajajaran Kingdoms, particularly the Binokasih Sanghiang Pake Crown, which serves as the paramount emblem of the Great Sundanese Empire.

In the waqf mandate, the Mantri Luar reiterated that the appointed Nazhir was the Panggede, the official who presided over the Sumedang Regency during the transitional period of Indonesia's

independence. Aria Tumenggung Singer was designated as the Regent of Sumedang, responsible for transferring the management of the waqf of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja back to the prince's descendants, specifically the family of Raden Kadir Soemawilaga. In conjunction with the transfer, the Pangeran Aria Soeria Atmadja Foundation (Yayasan Pangeran Aria Soeria Atmadja) was established in 1955 CE.

To more effectively serve the descendants of the princes of Sumedang, it was decided to rename the Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja Foundation to the Prince Sumedang Foundation (Yayasan Pangeran Sumedang). The Mantri Luar indicated that the Foundation's voyage encountered difficulties. There were numerous issues and internal discord within it. The heirs of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja established the Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation (Yayasan Nazhir Waqaf Pangeran Sumedang) to preserve the endowment assets of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja. The creation of this new Foundation aligns with the principles of Law No. 41 of 2004 on Waqf. This foundation acquired its legal status via Deed of Establishment No. 108, dated September 22, 2017, by Notary Isep Rahmayadi, SH, and the Decree of the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Document No. AHU-0014381, AH.01.04, Year 2017.

The establishment of this new foundation pertains to the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations (Yayasan). Article 15, paragraph (2), stipulates that the term "Yayasan" shall precede the name of the Foundation. Additionally, paragraph (3) specifies that for assets of the Foundation derived from waqf, the term "waqf" may be appended before the word "Yayasan". Accordingly, as stipulated in the Law, the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang is the designation selected by the founders to manage the Foundation's assets, all of which derive from the waqfs of the princes of Sumedang, particularly the waqf of Pangeran Aria Soeria Atmadja.

The primary initiative of the Foundation is the reconstruction and revitalization of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom. Subsequently, a formation team was established, comprising the extended family of Sumedang Larang, a cadre of academic experts, and a cohort of professional historical researchers. The findings of this internal study suggest the reconstruction and revitalization of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom via the Keraton institution, in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 39 of 2007 regarding the Keraton.

The reconstruction and revitalization program of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom, initiated by the Prince Sumedang Nazhir Waqf Foundation, aims to restore the Sumedang Larang Palace as mandated by Sumedang Regency Regional Regulation No. 01 of 2020, which designates Sumedang as Puseur Budaya Sunda (the Center of Sundanese Culture).

The Role of Royal Waqf in Preserving Cultural Heritage

Yayasan Nazhir Waqaf Pangeran Sumedang (The Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation) has established its organizational framework. This organizational structure pertains to Law No. 16 of 2001. In legal terms, the foundation's governing bodies comprise the Trustees, Directors, and Supervisors. The board of trustees of Yayasan Nazhir Waqaf Pangeran Sumedang (the Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation) is presided over by the Regent of Sumedang in an ex officio capacity, with members comprising the following: the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Sumedang Regency, the Head of the Sumedang Regency Ministry of Religion Office, and the Heads of the Sumedang Utara and Sumedang Selatan Religious Affairs Offices (KUA). According to Radya Anom, Rd. Luki Djohari Soemawilaga, the board of trustees of the Foundation does not comprise descendants of Prince Sumedang. Nonetheless, it is populated by local government officials lacking any affiliation with the Palace (Keraton) and cultural custodians. This aims to execute the directive of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, ensuring that all waqf assets are entrusted to the 'Panggede/officials' of the Sumedang community. Only one descendant of

Prince Sumedang, Radya Sepuh, Rd Ikik Loekman Soemadisoerja, who is a *Pancer Kakung* (direct descendant) of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, is included in the foundation's board of trustees. The involvement of this senior figure is to guarantee that the foundation's initiatives align with the preferences of its benefactors.

Similarly, regarding the composition of the foundation's board of trustees. The board of supervisors comprises a partnership between notable members of the Sumedang community and a descendant of the Sumedang rulers. This is to guarantee that the foundation's initiatives operate in compliance with the agreements established by all stakeholders of the foundation.

The foundation's board of directors is predominantly comprised of descendants of the Sumedang princes. The foundation's board of directors is presided over by Radya Anom (Junior Radya) Rd. Luki Djohari Soemawilaga. Radya Anom asserts that this domination aims to ensure the realization of the foundation's agenda, which upholds the ideals enshrined in the waqf charter and the preservation of Sundanese culture. The composition of advisors, directors, and supervisors, comprising state officials, elected community leaders, and descendants of the princes of Sumedang, has ensured the preservation and implementation of the waqf mandate of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja to this day.

According to Radya Anom Rd. Luki Djohari Soemawilaga, a senior authority within the royal structure of Sumedang, the inclusion of both state and religious officials—beyond members of the royal lineage—enhances the transparency and sustainability of waqf governance. This model aligns with the vision articulated by Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, who emphasized that waqf should be utilized for the benefit of the wider community rather than for exclusive royal interests.

As of 2022, internal data from the Foundation indicates that out of 147 historically recorded waqf assets affiliated with the Sumedang royal family, only 54 are currently active or under productive management. These assets include mosques, heritage structures, gamelan ensembles, historical manuscripts, and culturally significant heirlooms such as the Keris Binokasih. Despite their historical and cultural value, many of these assets remain underutilized due to challenges such as incomplete documentation, unclear legal status, and a lack of strategic development planning.

During discussions between the Foundation and *kawargian* (the relatives) of the Sumedang Larang, it was determined that the primary initiative of the Foundation is the reconstruction and recovery of the long-diminished Sumedang Larang Kingdom. The restoration and reinvention of this kingdom entails the collaboration of scholars and historians from many colleges, community leaders, and cultural personalities specializing in Sundanese cultural studies, alongside traditional communities located throughout West Java. Mantri Luar (The Minister of External Affairs) indicated that the research and analysis of the Sumedang Larang kingdom required over two years, involving visits to traditional communities, focus group discussions, and numerous seminars. This research encompasses the excavation and rediscovery of the practices of Kasumedangan (Sumedang traditions) and Kasundaan (Sunda traditions), as well as specific rites originally practiced during the pinnacle of the Sumedang Larang empire.

Restoring the Sumedang Larang Palace as a hub of Sundanese culture and traditions is a formidable challenge, stated the Radya Sepuh, His Majesty H. Rd. I. Lukman Soemadisoerja. The primary objection arises from the descendants of Prince Sumedang, who assert that the Sumedang Larang Kingdom is defunct, rendering the appointment of H. Rd. I. Lukman Soemadisoeria as Head of the Palace illegitimate. Indeed, "I am not a monarch. I am a radya sepuh". His Majesty H. Rd. I. Lukman Soemadisoerja proclaimed that statement. Radya is a radian, also referred to as rahadian, most commonly known as raden. Raden is a Sundanese title *menak* (noble) that has been perpetuated through generations. "I am the guardian and

protector of the endowment belonging to Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja, who possesses no entitlement to personally own any of the endowment assets, which are the properties of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom."

The Sumedang Larang royal family's endowment serves to reconstruct and revive Sundanese culture, with the palace as its focal point. The restoration of the Sumedang Larang palace entails ongoing endeavors to safeguard the heritage of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja's endowment for the advantage of its beneficiaries.

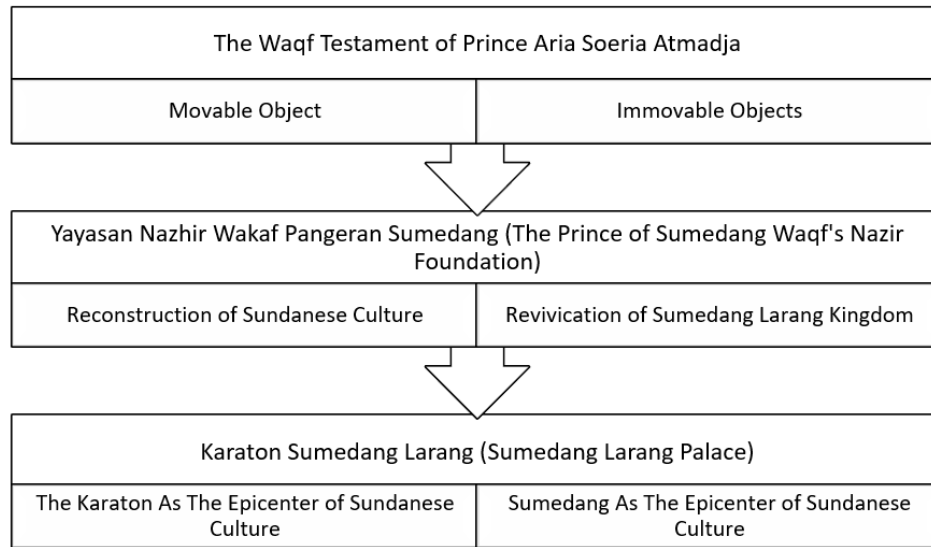


Figure 3 The Conceptual Flow of Royal Waqf Implementation in Sumedang Larang

The diagram in Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual framework connecting the *Waqf Testament of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja* with its institutional and cultural manifestations in contemporary Sumedang. At the top of the framework, the royal waqf testament is divided into movable and immovable objects, representing the physical foundation of the endowment. These assets—ranging from heirlooms and manuscripts to land and palace structures—form the material basis for the preservation of the kingdom's heritage.

The management and utilization of these assets are administered by the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang (The Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation), which functions as the official body responsible for transforming the waqf principles into social and cultural initiatives. The foundation's dual focus includes the reconstruction of Sundanese culture and the revival of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom, ensuring that the spiritual and historical dimensions of the waqf remain relevant in modern society.

At the institutional culmination, the Karaton Sumedang Larang (Sumedang Larang Palace) serves as both a symbolic and functional center for these cultural revitalization efforts. It operates as the epicenter of Sundanese culture, promoting heritage-based education, traditional arts, and rituals that embody the enduring legacy of the waqf established by Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja. Through this flow, Figure 3 demonstrates the transformation of royal waqf from a legal-religious instrument into a sustainable model of cultural governance.

The foundation, which has an office at the Sri Manganti Sumedang Palace, has a program consisting primarily of the following: revitalization of land and structures, preservation of archaeological locations, museums, and tombs, preservation of Religion, Culture, and the Arts, strengthening gathering between Prince Sumedang's Descendants, growth of the business sector. The primary focus of asset revitalization at this foundation is the preservation of religion, arts, and culture, with a particular emphasis on the preservation of arts and culture. The conservation of art and culture is manifested through specific rituals that have been absent from the Sundanese cultural heritage for a considerable period of time, such as *Jamasan Pusaka* (the act of washing and cleaning ancestral weaponry), a ritual historically performed to honor ancestral legacy. The foundation resurrected this practice through the waqf asset revitalization program, which led to a renewed focus on exploring and studying the historic and cultural values of old Sundanese society.

Another example of the preservation of cultural traditions is the Carnival of Panji (Sumedang Larang banners and flags) and Mahkota Binokasih (Binokasih Crown). The carnival is comprised of a sequence of customary rituals that occur in three cities: Ciamis, Bogor, and Sumedang, all located in West Java. The carnival, hosted in three historic Sundanese cities, showcases a variety of traditional and cultural artifacts, making it a popular tourist destination rooted in history and culture. The Binokasih Crown, an artifact from the Padjadjaran Kingdom, was presented as a valuable historical relic. One of the main principles of waqf for historical objects is to excavate and preserve the inherent treasures they possess.

Community Engagement and the Impact of Waqf Practice

This section presents the empirical findings derived from ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis concerning the governance, community engagement, and sociocultural impact of royal waqf practices in Sumedang. The findings reveal how the waqf institution—rooted in the royal endowment of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja—continues to function as a dynamic mechanism that intertwines religious philanthropy, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. Through prolonged field immersion and engagement with key stakeholders, the study identifies four interrelated patterns that characterize the management and social significance of royal waqf assets in contemporary Sumedang.

The ethnographic data demonstrate that the management of royal waqf assets in Sumedang is not merely an act of preservation but a complex process of adaptation to contemporary socio-political and cultural contexts. Across multiple layers of governance, ritual practice, and community participation, the waqf institution has evolved from a hereditary trust into a formalized system that integrates state regulation, religious authority, and local customary values. This transformation reflects the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity—where ancestral legacies are reinterpreted through modern legal and institutional frameworks while maintaining their spiritual and cultural essence. Within this continuum of transformation, four key patterns emerged that illustrate how the royal waqf operates as both a heritage mechanism and a tool for community resilience.

Institutionalization of Waqf Management through Foundations

In the historically significant town of Sumedang, where the legacy of the Pangeran lineage continues to inform local identity and collective memory, the formalization of waqf management has emerged as a critical development in heritage preservation and religious philanthropy. The Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang exemplifies this transformation, signaling a departure from traditional, kinship-based models of waqf custodianship toward a legally codified and organizationally structured foundation.

Established under the provisions of Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations and No. 41 of 2004 on Waqf, the Yayasan operates with a board of trustees and maintains formal collaborations with governmental and religious authorities, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). This institutional framework enhances both legal accountability and administrative continuity while reinforcing the cultural legitimacy of waqf stewardship in the eyes of the local community.

In a field interview conducted at the Sumedang Palace complex, Rd Luki Djohari Soemawilaga—a direct descendant of the royal family and a prominent figure in the foundation—articulated the motivations behind this institutional shift:

In the past, waqf management was more familial or traditional, but the challenge was the lack of a system that legally protected our assets. Now, through the Foundation, we can safeguard our ancestral trust in a more structured and sustainable way. It's not just about preserving old buildings—it's about caring for a living heritage (Luki Djohari Soemawilaga, interview at Sumedang Palace, February 12, 2024).

The Foundation's institutional structure has also facilitated the productive development of waqf assets, allowing for the generation of sustainable revenue through culturally aligned economic activities. These include leasing heritage buildings for public events and collecting admission fees from the palace museum—initiatives that contribute directly to the foundation's operational sustainability and asset maintenance. Such practices are often framed within the broader Islamic ethical paradigm of *maslahat* (public benefit), reinforcing the alignment between economic pragmatism and religious-social responsibility.

Thus, the institutionalization of waqf management in Sumedang reflects a broader reconfiguration of heritage governance—one that integrates legal formalization, cultural continuity, and socio-economic viability. Far from being relegated to historical memory, the waqf system is actively repositioned as a dynamic vehicle for community development and intergenerational legacy.

Community Engagement and Cultural Stewardship

A salient dimension of waqf governance in Sumedang is the deep-rooted participation of local community actors, particularly mandala (village representatives) and cultural custodians. These individuals serve as intermediaries between the foundation and grassroots communities, ensuring that waqf activities remain anchored in local epistemologies and traditions. Field interviews reveal how this engagement is sustained not only through administrative involvement but through the embodied transmission of collective memory, ritual practice, and oral history—elements integral to the intangible heritage of the former Kerajaan Sumedang Larang.

One mandala representative, interviewed in March 2024, articulated the communal ethos that underpins this custodianship:

We, as part of the traditional community, protect these heritage values—not just for the palace, but for all of us (Interview with Mandala representative, Sumedang, March 22, 2024).

This statement encapsulates the relational worldview in which heritage is understood as a shared legacy rather than a static possession of elite institutions. Rather than being relegated to the margins of official heritage discourse, indigenous actors in Sumedang actively assert their authority over cultural practices—including sacred rituals, vernacular language use, and spiritual ceremonies—thus challenging the top-down orientation of many state-led preservation agendas (Hafstein, 2008; Smith, 2006).

Moreover, these engagements are not merely symbolic. They play a critical role in sustaining local economies through community-based tourism and cultural festivals, many of which are facilitated under the aegis of the waqf foundation. These initiatives generate income, create local employment, and foster intergenerational transmission of knowledge—all while reinforcing the social legitimacy of the waqf institution itself. In this way, heritage governance in Sumedang reflects a model of “living heritage” (Taylor, 2018) that is embedded in everyday practice and informed by community-based stewardship.

Political Influence and Hybrid Governance

In Sumedang’s heritage governance landscape, the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang operates within a distinctly hybrid model that intertwines formal religious and cultural authority with local political power. Although the foundation itself is legally structured and autonomous under Law No. 16 of 2001, its board includes political figures in *ex officio* capacities, most notably the Regent (*Bupati*) of Sumedang. This intersection of political authority and cultural stewardship reflects a governance modality that is both strategic and fraught.

Ethnographic observations and interviews reveal that for many local actors, the involvement of political elites is a pragmatic necessity. As one cultural caretaker explained during a site visit in April 2024, “*Without the Regent’s support, many cultural activities couldn’t proceed. But sometimes, we also have to follow the political rhythm*” (Field interview with cultural caretaker, Sumedang, April 11, 2024).

This entanglement underscores what scholars have termed hybrid governance, where state and non-state actors share overlapping roles, often within informal yet influential arrangements (Blundo & Le Meur, 2009). In Sumedang, the dual role of political leaders as both government officials and cultural patrons provides access to public funding, institutional protection, and administrative resources. Such integration aligns with broader trends in Southeast Asian heritage management, where “soft” political power often mediates the mobilization of cultural capital (Sturm, 2006).

This dual character of hybrid governance in Sumedang reflects a broader tension between cultural continuity and political expediency. While the involvement of political actors may provide needed resources, it also introduces vulnerabilities that can compromise the integrity and autonomy of heritage custodianship. As such, the Sumedang case illustrates the need for clear boundary-setting and culturally grounded checks within hybrid governance structures—ensuring that waqf management remains accountable not only to the state, but to the communities it seeks to serve.

Selective Inclusion of Royal Descendants

The composition of the Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang reflects a strategic balance between traditional authority and modern institutional governance. Notably, only one royal descendant—Radya Sepuh Rd. Ikik Loekman Soemadisoerja—holds a formal position on the foundation’s board. As a symbolic and cultural figurehead, his role functions less as an administrative actor and more as a guardian of heritage (*penjaga warisan budaya*), embodying the spiritual and genealogical continuity of the Sumedang Larang dynasty within a contemporary legal framework.

This selective inclusion is not accidental; rather, it represents a calibrated fusion of cultural legitimacy and bureaucratic efficiency. Ethnographic observations suggest that Rd. Ikik’s presence is deeply resonant within the community. Local custodians refer to him not only as a trustee, but as a living link to ancestral memory—someone whose very participation affirms the waqf foundation’s moral authority. His inclusion maintains what Bourdieu (Bourdieu et al., 1984) might call symbolic capital—the

intangible credibility derived from heritage and lineage—ensuring that the foundation is seen as more than a modern legal entity; it is a continuation of a sacred trust.

From an institutional perspective, this model illustrates how selective traditionalism can operate within broader modernization efforts. It mirrors similar dynamics in heritage governance across Southeast Asia, where elite cultural figures are integrated into state or quasi-state bodies to lend authenticity and mediate tensions between modernity and tradition (Hafstein, 2008; Reid, 2011). By incorporating just one royal descendant, the foundation avoids the pitfalls of nepotism or elite capture, while maintaining a culturally resonant figure who serves both symbolic and advisory functions.

This hybrid configuration allows the foundation to operate with contemporary governance tools—legal accountability, financial oversight, and inter-agency coordination—while remaining anchored in the local cosmology and historical consciousness of the Sumedang people. It affirms that heritage institutions, particularly those managing waqf assets, must attend not only to efficiency and legality, but to cultural meaning-making and ancestral resonance.

Collectively, these four interrelated patterns illustrate how the royal waqf system in Sumedang operates not merely as a religious endowment, but as a multidimensional governance mechanism that bridges tradition and modernity. The institutionalization of waqf management through a formal foundation ensures legal and administrative continuity, while community engagement anchors it within the moral and cultural fabric of local society. The interplay of political influence and hybrid governance provides both resources and challenges, demanding careful negotiation to preserve institutional integrity. Meanwhile, the selective inclusion of royal descendants maintains symbolic legitimacy and ancestral resonance within an evolving bureaucratic framework. Through this hybrid configuration, the royal waqf institution sustains both tangible and intangible heritage—revitalizing Sundanese cultural identity and ensuring that the legacy of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja endures as a living force within the social and spiritual life of contemporary Sumedang.

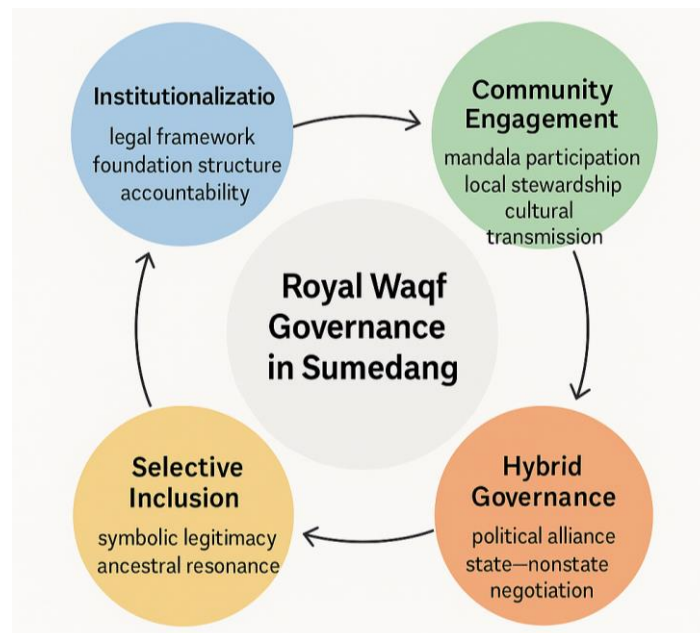


Figure 4 Interconnected Dimensions of Royal Waqf Governance in Sumedang

As illustrated in Figure 4, the governance of royal waqf in Sumedang operates through four interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions. The Institutionalization of waqf management ensures administrative and legal accountability, transforming traditional custodianship into a modern foundation-based system. Community Engagement anchors this institutional framework within local cultural contexts, emphasizing shared heritage, ritual continuity, and collective stewardship. The dimension of Hybrid Governance reveals the negotiation between political power, religious authority, and cultural autonomy—an adaptive model that enables access to resources while requiring careful ethical boundaries. Finally, the Selective Inclusion of Royal Descendants sustains symbolic legitimacy and ancestral continuity, ensuring that governance reforms remain rooted in the moral authority of lineage and tradition.

Together, these four elements form an integrated cycle of governance in which the waqf institution serves simultaneously as a legal entity, a cultural agent, and a moral custodian. This circular relationship reflects the *living heritage* character of the Sumedang royal waqf—where legal structure, social participation, and cultural symbolism converge to sustain the legacy of Prince Aria Soeria Atmadja across generations.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the royal waqf institution in Sumedang operates through four interrelated governance dimensions—legal institutionalization, community engagement, hybrid governance, and selective inclusion—which together construct a comprehensive model for sustaining cultural heritage and community participation. The findings demonstrate that the *Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang* effectively transforms traditional royal endowment practices into a legally formalized and socially inclusive governance structure. This institutional transformation not only safeguards tangible heritage such as artifacts and historical buildings but also revitalizes intangible cultural traditions, including rituals, collective memory, and indigenous knowledge systems. Through this hybrid model, the royal waqf serves as both a mechanism of cultural continuity and an adaptive framework for modern heritage governance, balancing ancestral legitimacy with administrative accountability.

The emergence of hybrid governance within the Sumedang royal waqf system reflects a pragmatic response to the dual demands of tradition and modernity. Historically, the management of waqf in royal contexts relied on kinship-based authority and customary legitimacy; however, the contemporary sociopolitical environment requires formal accountability, transparency, and legal recognition. The inclusion of both state officials and royal descendants within the *Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang* embodies this negotiation, where religious legitimacy and political authority coexist within a shared governance framework. Drawing on Blundo and Le Meur's (2009) concept of *hybrid governance*, this structure emerges as an adaptive form of power-sharing that enables traditional custodianship to operate effectively within bureaucratic systems. Simultaneously, the integration of community participation ensures that the waqf institution remains a form of *living heritage* (Taylor, 2018), continuously renewed through collective memory, ritual practice, and local stewardship. From a sociocultural perspective, this hybridity also generates what Bourdieu (1984) terms *symbolic capital*—the moral and cultural legitimacy derived from lineage and ancestral authority—while, within the Islamic legal framework, the principle of *maslahat* (public benefit) guides the use of waqf assets for communal welfare rather than exclusive royal interests. Thus, the coexistence of traditional ethics and modern governance mechanisms allows the royal waqf to function as a dynamic and resilient institution that bridges sacred trust, civic responsibility, and cultural sustainability.

In comparison with previous studies, this research expands the understanding of waqf beyond its conventional economic or religious interpretations. Çizakça (2000) emphasized the economic role of waqf in sustaining public welfare during the Ottoman Empire, framing it primarily as a financial instrument of Islamic philanthropy. Similarly, Singer (2002) and Fauzia (2013) examined waqf as a social institution that reinforced religious devotion and community solidarity, while Lamido and Haneef (2021) focused on the revitalization of waqf institutions through modernization and professional governance. However, unlike these prior studies, the present research situates waqf within the framework of *cultural heritage governance*, emphasizing its function as a mechanism for preserving both tangible and intangible cultural assets within a localized, royal context. The Sumedang case reveals how royal waqf institutions serve not only to manage property or redistribute wealth but to maintain intergenerational identity, symbolic legitimacy, and cultural memory. This study thereby contributes a new analytical dimension to waqf scholarship—highlighting *royal waqf* as a unique form of *heritage-based governance* that integrates Islamic legal principles, community participation, and cultural continuity. In doing so, it positions the Sumedang royal waqf as one of the first empirically documented models in Indonesia where traditional monarchy, modern legal frameworks, and heritage preservation converge within a single institutional system.

The findings of this study significantly broaden the understanding of cultural heritage preservation through waqf by demonstrating how the *royal waqf system* functions as an integrated mechanism for safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage within a living sociocultural framework. Whereas earlier research such as Assi (2008) on Palestine and Khalfan and Ogura (2012) on Zanzibar, highlighted waqf as a sustainable architectural and institutional model for heritage conservation, the present study extends this discourse to the Indonesian royal context, where waqf serves not merely as a financial or legal instrument but as a vehicle of *cultural continuity*. The case of the *Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang* illustrates that waqf, when rooted in royal tradition, sustains not only historic artifacts and buildings but also community practices, oral traditions, and symbolic rituals that define local identity. Similar to Aziz et al. (2025) who proposed innovative waqf-tourism models in Malaysia, this study shows that integrating waqf management with heritage-based economic activities—such as cultural festivals and palace museums—enhances sustainability while preserving authenticity. Moreover, aligning with Islam (2018) and Rafiqi et al. (2023), the institutionalization of royal waqf in Sumedang demonstrates how legal codification and community stewardship jointly ensure the *perpetuity and social relevance* of cultural heritage. Consequently, the Sumedang case advances scholarly discourse by presenting waqf as a living heritage system, one that bridges religious philanthropy, heritage management, and community development in a context where cultural preservation is deeply intertwined with spiritual and ancestral values.

The findings of this study also deepen the understanding of the relationship between symbolic power and philanthropic governance within the context of royal waqf management. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *symbolic capital*, the Sumedang case illustrates how heritage authority, lineage prestige, and religious legitimacy converge to sustain a unique form of cultural governance. In this model, the symbolic capital embodied by royal figures such as *Radya Sepuh Rd. Ikik Loekman Soemadisoerja* functions not as material wealth, but as moral and cultural authority that legitimizes the management of waqf assets. This finding resonates with Michelson and Paadam's (2016) argument that heritage sites accumulate symbolic capital through the reinforcement of cultural identity and prestige, while extending it into a philanthropic dimension—where heritage preservation itself becomes a sacred duty. Moreover, as observed by Mak, Gallou, and Fancourt (2024), the preservation of heritage assets

contributes to the strengthening of social capital and civic engagement. Similarly, in Sumedang, symbolic capital operates as a unifying force that binds local communities to the waqf institution, transforming reverence for royal heritage into participatory stewardship. This relational dynamic mirrors Xinxin et al.'s (2022) findings on community empowerment in heritage governance, where the distribution of symbolic power fosters collective agency rather than hierarchy. Yet, as Guttormsen and Fageraas (2011) caution, symbolic capital also risks producing idealized notions of authenticity that obscure complex power relations—a challenge that the Sumedang model addresses through inclusive governance and shared custodianship between royal, religious, and civic actors. Hence, the study reveals that symbolic capital in royal waqf governance operates as both *a source of legitimacy and a tool of empowerment*, embedding philanthropy within the moral economy of heritage preservation.

The integration of Islamic values with modern governance revealed in this study illustrates how traditional religious ethics can coexist with, and even strengthen, contemporary institutional frameworks. The case of the *Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang* exemplifies this synthesis: while it adheres to national legal frameworks such as Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations and Law No. 41 of 2004 on Waqf, its operational ethos remains rooted in the Islamic principle of *maslahah*—the pursuit of public benefit. This aligns with Zayyadi et al. (2023), who argue that the modernization of Islamic legal systems in Indonesia involves the harmonization of *syariah*-based moral imperatives with administrative rationality. Similarly, Abdillah (2013) demonstrates that Indonesia's political modernization does not entail the marginalization of Islam, but rather its adaptation as a normative compass in governance. The Sumedang model extends this discourse by institutionalizing *Islamic philanthropy* within a modern bureaucratic structure, transforming traditional waqf into a participatory governance mechanism that ensures transparency, accountability, and social welfare. This hybrid configuration resonates with Cesari's (2013) concept of "Muslim democracy," wherein religious legitimacy underpins civic modernization. Moreover, the foundation's emphasis on stewardship, consultation (*musyawarah*), and accountability reflects the ethical integration observed in other Muslim societies navigating modernization (Ahmed et al., 2025; Wu & Kamarudin, 2024). Thus, the findings demonstrate that modern governance need not dilute Islamic values; rather, through waqf-based institutionalization, it can operationalize faith-based ethics in tangible forms of social responsibility, heritage preservation, and sustainable community development—bridging the sacred and the administrative in the governance of cultural heritage.

The findings of this research carry significant social and theoretical implications for the study and practice of heritage governance within Islamic philanthropic frameworks. Socially, the royal waqf system in Sumedang demonstrates how endowments rooted in religious and cultural legitimacy can serve as engines of *community empowerment*, fostering participation, cultural continuity, and local creative economies. The revitalization of traditional rituals, such as *Jamasan Pusaka* and the *Panji and Binokasih Crown Carnival*, illustrates how cultural expressions supported by waqf institutions can generate inclusive cultural tourism and sustainable livelihoods for local artisans, performers, and custodians. Theoretically, this study extends the discourse on *heritage-based philanthropy*, offering a model that fuses *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu et al., 1984), *maslahah*-driven ethics, and *hybrid governance* (Blundo & Le Meur, 2009) into a coherent framework for cultural preservation. It highlights that royal waqf institutions—when properly formalized and participatory—can transform from static relics of feudal history into living systems of social innovation, advancing both academic understanding and practical applications of Islamic governance in the modern world.

Despite its transformative potential, the governance of royal waqf institutions in Indonesia is not without dysfunctions and vulnerabilities. Political interference often complicates the autonomy of waqf

management, as observed in several cases where bureaucratic influence and local government interests have shaped decision-making processes, sometimes leading to conflicts between *nazhir* and state authorities (Medias et al., 2025; Zaenurrosyid et al., 2025). Asset disputes and ownership conflicts also persist, particularly concerning land registration and *ruislag* (exchange of waqf land), where unclear documentation and overlapping claims result in prolonged legal tensions (Sati & Tambunan, 2025; Zakiyy & Hamid, 2025). Moreover, the lack of professionalism and managerial capacity among *nazhir* remains a critical challenge. Limited financial literacy, inadequate governance training, and weak accountability mechanisms often undermine the transparency and sustainability of waqf management (Hassan et al., 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2025). The absence of digital reporting systems and standardized auditing procedures further exacerbates inefficiencies and reduces public trust (Jamil et al., 2024; Mujahidin et al., 2025). Collectively, these issues underscore that while royal waqf institutions embody significant *symbolic capital* and cultural legitimacy, their long-term success depends on strengthening institutional accountability, professionalizing *nazhir* roles, and establishing safeguards to balance political power with ethical and transparent governance.

The sustainability of royal waqf institutions ultimately depends on their ability to balance traditional legitimacy with the imperatives of modern governance. On one hand, the symbolic authority of royal lineage and spiritual heritage provides moral legitimacy and cultural resonance that anchor the institution within local identity. On the other, contemporary demands for transparency, efficiency, and accountability require the adoption of modern administrative standards, digital management systems, and regulatory compliance. This balance reflects what scholars describe as *adaptive continuity*—a process through which inherited traditions are reinterpreted to meet present needs without eroding their cultural essence (Lamido & Haneef, 2021; Taylor, 2018). In the case of the Sumedang royal waqf, this equilibrium manifests through the coexistence of customary leadership roles such as *Radya Sepuh* and *Radya Anom* alongside legally recognized foundation structures. Such hybridity not only safeguards the waqf's spiritual and historical legitimacy but also ensures its relevance within Indonesia's modern legal framework. Sustaining this balance requires continuous negotiation between heritage and reform, where tradition serves as the ethical foundation, and modernization provides the operational mechanism for enduring cultural and social impact.

Building on these findings, several practical implications and policy recommendations emerge for strengthening the governance and sustainability of royal waqf institutions in Indonesia. First, there is an urgent need to reinforce the regulatory framework for cultural waqf, ensuring that heritage-based waqf assets—such as manuscripts, heirlooms, and palace sites—receive clear legal protection and recognition within both religious and cultural preservation laws. Second, the digitalization of waqf asset documentation should be prioritized to prevent disputes, enhance transparency, and support integrated monitoring through national waqf databases. Third, multi-stakeholder collaboration must be institutionalized, linking regional governments, waqf foundations, and local cultural communities in joint initiatives for conservation, education, and heritage-based tourism. These actions would not only secure the material continuity of royal waqf assets but also revitalize their social and economic roles in contemporary contexts. Moving forward, integrating royal waqf management into Indonesia's national cultural policy could reinforce the country's long-term commitment to sustainable heritage governance and inclusive community development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that royal waqf in Sumedang functions not merely as a religious endowment, but as a multidimensional governance mechanism that integrates legal structure, cultural continuity, and community participation. The management of waqf assets by the *Yayasan Nazhir Wakaf Pangeran Sumedang* (The Prince of Sumedang Waqf's Nazir Foundation) exemplifies how heritage-based endowments can sustain both tangible and intangible cultural values through institutionalized governance. By formalizing traditional custodianship within a foundation framework, the royal waqf ensures administrative transparency, long-term asset preservation, and the revitalization of local cultural practices.

This research further highlights that the preservation of royal heritage is inseparable from the empowerment of local communities. Through cultural revitalization initiatives the foundation transforms the waqf into a living institution that contributes to social cohesion and regional identity. In this regard, royal waqf plays a crucial role in connecting historical legacy with contemporary development agendas, including cultural tourism and creative economy growth.

The study also underscores the importance of adaptive governance within royal waqf institutions. The *Nazhir* system, grounded in both kinship ethics and professional accountability, reflects a hybrid model that balances ancestral legitimacy with modern administrative requirements. This hybridization ensures that the principles of *amanah* (trust) and *maslahat* (public benefit) continue to guide the preservation and utilization of cultural assets. Future research should expand upon these findings by conducting comparative analyses of other royal waqf institutions across Indonesia—such as those in Banten, Cirebon, and Yogyakarta—to explore variations in governance models and community engagement practices. Such comparative inquiry would deepen understanding of how waqf can serve as a sustainable instrument for cultural resilience, social welfare, and heritage-based development in the broader context of the Nusantara royal legacy.

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