

TRANSFORMATION OF KAILI TRIBE RITUALS POST-ISLAMIZATION: INTEGRATING ISLAMIC VALUES INTO LOCAL TRADITIONS

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Abstract: *The post-Islamization transformation of the Kaili tribe in Central Sulawesi led to significant changes in traditional rituals, especially Pompoura and Disaster Prevention, originally based on animism. This study explores the tribe's adaptation to Islamic influences while balancing the preservation of ancestral traditions and the tension it caused with traditional elders. Employing a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with traditional and religious leaders, participatory observation of ritual practices, and document analysis of historical records and manuscripts. The findings reveal that the Kaili people have undergone a process of ritual reinterpretation, where spiritual meanings and ritual procedures have shifted from ancestral worship to monotheistic practices such as collective prayers and charitable acts. While senior traditional leaders expressed concerns over cultural erosion, younger generations generally supported the transformations, indicating an intergenerational dynamic in the perception of change. Importantly, the social and communal dimensions of the rituals were preserved, ensuring continued community cohesion. This research contributes valuable insights for religious and cultural stakeholders in managing cultural change and negotiating between religious values and local traditions. Future studies are encouraged to explore similar cultural negotiations in other indigenous communities to promote inclusive and context-sensitive models of religious integration.*

Keywords: *Disaster Prevention; Islamization; Kaili Tribe; Pompoura; Ritual.*

Abstrak: Transformasi pasca-Islamisasi pada suku Kaili di Sulawesi Tengah menyebabkan perubahan signifikan terhadap ritual tradisional mereka, khususnya ritual Pompoura dan pencegahan bencana yang sebelumnya berakar pada animisme. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana suku Kaili beradaptasi terhadap pengaruh Islam sambil tetap berupaya menjaga tradisi leluhur dan menghadapi ketegangan yang muncul dengan para tetua adat. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pemuka adat dan tokoh agama, observasi partisipatif terhadap pelaksanaan ritual, serta analisis dokumen berupa naskah kuno dan arsip sejarah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Kaili telah mengalami proses reinterpretasi ritual, di mana makna spiritual dan prosedur ritual bergeser dari pemujaan leluhur ke praktik monoteistik seperti doa bersama dan kegiatan amal. Meskipun para tetua adat menyuarakan kekhawatiran terhadap hilangnya budaya, generasi muda umumnya mendukung perubahan tersebut, menunjukkan adanya dinamika antargenerasi dalam memaknai perubahan. Yang penting, dimensi sosial dan kebersamaan dalam ritual tetap dipertahankan sehingga kohesi komunitas tetap terjaga. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan berharga bagi pemangku kepentingan agama dan budaya dalam mengelola perubahan kultural serta merumuskan negosiasi antara nilai-nilai agama dan tradisi lokal. Studi selanjutnya dianjurkan untuk mengeksplorasi negosiasi budaya serupa pada komunitas adat lain guna mendorong model integrasi agama yang inklusif dan kontekstual.

Kata Kunci: Pencegahan Bencana; Islamisasi; Suku Kaili; Pompoura; Ritual.

Introduction

The Islamization of Central Sulawesi was a complex and gradual process.¹ The introduction of Islam to this region was closely tied to the active roles of traders, religious scholars (*‘ulama*), and the intense social interactions between the local communities and migrants from regions already familiar with Islam.² This process began around the 16th century, when trade routes connecting Central Sulawesi with other parts of the Nusantara became increasingly active.³ The traders, who brought Islamic teachings along with their goods, did not solely focus on commerce but also spread the religion through intensive missionary work (*da’wah*).

In the Kaili community, Islamization began to have a significant impact when local religious scholars started integrating Islamic teachings into the everyday lives of the people.⁴ The dakwah conducted by these scholars touched various aspects of life, from spiritual practices to the social norms adhered to by the community. Additionally, social interactions through intermarriages between locals and Muslim traders further accelerated the spread of Islam among the Kaili people.⁵ Thus, Islamization became an inseparable part of the social and cultural changes occurring in Central Sulawesi, particularly among the Kaili tribe.

Before the arrival of Islam, the Kaili people had a rich culture and tradition deeply rooted in animism and ancestor worship.⁶ Traditional rituals were an integral part of the social and spiritual lives of the Kaili community, with various ceremonies performed to honor ancestral spirits, seek protection, or celebrate life cycles.⁷ One of the most prominent rituals was Pompoura, a ceremony dedicated to the ancestral spirits to request blessings and protection. This ritual involved offerings such as *sesajen* (sacrificial offerings) and special mantras believed to summon spiritual power from the ancestral realm. Additionally, the disaster prevention ceremony was performed to ward off calamities by offering gifts to the village's guardian spirits.⁸ These cultural practices underscore the importance of rituals in maintaining balance between the human world and the spiritual world according to the beliefs of the Kaili people. Through these rituals, the Kaili community not only preserved their relationship with their ancestors but also strengthened the social bonds among community members.

Islamization brought significant impacts on the cultural practices and traditional rituals of the Kaili tribe.⁹ After Islam began to be embraced by the Kaili community, many rituals previously based on animistic beliefs underwent transformations to align with Islamic teachings.¹⁰ For instance, the Pompoura ritual, which originally involved offerings to ancestral spirits, was replaced by collective prayers and recitations that better adhered to the principles of tauhid in Islam.

These changes not only influenced ritual practices but also affected the social structure and values upheld by the Kaili community. The social structure, once centered around traditional figures and spiritual leaders, began to shift, with 'ulamā' and religious leaders playing a more dominant role in social life.¹¹ Traditional values that prioritized connections with the spiritual world of ancestors were also reinterpreted within the framework of Islamic teachings. Nonetheless, certain elements of the original culture were preserved in forms adjusted to Islamic law, indicating a complex process of syncretism in the cultural transformation of the Kaili tribe following Islamization.

Previous studies on the interaction between Islamic teachings and local traditions in Indonesia have yielded significant findings. Research by Pamungkas et al., for example, explored the role of Javanese mantras, particularly those developed by Sunan Kalijaga, in spreading Islamic teachings. The study highlighted that although these mantras are often regarded as mystical texts, they represent a philosophical blend of Islamic values and Javanese culture.¹² The integration of religious texts with

cultural symbolism underscores the importance of ethical dakwah, as discussed through content analysis and hermeneutical techniques. This study positions SKM as an educational medium that functions not only in the spiritual realm but also in the cultural sphere, contributing to cross-disciplinary discourse in Islamic studies.¹³

Furthermore, Hasyim et al. examined the negotiation between Islamic law and local customs in the Tengger community. Through the Walagara marriage ritual, this analysis revealed the interaction between Islamic legal norms and Hindu customs, shaping a hybrid religious practice. This negotiation reflects a symbolic-substantive compromise between local traditions and the principles of Islamic law, as also noted in other studies regarding the adaptation of Islam to local cultural practices without diminishing religious values. This dialectical relationship offers a crucial contribution to studies on legal pluralism in Islam in Indonesia, particularly in the context of marriage rituals.¹⁴

Furthermore, Mundakir and Hidayat examined the *Buka Luwur* tradition in Kudus, which illustrates the syncretism between Javanese rituals and Islamic teachings.¹⁵ The authors argue that although this tradition is considered *bid'ah* (innovation) by some formalistic interpretations of Islam, it serves as both a social and religious mechanism that promotes community solidarity and reverence for the efforts of Islamic figures like Sunan Kudus.¹⁶ The interaction between Islamic law and local traditions in this context reflects a broader trend in Indonesian Islam, where cultural practices are reconfigured within the framework of Sharia, creating harmony between religious and cultural values.

Hernawan et al. also contributed to the discourse on religious moderation through their study of the *Wawacan Babad Walangsungsang* manuscript. This research focuses on the spiritual journey of Prince Walangsungsang, depicted through his interactions with both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers. His journey emphasizes the values of openness and religious moderation, as the prince learns from various spiritual traditions before fully embracing Islam.¹⁷ This study illustrates that local wisdom and religious tolerance are deeply embedded in Sundanese culture, providing insight into how religious practices can coexist peacefully within the framework of Islamic teachings.¹⁸

Another study by Halim et al. explored the transformation of religious identity among the Dayak community in West Kalimantan.¹⁹ The authors found that the integration of Dayak culture with Islam gave rise to a new cultural identity, where converts retained their Dayak roots while adopting Islamic practices.²⁰ This process demonstrates that conversion to Islam in

this context does not necessarily mean abandoning traditional customs. Instead, the study highlights Islam's adaptability within the local cultural framework, reinforcing the idea of religious and cultural syncretism in Indonesia.

Overall, these studies reveal the complex interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural practices in various regions of Indonesia. The results show how Islam, when integrated with local customs, creates new expressions that contribute to both spiritual growth and social solidarity. While most research on post-Islamization cultural transformations in different regions of Indonesia tends to focus on the harmonization of Islamic teachings with local culture, there remains a gap in exploring the ambivalence or resistance among traditional elders toward these changes. Although the transformations are widely accepted, the emotional and cultural discomfort experienced by certain groups, especially traditional elders, has yet to receive sufficient academic attention.

In the context of the Kaili tribe, although the integration of Islamic values into ritual practices is considered successful, the sense of losing the original meaning of traditional rituals among traditional elders is a new finding that highlights a cultural identity dilemma. Previous research tends to overlook this aspect, focusing more on the success of integrating Islamic values. Thus, this study offers a novel contribution by emphasizing the duality between preserving original cultural traditions and the necessity of conforming to Islamic teachings in the transformation of Kaili tribe rituals.

Furthermore, this research opens opportunities to explore how the negotiation process between traditional values and Sharia can create a space for the continuity of cultural identity without sacrificing newly adopted aspects of religiosity. The study of cultural resistance during this transformative process is expected to enrich existing literature, which generally portrays the Islamization process as something fully accepted and without resistance.

Capturing and Describing The Object

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to investigate the transformation of traditional rituals among the Kaili tribe following the process of Islamization. A qualitative method is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of cultural practices, symbolic meanings, and the perspectives of those directly involved in the ritual transformation. The descriptive design allows the researcher to systematically document the changes in ritual elements, procedures,

and meanings without manipulating the natural context.²¹ This design is especially useful for studying phenomena that are complex, context-bound, and socially constructed, such as religious and cultural adaptation. The focus is not on hypothesis testing, but rather on capturing the richness of participant's experiences and the evolving nature of cultural practices. As such, this research aims to generate a comprehensive picture of how Kaili rituals, such as the Pompoura and disaster prevention ceremonies, have been reinterpreted and modified in line with Islamic values.

The research is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, which views reality as constructed through social interactions and shaped by cultural and historical contexts. This paradigm emphasizes understanding the emic (insider) perspective, allowing the voices of traditional leaders, community members, and religious figures to emerge authentically in the study.²² Through this lens, the study explores not only what changes occurred in the rituals but also how these changes were negotiated and received by different segments of the community. The interpretive approach supports the analysis of how religious teachings and local customs intersect, conflict, or harmonize. By focusing on lived experiences and local meanings, the study contributes to broader discussions on cultural continuity, religious accommodation, and identity in post-Islamization societies.²³ Such a design ensures that the findings are grounded in the social realities of the Kaili people and informed by their narratives.

The research was carried out in two strategic locations that hold cultural and historical significance for the Kaili tribe in Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia: Sibalaya Village in Sigi Regency and the city of Palu. Sibalaya Village was selected due to its strong adherence to traditional Kaili customs and its role as a center of ritual practice, while Palu represents an urban context where the influence of modernization and religious transformation is more pronounced²⁴. These two settings provided a comparative lens through which the ritual transformations could be analyzed in both rural and urban environments. Field observations in these locations allowed the researchers to witness ritual practices and community interactions directly, contributing to a deeper contextual understanding²⁵. The contrast between the locations also highlights the varying degrees and expressions of cultural adaptation in different sociocultural environments.

The subjects of this research consisted of three primary groups: traditional Kaili leaders (to provide insight into pre-Islamic practices), Islamic religious leaders (to explain religious reinterpretation), and members of the general Kaili community (to gauge acceptance and participation in transformed rituals). A purposive sampling method was

employed to ensure that participants had rich, relevant experiences and knowledge regarding the rituals before and after Islamization.²⁶ Traditional leaders were chosen based on their lineage, status, and involvement in ritual practices, while religious leaders were selected for their influence in the propagation of Islamic teachings in local contexts. Community members from various age groups and backgrounds were also included to capture intergenerational perspectives and varying responses to cultural change. This diverse selection enabled the researchers to obtain a balanced and representative view of the transformation process across different societal levels.

Data collection in this study employed a combination of qualitative methods to ensure the depth and richness of the information gathered. The primary technique was in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants, including traditional Kaili leaders, Islamic religious figures, and community members. These interviews aimed to uncover participants' interpretations of ritual changes and their perceptions of the effects of Islamization on traditional practices.²⁷ The semi-structured interview format allowed flexibility in exploring the participant's narratives while ensuring consistency across key topics. Follow-up questions were used to clarify and probe deeper into culturally embedded meanings and experiences. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed for subsequent analysis to capture both verbal content and underlying contextual nuances.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted participatory observations during rituals that have transformed, particularly the Pompoura ritual and the disaster prevention ceremony. These observations took place in natural settings within the Kaili community, where the rituals were still practiced, albeit in modified forms. Through participant observation, the researcher engaged in the communal and spiritual aspects of the rituals, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their symbolic and procedural shifts.²⁸ This method facilitated the collection of non-verbal data such as gestures, spatial arrangements, and ritual objects, which were documented in field notes. The integration of participation with observation enhanced the researcher's ability to interpret changes from both insider and outsider perspectives, enriching the ethnographic quality of the study.

The study also incorporated document analysis to provide historical and institutional context to the ritual transformations. Documents included pre-Islamic manuscripts, customary law texts, and archived decisions from local *adat* (customary) councils regarding the integration

of Islamic practices. These materials were examined to identify shifts in ritual symbolism, procedures, and governing values across time. The triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis ensured a comprehensive understanding of the Kaili community's ritual transformation. Collectively, the three data collection methods provided a multi-layered account of how Islamization has shaped the continuity, modification, and reinterpretation of local cultural practices.

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Patricia Leavy,²⁹ which emphasizes the process of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Thematic analysis was chosen because of its flexibility in handling various types of qualitative data, interviews, observations, and documents, while enabling a holistic understanding of the complex transformation of rituals within the Kaili tribe. The analysis began with the transcription of interview recordings and field notes from observations. Transcriptions were read multiple times to ensure familiarity and immersion in the data, allowing the researcher to gain a deep understanding of participants' perspectives and the ritual practices being studied.

The next step was open coding, where segments of data were labeled to identify meaningful units related to the transformation of rituals. These codes were both inductive, emerging from the data itself, and deductive, based on pre-determined categories such as spiritual meaning, procedural changes, cultural compromise, and community response. Codes were continuously compared across interviews and observations to identify recurring patterns, which were then grouped into broader themes, such as "spiritual reinterpretation," "institutional adaptation," and "generational differences." According to Leavy, this phase is essential for revealing how individual experiences are embedded in wider cultural and religious processes, which was particularly important in analyzing how the Kaili community negotiated between Islamic and ancestral values.

After theme identification, the analysis proceeded with theme refinement, where initial themes were reviewed across the entire dataset and assessed for internal coherence and external distinction. This process led to the development of a concept map to visualize the interconnection between major themes and subthemes, such as the shift in ritual locations from sacred sites to mosques, and the reinterpretation of offerings into acts of Islamic charity. Each theme was then illustrated with direct quotes from participants and field notes to support the credibility of the interpretation. Furthermore, triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews and observations with the results of document analysis of

traditional manuscripts and customary decisions to ensure consistency and confirm historical trajectories of ritual change.

Finally, the data were interpreted by considering the socio-religious context of Central Sulawesi and the broader discourse of Islamization in Indonesia. As Leavy emphasizes, qualitative researchers must not only describe themes but also situate them within larger cultural, historical, and institutional frameworks. In this study, this meant acknowledging how Islamic reform movements, religious leadership, and community identity all contributed to shaping the transformation of Kaili rituals. The analytic process aimed to remain sensitive to both the preservation of cultural heritage and the community's evolving religious values, providing an in-depth understanding of ritual negotiation in a pluralistic society.

To ensure the validity of this qualitative study, multiple strategies were employed, with a primary focus on methodological triangulation. Triangulation involved the use of various data sources, including in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis,³⁰ to capture a holistic and accurate picture of the ritual transformations among the Kaili people. This approach allowed the researcher to cross-check findings and reduce potential biases that may arise from relying on a single data source.³¹ Additionally, data source triangulation was implemented by comparing perspectives from different groups, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members, thereby enhancing the credibility of the interpretations. The use of multiple locations, namely Sibalaya Village and the city of Palu, also added to contextual validity, ensuring that the findings reflect variations across Kaili subgroups.

In terms of reliability, the study incorporated member checking, where preliminary findings and interpretations were shared with several key informants for feedback. This step ensured that the voices of participants were accurately represented and minimized researcher misinterpretation.³² A transparent audit trail was also maintained, detailing the steps of data collection, coding, and theme development. Furthermore, reflexivity was observed throughout the research process, with the researcher continuously reflecting on their assumptions and positionality with the community being studied. These strategies collectively contributed to the trustworthiness of the study, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba's criteria for credibility, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research.³³

Transformation of the Pompoura Ritual Post-Islamization

The findings of this study reveal that the Pompoura ritual, once a core spiritual and communal event within the Kaili tribe, has undergone

significant transformation following the Islamization of the community. Through in-depth interviews with 13 key informants, comprising 8 traditional leaders and 5 Islamic religious leaders, it was found that while the ritual's external and communal forms were largely maintained, the spiritual and symbolic content was profoundly altered. The transformation primarily manifests in the shift from ancestor worship to prayers directed toward Allah SWT, indicating a fundamental change in the theological basis of the ritual. This shift was not abrupt or imposed but occurred gradually, facilitated by the influential role of religious figures who guided the reinterpretation of ritual meanings in accordance with Sharia principles.

The transformation of spiritual meaning emerged as the most prominent theme. The Kaili community, once centered on rituals to honor ancestral spirits, now engages in collective supplication to Allah. This change reflects not only a realignment of metaphysical orientation, but also the emergence of a new religious consciousness shaped by Islamic theology. Despite the shift in spiritual focus, traditional leaders continued to play a role in sustaining communal aspects of the ritual. Interviews suggest that religious leaders collaborated with traditional figures to ensure that the community's sense of togetherness and identity was preserved, despite changes in ritual direction. The community's positive reception of the change suggests that the Islamization process did not disrupt the cultural cohesion, but rather offered a reinterpretation that was perceived as spiritually relevant and culturally sensitive.

Furthermore, traditional elements such as communal gatherings, joint meal preparations, and processions were preserved but recontextualized. These social practices, formerly conducted in the context of ancestral veneration, are now enriched with Islamic practices like Qur'anic recitation, group *du'a* (prayers), and charitable donations (*sedekah*). This blend of tradition and religious reform signifies a deliberate cultural compromise, reflecting the community's desire to uphold heritage while conforming to the tenets of Islam. The dual involvement of traditional and religious leaders in facilitating this compromise played a crucial role in mitigating potential resistance and ensuring intergenerational participation.

Additionally, the ritual procedures themselves experienced physical and symbolic transformations. Rituals that were once conducted at sacred ancestral sites have been relocated to mosques or other Islamic community spaces. This spatial shift signifies a movement from animistic traditions toward Islamic monotheism, replacing offerings to ancestors with acts of charity, prayer, and remembrance of Allah. These changes not only align the practice with Islamic law but also enhance the ritual's function as a

means of spiritual purification and community solidarity. While elements that could be classified as *shirk* were intentionally removed, the symbolic value of social bonding and communal spirituality remained intact.

To enhance understanding, the visualization is further explained in the table below.

Table 1. Comparison of Ritual Practices Before and After Islamization

Main Theme	Before Islamization	After Islamization
Spiritual Meaning	Ancestral Worship	Petition to Allah SWT
Role of Religious Figures	None	Prayers Directed to Allah
Community Acceptance	Ancestral Heritage	Positive, Sense of Community Preserved
Traditional Elements	Community Gatherings	Social Bonding, Group Prayers, Recitation of the Qur'an
Cultural Compromise	Continuation of Tradition	Continuation of Tradition + Islamic Integration
Role of Traditional and Religious Leaders	Preservation of Traditions	Maintaining Visual and Social Elements
Ritual Procedure	Offerings to Ancestors at Sacred Places	Charitable Offerings, Qur'an Recitation in the Mosque
Ritual Focus	Ancestral Teachings	Elimination of Elements Contrary to Islam
Community Participation	Active Participation in Traditional Events	Active Participation in Mosque Activities

As illustrated in table 1, the transformation affected multiple aspects of the ritual, from its core meaning and procedures to the roles of its actors and modes of community participation. This suggests that the Islamization of the Pompoura ritual was not merely a theological revision, but a comprehensive cultural negotiation. While certain traditional symbols and meanings were replaced, the ritual continued to serve its original social purpose, that is, to strengthen community identity and togetherness, albeit under new religious meanings. The success of this transformation was largely supported by the community's adaptive capacity and the inclusive approach taken by both religious and traditional authorities.

Transformation of the Disaster Prevention Ritual

The Disaster Prevention Ritual, known in the Kaili tradition as a protective ceremony toward off natural or social calamities, has experienced

significant changes following the Islamization of the community. Based on interviews with traditional leaders and document analysis, the ritual involved offerings to ancestral spirits, accompanied by ceremonial rites led by traditional figures at sacred sites considered spiritually potent. These offerings typically included food, flowers, and symbolic items believed to appease the spirits and ensure communal protection. However, as the influence of Islam expanded within the Kaili region, these elements were gradually perceived as *shirk*, a theological deviation in Islamic belief, and subsequently replaced with religiously acceptable practices. The transformation was not only theological but also procedural, as rituals once conducted by traditional leaders are now led by Islamic clerics who guide the community in *doa selamat* (prayers of protection). This ritual shift was especially evident in the form of charitable giving (*sedekah*) and mass prayer gatherings held in mosques. The replacement of material offerings with acts of devotion and charity reflects a conscious effort to align communal spirituality with Islamic ethics while maintaining the ritual's core purpose: safeguarding the community.

Field observations during community events and interviews with traditional and religious leaders confirm the deliberate elimination of syncretic elements in the ritual. The symbolic shift from offerings to prayers represents not merely a change in form, but a deeper spiritual realignment of the community. Instead of relying on unseen ancestral forces, the Kaili people now place their faith in divine protection from Allah SWT. This change in belief structure was reinforced through religious education and the growing authority of Islamic institutions in the region. Importantly, this transformation did not result in the total abandonment of cultural expression. While certain objects and rituals associated with animism were discontinued, the communal character of the ceremony, its collective participation, rhythmic chants, and public assembly, was preserved and adapted to Islamic sensibilities. As such, the ritual continues to serve as a unifying event, fostering a sense of belonging and moral responsibility among members of the community.

In simple terms, the data visualization can be further understood through the following table.

Table 2. Comparison of the Disaster Prevention Ritual Before and After Islamization

Ritual Aspect	Before Islamization	After Islamization
Ritual Leader	Traditional leaders	Islamic religious leaders

Procedure	Offerings to ancestral spirits, ceremonies with offerings	Prayers led by religious leaders, charitable giving, and group prayers
Location	Sacred sites believed to be the dwelling place of spirits	Mosques and public spaces
Ritual Purpose	Seeking protection from ancestral spirits	Seeking protection from Allah SWT
Symbols	Offerings including food, flowers, and other items	No offerings; traditional symbols replaced with prayers
Community Participation	Only traditional leaders and select community members	Entire community participates in group prayers at the mosque

As summarized in table 2, the transformation of the disaster prevention ritual spans several key dimensions: leadership, location, procedures, symbols, and participation. The shift from traditional to religious leadership, from sacred sites to mosques, and from offerings to prayers, highlights the broader trend of religious reinterpretation within indigenous Kaili culture. Despite the theological shifts, the core ritual intention, protection, and communal well-being, remain unchanged. The continuity of collective engagement, restructured under Islamic principles, demonstrates that cultural practices can evolve without losing their communal significance. This finding supports the argument that Islamization in the Kaili context functioned not as a force of cultural erasure but as a medium of reinterpretation, enabling the coexistence of religious orthodoxy with cultural heritage in a transformed but still recognizable form.

Community Response to Ritual Changes

The community's response to the transformation of the *Pompoura* and disaster prevention rituals presents a complex spectrum of attitudes shaped by generational, religious, and cultural dynamics. One of the most salient findings is the contrast between the younger generation and the senior traditional leaders. Younger community members generally support the changes, viewing them as necessary steps to align local traditions with Islamic teachings and to avoid elements considered *shirk*. For them, the modernization of rituals—such as replacing offerings with prayers and relocating ceremonies to mosques—demonstrates a form of religious maturity without sacrificing communal solidarity. On the other hand, many senior traditional leaders express concern that these transformations might erode the core values and meanings embedded in ancestral practices. They fear that the spiritual depth and historical richness of the rituals could be lost amidst the pressure to conform to religious orthodoxy. This

divergence indicates that while Islamization has been widely accepted, it continues to provoke discussions on identity, heritage, and authenticity within the community.

Despite these differing views, the transformation process was not abrupt or unilateral. A recurring theme in the data is Gradual Cultural Sensitivity in Transformation, as shown by the implementation of member checking, community dialogue, and inclusive consultation with traditional and religious authorities. These efforts ensured that the ritual changes were not perceived as top-down impositions but as a product of shared understanding and collective agreement. For example, in modifying the disaster prevention ritual, compromises were made to preserve the social aspects of the ceremony while eliminating doctrinally problematic elements. Likewise, in the *Pompoura* ritual, while the spiritual symbolism was adapted to Islamic meanings, the communal structure of the event—such as collective meals, cooperation, and storytelling—was retained. This culturally sensitive approach facilitated smoother transitions and minimized resistance, particularly among older members who feared the loss of tradition.

The community's ability to balance religious and cultural values emerged as a central theme in the acceptance of ritual transformation. Rather than choosing between religion and tradition, many community members opted for a middle path that allows coexistence. Religious leaders played a critical role in framing these changes as necessary for *tauhid* (monotheism), while traditional leaders emphasized the value of preserving social cohesion and cultural identity. This dual advocacy helped bridge the gap between belief and belonging. The transformed rituals, now held in mosques, filled with Qur'anic recitations and communal prayers, are seen not as abandoned customs but as recontextualized cultural expressions. Through this process, the Kaili community demonstrates a resilient adaptability, showing that faith-based transformation need not be a form of cultural erasure, but rather a negotiation of identity that respects both spiritual commitments and ancestral heritage.

Kaili Tribe and The Islamization Process

This study offers a new perspective on the Islamization process among the Kaili tribe, particularly concerning the transformation of spiritual meanings and ritual practices. While previous studies have focused on the successful integration of Islamic values, the findings of this research reveal a more complex cultural resistance than previously assumed. The duality between preserving original culture and implementing Islamic teachings

in the Pompoura and disaster prevention rituals highlights a significant identity dilemma, especially for traditional elders who feel that the original meaning of the rituals has been lost.

In this context, Durkheim's concept of sacred and profane provides a useful framework to analyze the changes occurring within the Kaili tribe's rituals. According to Durkheim, societies tend to divide the world into two distinct categories: sacred, which is revered and connected to religious or spiritual significance, and profane, which encompasses every day, secular activities.³⁴ Rituals, therefore, serve as a way to affirm and uphold the sacred aspects of a society, thereby reinforcing social bonds and cohesion.

In the case of the Kaili tribe, the shift from ancestor worship, which was once seen as a sacred practice, to Qur'anic recitation and communal prayers demonstrates a profound transformation in their understanding of what constitutes the sacred. The rituals that once honored ancestors were deeply embedded in the community's cultural identity, but as the tribe embraced Islamic teachings, the sacred focus shifted to align with Islamic values, emphasizing worship of Allah and adherence to Sharia law.

This transformation highlights a negotiation process where the community strives to maintain continuity with its cultural traditions while also adapting to new religious norms. The challenge lies in preserving the sacred elements of local culture without conflicting with Islamic principles. The move towards Qur'anic recitation and communal prayers reflects this delicate balance, as the community seeks to retain a sense of sacredness in their rituals, while also aligning with the broader religious expectations of Sharia. The shift, therefore, is not merely a change in ritual practice but also a redefinition of what is considered sacred within the community.

These findings extend the understanding of Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural resistance, which posits that cultural transformations are often met with resistance from groups that feel their original identity is under threat.³⁵ In the case of the Kaili tribe, this resistance does not necessarily manifest as direct opposition to Islamization but rather as an effort to find compromises. These compromises aim to preserve original cultural elements, such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and certain visual aspects of the rituals, without sacrificing the newly adopted religious identity.

In this context, instead of a direct conflict between cultural traditions and the new religious teachings, the Kaili tribe strives to align their cultural practices with Islamic values. This demonstrates that cultural resistance does not always imply total rejection of change, but rather a process of adaptation where the community seeks to preserve its cultural heritage

while embracing a new religious identity. This transformation illustrates how key elements of the original culture, such as *gotong royong*, can be harmonized with Islamic teachings, creating a synergy between local traditions and new religious values.

Berry's theory of cultural adaptation explains how communities adapt to new cultural influences while striving to maintain aspects of their original identity.³⁶ According to this theory, when cultural change occurs, communities do not necessarily abandon their traditions entirely but instead seek to integrate new elements in a way that aligns with their core values. In the context of this study, this concept is reflected in the compromise between traditional practices and Islamic teachings.

The transition of rituals from ancestor worship to mosque-centered activities, such as communal prayers and Qur'anic recitation, illustrates a gradual assimilation process. Rather than completely erasing the traditional rituals, the community selectively adopts Islamic practices, particularly those aligned with Sharia. At the same time, they preserve social elements of the rituals that foster community cohesion. For instance, while practices deemed in conflict with Islamic law—like offerings to ancestors—are eliminated, the communal gatherings and collective participation remain intact. This approach shows how the community is adapting to Islamic norms while still preserving their social structure and cultural continuity, allowing them to navigate the tension between tradition and religion.

The findings regarding the role of religious and traditional leaders in guiding this transformation also challenge the existing assumption that the Islamization process is always directed by formal religious authorities.³⁷ In this context, the involvement of traditional leaders demonstrates that the spiritual and ritual transformation within the Kaili community was the result of negotiation and collaboration between two forms of authority: religious and traditional. This broadens the discussion about the dual role of community leaders in balancing the preservation of tradition with the implementation of new teachings.

Thus, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature on Islamization, cultural transformation, and cultural resistance.³⁸ These findings highlight that although Islamization is often viewed as a fully accepted process, behind it lies an active effort by the community to negotiate new meanings for rituals that align with Sharia without sacrificing their original cultural identity. This process allows for the continuation of social cohesion and cultural identity, even though there is a shift in spiritual meaning.

Conclusion

This study reveals the profound transformation experienced by the traditional rituals of the Kaili tribe post-Islamization. Through the reinterpretation of practices such as Pompoura and Disaster Prevention, the Kaili community has successfully integrated Islamic values into their local culture without completely losing the essence of their ancestral cultural identity. The findings highlight the flexibility of culture in responding to new teachings, while also underscoring the important role of traditional and religious leaders in mediating social change. Consequently, these findings contribute to the literature on the Islamization process in Indonesia, demonstrating that cultural change can occur harmoniously without sacrificing social cohesion.

Theoretically, this study provides new insights into how theories of cultural adaptation and cultural resistance manifest in religion-based social transformation. Practically, these findings are relevant for religious leaders and policymakers in theology and religious studies, offering guidance on managing cultural changes without triggering identity conflicts. While this study is limited to the Kaili tribe, further research in other communities could broaden the perspective and explore the more complex dynamics of cultural resistance. Future studies may also focus on how cultural and religious negotiations can create innovative solutions to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity.

Endnote

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