



HARMONIZING RELIGIOUS AND INDIGENOUS VALUES AMONG THE BANUA COMMUNITY IN BERAU

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Abstract

This study examines the harmonization of religious and indigenous values within the Banua community in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan. The research aims to explore how Islamic teachings are interpreted, practiced, and transmitted through adat (customary traditions) in everyday social life. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in interpretative phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving customary leaders, religious figures, ritual practitioners, and community members. The findings reveal that religious values and adat function as complementary systems rather than competing frameworks. Islamic moral principles are embedded within customary norms, rituals, and communal practices, enabling religion to remain culturally resonant and socially meaningful. Cultural rituals such as Puncak Rasul and Terbangin (Hadrang) play a crucial role as media for value integration and intergenerational transmission. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical demonstration of harmonization as a lived, dialogical process within an underrepresented indigenous community in Kalimantan. The study implies that culturally grounded religious practices can strengthen social cohesion, cultural resilience, and moral continuity in plural societies.

Keywords: Adat Traditions, Banua Community, Indigenous Values



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INTRODUCTION

Religion and indigenous traditions have long coexisted as foundational elements shaping social order, moral orientation, and cultural identity within local communities (Hasbullah et al., 2025). In many Muslim societies, religious values do not stand apart from cultural practices but are deeply embedded in customary norms that guide everyday life (Miharja et al., 2025). This interaction between religion and indigenous culture reflects a dynamic process in which spiritual teachings are interpreted, negotiated, and expressed through local traditions (Surur et al., 2025). Rather than functioning as competing systems, religion and indigenous values often operate as complementary frameworks that sustain social cohesion, ethical conduct, and collective identity within traditional communities (Agung et al., 2024). To conceptualize this dynamic relationship, Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of interactions between religion and indigenous traditions in Indonesia, moving from coexistence and integration in the pre-modern era toward increasing challenges during modernization and ongoing renegotiation in the contemporary period.

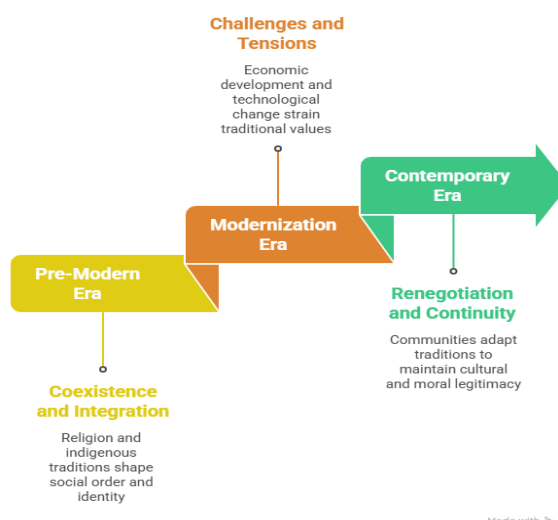


Figure 1. Evolution of religion and indigenous traditions in indonesia

As depicted in Figure 1, the initial phase of coexistence between religion and indigenous traditions gradually shifted as modernization introduced economic, technological, and socio-cultural transformations that placed increasing pressure on traditional value systems. In the context of rapid social change and modernization, the relationship between religious values and indigenous traditions faces increasing challenges (Defriza, 2025). Economic development and changing socio-cultural environments have significantly influenced patterns of religious practice and traditional belief systems in rural communities (Dewi & Lestari, 2025). Technological advancement and shifting generational perspectives have contributed to changes in value orientation, particularly among younger community members (Wahyuni & Rahmat, 2024). These transformations frequently generate tension between the preservation of indigenous customs and the normative demands of religious teachings (Sari & Nurhayati, 2024).

As a result, local communities are required to continuously renegotiate the meanings of tradition to maintain cultural continuity and moral legitimacy in the era of modernization (Ismail, 2025). Indonesia is widely recognized as a multicultural nation characterized by ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, where indigenous communities continue to play a vital role in

preserving local wisdom and social harmony (Komala et al., 2025). Within these communities, adat functions as a living system that regulates social relations, moral behavior, and collective responsibilities (Hartono & Putri, 2024). Indigenous traditions are not merely cultural expressions but also serve as mechanisms for transmitting moral and religious values across generations (Cahyana & Wijaya, 2024).

In many regions, these traditions have historically developed in close interaction with Islam, resulting in locally grounded religious practices that reflect both spiritual devotion and cultural continuity (Annisa & Affandi, 2025). The presence of Islam within indigenous communities has contributed to the formation of distinctive patterns of religious expression that are deeply intertwined with local customs (Azka, 2025). Rather than replacing indigenous traditions, Islamic values are often accommodated and internalized through cultural practices, rituals, and communal activities (Putra & Hasanah, 2025). This accommodative relationship has enabled indigenous societies to preserve cultural identity while grounding social life in religious morality (Faturrahman et al., 2025).

However, such integration is not static, as it requires continuous interpretation and negotiation to ensure that indigenous practices remain socially meaningful and religiously legitimate (Kurniawan & Siregar, 2025). The integration of religion and culture has also been discussed within the context of multicultural Islamic education, emphasizing harmony as a pedagogical and social objective (Darajat & Novianti, 2025). Intergenerational transmission plays a crucial role in sustaining this harmony, as religious and cultural values are learned, practiced, and reinterpreted within family and community settings (Mujib & Farid, 2024). Ethnographic studies further demonstrate that local wisdom often functions as a medium for strengthening social spirituality and communal ethics (Sumiadi, 2025).

In East Kalimantan, indigenous communities maintain rich cultural traditions that continue to shape social life and collective identity amid ongoing socio-economic transformation (Saputra et al., 2025). The region is home to diverse ethnic groups whose customary practices remain influential in regulating communal relations, ritual life, and moral values (Rudihartono & Asso, 2024). Within this context, adat functions not only as cultural heritage but also as a mechanism for social integration and conflict resolution in everyday community life (Setiawan & Hadi, 2025). Berau Regency represents a significant example of the interaction between religion and indigenous culture in contemporary Indonesia (Abdurrahman et al., 2025).

Indigenous rituals and communal ceremonies in Berau often embody moral principles that resonate with Islamic teachings, indicating a process of harmonization rather than opposition (Saputra et al., 2025). However, increasing exposure to external cultural influences and institutional religious discourses has introduced new challenges to maintaining this balance (Defriza, 2025). The Banua community in Berau constitutes an indigenous group whose social life is strongly shaped by the interplay between religious values and customary traditions (Ramadhan & Surya, 2023). For the Banua people, adat is not merely a cultural inheritance but a normative system that regulates moral conduct, social obligations, and communal identity.

Religious teachings, particularly Islamic values, are embedded within customary practices and social norms, forming an integrated framework that guides both individual behavior and collective life. Although studies on indigenous communities and religious practices in Indonesia have expanded in recent years, much of the existing literature tends to examine religion and indigenous tradition as separate analytical domains (Junaidi &

Suwardani, 2025). Research on local wisdom often emphasizes cultural preservation, while studies on religion predominantly focus on doctrinal or institutional dimensions. Consequently, limited attention has been given to the lived processes through which religious values and customary traditions are integrated and harmonized within everyday community life, particularly in Kalimantan.

Responding to this gap, the present study aims to examine the harmonization of religious and indigenous values within the Banua community in Berau. Specifically, this research seeks to explore how religious teachings are interpreted and practiced through customary traditions and how adat functions as a medium for transmitting religious values across generations. By employing a qualitative approach, this study captures the perspectives and lived experiences of community members in negotiating the relationship between religion and indigenous culture in their social context.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on religion and indigenous culture by providing an empirical account of value harmonization within an underrepresented indigenous community. The findings offer conceptual insights into how religion and adat can function as complementary systems in maintaining social harmony and cultural resilience. Finally, this research has practical implications for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders in promoting culturally sensitive approaches to religious development and indigenous community empowerment in plural societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using an interpretative phenomenological approach grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of indigenous community members in harmonizing religious and customary values (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of meaning as constructed through participants' experiences within their cultural and religious contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The research was conducted in 2025 in Desa Batu-Batu, Gunung Tabur District, Berau Regency, East Kalimantan, an area recognized as a core settlement of the Banua community where Islamic values and indigenous traditions remain actively practiced in daily and ritual life.

Research Target/Subject

The research subjects consisted of members of the Banua community who possess experiential knowledge and social authority related to religious practices and customary traditions (Etikan, 2021). These participants included customary leaders, religious leaders, ritual practitioners, and adult community members actively involved in communal and ceremonial activities (Guest et al., 2020). Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals most relevant to the research focus on value harmonization. Snowball sampling was subsequently applied to identify additional key informants recommended by initial participants. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of information saturation, whereby data collection continued until no new substantive insights emerged.

Research Procedure

The research procedure began with preliminary field observations to gain an initial understanding of the social setting and cultural dynamics of the Banua community. This stage

was followed by in-depth interviews aimed at exploring participants' perceptions, interpretations, and experiences related to the harmonization of religious and indigenous values. Participant observation was conducted during religious rituals, customary ceremonies, and communal activities to document practices and symbolic interactions as they naturally occurred. In addition, document analysis was undertaken to examine customary records, ritual texts, and community archives relevant to religious and cultural practices.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

In this qualitative study, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). Supporting instruments included a semi-structured interview guide designed to facilitate open-ended inquiry into participants' lived experiences. An observation guide was used to document social interactions, ritual sequences, and symbolic elements within religious and customary practices. Documentation techniques were employed to collect visual materials, written records, and cultural artifacts relevant to Banua traditions. (O'Leary, 2020).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study was conducted using an interactive qualitative analysis model involving systematic coding and interpretation of empirical data. (Saldaña, 2021). The analytical process began with data condensation, which focused on selecting, simplifying, and transforming relevant information related to the harmonization of religious and indigenous values. (Miles et al., 2020). Condensed data were then organized and presented in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate pattern recognition, comparison, and meaning-making within the socio-cultural context of the Banua community. (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Conclusion drawing and verification were carried out iteratively throughout the research process to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in empirical data and aligned with the research objectives. (Miles et al., 2020). To enhance analytical rigor and ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from customary leaders, religious figures, ritual practitioners, and community members. (Lincoln & Guba, 2021). Technique triangulation was applied by integrating data from interviews, participant observation, and documentation in examining the same phenomena. Time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different times and during various ritual contexts to assess the consistency of information (Polit & Beck, 2021). Member checking was employed by returning preliminary interpretations to research participants to confirm accuracy and prevent misinterpretation. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with colleagues experienced in qualitative and indigenous research to refine interpretations and enhance analytical depth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical and Cultural Context of the Banua Community

To frame the multidimensional nature of the Banua community's historical and cultural context, Figure X illustrates key domains through which adat, leadership, governance, and historical narratives interact in shaping contemporary social life.

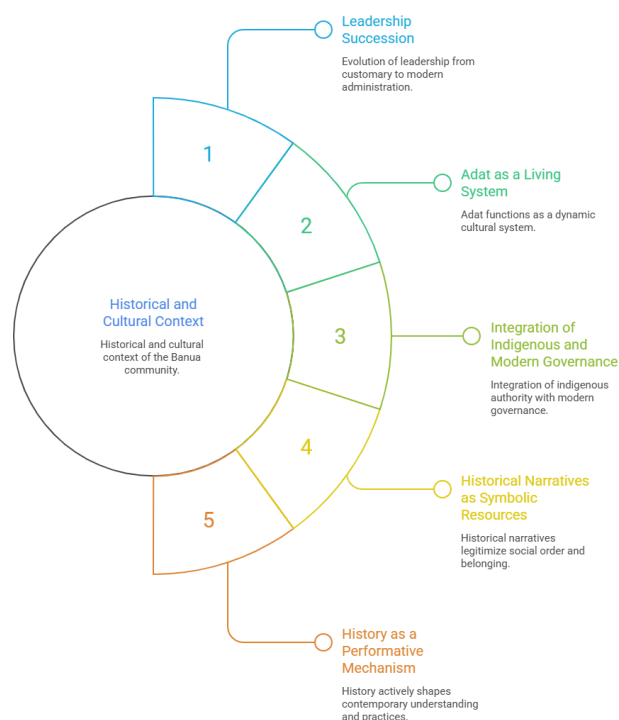


Figure 2. Unveiling the multifaceted history of the banua community

Figure 2 conceptualizes the historical and cultural context of the Banua community as a multidimensional and interconnected system rather than a linear historical narrative, positioning historical and cultural context at the core to indicate that leadership patterns, governance structures, and social norms are embedded within a shared historical consciousness. The dimension of leadership succession reflects the gradual transformation of authority from customary leadership to modern village administration while maintaining adat-based legitimacy, suggesting that institutional change does not replace traditional authority but rather reconfigures it within new political frameworks. The representation of adat as a living system highlights its continued function as a dynamic regulatory mechanism that guides social relations and collective responsibilities, rather than as a static cultural heritage. The integration of indigenous and modern governance illustrates a hybrid institutional arrangement in which legitimacy is derived simultaneously from cultural authority and state recognition, enabling cultural continuity alongside administrative adaptation. Furthermore, historical narratives are depicted as symbolic resources that legitimize social order, while history as a performative mechanism underscores that collective memory actively shapes contemporary understandings of authority, identity, and moral obligation through oral traditions and ritual practices. Overall, the figure demonstrates that historical consciousness in the Banua community operates not merely as a record of the past but as an ongoing social force that sustains governance structures, cultural identity, and normative systems in the present.

Field findings indicate that Batu-Batu Village is historically recognized as a central settlement of the Banua community in Gunung Tabur District, Berau Regency. Oral histories narrated by community elders, customary leaders, and religious figures reveal that the name Batu-Batu is closely associated with local legends and environmental characteristics surrounding the early settlement. These narratives also reflect the community's collective memory regarding leadership succession, which has evolved from traditional customary

authority during the colonial period to contemporary village administration, while still maintaining strong adat legitimacy. This historical continuity demonstrates that adat within the Banua community functions as a living cultural system rather than a static tradition. The coexistence of customary leadership with formal governance structures illustrates the community's capacity to integrate indigenous authority with modern administrative systems. Such integration reinforces cultural identity and contributes to long-term social stability by preserving local legitimacy within changing political and administrative contexts.

Beyond its administrative function, historical narratives serve as a symbolic resource that legitimizes social order within the Banua community. Collective memory surrounding origins, leadership, and settlement history provides moral grounding for contemporary practices and reinforces a shared sense of belonging. Through storytelling and oral transmission, history becomes a cultural mechanism that sustains continuity between past and present. Analytically, this finding supports the view that indigenous history is not merely retrospective but performative in nature. Historical consciousness among the Banua people actively shapes how authority, identity, and social norms are understood today. By maintaining adat legitimacy alongside modern governance, the community demonstrates cultural adaptability without eroding indigenous foundations.

Religious Values as Moral Foundations of Social Life

The findings show that religious values among the Banua community are understood as moral and spiritual guidelines rooted in Islamic teachings. These values are reflected in everyday behavior, interpersonal relationships, and communal life. Religious principles such as gratitude, responsibility, respect, and social harmony are consistently embedded in personal conduct as well as in collective activities and rituals practiced within the community. This pattern indicates that religiosity among the Banua people is experiential rather than merely doctrinal. Religious values operate as a moral compass that shapes social behavior through lived practice. Faith is internalized not only through formal religious instruction but also through cultural expressions and daily interactions, confirming the inseparable relationship between religious belief and social life within the community.

Importantly, religious values are not perceived as abstract norms but as practical ethical references guiding everyday decision-making. Acts such as mutual assistance, respectful communication, and collective responsibility are understood as religious obligations expressed through social conduct. This indicates that morality is enacted relationally rather than individually. From an interpretive perspective, this embedded religiosity reflects a form of cultural Islam that emphasizes ethical embodiment over textual formalism. Such a model allows religious values to remain socially relevant and culturally resonant, enabling Islam to function as a source of moral cohesion within indigenous contexts.

Adat Istiadat as a System of Social Regulation and Identity

Empirical evidence reveals that adat istiadat functions as a normative system regulating social relations, moral behavior, and communal obligations. Members of the Banua community perceive adat as a binding guideline that structures social order, resolves disputes, and reinforces collective identity. Compliance with adat norms is maintained primarily through communal consensus and moral responsibility rather than through formal sanctions. From an analytical perspective, adat operates as an effective mechanism of social regulation grounded in shared cultural values. Its legitimacy derives from collective acceptance and respect for customary authority, enabling adat to remain resilient amid social change. This resilience

allows adat to preserve social cohesion while simultaneously accommodating adaptation and transformation.

Adat also serves as a marker of identity that distinguishes the Banua community from surrounding social groups. Through adherence to customary norms, individuals affirm their belonging to the community and their commitment to shared moral standards. Identity is thus constructed through practice rather than symbolic affiliation alone. This finding underscores that adat legitimacy is maintained not through coercion but through moral internalization. The strength of adat lies in its integration into everyday life, where social expectations are reinforced through mutual recognition and collective accountability.

Processes of Harmonization Between Religious and Indigenous Values

The findings indicate that the Banua community does not perceive religious values and adat as conflicting systems. Instead, religious teachings are continuously interpreted and practiced through customary traditions. Rituals, social norms, and communal activities reflect an ongoing process of harmonization, facilitated by dialogue and cooperation between customary leaders and religious figures. This process illustrates that harmonization is dynamic and negotiated rather than fixed. Islamic values are accommodated within cultural frameworks without displacing indigenous traditions. Such adaptive integration supports cultural continuity while strengthening religious legitimacy, demonstrating that religious adaptation can enhance rather than undermine indigenous identity.

Harmonization emerges as a dialogical process in which religious and cultural authorities collaboratively interpret norms and practices. Rather than imposing rigid boundaries, both systems engage in mutual adjustment to maintain social relevance and legitimacy. This collaborative model minimizes tension and fosters shared moral understanding. Conceptually, this finding challenges dichotomous views that frame religion and tradition as oppositional forces. Instead, the Banua case illustrates that harmonization is a culturally embedded strategy for sustaining moral order within plural normative systems.

Cultural Rituals as Media for Value Integration

The study identified Puncak Rasul and Terbang (Hadrah) as key cultural practices that embody the integration of religious and indigenous values. Puncak Rasul involves communal prayers accompanied by symbolic offerings that reflect gratitude and spiritual devotion, while Terbang combines religious messages with musical and artistic expression. Both practices are performed during major life-cycle events and important social gatherings. These rituals function as effective cultural media for transmitting religious values in accessible and meaningful forms. By embedding Islamic teachings within artistic and ritual expressions, the Banua community ensures that religious messages are internalized collectively without diminishing cultural identity. Ritual performance thus becomes both a spiritual practice and a cultural learning space.

Rituals also function as social integrators that bring together diverse generations and social roles within a shared symbolic framework. Participation fosters emotional attachment, communal solidarity, and shared moral experience, reinforcing collective identity through embodied practice. Analytically, ritual performance operates as a pedagogical space where values are learned through participation rather than instruction. This experiential transmission enhances the sustainability of both religious and cultural norms within the community.

Intergenerational Transmission and Social Cohesion

The findings show that participation in religious and customary rituals plays a crucial role in transmitting values across generations. Younger members of the community learn religious and cultural norms through direct involvement, observation, and guidance from elders, customary leaders, and religious figures. This experiential learning process strengthens continuity between generations. Such intergenerational transmission contributes significantly to social cohesion and cultural resilience. It reduces generational gaps and enables the Banua community to sustain harmonized values despite modernization and external cultural influences. Through shared ritual participation, values are not only taught but collectively experienced and reaffirmed.

This process positions elders as cultural mediators who bridge tradition and contemporary realities. Their role is not merely authoritative but pedagogical, ensuring that values remain relevant to younger generations while preserving cultural authenticity. The findings suggest that social cohesion is maintained not through formal instruction but through shared participation in meaningful practices. Intergenerational engagement thus becomes a cornerstone of cultural sustainability.

Indicators of Successful Harmonization

Indicators of successful harmonization within the Banua community include high levels of participation in both religious and customary activities, minimal conflict related to value differences, sustained performance of traditional rituals, and a strong sense of collective identity. Community members consistently express acceptance of religious and indigenous norms as complementary rather than contradictory. These indicators suggest that harmonization plays a vital role in maintaining social stability and moral coherence. The Banua community represents a contextual model in which religion and indigenous culture mutually reinforce one another, contributing to the preservation of cultural identity while sustaining ethical and spiritual life in a changing social environment.

Importantly, the absence of significant value-based conflict indicates that harmonization is internalized at the community level rather than imposed institutionally. Acceptance emerges organically through shared experience and collective agreement. This model offers broader implications for plural societies, demonstrating that cultural and religious integration can serve as a foundation for sustainable social harmony rather than a source of tension.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the relationship between religious values and indigenous traditions within the Banua community is characterized by harmonization rather than tension. Islamic teachings and adat operate as complementary systems that jointly shape moral conduct, social interaction, and collective identity in everyday community life. The findings reveal that adat functions as a living cultural framework through which religious values are interpreted and practiced. Customary norms, rituals, and communal activities provide culturally grounded spaces for embedding Islamic values without undermining indigenous identity.

Cultural rituals such as Puncak Rasul and Terbang (Hadrah) play a strategic role in integrating religious teachings with artistic and symbolic expressions. These practices serve as effective media for intergenerational transmission, ensuring continuity of values amid social change. Overall, the Banua community offers an empirical model of successful value harmonization that supports social cohesion and cultural resilience. This study contributes to

scholarly discussions on religion and indigenous culture and provides insights for culturally sensitive approaches to community development in plural societies.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Google Gemini to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) Carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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