



To'dok Telok, Manre Ka'dok: Islamic Traditions, Bugis Cultural Identity, and Maritime Communities on Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa

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DOI: 10.15294/sjsj.v14i1.48664

Submitted: May 4th, 2026 Accepted: June 30th, 2026 Published: July 5th, 2026

Abstract

This article discusses the transformation of the Ma Maulu' tradition—a Maulid celebration of Prophet Muhammad with Bugis characteristics—into the To'dok Telok Manre Ka'dok festival on Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa, Central Java. The article aims to explain how this tradition functions as a medium for cultural preservation, collective identity formation, and the representation of maritime culture among the multi-ethnic community on Kemujan Island. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this research is analyzed from the perspectives of Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretive anthropology and Koentjaraningrat's (2009) acculturation theory. The results show that this festival is not only a religious celebration but also a space for the negotiation and reproduction of Bugis values, local Islamic spirituality, and maritime identity. The To'dok Telok (egg skewer) and Manre Ka'dok (eating together) symbols represent the balance between this world and the afterlife, social solidarity, and cross-ethnic cohesion amid the growing tourism in Karimunjawa. Based on these findings, we argue that To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok has developed into a symbol of collective cultural transformation that goes beyond Bugis ethnic identity and has become a shared cultural heritage for the people of Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa.

Keywords: *Bugis culture; islamic traditions; maritime communities; cultural acculturation; karimunjawa; symbolic rituals*

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p-ISSN 2252-6307

e-ISSN 2686-5408

INTRODUCTIONS

Islamic traditions in the Nusantara, especially in Indonesia, have historically developed through encounters, negotiations, and blending with local cultures. In the context of Indonesia's maritime communities, religious practices cannot be separated from ethnic

identity, local cosmology, and the social systems of coastal communities shaped through inter-island trade and migration networks. Anthony Reid (1988) explains that Southeast Asia's maritime regions since the 15th century have been spaces where cultures meet, bringing together Islam, trade, and local

identity within dynamic coastal cultural networks.

In that context, Islamic values, manifested in various forms, especially through communal rituals, have gone beyond mere religious practice; rituals have become a stage for reproducing cultural identity and social solidarity in maritime communities. Studies on the relationship between Islam and local culture in Indonesia show that Islamic ritual practices in the Nusantara were formed through a long process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and the local traditions of the community (Ahmad, 2019; Batara & Musyaqqat, 2023; Woodward, 1989) emphasize that various local expressions of Islam in Java cannot be understood as deviations from normative Islam, but rather as forms of articulating Islamic values manifested through symbols and cultural practices of the community. Meanwhile, Sila (2015) shows that the Maulid celebration in the Bugis community in South Sulawesi not only expresses religious piety but also serves as a medium for reproducing social identity, transmitting cultural values, and strengthening community cohesion. Thus, Islamic rituals in coastal Nusantara societies can be seen as a space for negotiating spirituality, cultural identity, and social solidarity, a process that continues to be reproduced in everyday life.

The transformation of the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival*¹ In 2024, it did not happen suddenly; it was a response by the people of Kemujan Island to various social, cultural, and economic changes in Karimunjawa. Before this transformation, *Ma Maulu'* was held as a religious ritual limited to the *Bugis* community. Activities like reading *Barzanji*, presenting *To'dok Tello'*, and the tradition of eating together were mainly seen as a way to honor the birth of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, as well as a medium for passing down *Bugis* Islamic values.

Studies on cultural festivals in Indonesia also show that festivals often serve as a medium for producing collective identity and as a cultural strategy for local communities to address social changes. (Adiprasetio & Vinianto, 2020). The *Maulid* tradition on Kemujan Island demonstrates how the community engages in cultural revitalization to maintain its collective identity amid modernization and tourism development.

The celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW*) as preserved by the *Bugis* community on Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa. Based on observations of activities on Kemujan Island, this festival is held every Rabiul Awal. In 2024, it was held for the first time as a cultural festival involving a multi-ethnic

¹In this article, the researcher consistently uses the spelling *To'dok Telok Manre Ka'dok*, based on the writing of festival practitioners observed during fieldwork. Based on observations of Bugis

writing, there is a standard and more appropriate method: "*To'do' Tello' Manre Kaddo'*."

community on Kemujan Island. The series of activities begins with *Mabaca*, which is the reading of *Barzanji*, sending blessings, and communal prayers as a sign of respect to the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH. The next stage is *Kirab To'dok Tello'*, a parade of the *To'dok Tello'* symbol in the form of boiled eggs placed on bamboo poles and elaborately decorated as a representation of the religious and philosophical values of the *Bugis* people. Next is the *Maulid* Parade, featuring cultural performances, arts, and symbols of Karimunjawa's maritime identity from communities across various villages. The event series ended with *Manre Ka'dok*, a tradition of eating sticky rice together that symbolizes solidarity, brotherhood, and egalitarianism among coastal communities. The transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into a cultural festival was marked by the expansion of participation from the *Bugis* community to a multiethnic society, the addition of cultural performances and public parades, involvement of the village government and tourism actors, and the shift of the tradition's focus from an internal-communal ritual to a representation of shared cultural heritage for the people of Kemujan Island, without losing the religious elements that remain at the core of the celebration.

Rituals and Festivals in the Transformation of *Ma Maulu'*

Conceptually, rituals and festivals have different characteristics even though they often overlap in social practices. Rituals are generally understood as symbolic actions that are formal,

repetitive, and tied to a specific belief system to communicate sacred values within a community (Bell, 1992). Victor Turner's (1982) perspective on rituals and festivals as forms of social solidarity is accurate. Rituals and festivals are forms of social drama that function to strengthen social solidarity, build community cohesion, and reproduce cultural symbols of society (Bell, 1992). A perspective on rituals and festivals as social solidarity can be considered accurate. Rituals and festivals are forms of social drama that serve to strengthen social solidarity, build community cohesion, and reproduce the cultural symbols of society (Turner, 1982). In the context of celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, rituals take shape through a series of religious practices such as reading *Barzanji* (*Mabaca*), praying together, and presenting certain symbols aimed at reinforcing human connections with the transcendent dimension while also reproducing the social order. Thus, rituals not only function as expressions of religious piety but also as mechanisms for transmitting values and fostering social solidarity.

Unlike rituals that focus on the sacred dimension and the community's internal aspects, festivals are more open and performative, involving a wider audience. A festival is not just a place for celebration; it is also a way to represent cultural identity, create collective meaning, and even promote cultural heritage to the public. In the context of cultural heritage studies, (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014) explains that cultural practices showcased through festivals undergo a process called heritagization, in which traditions are selected,

reinterpreted, and presented again as cultural heritage relevant to contemporary society. So, a festival is not just a more festive version of a ritual—it is a new space where communities negotiate their identity, history, and social presence.

Distinguishing between a ritual and a festival is important to understand the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* in 2024. Before becoming a festival, *Ma Maulu'* was a religious ritual that was relatively limited within the Bugis community, involving activities such as *Mabaca*, presenting *To'dok Tello'*, and *Manre Ka'dok*. As a festival, the tradition's function expanded through cultural processions, *Maulid* parades, involvement from people of different ethnicities, and support from various stakeholders on Kemujan Island. This transformation shows that the ritual elements were not removed but were repositioned in a public space to pass on culture, strengthen collective identity, and represent Karimunjawa's maritime culture. So, understanding the difference between a ritual and a festival is key to explaining that what happened was not just a change in name but a real social and cultural transformation.

The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* is not just a ceremonial activity but also a symbolic space where people come together to build shared meanings about their identity and social existence. To understand how the *Ma Maulu'* ritual evolved into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival*, it is important to look at the social context of the Kemujan Island community as a meeting space for various

ethnic groups, where the *Bugis* diaspora community plays a central role in maintaining local Islamic traditions and maritime cultural identity.

Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa, is part of the archipelago on the northern coast of Java, inhabited by multi-ethnic communities including *Javanese*, *Bugis*, *Madurese*, *Mandar*, *Bajau*, and *Buton*. Among these ethnic groups, Bugis culture strongly influences the local community's social structure and cultural practices. The *Bugis* community became the dominant group on Kemujan Island as early as the 17th and 18th centuries. They built a strong maritime migration network through sailing, fishing, and trading, allowing sustainable settlements to form and maintaining their cultural identity across generations. According to Pelras (1996) and Suliyati (2016), the Bugis are a maritime diaspora community with a strong ability to adapt culturally without losing their social and symbolic identity.

In the context of Karimunjawa, the presence of the *Bugis* diaspora and multiethnic coastal communities also shows how cultural identity is negotiated through social and local cultural adaptation. (Amaruli, 2016). The *Bugis* diaspora not only built trade and sailing networks across the archipelago, but also kept their culture alive through language, rituals, architecture, and religious traditions in the regions they settled.

Besides being religious rituals, cultural festivals are also part of the process of producing cultural heritage. Barbara (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) explains that festivals and cultural performances often serve

as a medium for local communities to represent their cultural identity to the public through the process of heritagization or performative cultural transmission. In the context of Kemujan Island, the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* is a heritagization process that produces religious traditions as a collective cultural heritage. Following (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) Cultural heritage is understood as the result of selection, reinterpretation, and cultural representation carried out by communities to meet contemporary needs. Through festivalization, ritual processes like *Mabaca*, *To'dok Tello'*, and *Manre Ka'dok* are no longer confined to internal religious spaces but appear in public spaces as markers of the identity of the people of Kemujan Island. In this process, traditions retain their sacred dimension while gaining new functions as a medium for passing down values, strengthening cross-ethnic solidarity, and representing Karimunjawa's maritime culture, as also seen in the *Maudu Lompoo* and *Sekaten* traditions. (Batara & Musyaqqat, 2023).

From the perspective of symbolic anthropology, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition can be understood as a cultural symbol system that carries social and religious meanings for the community. Clifford Geertz (1973) emphasized that culture is a web of meanings that is symbolically transmitted and produced through social practices. The symbols in the *To'dok Tello'* and *Manre Ka'dok* procession not only serve as ceremonial tools in the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, but also carry cultural meanings that

live through the practices of the people on Kemujan Island. Ritual materials like *To'dok Tello*, made from quail eggs and bamboo, are interpreted as representations of the relationship between worldly life and the orientation toward the afterlife. In contrast, *Ka'dok*, made from glutinous rice, symbolizes the unity and social solidarity of the multiethnic coastal community. The meaning is formed and inherited through collective participation in rituals, thus strengthening the local cultural identity. As explained by Meyer and Houtman (2012), ritual objects are not merely passive representations of religious beliefs but material media that allow religious values to be presented, experienced, and transmitted in social life. Thus, ritual symbols and materials in the *Maulid* tradition play an important role in the transmission of the community's religious, social, and cultural values. (Wijayanto & Soekarba, 2019).

Studies on the tradition of the Prophet's Birthday in Indonesia have developed from various perspectives, ranging from the acculturation of Islam and local culture to the formation of community identity. Research on *Maudu Lompoo* in South Sulawesi shows that the *Maulid* celebration not only functions as a religious ritual but also as a space for reproducing *Bugis-Makassar* identity and strengthening social cohesion in coastal communities (Juliyati & Rahman, 2021) (Sila, 2015). Meanwhile, studies on *Sekaten* in Yogyakarta highlight how the *Maulid* celebration becomes a medium for cultural preaching that shows the negotiation process between Islam, the power of the palace, and

Javanese tradition (Nursolehah, Sihabuddin Noor, 2022) (Woodward, 1989). In Cirebon, the *Muludan* tradition is understood as a mechanism for transmitting local Islamic values through cultural symbols and ritual practices passed down across generations (Wijayanto & Soekarba, 2019). Nevertheless, these studies tend to focus on the function of rituals as religious expressions, cultural symbolism, or the strengthening of ethnic identity within relatively homogeneous communities. Research on how the *Maulid* tradition transforms into a cultural festival in the context of multiethnic maritime societies remains relatively limited. In addition, studies on the Buginese diaspora in the coastal areas of Java mostly focus on migration, trade, and economic adaptation (Pelras, 1996) (Suliyati, 2016), while the reproduction of cultural identity through religious festivals as a form of heritagization has not received much attention. Stemming from this gap, this study offers a new perspective by examining the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* as a space for negotiating Buginese diaspora identity, reproducing solidarity in multiethnic maritime communities, and the process of producing local Islamic cultural heritage in Karimunjawa.

Various studies on the *Maulid* tradition in Indonesia have successfully shown how Islamic teachings interact with local culture through processes of acculturation, ritual symbolism, and the formation of community identity. However, most of these studies still view *Maulid* as a religious practice that reproduces social and cultural values

within certain communities. Attention to the shift in the *Maulid* tradition from a religious ritual to a cultural festival performed in public spaces remains relatively limited. Similarly, research on the processes of festivalization and heritagization that transform traditions into collective cultural heritage in multiethnic maritime communities has not been widely conducted, particularly in the *Bugis* diaspora community along the coast of Java. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by analyzing the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* as a process of cultural heritage production, negotiation of collective identity, and a strategy for preserving local Islamic traditions in Karimunjawa.

Based on these research issues, this article is aimed at answering the following key questions: 1) How does the process of reconstructing the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* represent strategies for cultural preservation and the revitalization of the community identity of Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa?; 2) How do ritual symbols in the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition reproduce *Bugis* cultural values, local Islamic spirituality, and the solidarity of the multi-ethnic maritime community on Kemujan Island?, and 3) How does the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* function as an arena for negotiating cultural identity, coastal Islamic acculturation, and the representation of maritime cultural heritage in Karimunjawa?

This study argues that *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* cannot be understood merely as a religious celebration, but rather as a symbolic arena where *Bugis* identity, local Islamic

spirituality, and the maritime culture of the people of Kemujan Island are negotiated and reproduced. Using Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretive symbolic theory and Koentjaraningrat's acculturation theory as analytical lenses, this research examines how ritual symbols, festival practices, and collective community participation shape shared cultural identity in the coastal communities of Karimunjawa.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative ethnographic approach to understand the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition as a cultural practice and an arena for identity production among the people of Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa. Data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. The researcher was directly involved in the entire 2024 festival, from the *Mabaca* ritual, the *To'dok Tello* procession, to the *Maulid* Parade, to get a thick description of symbols, ritual practices, and social relations in the community. Interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, religious figures, festival organizers, and community members who practice the tradition to understand the process of transforming *Ma Maulu's* tradition into a collective cultural festival. Data analysis was interpretive, focusing on rituals and cultural symbols as social texts that represent identity, collective memory, and the cultural power relations of the maritime community.

In the data analysis phase, as we mentioned earlier, we used Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretive anthropology perspective,

which sees culture as a web of significance produced through symbols and social practices, as a lens. (Geertz, 1973). More specifically, this perspective serves as a window to interpret *To'dok Tello'* and *Ka'dok* as religious and cultural symbols that represent the balance between the worldly and the hereafter, social solidarity, and the identity of coastal communities. In addition, the study uses Koentjaraningrat's acculturation theory to explain the process of internalizing *Bugis* culture in the multiethnic society of Kemujan Island without erasing the local cultural identity of the host community. This approach helps explain how *Bugis* culture is negotiated and accepted as a collective identity of the people of Kemujan Island.

This research draws on Victor Turner's (1982) perspective on ritual as social drama and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's concept of heritagization to examine the transformation of the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into a cultural festival. From (Turner, 1982) From a perspective, festivals are seen as performative arenas that strengthen social cohesion and community solidarity through collective participation and cultural symbols. Meanwhile, (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) explains that traditions can be reconstructed into performative cultural heritage, presented as local identity and community cultural representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presence of the dominant *Bugis* culture on Kemujan Island cannot be separated from the history of the *Bugis* diaspora in the maritime regions of Nusantara, now Indonesia. The

Bugis are known as one of the most active seafaring communities in Southeast Asia. Their high maritime mobility has spread the *Bugis* across various coastal areas of Indonesia. They can integrate with local communities without losing their cultural identity. *Bugis* identity is maintained through language, rituals, customs, architecture, and social values like *siri'*, which means self-respect, and *getteng*, which means resilience, showing the *Bugis* cultural character that consistently upholds good values. On Kemujan Island, *Bugis* culture not only survives but also develops into a collective identity for the multi-ethnic community. This shows that *Bugis* culture has strong integrative power in diaspora areas.

The value of *siri'*, which is a sense of dignity in *Bugis* culture, serves as a moral mechanism that protects the honor of both individuals and the community. *Siri'* is not only related to feelings of shame but also to social responsibility and respect for cultural values. Meanwhile, the value of *getteng*, which embodies steadfastness, reflects the *Bugis* cultural character of consistently upholding good values. This value is evident in the efforts of the people of Kemujan Island to preserve the Ma Maulu' tradition across generations. The internalization of *Bugis* culture is also evident in the use of the *Bugis* language in naming festivals. The name *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* becomes a symbol of cultural identity, highlighting the historical roots of the Kemujan Island community. Apart from language, the internalization of *Bugis* culture is reflected in the stilt house patterns, ritual practices, and the use of *sure'*, which is the recitation of poetry in

the *Maulid* ritual tradition. This shows that *Bugis* culture is not only present as an ethnic identity but has also become part of Kemujan Island's local culture. From (Hall, 2021) From a perspective, cultural identity is not something fixed, but continuously produced through representation and social practice. The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* serves as a stage for representing *Bugis* cultural identity and the maritime identity of the Karimunjawa community. The series of processions, *Maulid* parades, and *ketoprak* performances demonstrates that the festival does not merely showcase *Bugis* culture but also presents *Javanese* culture and the broader coastal identity of Karimunjawa. The presence of *santri ketoprak* in the festival indicates a cultural dialogue between *Bugis* and *Javanese* traditions. The performance of the drama *Sang Naga Samudra*, which tells the story of *Queen Kalinyamat*, shows how the people of Kemujan Island connect their cultural identity with the maritime history of Jepara. The narrative about *Queen Kalinyamat* as a female maritime ruler strengthens the representation of Karimunjawa as part of the Nusantara maritime tradition.

***Bugis* Mobility**

The migration of the *Bugis* people to the Karimunjawa Islands, especially Kemujan Island, was part of the rapidly expanding *Bugis* maritime diaspora network since the 17th century, following the fall of the Gowa-Tallo Sultanate due to the *Makassar War* (1666–1669). This political defeat pushed many *Bugis* sailors and traders to roam various coastal regions of the archipelago, including the coast

of Java and the Java Sea. From a Southeast Asian maritime history perspective, (Reid, 1988) explains that *Bugis* mobility was driven not only by economic and trade factors but also by their ability to build cultural and social networks in their new territories. Karimunjawa, located along the Java Sea trade route and close to the port of Jepara, became a strategic spot for the *Bugis* community to settle and build a new maritime community. Their later presence had a significant impact on the lifestyles of coastal communities, from sailing traditions and trading practices to Islamic religious rituals influenced by *Bugis* culture. Christian Pelras (1996) emphasized that the *Bugis* diaspora is known for having strong cultural adaptability without losing their symbolic identity as a Muslim maritime community. In the context of Karimunjawa, this influence can be seen through the use of the *Bugis* language, stilt house designs, the *Maulid Nabi* tradition, and patterns of social solidarity among coastal communities.

The historical relationship between the *Bugis* and Karimunjawa reflects a long process of cultural acculturation among the *Bugis* community, coastal Javanese, and other ethnic groups in Karimunjawa. Studies from (Suliyati, 2016) show that the *Bugis* community in Karimunjawa not only formed trading colonies but also managed to establish cultural dominance through the internalization of the values of *siri'* (self-esteem), *getteng* (steadfastness), and local Islamic traditions in the lives of the local people. This acculturation resulted in a distinctive maritime cultural identity, where *Bugis* elements are accepted as

part of the collective identity of the people of Kemujan Island. This phenomenon aligns with acculturation theory (Koentjaraningrat, 2009), which explains that foreign cultural elements can be accepted and internalized without erasing the local cultural identity of the receiving society. In addition, the development of Karimunjawa as a trading and sailing hub from the era of the Demak Sultanate to the colonial period made this region a meeting place for Nusantara maritime cultures, bringing together *Bugis*, *Mandar*, *Bajau*, *Madura*, and *Javanese* people into a single coastal social network. This historical process then gave rise to various traditions, including the *Ma Maulu'* tradition and the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival*, which represent a blend of Islam, *Bugis* culture, and Karimunjawa's maritime identity.

The Cultural Blend of Maritime and Islam

The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition on Kemujan Island shows how Islam in the Nusantara developed through a process of dialogue and negotiation with local cultures. In the context of coastal communities, religion does not function as a system that completely wipes out prior cultures, but rather interacts dynamically with long-standing local values. This phenomenon aligns with Anthony Reid's (1988) view that since the 15th century, Southeast Asia's maritime regions have been spaces where trade, migration, and Islam meet, giving rise to cosmopolitan coastal cultures. On Kemujan Island, this process is evident in the meeting of *Bugis*, *Javanese*, *Madurese*, *Mandar*, and *Buton* cultures, which then shaped the

collective identity of the Karimunjawa maritime community.

The ritual symbolism in this festival shows a strong process of acculturation between Islam and *Bugis* culture. (Koentjaraningrat, 2009) explains that acculturation is the process of accepting elements of foreign culture without losing the original cultural identity of the receiving society. In the case of Kemujan Island, *Bugis* culture is widely accepted by the multi-ethnic community without erasing the *identities of the Javanese, Madurese, and other ethnic groups*. This can be seen in how non-*Bugis* people get involved in the *Ma Maulu'* festival, use *Bugis* symbols, and even adopt some *Bugis* cultural practices in their daily lives.

This phenomenon shows that *Bugis* culture on Kemujan Island has developed into a collective identity of the coastal community. (Pelras, 1996) explains that the *Bugis* diaspora has a very strong cultural adaptability. Besides being known as sailors and traders, the *Bugis* are also a diaspora community capable of building social and cultural networks in distant regions without losing their original symbolic identity. In the context of Kemujan Island, this adaptability allows *Bugis* culture to be accepted as part of the shared identity of the Karimunjawa coastal community.

Furthermore, the transformation of the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into a cultural festival demonstrates how local communities engage in cultural change amid modernization and tourism development. From Barbara's perspective (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) Turning a tradition into a cultural festival

is part of the heritagization process, which makes traditions into performative cultural heritage presented to the public as a community identity.

The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* is not just an internal ritual for the people of Kemujan Island, but also a way to showcase the maritime *Bugis* culture of Karimunjawa to a wider audience. Studies on cultural festivals in Indonesia show that festivals often serve as a strategic medium for local communities to preserve their culture amid globalization and the tourism industry. (Adiprasetyo & Vinianto, 2020). In the context of Karimunjawa, which is developing as a national tourist area, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* demonstrates how the local community strives to build cultural symbols that can become a unique identity for Kemujan Island.

Transformation of Tradition as a Strategy for Cultural Revitalization

The transformation of the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* demonstrates the people of Kemujan Island's cultural awareness of the importance of preserving local identity. Tradition is not merely a change in the form of religious celebrations, but a social and cultural strategy of coastal communities to maintain their identity amid rapid social change. Modernization and the growth of the tourism industry in Karimunjawa have significantly impacted the community's lifestyle patterns. The shift in livelihoods from agriculture and fishing to tourism has altered people's social orientation. In this situation, cultural traditions

often face the threat of marginalization because they are considered irrelevant to modern life. Therefore, the people of Kemujan Island transformed *Ma Maulu'* into a cultural festival so that the tradition stays alive and finds a new place in the social life of the people on Kemujan Island.



Image: 1 Source: Documentation of the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* Committee 2024

The collective celebration of the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* by the communities of Telaga and Batulawang Villages shows that the *Ma Maulu'* tradition has expanded in meaning from being just a religious identity of the *Bugis* diaspora to becoming a shared cultural heritage of the people of Kemujan Island. The involvement of *Javanese*, *Madurese*, *Mandar*, and other ethnic groups in the entire series of activities demonstrates that this tradition no longer serves solely as an ethnic identity marker, but rather as a space for social integration that strengthens solidarity among the multiethnic island communities. In this way, the festival serves as a space for the production of collective identity by connecting diverse community groups through shared rituals and cultural experiences.

This transformation can be seen in changes in the tradition's space and function.

Before 2024, *Ma Maulu'* was carried out within the *Bugis* community, mainly focused on celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, while now, in the form of a cultural festival, the tradition appears in public spaces through the *Kirab To'dok Tello'*, *Maulid Parade*, and various forms of wider community participation. This process shows festivalization, the shift of cultural practices from internal spaces to public representation spaces, without losing core ritual elements such as reading the *al-Barzanji*, reading *sure'*, communal prayers, and the symbols of *To'dok Tello'* and *Ka'dok* as the center of religious and cultural meaning.

From a heritagization perspective, the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* reflects the strategy of the Pulau Kemujan community to revitalize traditions amid social changes, tourism development, and increasing interaction with the outside world. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014). Traditions are not abandoned but are reinterpreted and presented anew as cultural heritage relevant to contemporary society's needs. In line with (Woodward, 1989, 2011) This process shows that local Islamic practices evolve through a dynamic dialogue between religious values and socio-cultural context, so modernity does not erase traditions but rather becomes a space for reproducing cultural identity and local Islamic heritage in more inclusive and sustainable ways.

The Symbolism of *To'dok Tello'* as a Representation of the Cosmology of Life

From a symbolic-anthropological perspective, Clifford Geertz sees culture as a system of symbols humans use to give meaning to the world and their lives. (Geertz, 1973). Cultural symbols are not limited to material objects used in rituals, such as eggs, bamboo, or glutinous rice, but also include language, poetry, prayers, body movements, dance, music, clothing, and various social practices that carry particular meanings for their communities. In this way, symbols are a means for people to express the values, beliefs, and worldviews that are collectively passed down from generation to generation. In the context of the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition, cultural symbols are not just present in ritual materials like *To'dok Tello'* and *Ka'dok*, but also in the reading of *sure'*, the chanting of al-Barzanji, processions, and communal meals that represent the relationship between humans, religion, and the community. Therefore, symbols are not just for aesthetic or ceremonial purposes; they act as a medium connecting the community's way of life with the religious, social, and cultural values they uphold (Geertz, 1973).



Image: 2. Source: Documentation from the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* committee of decorated eggs

To'dok Tello' in the tradition of the people of Kemujan Island serves as the main symbol representing the balance between worldly life and the afterlife. A sharp bamboo stick symbolizes orientation toward the afterlife, while the egg represents worldly life and the responsibilities that come with it. This symbolism shows how Islamic values are translated into cultural forms that are closely tied to the everyday experiences of coastal communities. In this context, religious teachings are not delivered solely through formal doctrine but through symbols, ritual practices, and collective experiences that are easy for the community to understand. This phenomenon reflects the pattern of Islamic cultural preaching that developed in the Nusantara, meaning the process of spreading and internalizing Islamic values through adaptation to local languages, symbols, and traditions, without losing the essence of the religious teachings. (Howell, 2001; Woodward, 2008, 2011)

Ahmad's research (2019) shows that Islam's development in Indonesia was greatly influenced by scholars' ability to integrate Islamic teachings with local culture, enabling people to embrace Islam in a relatively peaceful, accommodating manner. Similar findings were mentioned by (Woodward, 1989) (Woodward, 2011), who explained that local Islamic practices in the Nusantara evolved through a dialogue between Islamic teachings and local community traditions, rather than by erasing pre-existing cultures. Howell (2001) also noted that Sufi traditions played an important role in the Islamization

process by allowing Islamic values to be conveyed through symbols, rituals, and cultural experiences closely connected to people's lives. In the context of the *Maulid* ritual, (Juliyati & Rahman, 2021) (Sila, 2015) found that various material symbols used in the Maudu' celebration in South Sulawesi function as a medium for transmitting religious values and community identity. The egg symbol in *To'dok Tello'* is interpreted as a representation of life, fertility, and the continuity of generations, a meaning also found in various Nusantara ritual traditions that use eggs as a metaphor for birth and the continuity of life. Meanwhile, the bamboo supporting the egg represents a human's spiritual orientation toward God and also reflects widely recognized Bugis cosmological values of steadfastness, strength, and balance. Thus, *To'dok Tello'* not only functions as a ritual device but also as a symbolic medium connecting Islamic values with the cultural experience of the coastal community of Kemujan Island.

According to Sujono Jastro Jumirah, a Karimunjawa cultural expert and also the head of the event committee (interview, July 24, 2024), the people of Kemujan interpret the egg in *To'dok Tello'* as a symbol of worldly life, while bamboo represents orientation towards the afterlife. The community believes that the process of sticking the egg onto the bamboo conveys a moral message: that worldly life should be lived with spiritual values as a foundation. The egg, which is easily broken, is a reminder that humans should not be too attached to worldly matters, while the bamboo standing upright symbolizes the human

relationship with God and the ultimate purpose of life. This interpretation shows how Islamic teachings are translated into cultural symbols closely related to the life experiences of coastal communities. From the perspective of symbolic anthropology (Geertz, 1973), *To'dok Tello'* can be understood as both a model of reality and a model for reality, meaning a symbol that not only represents how people understand life but also serves as a moral guide in living social and religious life.

***Manre Ka'dok* and the Social Solidarity**

Values of Maritime Communities

If *To'dok Tello'* represents the philosophical and spiritual dimension, then *Manre Ka'dok* represents the social dimension in the life of the Pulau Kemujan community. Eating together after the procession and *Maulid* parade shows that this tradition is not only focused on the relationship between humans and God, but also relationships among people. *Ka'dok*, or sticky rice, is chosen as the main symbol for its sticky, unified nature. In Nusantara culture, sticky rice is often seen as a symbol of unity and social solidarity. In the Pulau Kemujan community, this meaning is reinforced through the practice of sharing and eating together regardless of social status, age, or ethnicity. The tradition of eating together at the festival reflects egalitarian values within the maritime community. Everyone sits together and enjoys the same food. This reflects the principle of social equality, which is an important part of coastal culture.

Maritime communities have historically had a more egalitarian social

structure than feudal agrarian societies. Life at sea demands cooperation, solidarity, and mutual dependence. In the Kemujan Island community, these values are reflected in the practice of *Manre Ka'dok*. The feeding ceremony between the people of Telaga Village and Batulawang Village also carries a strong symbol of Islamic brotherhood. The narrative connecting this ceremony to the story of the Muhajirin and Ansar shows that the community interprets this tradition as a representation of Islamic unity. From Turner's (1982) perspective, collective rituals, such as eating together, create a sense of togetherness that transcends formal social boundaries. At that moment, all participants in the ritual experience are equal members of the community.

Besides strengthening social solidarity, the *Manre Ka'dok* tradition also serves as a means of passing down cultural and religious values across generations. This educational process takes place through the direct involvement of young people in various stages of the festival, from preparing *To'dok Tello'*, arranging *Ka'dok*, reading *sure'*, to carrying out the procession and communal eating. Through this participation, young people not only learn the procedures of the tradition but also understand the underlying values, such as cooperation, brotherhood, respect for ancestors, and the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with others. Thus, learning happens informally through experience, observation, and social interaction within the ritual space. This finding aligns with the research by (Salsabillah et al., 2024) on the

Badikiar tradition in Muaro Sentajo, which shows that the *Maulid* ritual serves as a medium for transmitting social, moral, and cultural values to the younger generation. In the context of the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival*, this educational function is evident in how the tradition serves as a space for reproducing cultural knowledge while also fostering collective awareness of the Pulau Kemujan community's identity.

The Bugis Diaspora and the Reproduction of Cultural Identity

The Transformasi *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* shows how the local community builds representations of maritime cultural heritage through rituals and cultural performances. In the context of cultural tourism, festivals serve as an important medium for displaying local identity to the public. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) explains that cultural heritage is not something automatically passed down, but is produced through the process of cultural representation. Cultural festivals are one form of performative heritage, meaning cultural heritage that is produced through performance and social participation. In the context of Kemujan Island, this festival demonstrates how the community expresses its identity as a multiethnic maritime community that is religious and open to cultural diversity.

Besides that, traditional food served at the festival shows that cultural heritage is not just about rituals, but also about everyday practices and traditions. In the end, this festival becomes a place where cultural identity, historical memory, Islamic spirituality, and the

local economy all come together. In this context, *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* is not just a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, but also a representation of the maritime culture of the people of Kemujan Island.

The transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* not only brought changes to how the tradition is carried out, but also opened up space for changes in how people understand the tradition. Even though the core elements, such as the reading of al-Barzanji, communal prayers, sure' readings, and the symbols of *To'dok Tello'* and *Ka'dok*, are still preserved, the festival has expanded the tradition's function from an internal ritual space to a more open cultural representation. This change shows that the people of Kemujan Island no longer see the tradition purely as a religious obligation, but also as a medium for cultural inheritance, youth education, and the strengthening of the island community's collective identity. From (Geertz, 1973) perspective, cultural symbols gain their meaning through an ongoing process of interpretation in social life. Therefore, transformations that occur do not necessarily mean changes in the ritual practices themselves, but rather in the social context and the meanings attached to them. In this way, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* demonstrates how people actively reinterpret tradition to keep it relevant amid social change, tourism development, and increased interaction with the outside world, without losing the religious orientation that underpins it.

This shows that the people of Kemujan Island have a fairly strong cultural awareness of how to maintain the authenticity of their traditions. The festival is not merely a tourist attraction but a space for the transmission of cultural and spiritual values. From (Appadurai, 1996) From a perspective, cultural globalization does not always result in cultural homogenization. Local communities can still negotiate their identity through local cultural practices. The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* demonstrates how local people utilize tourism to strengthen their cultural identity.

***To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* as a Symbol of Collective Identity**

In the end, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* developed into a symbol of the collective identity of the people of Kemujan Island. This identity is built through ritual symbols, social participation, and cultural memory passed down from generation to generation. The festival shows that the cultural identity of coastal communities is not singular. This identity is formed through processes of acculturation, migration, and cross-cultural social interaction. *Bugis* culture is the main foundation in shaping this tradition, but the festival's identity has grown beyond the *Bugis* ethnic boundaries. The participation of *Javanese*, *Madurese*, and other ethnic groups shows that this festival has been embraced as a shared cultural heritage. From Anderson (1983) From a perspective, communities are built through shared imagination or collective imagination produced through symbols and shared social practices. The *To'dok Tello' Manre*

Ka'dok Festival serves as a medium through which the people of Kemujan Island build a collective imagination as a cultural community.

Through *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok*, the people of Kemujan Island affirm their identity as a religious, egalitarian maritime society open to cultural diversity. Thus, this festival can be understood not only as a celebration of the Prophet's birthday but also as a symbolic arena where the people of Kemujan Island reproduce cultural identity, strengthen social solidarity, and build representations of Karimunjawa's maritime cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

The *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* tradition on Kemujan Island, Karimunjawa, shows that Islamic religious practices in coastal communities of the Nusantara cannot be understood solely as spiritual practices, but also as spaces for producing cultural identity, fostering social solidarity, and representing maritime heritage. This study shows that the transformation of the *Ma Maulu'* tradition into a cultural festival in 2024 is a form of cultural revitalization carried out by the people of Kemujan Island in response to social changes, modernization, and the development of tourism in Karimunjawa. This transformation does not erase the religious essence of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday tradition. Actually, it expands its social function and symbolic role as a collective identity of the multi-ethnic community on Kemujan Island.

This study also proves that *Bugis* culture has a very strong influence on the

formation of cultural identity among the people of Kemujan Island. This influence can be seen in the use of the *Bugis* language in festival branding and ritual symbols, in the reading of *sure'*, as well as in social values like *siri'* and *getteng*, which are still upheld in the community's daily life. However, *Bugis* culture on Kemujan Island does not develop in isolation but undergoes acculturation with *Javanese*, *Madurese*, and other coastal ethnic cultures. From Koentjaraningrat's perspective on acculturation theory, *Bugis* culture is accepted and internalized by the multiethnic community without erasing the identity of each local culture. Therefore, *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* no longer serves only as a symbol of the *Bugis* diaspora identity, but has become a shared cultural heritage for the people of Kemujan Island. Besides being a religious ritual, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* also serves as a space for representing Karimunjawa's maritime culture. Events like *Mabaca*, the *To'dok Tello' Parade*, the *Maulid Parade*, and the *Maulid Ketoprak Stage* show that this festival becomes a performative arena where the community reproduces historical memories, local Islamic spirituality, and coastal cultural identity. The presence of *Javanese* cultural elements in *santri ketoprak* and the narrative of Queen Kalinyamat indicates that this festival represents the harmony of cross-ethnic cultures in Karimunjawa society. In this context, the *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok Festival* demonstrates that local traditions can serve as a medium for strengthening social cohesion and as a cultural preservation strategy amid

globalization and cultural tourism. Thus, this study confirms that *To'dok Tello' Manre Ka'dok* is a form of cultural expression that emerged over a long process of transformation in maritime culture.

The conclusions of this study show that the transformation of *Ma Maulu'* into the *To'dok Telok Manre Ka'dok Festival* is not just a change in the way celebrations are held, but a process of cultural negotiation that allows local Islamic traditions to stay alive through mechanisms of revitalization, inheritance, and reproduction of collective identity. This article contributes to the study of Nusantara Islam, maritime anthropology, and cultural heritage studies by showing that cultural festivals are arenas in which local communities actively reconstruct relationships among religiosity, cultural identity, and social change amid modernization and tourism development.

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