

**RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN THE NAZAR TRADITION AT THE SACRED
TOMB OF TUKJI, NAGARI SIALANG GAUNG, DHARMASRAYA, WEST
SUMATRA**

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ABSTRACT

Religious syncretism in Minangkabau is normatively framed within the philosophy of Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS-SBK). This study examines the nazar (vow) tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb, Nagari Sialang Gaung, Dharmasraya, which remains academically unexplored. The central problem revolves around a fundamental theological tension: on one hand, traditionalist adat leaders and ulama legitimize the practice as a legitimate cultural heritage in accordance with syarak due to its function in preserving social cohesion and communal identity. On the other hand, puritan groups consider it a deviation from monotheism, bid'ah, and potentially shirk. This tension is compounded by the absence of scholarly inquiry that deeply captures the dynamics of meaning negotiation among stakeholders ninik mamak, ulama, tomb custodians, and pilgrims amid contemporary currents of religious purification. This research aims to: (1) describe the structure and symbolic meanings of the nazar tradition; (2) uncover the mechanisms of meaningful negotiation among stakeholders; and (3) analyze the theological and social implications of sustaining this syncretic tradition. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten purposively selected key informants, and visual documentation. Findings reveal five interrelated forms of syncretism: structural, ritual, symbolic, ideological, and socio-cultural. Analysis reveals that syncretism operates as an adaptive strategy termed masalah adaptive efforts by the community to preserve the essence of the tradition while adjusting controversial ritual elements in response to theological critiques. This research confirms that the nazar tradition is not passive cultural preservation, but rather an arena of active negotiation between Islamic teachings and local wisdom, serving to strengthen solidarity and communal identity amid changing religious discourse.

Keywords : Religious Syncretism, Nazar Tradition, Sacred Tomb, Adaptive Masalah, Minangkabau

ABSTRAK

Sinkretisme keagamaan di Minangkabau secara normatif terbingkai dalam falsafah Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS-SBK). Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi nazar di Makam Keramat Tukji, Nagari Sialang Gaung, Dharmasraya, yang hingga kini belum tersentuh kajian akademis. Permasalahan utama penelitian berpusat pada ketegangan teologis yang mendasar: di satu pihak, tokoh adat dan ulama tradisional melegitimasi praktik tersebut sebagai warisan budaya yang sah dan selaras dengan syarak karena berfungsi memelihara kohesi sosial dan identitas komunal. Di pihak lain, kelompok puritan menilainya sebagai

penyimpangan dari tauhid, bidah, dan berpotensi syirik. Ketegangan ini diperumit oleh absennya kajian ilmiah yang memotret secara mendalam dinamika negosiasi makna di antara para pemangku kepentingan ninik mamak, ulama, juru kunci, dan peziarah di tengah arus pemurnian agama kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mendeskripsikan struktur dan makna simbolis tradisi nazar; (2) mengungkap mekanisme negosiasi makna antarpemangku kepentingan; serta (3) menganalisis implikasi teologis dan sosial dari keberlanjutan tradisi sinkretik tersebut. Dengan pendekatan etnografi kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur terhadap sepuluh informan kunci yang dipilih secara purposif, dan dokumentasi visual. Temuan menunjukkan lima bentuk sinkretisme yang saling terkait, yakni struktural, ritual, simbolik, ideologis, dan sosial-budaya. Analisis mengungkap bahwa sinkretisme beroperasi sebagai strategi adaptif yang disebut *masalah adaptif*, yaitu upaya masyarakat mempertahankan esensi tradisi seraya menyesuaikan elemen-elemen ritual yang kontroversial guna merespons kritik teologis. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tradisi nazar bukanlah pelestarian budaya pasif, melainkan arena negosiasi aktif antara ajaran Islam dan kearifan lokal, yang berfungsi memperkuat solidaritas dan identitas komunal di tengah perubahan wacana keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: Sinkretisme Keagamaan, Tradisi Nazar, Makam Keramat, *Maslahah Adaptif*, Minangkabau

A. Introduction

Religious syncretism in Indonesia is a fascinating area of study, particularly given Indonesia's position as one of the world's most populous Muslim countries, boasting a rich cultural diversity and complexity.¹ The process of Islamization in the archipelago did not occur through the total replacement of pre-existing belief systems, but rather through a gradual, dialogical process open to local culture.² This process did not completely eradicate local beliefs, but rather involved the adaptation of symbolic meanings and creative

integration with pre-existing values, ritual traditions, and social structures.³ The result was the emergence of diverse forms of Islamic practice in each region, reflecting the unique encounter between universal Islamic teachings and diverse local cultural realities.⁴ In contemporary academic studies, syncretism is no longer understood negatively as an unclear mixture or deviation from pure teachings, but rather as a more sensitive and dynamic analytical tool for understanding the intersection of religion and culture.⁵ Syncretism can be understood as the process by

¹ Siti Rohmatun Masti Yanto, *Transmission of Islamic Diversity and Modern Life* (PENERBIT KBM INDONESIA, 2025).

² Hawa Hidayah et al., "Transformation of Nusantara Culture in the Process of Islamization in Indonesia," *Khazanah: Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2023): 1–11.

³ Sri Lestari and Yuyun Yunita, "Syncretism of Islamic Culture and Local Culture of the Archipelago in Strengthening Community

Relations," *Journal of Social and Religious Affairs* | 10, no. 01 (2025): 93–103, <http://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/index.php/riayah>.

⁴ Syaifudin Zuhri, "Islam, (UN)Civil Society and Challenges For Democratization In Indonesia," *Al-A'raf: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 292–308, <https://doi.org/10.22515/AJPIF.V19I2.6488>.

⁵ Ali Abu Bakar, "Integration of Tradition and Interpretation of the Quran and Legal

which societies combine and give new meaning to elements from various religious and cultural traditions to address their spiritual needs, social life, and identity, in accordance with their circumstances and history⁶

Among the various cultural regions of the Indonesian archipelago, Minangkabau in West Sumatra offers a particularly paradigmatic case for examining the dynamics of religious syncretism.⁷ The uniqueness of Minangkabau society lies in the existence of a clear and normative foundation that provides both the basis and the rules for this blending process: the philosophy of "Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah" (ABS-SBK).⁸ Unlike other regions where the relationship between Islam and adat is often implicit or even leads to conflict, in Minangkabau this relationship is clearly formulated and agreed upon as the basis for social and customary life.⁹ Syarak serves as the highest normative source, providing a moral and legal foundation, while Adat is a system of values, rules, and cultural

practices that have been refined and reformulated to align with this foundation.¹⁰ However, this seemingly neat and harmonious formulation is not rigid in practice. Instead, it has become a vibrant space for negotiation, where a constant tug-of-war occurs between religious views that emphasize textual and universal purification of teachings and those that seek to preserve custom as a form of local expression deemed legitimate and valuable.¹¹ These differing views involve various parties, from traditional leaders, religious scholars, intellectuals, and the wider community, who engage in ongoing dialogue and dynamic interpretation to assess which practices are considered harmonious and which are considered contradictory.¹²

The practice of making vows at sacred tombs represents one of the most sensitive interfaces between Islamic tradition and pre-Islamic heritage. In Islam itself, visiting graves is encouraged as a way to remember the dead (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and to offer prayers for the departed.¹³

Change: A Study of the Sociology of Law," *Malikussaleh Journal of Social and Political Sciences (JSPM)* 4, no. 1 (2023): 162–81, <https://doi.org/10.29103/jspm.v4i1.10843>.

⁶ Ros Aiza Mohd Mokhtar and Che Zarrina Sa'ari, "The Concept of Syncretism from an Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Aqidah & Thought* 17, no. 1 (2015): 51–78, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol17no1.3>.

⁷ Nelmawarni and Fikri Surya Pratama, *History of Islamic Civilization in Minangkabau* (GUEPEDIA, 2024).

⁸ Ibnu Amin, "Implementation of Islamic Law in the Basandi Syarak Traditional Philosophy, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah in Minangkabau," *Ijtihad* 38, no. 2 (2022): 15–26.

⁹ Hasanuddin Hasanuddin, *CUSTOM AND SYARAK: Source of Inspiration and Reference for Minangkabau Dialectical Values*, *CUSTOM AND SYARAK: Source of Inspiration and Reference for Minangkabau Dialectical Values* (Minangkabau Information

and Culture Study Center, Andalas University, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.25077/car.10.10>.

¹⁰ Ibnu Amin, "Implementation of Islamic Law in the Basandi Syarak Traditional Philosophy, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah in Minangkabau."

¹¹ Defi Permata Sari, "Elements of State, Custom and Religion Through the Principle of 'Traditional Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah' in Minangkabau," *Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2024): 77–99, <https://jurnaldialog.kemenag.go.id/index.php/dialog/article/view/922/283>.

¹² Nasir Muhammad, "Minangkabau Customs," *Teaching Materials*, 2022, 1–10, https://www.academia.edu/download/106548229/Minangkabau_Adat_Muhammad_Nasir_2022.pdf.

¹³ H Brilly El-Rasheed, *Tawassul and Tabarruk According to Salafi-Sufi* (brillyelrasheed, 2024).

However, in Indonesian culture, which has long upheld respect for ancestors and believed in the spiritual power of certain places, the practice of visiting graves has developed a broader meaning and role. The graves of important figures, both religious scholars and propagators of Islam, are not merely places for remembrance but can also be viewed as sources of blessings, places for prayer, and spaces for fulfilling vows.¹⁴ It is at this point that the concept of sacredness plays a crucial role in the understanding of local communities, where a person or place can be considered sacred because it is believed to hold spiritual power (*karamah*), possess significant historical significance, or because it has been continuously maintained through ritual practices passed down from generation to generation.¹⁵ Places like this then function as bridges between the past and the present, between everyday life and the sacred realm, as well as between society, ancestors and God.

This research focuses on the nazar tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb, Nagari Sialang Gaung, Dharmasraya Regency, West Sumatra, which offers a unique case and has not been touched by academic research. Nagari Sialang Gaung is located in Dharmasraya, a

regency that was only administratively formed in 2004, but historically this region has played a major role in the development of the Dharmasraya and Malayu Kingdoms.¹⁶ The story of Tukji lives on through the oral tradition of the local community with several versions: some call him a cleric who spread Islam early, some as a wise and charismatic traditional figure (*penghulu*), and still others are still stored in the memories of the Sialang Gaung community. The ambiguity of Tukji's identity is actually an important and valuable source of data because it shows how the community fills the gaps in written history with their memories and spiritual needs, thus creating a figure who can be a projection of various hopes as a spiritual intermediary (*wasilah*), protector of the nagari, and a source of local identity.¹⁷

Behind this seemingly harmonious blend of cultures, however, lies a fundamental theological tension. The practice of vows at sacred tombs is at the center of a long-running debate within Islam, particularly regarding three crucial issues: *tawhid*, *tawassul*, and *bid'ah*.¹⁸ Puritanical Salafists view such practices as erroneous and inconsistent with Islamic teachings, as they have the potential to constitute shirk (polytheism) in the unity of

¹⁴ JUNI SOFIANSYAH, "Vows of Pilgrims to the Tomb of Ali Onang in Menanti Village, Kelekar District, Muara Enim Regency (A Study Using a Phenomenological Approach)," nd

¹⁵ Ratna Sari, "The Meaning of Pilgrimage to Sacred Tombs (Case Study: Pilgrims to Mbah Priok's Tomb, North Jakarta)," *Thesis at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta* (Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of ..., 2021).

¹⁶ V Alldo, "Expansion and Evaluation of Regional Development of Dharmasraya

Regency Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 38..." (Andalas University, 2021), <http://scholar.unand.ac.id/100051/>.

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge university press, 1981).

¹⁸ Muchammad Ikfil Chasan, *Ayatullah Ja 'far Al-Subhani's Criticism of Uluhiyyah Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab's Concept of Tauhid* (A-Empat Publishers, 2021).

tawhid uluhiyyah (Islamic unity). They also question the validity of¹⁹ the concept of *tawassul* through deceased pious individuals, and consider all additional rituals around tombs to be *bid'ah* (innovative) that must be eliminated.²⁰ On the other hand, the Nusantara Islamic tradition, widely held by traditionalists, holds a more accommodating view, distinguishing between permissible *tawassul* and prohibited *istighatsah*, and considers rituals at sacred tombs to be part of the *'urf* (lawful practice) as long as they do not contradict the established texts.²¹ This difference in views does not only occur at the level of thought but has entered into the daily lives of the people of Nagari Sialang Gaung, as seen from the difference in attitudes between traditional leaders who want to maintain tradition and young people who are starting to be influenced by puritan teachings, as well as from the difference in views between religious scholars.

Previous studies on religious syncretism in Indonesia have made important theoretical contributions. Piepke (2023), in his study of the

synbiosis of custom and Islam in Minangkabau, distinguished two forms of syncretism: the blending of different belief systems and the adaptation of foreign elements into existing systems, emphasizing that in local religious practices, the analytical boundaries between these two forms are often blurred.²² Asril et al. (2023), in their study of Tabuik in Pariaman, demonstrated how ritual hybridity was formed through the modification of foreign elements to suit the Sunni-Minangkabau context.²³ Sefriyono et al. (2024), in their study of the Baralek Tuanku ceremony, found that the acculturation process produced a dual identity in Minangkabau society through ceremonial practices that combined Minangkabau customary values and the teachings of the Syattariyah order.²⁴ Zulfadli et al. (2021) highlighted the practice of condolences and Quranic recitation in funeral traditions as forms of religious and customary acculturation in Padang Pariaman.²⁵

Research on the nazar tradition has been conducted by Sari et al. (2024) who examined the perceptions

¹⁹ Imam Alawi Abdul Luthfi et al., "The Concept of Salaf from the Perspective of Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taimiyah," *JIIIC: Journal of Intellectual Human Cendikia* 2, no. 1 (2025): 488–500,

<https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jiic>.

²⁰ Amin Farih, "The Paradigm of Tawassul and Tabarruk Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Bin Zaini Dahlan Amidst the Majority of Wahhabi Theology," *Jurnal Theologia* 27, no. 2 (2016): 279–304,

<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2016.27.2.1069>.

²¹ Asmaran, "Reading the Phenomenon of Saint Pilgrimage in Indonesia: Understanding the Traditions of Tabarruk and Tawassul," *Al-Banjari: Scientific Journal of Islamic Sciences* 17, no. 2 (2018): 173, <https://doi.org/10.18592/al-banjari.v17i2.2128>.

²² Joachim G. Piepke, "Die Symbiose von Adat Und Islam Bei Den Minangkabau

(Sumatra)," *Patchwork*, 2023, 233–56, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783985721047-233>.

²³ Asril et al., "Hybridity Between Shi'ite, Sunni and Minangkabau Cultures at the Tabuik Performance in Pariaman, West Sumatra," *Arts and Design Studies*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.7176/ads/105-02>.

²⁴ Sefriyono Sefriyono, Andri Ashadi, and Zulfis Zulfis, "Integrating Faith and Tradition: The Baralek Tuanku Ceremony in Minangkabau," *Khazanah Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2024): 321–33, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v6i2.34054>.

²⁵ Muhammad Zulfadli et al., "Acculturation of Islam and Local Culture in the Mangaji Kamatian Tradition in the Lareh Nan Panjang Community, Padang Pariaman Regency," *SMART Journal (Society, Religion, and Tradition Studies)* 7, no. 01 (2021): 103–14, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v7i01.1257>.

of the Empat Lawang community towards the Beniat and Benazar traditions at the Puyang Serunting Sakti Tomb, finding a dichotomy of perception between groups who interpret it as a hereditary cultural practice and groups who view it as a practice that has the potential to deviate from Islamic faith.²⁶ Research on sacred tombs and grave pilgrimage practices has also been widely conducted, such as the study by Yanti et al. (2018) on the Ngababali tradition in Lampung which shows a syncretic pattern of pilgrimage-prayer,²⁷ as well as the research of Hidayat et al. (2022) on the pilgrimage tradition to the tomb of Sheikh Burhanuddin in Ulakan Pariaman which shows that the practice of pilgrimage is not solely understood as a religious ritual, but also as a socio-cultural expression influenced by the socio-economic background of the pilgrims.²⁸

However, there are several significant research gaps. *First*, the majority of studies on sacred tombs in Minangkabau focus on major sites that have become regional destinations, such as the Tomb of Sheikh

Burhanuddin Ulakan. There is almost no in-depth study of sacred tombs at the nagari level, such as the Tukji Tomb in Dharmasraya.²⁹ *Second*, existing studies on grave pilgrimages tend to view it as a general activity, without specifically focusing on the practice of vows as a form of religious commitment that is more serious, has economic value, and contains complex ritual promises.³⁰ *Third*, many anthropological studies describe rituals symbolically but do not delve deeply into the dimensions of the internal theological debates faced by the practitioners, while theological studies often only judge right and wrong without understanding the social logic and subjective meaning behind the practice.³¹ *Fourth*, much of the research and discussion on ABS-SBK is philosophical-historical in nature, and has not empirically tested how these principles are operationalized and negotiated in the context of controversial religious practices in the modern era, when customary and religious authorities themselves are no longer monolithic.³²

²⁶ Fitria Anggia Permata Sari, Eni Murdiati, and Muhammad Randicha Hamandia, "Perception of Empat Lawang Community Towards the Tradition of 'Beniat and Benazar' at the Tomb of Puyang Serunting Sakti," *Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 4 (2024): 16, <https://doi.org/10.47134/pssh.v1i4.209>.

²⁷ Fitri Yanti, Eni Amaliah, and Abdul Rahman, "'Ngababali' Tradition on Islamic Religious Practice in The Negeri Besar Village, Way Kanan, Lampung Province," *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 26, no. 2 (2018): 306, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v26i2.2043>.

²⁸ AT Hidayat, A Rosadi, and I Antony, "Cultural and Religious Symbols in the Tradition of Visiting the Tomb of Sheikh Burhanuddin," *Tsaqafah: Journal of Islamic Civilization* 18, no. 1 (2022): 109–28, <https://scholar.archive.org/work/y2lt5q6wrrdsj>

[izzjt4xfk2jge/access/wayback/https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/tsaqafah/article/download/7640/9959](https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/tsaqafah/article/download/7640/9959).

²⁹ Helmy Faizi Bahrul Ulumi, *Syncretism in the Sacred Pilgrimage Tradition in Banten* (A-Empat Publisher, 2024).

³⁰ Sarah Novian Chand et al., "The Tradition of Visiting Graves in Indonesian Society: Between Local Wisdom and the Threat to the Purity of Monotheism," *Journal of Islamic Theology* 1, no. 2 (2025): 127–37.

³¹ Zoltán Szombathy, "A Trust from the Ancestors: Islamic Ethics and Local Tradition in a Syncretistic Ritual in East-Central Sulawesi," *Die Welt Des Islams* 61, no. 4 (2021): 448–74.

³² Mufdil Tuhri, "Islam As Adat or Adat As Islam? Reexamining Minangkabau Identity in Contemporary Global Context," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim*

Based on the identification of the gaps above, this study has three main objectives. *First*, descriptively-analytical to ethnographically describe and analyze the structure, symbolic meaning, and narrative that surrounds the practice of the nazar tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb. *Second*, processually to reveal the social mechanisms and negotiations of meaning that occur behind the practice by examining the roles and interactions between various stakeholders *such as* ninik mamak, religious scholars, tomb caretakers, and the community performing nazar. *Third*, reflectively-critical to analyze the theological and social implications of the continuation of the syncretic nazar tradition on social cohesion, the community's religious identity, and their response to the challenges of religious purification in the contemporary era.

The central argument of this study is that religious syncretism in the nazar tradition at the Tukji Tomb is not merely a passive preservation of pre-Islamic customs or a simple accommodation to Islamic teachings, but rather an active and ongoing process of negotiation in which various actors continually reinterpret, legitimize, and contest the boundaries between acceptable Islamic practices and local traditions. This syncretism operates through five interrelated forms: structural syncretism through the ABS-SBK framework, ritual syncretism in the fusion of Islamic and local elements, symbolic syncretism in material culture and architecture,

ideological syncretism in the theological reinterpretation of *tawassul*, and socio-cultural syncretism in communal solidarity and identity formation. Thus, this study aims not only to record and describe one local tradition, but further seeks to understand the real, dynamic, and diverse religious life in contemporary Minangkabau society, complete with its accompanying attractions, dynamics, and tensions.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative research type with an ethnographic approach. Qualitative research was chosen because it aims to understand social phenomena in depth and holistically from the perspective of the research subjects, not to test hypotheses or make statistical generalizations. As stated by Creswell, qualitative research is an appropriate method for exploring and understanding the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social or humanitarian problem.³³ The ethnographic approach was used because this study aims to describe and understand in depth the cultural practices of a community in its natural context, allowing researchers to directly observe the behavior, rituals, and social interactions of the Nagari Sialang Gaung community in carrying out the nazar tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb, as well as understanding the system of meaning behind these practices.³⁴ This research can also be categorized as field research, namely research conducted directly at the research

Society 5, no. 2 (2020): 207–18, <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v5i2.2461>.

³³ JW Crewell and NC Porth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 1998).

³⁴ M Ikhsan Tanggok, "The Use of Ethnographic Methods in Religious Research," *Reflections: Journal of Religious and Philosophical Studies* 4, no. 3 (2002): 307–20.

location to obtain authentic and contextual primary data.³⁵

This research was conducted at the Tukji Sacred Tomb located in Nagari Sialang Gaung, Koto Baru District, Dharmasraya Regency, West Sumatra Province. The selection of this location was based on several considerations: (1) The Tukji Sacred Tomb is one of the sacred sites that is still actively visited by pilgrims; (2) the vow tradition at this tomb shows unique characteristics that reflect the blend of Islamic teachings and local beliefs of the Minangkabau people; (3) Dharmasraya Regency has a long historical background since the time of the Dharmasraya Malay Kingdom in the 11th century which was Hindu-Buddhist in character until the arrival of Islam, thus providing a rich historical context for studying the phenomenon of religious syncretism; and (4) there has been no academic research that specifically examines the practice of syncretism in the vow tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb.

The research subjects are those who have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the vow tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb. The determination of research subjects was carried out using *purposive sampling*, namely a data source sampling technique with certain considerations. Based on these criteria, the subjects of this research consist of: (1) the caretaker of the Tukji Sacred Tomb; (2) traditional leaders of Nagari Sialang Gaung (members of the Nagari Traditional Council/KAN); (3) local religious leaders (mosque imams, ustaz, or local ulama); (4) pilgrims who have made vows; and (5) the community around the tomb.^[5] The

number of informants in qualitative research is not determined rigidly, but is based on the principle of data saturation, namely the condition when the addition of new informants no longer provides new information or understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher targets in-depth interviews with 5–10 key informants representing the five categories above.

To obtain comprehensive and valid data, this study used four main data collection techniques. *First*, observation, which includes non-participant observation to observe the pilgrimage practices and vow rituals from the outside, as well as participant observation with the researcher's direct involvement in pilgrimage activities and vow rituals to experience the pilgrims' religious experiences directly. *Second*, *in-depth interviews* with a semi-structured format, which allowed the researcher to explore research themes in depth while keeping the interviews directed to the research objectives. *Third*, visual and audio documentation to collect data in the form of photos, videos, and interview recordings. *Fourth*, literature study to collect secondary data from books, journal articles, and relevant official documents.

The data analysis in this study uses an interactive data analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.³⁶ Data condensation includes the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data contained in field notes and interview transcripts, which is carried out

³⁵ Ulumi, *Syncretism in the Sacred Pilgrimage Tradition in Banten*.

³⁶ Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (sage, 2014).

through three stages of coding: *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding*.³⁷ Data presentation is done in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, and direct quotations from interview transcripts.³⁸ To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation, technical triangulation, time triangulation, *member checking*, and *peer debriefing techniques*.³⁹ This qualitative approach with multi-methods was chosen because it is able to reveal the complexity of the phenomenon of syncretism that appears in various layers, starting from the typology of sacred places, pilgrim motivations, mythological narratives, rituals, to the underlying belief systems.⁴⁰

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

a. Overview of the research location

1) Profile of Sialang Gaung Village

Nagari Sialang Gaung is located in Koto Baru District, Dharmasraya Regency, West Sumatra, with an area of 35.60 km² and borders: North with Nagari Padang Laweh, South with Nagari Koto Baru, West with Nagari Koto Padang, and East with Nagari Tiumang. The topography consists of lowlands to hills with land access 35 km from the district capital.

The population of 5,236 people after the expansion, the majority of whom are ethnic Minangkabau, with their primary livelihoods in the agricultural and plantation sectors (palm oil, rubber, and rice). Nagari

consists of 11 jorong (village units) with the administrative center in Jorong Sialang Gaung. The socio-cultural structure involves the Nagari Customary Council (KAN), the *ninik mamak* (leaders), and religious scholars within the philosophical framework of "Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah" (ABS-SBK).⁴¹

Religious life is dominated by traditional Islam, which accommodates customs, with the practice of *tahlilan* (religious recitation), grave pilgrimages, and vows at sacred sites. However, in recent decades, the influence of purification movements (Salafi/Wahhabi) has begun to penetrate through out-of-region preaching, social media, and Islamic boarding school education, creating a subtle tension between traditionalist and puritanical styles.

2) Tukji Sacred Tomb

The Tukji Sacred Tomb (Atuak Aji) is a sacred site actively visited by pilgrims to pray for healing, prosperity, and fulfill vows. Tukji's historical identity cannot be definitively ascertained due to the lack of written sources; there are three versions of the oral narrative: (1) a cleric who spread Islam early, (2) a prince who performed miracles, and (3) a warrior/founder of the nagari. Sacred status is established through a reputation for piety, community recognition, and the legitimacy of the KAN (National Mandate Party). The caretaker plays a central role in maintaining the tomb and reproducing

³⁷ Feny Rita Fiantika et al., "Qualitative Research Methodology," *Padang: PT. Global Eksekutif Teknologi* 56 (2022).

³⁸ Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis*.

³⁹ Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (sage, 1985).

⁴⁰ Ulumi, *Syncretism in the Sacred Pilgrimage Tradition in Banten*.

⁴¹ "Central Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *2010 Population Census: Population by Region, Urban/Rural Areas, and Gender, Dharmasraya Regency*. Jakarta: BPS. - Google Search," accessed June 9, 2026.

the sacred narrative, making the tomb a symbol of the nagari's local identity.

b. Forms of Syncretism in the Nazar Tradition

Based on observations and in-depth interviews with traditional figures, religious scholars, caretakers and pilgrims, five interrelated forms of syncretism were found:

1) Structural Syncretism: Legitimation of Custom through ABS-SBK

The ABS-SBK philosophy serves as a legitimizing framework that provides space for the nazar tradition. Traditional leaders and the National Mandate Party (KAN) actively use ABS-SBK to defend the tradition when facing criticism from puritan groups.⁴² Datuak Rajo Mangkuto (65 years old, traditional leader) stated:

"The tradition of vows is not a new invention or a heretical teaching; it's a legacy passed down from our ancestors. In the past, scholars never questioned it, so why is it suddenly being questioned now? As long as your intention is to Allah and Tukji is merely an intermediary, there's no problem." (Interview, April 12, 2026)

The ninik mamak (heads of the clan) made strategic accommodation adjustments by reducing the most controversial ritual elements (offerings) while maintaining the essence of the tradition. Datuak Sati (70 years old) admitted:

"In the past, many people brought various offerings, but now they've started to reduce them. We see the

younger generation starting to hesitate. We're adjusting the rituals, but the important thing is to maintain the essence of a vow, a promise to God." (Interview, April 18, 2026)

Differences of opinion among the ninik mamak are managed through customary deliberation, showing that customary legitimacy is dynamic and continuously negotiated.

2) Ritual Syncretism: The Blending of Islamic and Local Practices

The ritual flow of the vow follows the pattern: (1) pilgrims come with equipment (flowers, water, food), (2) ablution, (3) reading Al-Fatihah, tahlil, and prayer, (4) delivering the vow verbally, (5) scattering flowers and pouring prayer water, (6) fulfilling the vow after the wish is granted (slaughtering an animal, feast).⁴³ Mr. Junaidi (55 years old, caretaker) explains:

"Usually pilgrims come, bring flowers, water, sometimes food. Before going to the grave, they perform ablution first. Then read Al-Fatihah, tahlil, prayer. After that, they make a vow, promising that if their wish comes true, they will slaughter or hold a feast." (Interview, March 10, 2026)

Islamic elements (ablution, Arabic prayers) are placed first, while local elements (flower scattering, feasts) follow, demonstrating a hierarchy of symbolic value. "Prayer water" becomes a syncretic medium: ordinary water "charged" with spiritual

⁴² M Sadam Husen and Windy Rizky Putri, "The Concept of Adat Basandi Syarak Syarak Basandi Kitabullah as a Form of the Existence of the Values and Philosophy of Riau Malay Customary Law in the Social and Cultural Life of the Community," *Law Journal (Lajour)* 5, no. 2 (2024): 66–77.

⁴³ Zidan Nadhir, "The Meaning of the Qur'an in Pilgrimage Rituals at the Sunan Gunung Jati Cemetery Complex, Cirebon Regency: A Phenomenological Study." (SI-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir UINSSC, 2025).

power through prayer. Ibu Siti (42) stated:

"I drank the prayer water from Tukji's grave, and I felt healed from a long-standing illness. I'm sure it's because prayers at the grave of a pious person are more effective. But I know that it's Allah who heals." (Interview, March 15, 2026)

Ritual changes are occurring gradually among the younger generation: reducing offerings and emphasizing prayer. Rizal (28 years old) admitted:

"In the past, my parents always brought offerings complete with flowers, incense, and food. But now I'm more modest. I bring just enough flowers and read more prayers and the Quran. I feel that's more in line with Islamic teachings." (Interview, March 25, 2026)

3) Symbolic Syncretism: Visual Language and Double Meaning

The tomb's architecture combines a dome (a symbol of Islam) and Minangkabau carvings (a local symbol).⁴⁴ Datuak Rajo Mangkuto explained that the dome symbolizes Islam, and they are indeed Muslims, but the carvings beneath it symbolize their identity as Minang people, and they are unwilling to abandon either (Interview, April 12, 2026). The figure of Tukji becomes a personal symbol that brings together various meanings: a cleric, a headman, or a founder of a nagari (village). The diversity of versions becomes a symbolic force that allows various groups to find relevance. Ritual objects (flowers, incense) are also fraught with multiple

meanings. Pak Zainal (45 years old) said that he doesn't think much about the dome or the carvings, as long as he comes there to pray and make a vow, but in retrospect, perhaps it is a sign that Islam and local customs have merged (Interview, April 22, 2026). This unconsciousness suggests that symbolic syncretism is deeply ingrained.

4) Ideological Syncretism: The Battlefield of Interpretation

Theological debate focuses on three issues: tawassul, tauhid, and bid'ah. Traditionalists believe the practice to be a valid tawassul. Mr. Junaidi stated that he always tells pilgrims to recite prayers, tahlil, and Al-Fatihah for Tukji, but that they should ask Allah for their needs, as Tukji is merely a wasilah or intermediary (Interview, March 10, 2026). Meanwhile, puritans reject the practice as shirk. Ustaz Ridwan (35 years old) stated that he often reminds congregants that praying at graves with the belief that prayers there are more efficacious is a form of deviation, because Allah never said that prayers at the graves of pious people are more likely to be answered, and that it is bid'ah that must be abandoned (Interview, April 5, 2026).

Traditionalist religious figures engaged in a defensive reinterpretation. Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi (40 years old) explained that he did not prohibit people from visiting Tukji's tomb, but he always reminded them not to shift their beliefs. What is permissible is praying for the deceased and asking Allah for help, while what is not permissible is asking

⁴⁴ Robert W. Hefner and John R. Bowen, "Muslims Through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society.," *Man* 29, no. 4

(1994): 1012,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3034011>.

Tukji directly or believing that Tukji will grant their wishes (Interview, March 28, 2026). Some pilgrims, especially the younger generation, experience doubts. Rizal admitted that he is now somewhat hesitant. He used to accompany his parents to the tomb, but after hearing a sermon stating that such activities are heretical, he became confused (Interview, March 25, 2026).

5) Socio-Cultural Syncretism: The Function of Solidarity

A vow is not a private matter; it is a social event. Fulfilling a vow involves slaughtering an animal and having a communal feast. Mr. Herman (38) recounted that when his vow was answered, he slaughtered a goat and invited family, neighbors, and traditional leaders to a meal. He said that this was customary there, and they shared their wealth and socialized, and that this was what kept them harmonious (Interview, March 20, 2026).

The tomb serves as a center of collective identity and a symbolic boundary *marker* between the residents of Sialang Gaung and other nagari (village). Datuak Rajo Mangkuto stated that Tukji's tomb is their pride. Other nagari (villages) do not have such sacred tombs, so they protect and preserve it, as it reflects their nagari identity (Interview, April 12, 2026).

c. Construction of Religious, Spiritual, and Symbolic Meaning

1) Meaning at the Individual Level (Pilgrim)

Three layers of meaning are constructed: First, the response to the crisis and the pilgrims' hopes that emerge when facing difficult

situations. Mrs. Fatimah (50 years old) said that her child was seriously ill and had sought treatment everywhere but was not cured. So she made a vow at Tukji's tomb, promising that if he recovered, she would slaughter a goat. And thank God, now her child is healthy (Interview, April 25, 2026). Second, the transformative experience of moving from anxiety to calm. Mr. Zainal stated that he felt calm and relieved after praying at Tukji's tomb (Interview, April 22, 2026). Third, the inner negotiation between tradition and theological doubt. Mrs. Siti admitted that she sometimes wondered if what she was doing was right, but her heart told her that she came to the tomb to pray to Allah, not to Tukji (Interview, March 15, 2026).

2) Meaning at the Collective (Community) Level

Tombs are interpreted as (1) collective "places of memory" that connect the past and the present, (2) reinforcers of social solidarity through *kenduri*, and (3) markers of the differentiation of nagari identity. Datuak Rajo Alam (58 years old, member of KAN) stated that this tradition has been passed down through generations. It (tradition) keeps them harmonious and united. If this tradition were lost, they would fear losing their identity (Interview, April 15, 2026). Symbolic Meaning in Rituals

Five main symbolic meanings: (1) the tomb as a symbol of closeness to God (a *mustajab* place), (2) *nazar* as a symbol of hope and endeavor, (3) *votive alms* as a symbol of gratitude and social solidarity, (4) the sacred story of Tukji as a symbol of collective identity, (5) pilgrimage as a symbol of the relationship between the past and the present.

3) The Actors' Views

Guardians interpret tradition as a trust and spiritual service. Traditional leaders interpret it as part of the identity of the community and the village. Traditionalist clerics interpret it as permissible tawassul (intercession). Puritan clerics interpret it as a deviation. Lay pilgrims interpret it pragmatically and personally. Local communities interpret it as part of daily life and a source of income.

2. Discussion

a. Syncretism as an "Adaptive Problem"

This discussion uses Al-Ghazali's theory of *maslahah murrasa* which stipulates four conditions: intrinsic (real), *kulliyat* (universal), does not conflict with the *qath'i* propositions, and is in line with *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* (protecting religion, soul, mind, lineage, property).

1) Structural Syncretism: *Maslahah Ḥājiyyah*

The legitimacy of custom through ABS-SBK serves as a secondary benefit, eliminating psychological difficulties and maintaining social cohesion. The essential requirement is that the psychological benefits (calmness, hope) are tangible. The *kulliyat* requirement is that the benefits are felt by the majority of the community. However, the third requirement (not contradicting the *qath'i* argument) is conditional, depending on the intention and understanding of the individual pilgrim.

2) Ritual Syncretism: 'Urf Sahih

The nazar ritual is 'urf (local custom) which can be a source of law as long as it is 'urf shahih (does not

conflict with the Al-Qur'an and Sunnah). Reading Al-Fatihah and tahlil strengthens *hifẓ al-dīn*. Local elements (sprinkling of flowers, prayer water) can be tolerated as *tabarruk* if they are understood as respect and a means of getting closer to Allah, not magical offerings. Changes in rituals by the younger generation reduce offerings, emphasizing that prayer is a form of *ijtihad* among ordinary people in weighing matters, sacrificing elements of *taḥsīniyyah* (perfection) in order to maintain *hifẓ al-dīn*.

3) Symbolic Syncretism: A Medium of Spiritual Communication

Symbols (domes, carvings, flowers, prayer water) serve as spiritual communication media that strengthen awareness and provide a framework for meaning. The *maslahah* test: these symbols do not harm reason as long as they are understood within the framework of monotheism, not as independent objects of worship. Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi asserts:

"Symbols like flowers and carvings are fine as long as they don't involve any form of worship. The problem is when people believe that flowers or prayer water have their own power, without involving God." (Interview, March 28, 2026)

4) Ideological Syncretism: A Gray Area

The theological debate is the most crucial point. If the practice is understood as *tawassul* (asking Allah through the intermediary of Tukji), it remains within the framework of monotheism. However, if the belief shifts to "it is Tukji who grants," it violates the *qath'i* argument (Quran,

Al-Fatihah: 5) and invalidates its claim to maslahah. Ustaz Ridwan warned:

"I'm worried that if we continue to allow this practice, people's beliefs will gradually shift. From 'asking Allah through Tukji' to 'asking to Tukji'. That is shirk, and it is very dangerous." (Interview, April 5, 2026)

The classic argument of traditionalist scholars: if practices are forcibly eliminated, society will abandon Islam. Mr. Junaidi stated:

"If the iko tradition is banned, I'm afraid people will abandon Islam altogether." (Interview, March 10, 2026)

Thus, maintaining a practice with a "slight error" is better than losing a religious practice altogether as long as education continues.

5) Socio-Cultural Syncretism: The Most Obvious Maslahah

The socio-cultural dimension brings the most tangible benefits: maintaining harmony, strengthening solidarity, and economic redistribution. This tradition supports community preservation and wealth preservation through votive almsgiving. Ibu Siti stated:

"Votive alms also help those who are less fortunate. When someone holds a kenduri, everyone gets a share. It's a blessing for all of us." (Interview, March 15, 2026)

b. Socio-Cultural Implications

1) Implications for Social Cohesion

The tradition of vows strengthens mechanical solidarity (Durkheim's)—social bonds based on shared values, beliefs, and experiences. Cohesion is intrinsic and sustainable, despite challenges from

differing views across generations. Datuak Rajo Alam stated:

"The iko tradition has been passed down through generations. It keeps us harmonious and united." (Interview, April 15, 2026)

Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi acknowledged the potential for division:

"I see differences of opinion emerging in society. Some are continuing to practice it, while others are abandoning it. If not managed properly, this could become a source of division." (Interview, March 28, 2026)

2) Implications for Religious Value Systems

The shift from local Islam to global Islam has dual implications: potential benefits in the form of purifying faith, but also potential harm in the form of the loss of local traditions. Evaluate these benefits using four conditions of benefits:

Essential requirements : The psychological (calmness, hope) and physical (healing) benefits are real. Research on the influence of suggestion and belief on the healing process shows that spiritual beliefs can influence the immune system and physical recovery.

Kulliyat conditions : The benefits are felt by the majority of the community, although not completely evenly.

The third condition (not contradicting the qath'i argument) : Conditional in nature fulfilled if the community's understanding remains within the corridor of monotheism, but falls short if it shifts to shirk.

The fourth condition (in line with maqāṣid) : Tradition supports hiḥẓ al-nafs (soul), hiḥẓ al-nasl (community), and hiḥẓ al-māl (property), but faces challenges to hiḥẓ al-dīn and hiḥẓ al-'aql.

3) Implications for the Sustainability of Tradition

Ritual adaptation (reducing offerings, emphasizing prayer) is a form of *strategic survival* that maintains the essence while responding to theological criticism. This adaptation is a form of dynamic *maslahah* (maslahah): sacrificing elements of *taḥṣīniyyah* (religious principle) to maintain *ḍarūriyyah* (monotheism). However, Datuak Nan Putiah (62 years old) is concerned:

"I'm worried that if the iko tradition continues to be modified, it will gradually disappear. Many of today's young people are influenced by external discourses." (Interview, April 20, 2026)

The sustainability of traditions depends on the community's ability to adapt without losing its essence, as well as ongoing education by traditional leaders and religious scholars.

4) Implications for Customary and Religious Relations (ABS-SBK)

The tradition of vows serves as a test case for the implementation of ABS-SBK. Theoretically, custom should be based on Islamic law, and Islamic law should be based on the Book of God. In practice, its implementation is not simple: there

are differing interpretations of what "conforms" to Islamic law. This difference demonstrates that ABS-SBK is not a dead dogma, but rather a living space for negotiation.

The fragmentation of customary and religious authority among the *ninik mamak* (leaders) themselves, as well as among *ulama* (ulama), creates a situation where the general public faces a number of competing claims to truth. Research by Warman et al. (2023) found that customary and religious authority in Minangkabau is no longer monolithic, but rather fragmented and under constant negotiation.⁴⁵

ABS-SBK is basically the local Minangkabau version of the *maslahah* formula. "*Adat Basandi Syarak*" means that customs only apply if they bring benefits to the *Syarak*. "*Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*" means *syarak* is the highest source of *maslahah*. The debate about *nazar* is a debate about the interpretation of *maslahah*: what is more problematic to maintain tradition (maintain solidarity, identity) or abandon it (maintain the purity of monotheism)?

The Sialang Gaung community responded pragmatically and contextually: maintaining tradition with adaptation. Datuak Rajo Alam stated:

"We realize that the iko tradition isn't perfect. There are areas that need improvement. But we don't want to throw it all away. We prefer to improve it from within, while maintaining its essence." (Interview, April 15, 2026)

c. Critical Reflection and Synthesis

⁴⁵ Arifki Budia Warman, Riska Fauziah Hayati, and Wardatun Nabilah, "HARMONIZATION OF ISLAMIC ECONOMIC LAW WITH LOCAL CULTURE:

STUDY OF THE PETATAH-PETITIH MINANGKABAU," *Tafaqquh: Journal of Islamic Research and Studies*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.52431/tafaqquh.v11i1.1746>.

1) Syncretism as a Cultural Survival Strategy

Syncretism in the nazar tradition is not a deviation, but rather an adaptive mechanism that allows Islam to remain relevant amidst the sociological realities of society. The history of the Islamization of the archipelago shows that Islam has never existed in a cultural vacuum; there has always been a creative dialogue between universal teachings and particular cultures.⁴⁶

The "middle way" logic adopted by the Sialang Gaung community is the essence of an adaptive *maslahah* approach that doesn't choose between black and white, but rather seeks common ground that allows tradition and religion to coexist. Datuak Rajo Mangkuto summarizes:

"We don't want to abandon our traditions, and we don't want to abandon our religion either. We're looking for a middle ground where both can go hand in hand." (Interview, April 12, 2026)

2) The Limitations of *Maslahah* and Four Strict Conditions

The concept of *maslahah* has the potential danger of relativism that everything can be justified in the name of "benefit". To prevent abuse, Al-Ghazali established four strict conditions: true, *kulliyat*, not contradictory to the *qath'i* propositions, and in line with *maqāṣid*.

In the case of the nazar tradition, claims of benefit are

conditional, depending on the community's intentions, understanding, and actual practices. If understanding shifts to shirk, the claim of benefit is invalidated. Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi realized:

"We can't simply ban deeply rooted traditions, but we also can't allow deviations. What we need is education providing the public with the correct understanding so they can practice traditions with the right intentions and a clear understanding." (Interview, March 28, 2026)

3) Recommendation

This research offers five nuanced recommendations:

- a) Strengthening the understanding of Tawhid through continuous education by traditional figures, religious scholars, and caretakers that the only one who has the right to be worshipped is Allah, a vow is a promise to Allah, and pilgrimage is a means of praying for the grave and remembering the dead.
- b) Purification of Intention (*Tajdīd al-Niyyah*) without leaving the tradition of the community can still come to the grave with the intention of praying to Allah, with the grave as a reminder of piety.
- c) Selective adaptation of the most controversial ritual elements (offerings) while maintaining the essence (vow as a promise to Allah).
- d) Dialogue and tolerance between traditionalist and puritan groups

⁴⁶ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*

in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (University of Hawaii Press, 2022).

through customary deliberations to create mutual understanding.

- e) Documentation and preservation of traditions as Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage not only for the Sialang Gaung people, but also for understanding the richness of Islam in the archipelago.

d. Final Synthesis

The tradition of vows at the Tukji Sacred Tomb is a complex phenomenon that cannot be judged in a single, black-and-white manner. It is a product of centuries-long acculturation between Islam and local culture, a part of collective identity, a glue of solidarity, and a source of psychological hope. However, it also faces serious theological challenges, including the potential for shirk (polytheism) if societal understanding shifts.

The Sialang Gaung community demonstrates a capacity for adaptation: maintaining its essence (nazar as a promise to God) while adapting controversial ritual elements. This compromise, maintaining tradition through adaptation, preserving customs without abandoning sharia, reflects local wisdom that has been tested for generations. Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi summarizes:

"The task of all of us, traditional leaders, religious scholars, guardians, and the community, is to ensure this tradition remains on the right track. That track is monotheism. As long as this tradition remains on that track, it

will continue to bring blessings to us all." (Interview, March 28, 2026)

This middle ground is not final; it continues to be negotiated from generation to generation amidst social change and evolving religious discourse. The future of the tradition depends on maintaining a sound understanding of monotheism and the ability of its leaders to continually educate and adapt.

This research demonstrates that syncretism, *maslahah*, and tradition are not contradictory concepts; they are part of a dynamic process in which universal Islamic teachings meet particular cultural realities, shaping and enriching each other. As Datuak Rajo Mangkuto stated:

"We're looking for a middle ground, where both sides can walk together." (Interview, April 12, 2026)

This is where the local wisdom of the Sialang Gaung community lies: not getting caught up in a black-and-white dichotomy, but finding a middle ground that allows them to remain devout Muslims while simultaneously preserving their Minangkabau cultural heritage. This middle ground, Islam Nusantara, is one of Indonesia's greatest treasures, worthy of protection and preservation.⁴⁷

D. Conclusion

This research has succeeded in achieving its three main objectives in examining the nazar tradition at the Tukji Sacred Tomb, Nagari Sialang Gaung, Dharmasraya. **First**, descriptively-analytical, this research reveals that the nazar tradition at the

⁴⁷ Lestari and Yunita, "Syncretism of Islamic Culture and Local Nusantara Culture in Strengthening Community Relations."

Tukji Sacred Tomb consists of five interrelated forms of syncretism. Structural syncretism is manifested through the use of the ABS-SBK philosophy (*Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*) by ninik mamak and the Nagari Customary Council (KAN) as a legitimizing framework to maintain the tradition when facing criticism from puritan groups. Ritual syncretism is seen in the flow of nazar practices that combine Islamic elements (ablution, recitation of Al-Fatihah, tahlil, Arabic prayers) with local elements (flower sprinkling, prayer water, kenduri), with a hierarchical pattern in which Islamic elements are placed at the beginning as a marker of higher symbolic value. Symbolic syncretism is evident in the tomb architecture, which combines domes as symbols of Islam with Minangkabau carvings as symbols of local identity, as well as in ritual objects such as flowers and incense, which are full of multiple meanings. Ideological syncretism is reflected in theological debates centered on three crucial issues: *tawassul* , *tauhid* , and *bid'ah*, which become the battleground for interpretation between traditionalist and puritan groups. Socio-cultural syncretism serves to strengthen communal solidarity through the fulfillment of vows that involve the entire community, while also acting as a boundary marker for the collective identity of Nagari Sialang Gaung.

Second , processually, this research reveals the dynamic mechanism of negotiation of meaning among stakeholders. The caretaker (Pak Junaidi) acts as a guardian of tradition and a reminder that nazar is a promise to God, with Tukji only as an intermediary. Traditional leaders (Datuak Rajo Mangkuto, Datuak Sati, Datuak Rajo Alam, Datuak Nan

Putiah) carry out what is called strategic *accommodation* by reducing the most controversial ritual elements (offerings) while maintaining the essence of tradition in an effort to respond to theological criticism from puritan groups. Traditionalist cleric (Ustaz Ahmad Fauzi) carries out a defensive reinterpretation by distinguishing between the permissible *tawassul* and the *forbidden istighatsah* , and reminds the community not to shift their beliefs from asking God to asking directly to Tukji. Meanwhile, the puritan group (Ustaz Ridwan) rejects the practice as a form of *shirk* and *heresy* that must be abandoned. This negotiation also occurs at the individual level, especially among the younger generation (Rizal) who begins to doubt the legitimacy of tradition after being exposed to puritan teachings through lectures and social media, as well as among lay pilgrims (Mrs. Siti, Mr. Zainal) who experience an inner negotiation between inherited traditions and emerging theological doubts.

Third , this research critically-reflectively analyzes the theological and social implications of the continuation of this syncretic tradition. From the theological dimension, the research finds that the claim of *maslahah* (benefit) of this tradition is conditionally valid if the community's understanding remains within the corridor of *tauhid* (asking Allah through the intermediary of Tukji), but is invalid if it shifts to the belief that Tukji is the one who grants the hajjat.

This debate tests the application of Al-Ghazali's four conditions of *masalah mursalah* : *hakiki* (real psychological and physical benefits), *kulliyat* (benefits felt by the majority of society), not contradicting the *qath'i* (conditional) *dalil*, and in line with *maqāṣid al-syar'ah* (this tradition supports *hifẓ al-nafs* , *hifẓ al-nasl* , and *hifẓ al-māl* , but faces challenges on *hifẓ al-dīn* and *hifẓ al-'aql*). From a social dimension, research has found that this tradition has dual implications: on the one hand, it strengthens social cohesion and mechanical solidarity (Durkheim) through shared experiences and feasts involving the entire community, but on the other hand, it has the potential to create inter-generational divisions due to the increasingly widening differences in views between the older generation who maintain the tradition and the younger generation who are starting to be influenced by puritan teachings.

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