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Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

Toron Tana Tradition In Bangkalan: Between The Priyayi And The Common People

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the symbolic meaning and differences in the implementation of the Toron Tana tradition in Madurese society, especially in Bangkalan, by highlighting the differences between the priyayi and ordinary people. The scope of the study includes the symbolic aspects of rituals, the social structure of the tradition actors, and the function of tradition in maintaining the identity and social cohesion of the community. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were obtained through interviews with local people, as well as literature studies of relevant references. Data analysis used Émile Durkheim's structural functionalism perspective to understand the social function of the Toron Tana tradition in the context of Madurese society. The results of the study show that although there are differences in the form and excitement of the implementation between the priyayi and ordinary people, the core meaning of the tradition is maintained. This tradition functions as a medium for transmitting cultural and spiritual values, strengthening social solidarity, and reproducing social structures continuously. The conclusion of this study confirms that the Toron Tana tradition is not only a cultural heritage, but also an important instrument in maintaining social integration and the collective identity of the Madurese community amidst the dynamics of changing times.

Keywords: Toron Tana, Madura Culture, Social Structure, Structural Functionalism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji makna simbolik dan perbedaan pelaksanaan tradisi Toron Tana dalam masyarakat Madura, khususnya di Bangkalan, dengan menyoroti perbedaan antara kalangan priyayi dan rakyat biasa. Ruang lingkup penelitian mencakup aspek simbolik ritual, struktur sosial pelaku tradisi, serta fungsi tradisi dalam menjaga identitas dan kohesi sosial masyarakat. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data diperoleh wawancara dengan masyarakat setempat, serta studi pustaka terhadap referensi yang relevan. Analisis data menggunakan perspektif fungsionalisme struktural Émile Durkheim untuk memahami fungsi sosial tradisi Toron Tana dalam konteks masyarakat Madura. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat perbedaan bentuk dan kemeriahan pelaksanaan antara kalangan priyayi dan rakyat biasa, inti makna tradisi tetap dipertahankan. Tradisi ini berfungsi sebagai media transmisi nilai-nilai kultural dan spiritual, memperkuat solidaritas sosial, serta mereproduksi struktur sosial secara berkesinambungan. Simpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tradisi Toron Tana bukan



Medina-Te : Jurnal Studi Islam, Vol. 21 Nomor 2, Juni 2025 p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

hanya warisan budaya, melainkan juga instrumen penting dalam menjaga integrasi sosial dan identitas kolektif masyarakat Madura di tengah dinamika perubahan zaman.

Kata Kunci: Toron Tana, Budaya Madura, Struktur Sosial, Fungsionalisme Structural

Introduction

One of the local traditions of the Madurese community is Toron Tana. For the Javanese community, this tradition is called Tedhak Siten, while the Malay community calls it turun tanah, and until now it is still often carried out by the Madurese community, especially in Bangkalan. Toron Tana introduces children to stepping on the ground or earth for the first time. This tradition is usually carried out when the child is 7-9 months old or older and the child is ready to carry out Toron Tana. This tradition symbolizes the salvation of a baby when he will go down to the ground or earth for the first time. This traditional ritual is very familiar to the Madurese community, because it is a local obligation to be preserved (Firnando & Zahara, 2023).

In carrying out the Toron Tana tradition in Madura, especially in the Bangkalan area, there are differences in the form of celebration that reflect the social position of the perpetrators of the tradition. In ordinary people, the implementation of the tradition tends to be simple. The event is held in the yard of the house with a symbolic procession such as stepping the child's feet on the ground or a certain base (for example flour or sand), reciting prayers, and accompanied by a small feast involving the closest relatives. Meanwhile, among the local aristocrats or nobles who have a higher social and economic position, the Toron Tana tradition is carried out more lively and formal. This celebration among them can involve a wide invitation and the serving of decent and impressive food and gifts. Although classified as an internal tradition, this shows that social status also influences the symbolic and social forms in the implementation of this cultural rite.

The classification of Madurese society itself is often influenced by the Javanese classification which distinguishes between abangan, santri, and priyayi. If in Javanese culture there are three social groups, namely abangan, santri, and priyayi (Kartikasari & Legowo, 2018). In the context of Madura, this term has indeed undergone adaptation. The ordinary people referred to in this tradition come from two groups, namely the abangan community and the santri community whose social status is not high. The abangan community is a community that practices Islam by following customary beliefs and traditions. The abangan community does not have a stance in carrying out religious commands because this Javanese Islamic community believes more in the original Javanese traditions that have developed for a long time. The santri community is a community that practices its religious knowledge according to Islamic law. While the priyayi referred to in the Toron Tana tradition are communities that are considered to have a high social level.

Family traditions contribute to social and psychological security, passing on family experiences and stabilizing family life, which is important for forming a positive family identity (Kabanova, 2021). Including the Toron Tana tradition, it plays an important role in maintaining family relationships and social identity by acting as a channel for cultural, historical, and socio-psychological experiences across generations. Traditional family values are essential in maintaining family relationships and shaping the socio-cultural identity of children. These 100



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

values serve as the basis for personality development and guide individuals in their search for civic and socio-cultural identity (Belyanskaya, 2024).

Previous research by Moh. Fajrul Islam also explained that the implementation of the Toron Tana tradition is full of symbolism that is not only rooted in local beliefs, but also reflects the social structure of its society. Through the structuralism approach of Lévi-Strauss, he analyzed how the mantras in the procession represent hierarchical and cosmological values. Therefore, this study aims to examine the symbolic meaning of the Toron Tana tradition in Bangkalan, how the toron tana tradition differs between ordinary people and priyayi with Emile Durkheim's structural functionalism approach.

Research Method

The type of research used in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. As stated by Gill (2020), a qualitative phenomenological approach is very effective in understanding the subjective meanings that emerge from participants' social experiences (Järvinen & Meyer-Mik Nanna, 2020). Qualitative is the result of data collection that is described in written words, in the sense of not numbers so that it can provide clarity on the focus of the problem. Qualitative research produces descriptions in the form of written or oral presentations from the people observed. This type of research is Field Research, which is a study that uses information obtained from research targets called informants or respondents through interviews. This research was conducted in Bangkalan, by conducting interviews with parties involved in the implementation of the research, namely the community from the priyayi (community leaders) and ordinary people. Data collection in this study is more directed at written data or documents related to the research on the toron tana tradition in Bangkalan and the interviews.

Result and Discussion

A. Implementation of the Toron Tana Tradition in Bangkalan

The tradition of toron tana has existed since ancient times and has been carried out from generation to generation. The tradition of toron tana in Bangkalan has been carried out since the time of our ancestors until now it is still carried out and applied even though there are a small number of S families who do not carry out this tradition. Etymologically, tradition has the meaning of a connection between the past and the present, in the form of knowledge, doctrine, and forms of practice that are transmitted from generation to generation. An important element of tradition is transmission from one generation to the next. If that is lost, then it is certain that the tradition will also be lost, swallowed up and crushed by time. This is in line with the results of Miftahul's research in his journal article that turun tanah is a series of birth processions that are carried out continuously from their ancestors, where this tradition has existed since ancient times (Miftahul, 2017).

Specifically, there is no single figure or figure known as the pioneer of the Toron Tana tradition. This is because this tradition developed collectively in society, through the transmission of cultural values that are passed down orally and in practice from generation to generation. However, the role of traditional figures and local religious figures is very large in maintaining and preserving this tradition. They act as guardians of values and guides for



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

the course of the ritual, ensuring that each stage is carried out in accordance with applicable customary norms and Islamic law. Based on the results of research interviews, in general, this tradition is a form of expression of gratitude for achieving an important stage of development, namely when a baby begins to walk, and is a symbol of hope for the child's life in the future when he is an adult, this tradition is also known as a symbol of children being allowed to touch their feet to the ground. Regardless of whether it is true or not or whether it is in accordance with how the child's life will be in the future. Based on the results of the interview, this tradition not only functions as a symbolic ritual, but also as a medium for preserving cultural and spiritual values that are passed down from generation to generation (Interview results of N, May 5, 2025).

For the implementation of the toron tana tradition, it is adjusted and depends on the wishes and agreement of the family. Based on the results of an interview with one of the local community leaders, the toron tana tradition is carried out when the baby is 7 months old, it can be carried out as a family by inviting the closest relatives or closest neighbors for people who live in the city.

The process of implementing the toron tana tradition begins with a joint prayer activity led by a family elder or traditional figure. This prayer is addressed to God as a form of request for safety, health, and a bright future for the child. This stage reflects a strong spiritual dimension in the lives of local communities, where a child's biological transition is also framed in a religious dimension.

After the joint prayer, the elders recite the Prophet's prayers three times, which are then blown onto the child's crown. This practice is understood as a symbolic form of transmitting prayers and spiritual hopes that are directly attached to the child as a form of protection from bad things. The recitation of prayers also emphasizes the integration of Islamic values in the implementation of local traditions.

The next stage is the procession of ordering the child to step on the tetel covered with plastic on top (traditional food made from sticky rice). Sticky rice in this context is interpreted as a symbol of attachment or "stickiness" to good things, inherent fortune, and close social ties. After stepping on the tetel, the child is guided to touch his feet directly to the ground, which in local cosmology is understood as a symbol of the child's acceptance by the earth—as a place to stand and a place to return to.

The culmination of this tradition is a procession known as bu' nyambu', where the child is placed near a talam or large tray containing various symbolic objects, such as pencils, the Qur'an, books, mirrors, money, prayer beads, combs, gold, and rice. These objects are arranged and then spontaneously selected by the child. Each object represents a hope for the child's future. The child's choice of objects is believed to have predictive meaning for their interests, talents, or the direction of their life in the future. Therefore, this tradition not only functions as a rite of passage, but also as an instrument for internalizing values and forming the child's cultural identity in their community (Interview results of N, May 5, 2025).

The items used in the toron tana tradition are fully surrendered to the family, there is no limit to putting any items into the tray in the "bu'-nyambu" process as long as the items are not dangerous. Everything is adjusted to the wishes of the family. However, the community does not believe in these items, it is only an interpretation and a hope that will



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

happen in the future according to the family's hopes for the child who carries out this toron tana tradition. Whether or not this tradition is carried out lively depends on the family's ability, which determines the day of the implementation of this tradition is also the family.

The purpose of carrying out the Toron Tana tradition is to get a picture or prediction of how the child's life will be when they are adults. In addition, the reason for carrying out this tradition is not only as a symbol and intermediary for the child to be allowed to touch the ground for the first time, this tradition is also used as a reminder that humans are created from the earth and will return to the earth. In interviews, respondents stated that this tradition is not mandatory, but is a complement in their families. This is in line with the view that the Toron Tana tradition contains deep spiritual and social values, strengthening the relationship between humans and nature and their communities (Interview Kyai UHM, April 28, 2025).

B. The Symbolic Meaning of the Toron Tana Tradition in Bangkalan

Symbolic meaning refers to the attribution of meaning to objects or symbols, both inanimate and living, through the process of communication, either directly or indirectly. The purpose of symbolic meaning is to give meaning to symbols through consensus within a particular geographic area or society (Sholihah et al., 2024).

In the practice of the toron tana tradition, there are symbolic meanings of the objects contained in the tray used, namely: The Qur'an Has a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who is an expert in reciting the Koran and applying the values of the Qur'an in everyday life. Prayer beads Have a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who is an expert in worship and religion. Notebooks Have a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who is diligent in reading and intelligent. Ballpoint pens Have a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who is good at writing. Combs Have a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who always looks neat. Glasses Have a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who loves to dress up and beautify himself. Money Has a symbolic meaning so that the child will later become someone who is successful and rich.

In the Toron Tana tradition, the symbolism of objects such as the Qur'an, prayer beads, money, and others not only function as representations of children's future hopes, but also reflect local cultural values that are integrated with religious teachings. In a symbolic framework, rituals such as bu'-nyambu' reflect a local value system combined with religious teachings. This is in line with Beck and Grayot (2021) who explain that the new functionalism theory emphasizes the importance of dynamic cultural meaning in modern social systems (Beck & Grayot, 2021). In addition, Turner explains that ritual processions such as bu'-nyambu' in Toron Tana are a form of social transition that connects individuals with their communities through spontaneously chosen symbols (Turner et al., 2017).

The Toron Tana tradition is a form of ritual in the life cycle of the Madurese people, especially in the early phase of human life. As in many cultures in the archipelago, the Madurese people also have stages of transition rites (rites of passage) that accompany the process of human life from birth to death. In this context, Toron Tana becomes a symbol of the child's initiation into social and ecological relations, namely the relationship between humans and their environment and community.



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

The Toron Tana ritual is not only symbolic, but is also full of the instillation of religious values and customs from an early age. In practice, there are prayers, sholawat, and the "bu'-nyambu'" process which reflects the parents' hopes for the child's future. This ritual contains the message that since infancy, children have been conditioned to have a relationship with spiritual (divinity), social (community), and ecological (land) values. In the study of Islamic anthropology, traditions like this are included in the form of cultural Islam, namely the process in which Islamic teachings are absorbed and manifested in local cultural practices. This is in accordance with the view of Zamakhsyari Dhofier who stated that in both santri and abangan communities, the form of appreciation of Islam is often manifested through local culture that has been assimilated with Islamic values (Dhofier, 2011).

C. Toron Tana Tradition Between the Priyayi and the Common People

A tradition is formed and persists in a society because they consider that the tradition they adhere to is something meaningful, significant or beneficial for their lives. On the other hand, tradition has also given meaning to the society that adheres to and maintains it. The Toron Tana tradition is a hereditary ritual in Madurese society that is carried out when babies start to learn to walk. This tradition symbolizes gratitude for the child's growth and introduces them to the elements of the earth as a symbol of closeness to nature and social life. The main difference in the implementation of the Toron Tana tradition between the priyayi and ordinary people lies in the material aspect, the excitement of the event and the place where the event is held. The toron tana tradition among the priyayi is usually carried out at the grave of the child's family elders.

Among the Priyayi, the implementation of this tradition tends to be more lively with rituals such as the use of jasmine flowers on the baby, the reading of prayers by family elders, and the serving of special foods such as urap, eggs, and chicken adun (a typical Madurese food). One interesting ritual is the placement of various objects in a tray such as the Qur'an, prayer beads, money, and candy—chosen by the child as a symbol of hope for the future. Meanwhile, among ordinary people, this tradition is carried out simply and privately, only involving the nuclear family without inviting religious figures or extended relatives (Interview Kyai UHM, April 28, 2025).

They do not invite religious figures such as kyai, unlike traditions that already have names such as agigah or circumcision. The presentation of the dishes is also simple, porridge and traditional snacks.

However, in terms of ritual implementation, it is the same for both the priyayi and the common people. Although there are differences in the material and festive aspects, the essence of Toron Tana remains the same, namely an expression of gratitude and prayer for the child. This difference does not cause a gap because this tradition is private and does not involve many people, unlike traditions such as marriage or tahlilan which are more public.

The difference in the implementation of Toron Tana between the priyayi and the common people reflects the social hierarchy that exists in. The differences in the implementation of Toron Tana illustrate how social structures work to maintain the balance of group identities, as studied by Izadi et al. (2020) in the application of structural



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

functionalism to diverse social environments (Izadi et al., 2020). In this context, the priyayi class uses this tradition as a means of legitimizing their social status through more festive rituals, while ordinary people focus more on spiritual aspects and simplicity.

In the traditional toron tana procession, when compared to the procession in ancient times, there are certainly changes. However, the changes made are only partial and not complete. However, the changes that occur are only in certain parts. For example, if in the past money was not placed under the porridge base, now some families who carry out the tradition put money under the porridge base which is then given as charity. In the past, some people recited Macapat, while now it has been replaced with religious studies and prayers. This is in line with research conducted by Zaitur Rahem in his journal article that the technical aspects of the toron tana culture in a number of villages are indeed diverse and are packaged in a series of activities (Rahem, 2020).

Traditions also change. Traditions are born at a certain time when people establish certain fragments of the past heritage as traditions. Traditions change when people pay special attention to certain fragments of tradition and ignore others. Traditions can last for a certain period of time and may disappear when material objects are discarded and ideas are forgotten. Along with the changing times, the Toron Tana tradition has undergone transformation in several aspects, such as replacing the reading of Macapat with pengajian and sholawat. This is in accordance with the theory of social change put forward by Soerjono, which states that tradition will always adapt to the socio-cultural conditions of society. In addition, it emphasizes that cultural change is often influenced by the interaction between local and global values, which in this case is reflected in the integration of Islamic values with Madurese cultural practices.

D. Analysis of Structural Functionalism Theory on the Toron Tana Tradition in Bangkalan

Structural functionalism theory is one of the classical approaches in sociology developed by Émile Durkheim. Durkheim used a functional approach in his sociology, namely explaining social institutions based on the positive roles or functions they perform to maintain social order and stability. In this view, society is understood as a system composed of various interconnected social structures that have their respective functions to maintain social stability and balance. Every element in society, including tradition, is considered to have an important role in creating social order and solidarity. The Toron Tana tradition as one of the cultural rituals of the Madurese community, especially in Bangkalan, can be analyzed within this framework because it plays a role in uniting society through symbolic and spiritual practices that are passed down from generation to generation.

Durkheim's structural functionalism theory explains that every element in society has an important function in maintaining social stability. In the context of Toron Tana, this tradition not only functions as a rite of passage, but also as a social glue that strengthens collective consciousness. This is in line with Talcott Parsons which states that social institutions have a dual role, namely fulfilling individual needs and maintaining the balance of the social system. Within the framework of contemporary structural functionalism theory, Solomon and Anthony emphasize that the social function of cultural rituals is not only to



p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

maintain stability but also to mediate the process of societal adaptation to social change (Kofi Amoah & Ayim, 2018).

In Durkheim's perspective, tradition is not only a cultural heritage, but also functions as a social glue that strengthens collective consciousness. This collective consciousness emerges through community participation in rituals that are considered sacred and meaningful both spiritually and socially. The Toron Tana tradition, as a rite of passage, brings together family and community members in an important moment—namely when a child is first introduced to the element of earth as a symbol of world life. This process not only has symbolic meaning, but also functions to strengthen family relationships, strengthen social identity, and reproduce the cultural values of the Madurese community in a sustainable manner. Beck and Grayot add that new functionalism seeks to avoid Parsons' classical tautology by integrating model-based explanations into social systems (Beck & Grayot, 2021).

One important aspect of structural functionalism is the view that social differences do not necessarily cause conflict, but rather play a role in maintaining the structure of society. This is reflected in the differences in the implementation of the Toron Tana tradition between the priyayi and the common people. The priyayi carry out this tradition in a more festive manner, involving religious figures, special foods, and social symbols such as jasmine flowers and gold. Meanwhile, the common people carry out this tradition in a simpler way and are limited to the nuclear family (Sholihah et al., 2024). Although different in expression, both groups maintain the core meaning of tradition as a form of gratitude and hope for the future of children. This shows that the social structure in Madurese society is not exclusive or divisive, but rather complements and strengthens each other's roles in society.

The social function of the Toron Tana tradition can be divided into two types: manifest function and latent function. The manifest function of this tradition is as a form of celebration and gratitude for the growth of children who are starting to be able to walk. This is reflected in symbolic processions such as reading prayers, sholawat, to the bu' nyambu' procession which involves objects such as the Qur'an, prayer beads, books, and money (Firnando & Zahara, 2023a). Meanwhile, the latent function, which is not immediately visible, is the preservation of cultural values, the legitimacy of social structures, and the reproduction of group identities. In other words, through this tradition, the Madurese people reaffirm collective values and strengthen social solidarity across generations.

Furthermore, the Toron Tana tradition also shows the integration between religious values and customs. Joint prayers, reading of sholawat, and religious symbols in the bu' nyambu' procession show that this tradition is not only customary, but also religious. In Durkheim's view, religion functions as a moral force that binds individuals in a community (Emile Durkheim, 1915). Therefore, the integration of Islamic values in the Toron Tana tradition strengthens social cohesion and becomes a means of early value education for children. Spiritual values such as purity, hope, and divine protection are symbolically instilled through this ritual, and become part of the normative system maintained by the community.

p-ISSN: 1858-3237 Page: 99-109 e-ISSN: 2623-0178

Over time, this tradition has also undergone transformation as part of adaptation to social change. Some forms of old practices, such as the recitation of Macapat, have been replaced by pengajian and sholawat (Rahem, 2020). In addition, some families now put money in the porridge base as part of a symbolic procession, which is then given as charity. These changes do not eliminate the main function of the tradition, but instead show its flexibility in adapting to the socio-cultural conditions of society. This is in accordance with the view of structural functionalism which states that society will always try to achieve a new balance through the process of adaptation to external changes (Izadi et al., 2020).

The role of tradition as a medium for social integration is also seen in the process of internalizing social values to children. In the bu' nyambu' procession, children are given the opportunity to choose symbolic objects that are believed to reflect their future. This practice is not just a game, but becomes an educational tool for families and communities in conveying hopes and values to the next generation (Miftahul, 2017). From a functionalist perspective, this is a clear example of how social institutions such as families and communities play a role in passing on social values and norms to their members.

In addition to being an instrument for preserving values, the Toron Tana tradition can also be understood as an adaptive mechanism that allows Madurese society to respond to the challenges of the times without losing its cultural identity. In the context of modernization and increasing social mobility, this tradition is still maintained by many families, both in rural areas and those who have migrated to big cities. This preservation is not merely symbolic, but shows a collective awareness that tradition plays a role in strengthening the social network of the extended family. In some cases, the Toron Tana tradition also becomes an event for family reunions, bringing together relatives who are spread across various regions, thus strengthening the sense of togetherness and extending the internal social network.

Interestingly, amidst the growing tide of individualism, Toron Tana still places community at the center of meaning. This is in line with Durkheim's concept of mechanical solidarity, where social bonds are formed through shared experiences and collective beliefs. This tradition, although it seems simple, carries a deep meaning about human attachment to cultural roots, community, and spiritual values. Thus, the Toron Tana tradition not only has historical and cultural value, but also becomes a social strategy to maintain the sustainability of the collective values of the Madurese people amidst the changing times .

Overall, the Toron Tana tradition can be understood as a symbolic system that has an integrative function in Madurese society. This tradition is a vehicle for forming social identity, strengthening collective solidarity, and maintaining the stability of social structures in the community. Through a structural functionalism approach, it can be concluded that the sustainability of this tradition is not solely due to cultural heritage, but because it fulfills a vital social function for society connecting the past, present, and future in a framework of mutually agreed values.

Conclusions

The Toron Tana tradition in Bangkalan is a form of transition rite in the life cycle of the Madurese people which is full of symbolic, spiritual, and social values. This tradition is not just



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a cultural ceremony, but a mechanism for inheriting values that binds generations and strengthens collective solidarity. Through ritual processions such as prayers, reading of sholawat, and the selection of symbolic objects by the child, Toron Tana functions as a medium for internalizing local religious and cultural values from an early age.

The differences in implementation between the priyayi and ordinary people show the influence of social structure on cultural expression, but do not change the core meaning of the tradition. Madurese society, both from the upper and lower classes, still uphold the values of gratitude, hope, and spiritual attachment contained in this tradition. Within the framework of Durkheim's structural functionalism theory, this tradition functions as a social glue that strengthens collective consciousness and maintains social order.

In the midst of modernization and social change, this tradition has not become extinct, but rather shows flexibility through forms of adaptation that maintain the essence of values. Toron Tana is proof that local traditions have the ability to survive, transform, and remain relevant in contemporary society. Therefore, this tradition is not only part of the cultural heritage, but also an important instrument in maintaining identity, social cohesion, and continuity of values in Madurese society.

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