



RELIGIOUS LEADERS AS CULTURAL COMMUNICATORS: AN ANALYSIS OF *BEGAWÉ* LOCAL WISDOM IN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION IN LOMBOK

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Abstract

This study examines the communicative role of religious leaders in mediating the relationship between Islamic values and local cultural practices within the *Begawé* tradition of the Sasak community in Lombok. Existing scholarship on religious authority and local wisdom has largely overlooked the discursive mechanisms through which socio religious meanings are negotiated in communal ritual contexts therefore, this study aims to address this gap by analysing how religious narratives are constructed and strategically communicated. Employing a qualitative design grounded in critical discourse analysis, data were collected through in depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving five key informants representing religious, customary, and community leadership. The findings reveal that religious leaders function as cultural brokers who articulate adaptive Islamic discourses by integrating scriptural references, symbolic ritual language, and moral exhortations that legitimise tradition while responding to ongoing socio religious transformations. This mediation process fosters social cohesion and reinforces collective identity, yet also reflects contestations shaped by modernisation and differing Islamic orientations, particularly between Aswaja and Salafi groups. Overall, the study contributes to communication studies and the anthropology of religion by conceptualising local religious discourse as a dynamic

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cultural strategy for negotiating continuity and change in contemporary Muslim societies.

Keywords: Religious Leaders; Cultural Communicators; Begawe; Sasak Community; Socio-Religious Communication.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji peran komunikatif para pemimpin agama dalam memediasi hubungan antara nilai-nilai Islam dan praktik budaya lokal dalam tradisi Begawe pada masyarakat Sasak di Lombok. Kajian sebelumnya mengenai otoritas keagamaan dan kearifan lokal sebagian besar mengabaikan mekanisme diskursif melalui mana makna sosial-keagamaan dinegosiasikan dalam konteks ritual komunal, oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menganalisis bagaimana narasi keagamaan dibangun dan dikomunikasikan secara strategis. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif yang berlandaskan analisis wacana kritis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan lima informan kunci dari unsur kepemimpinan agama, adat, dan komunitas. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa para pemimpin agama berfungsi sebagai perantara budaya yang mengartikulasikan wacana Islam yang adaptif melalui integrasi rujukan skriptural, bahasa simbolik ritual, dan pesan moral yang melegitimasi tradisi sekaligus merespons transformasi sosial-keagamaan yang sedang berlangsung. Proses mediasi ini mendorong kohesi sosial dan memperkuat identitas kolektif, namun juga mencerminkan dinamika kontestasi yang dipengaruhi modernisasi serta perbedaan orientasi keislaman, khususnya antara kelompok Aswaja dan Salafi. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini berkontribusi pada kajian komunikasi dan antropologi agama dengan mengonseptualisasikan wacana keagamaan lokal sebagai strategi budaya yang dinamis dalam menegosiasikan keberlanjutan dan perubahan pada masyarakat Muslim kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Tokoh Agama; Komunikator Budaya; Begawe; Masyarakat Sasak; Komunikasi Sosial-Keagamaan.

INTRODUCTION

Religious communication is fundamentally embedded in the cultural context in which it occurs. From the perspective of cultural communication theory, culture functions as a system of meanings that shapes how individuals interpret religious messages and translate them into everyday practices. In this sense, culture operates as an interpretive framework influencing how religious teachings are understood, experienced, and enacted in daily life. Through shared values, symbols, and local traditions, religious messages acquire contextual meanings that correspond to the social character of a community. In multicultural societies such as Lombok, cultural diversity and plural value systems significantly determine the effectiveness of socio-religious communication processes.¹ Local cultural elements therefore function not only as expressions of identity but also as communicative bridges that connect normative religious doctrines with lived social realities.² Understanding these cultural dimensions is thus essential for constructing contextual religious communication capable of sustaining social harmony in pluralistic environments.

Local wisdom may be conceptualized as collectively shared traditional values transmitted across generations that guide patterns of social behaviour and community interaction.³ Within symbolic interactionist perspectives, these values represent socially constructed meanings regulating interpersonal relationships and engagement with the surrounding environment. In the Sasak community of Lombok, such local wisdom is concretely manifested in the *Begawe* tradition, a socio-cultural ritual symbolizing communal solidarity and collective identity.⁴ This tradition embodies principles of cooperation, religiosity, and social cohesion that reinforce communal integration. More importantly, *Begawe* provides a communicative arena where religious leaders and community members exchange symbolic meanings, moral experiences, and social interpretations.⁵ Through this interaction, religious teachings are negotiated and harmonized with local cultural norms, thereby shaping both the social and spiritual dimensions of community life.

In this context, religious leaders function not merely as transmitters of doctrinal teachings but as cultural mediators who interpret and contextualize religious norms within specific socio-cultural environments.⁶ In culturally diverse settings characterized by strong local traditions, religious authority is often articulated through adaptive communicative strategies that render religious messages socially meaningful and culturally resonant. By employing culturally embedded symbols, narratives, and ritual expressions familiar to the

¹Syaiful Anam, Nilam Handayani, and Khairurrizki Khairurrizki, "Konflik Antar Etnik-Agama Dan Pembangunan Perdamaian Di Lombok: Sebuah Eksplorasi Everyday Peace Di Lombok Utara," *RESIPROKAL: Jurnal Riset Sosiologi Progresif Aktual* 6, no. 2 (2024): 175-96, <https://doi.org/10.29303/resiprokal.v6i2.613>.

²Irwan Supriadin and Musafir Pababari, "Dialektika Dan Proses Inkulturasi Agama Dan Budaya Lokal Di Indonesia," *Al-Qalam: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 226-35, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-qalam.v16i2.3330>.

³Husna Husna et al., "Nilai Nilai Kearifan Lokal Generasi Millennial Di Kota Banjarmasin," *Al-Hiwar Jurnal Ilmu Dan Teknik Dakwah* 10, no. 1 (2022): 29-37, <https://doi.org/10.18592/al-hiwar.v10i1.6935>.

⁴Ahmad Abdul Hadi et al., "Analisis Nilai Kearifan Lokal Tapsila, Krama Dan Gama Sebagai Penguatan Karakter Siswa," *Renjana Pendidikan Dasar* 5, no. 1 (2025): 39-47, <https://prospek.unram.ac.id/index.php/renjana/article/view/1307>
KARAKTER SISWA.%22%0A%0ARenjana Pendidikan Dasar 5, no. 1 (2025): 39-47.

⁵Muh Izzat Ubaidi and Fakhruddin Aziz, "Konstruksi Sosial Dalam Tradisi Begawe Pada Masyarakat Dusun Tibulilin Lombok Tengah," *TAMADDUN: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Seni, Dan Humaniora* 2, no. 2 (2024): 73-80, <https://doi.org/10.70115/tamaddun.v2i2.189>.

⁶Moch Irfan Syahroni and Muhammad Rofiq, "Aktualisasi Paham Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah Masyarakat Hollo Maluku Tengah Di Dalam Penguatan Pendidikan Agama Islam," *ALMIKRAJ Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora (E-ISSN 2745-4584)* 5, no. 2 (2025): 1621-43, <https://ejournal.insuriponorogo.ac.id/index.php/almikraj>.

community, religious leaders contribute to constructing contextualized religious understanding.⁷ This mediating role becomes particularly visible in the *Begawe* tradition among the Sasak people, where religious leaders deliver prayers, moral advice, and symbolic discourses that strengthen the ritual's spiritual legitimacy.⁸ Their presence facilitates the integration of religious values with local cultural practices, thereby reinforcing socio-religious harmony and communal continuity.⁹

However, contemporary social transformations in Lombok shaped by modernization, digital technological expansion, and increasing social mobility have altered patterns of interaction and religious practice. The intensification of global information flows has gradually shifted community value orientations that were previously grounded in strong traditional framework.¹⁰ These transformations may generate tensions between emerging individualistic tendencies and collectivist cultural values emphasizing solidarity and shared responsibility.¹¹ Within this evolving socio-cultural landscape, religious leaders are required to recalibrate their communicative roles to ensure that religious messages remain relevant, persuasive, and socially integrative.¹² This condition highlights the urgency of examining how religious communication adapts to structural change while maintaining cultural continuity.

Despite extensive scholarly attention to religious leadership in social and theological domains, limited research has explicitly conceptualized religious leaders as cultural communicators through a systematic discourse-analytical perspective. Existing studies tend to prioritize ritual performance, institutional authority, or normative doctrinal transmission, offering less analytical focus on how socio-religious meanings are discursively constructed and negotiated in everyday communal practices.¹³ This gap underscores the need for research that positions religious leaders as active cultural agents engaged in shaping and disseminating local wisdom discourse within dynamic social contexts.¹⁴

Several previous studies demonstrate thematic relevance to the present research. For example, Solihin and Al-Farisi examined the integration of Islamic educational values with Javanese cultural perspectives through the intellectual discourse of Emha Ainun Nadjib, illustrating the mediating role of religious figures in contextualizing religious teachings.¹⁵

⁷M Hidayat M Hidayat et al., "Peran Budaya Lokal Dalam Pelestarian Nilai-Nilai Keagamaan: Studi Etnografi Terhadap Komunitas Adat Yang Menjalankan Syariat Islam," *KHAZANAH: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Agama, Sosial Dan Kebudayaan* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1-11, <https://jurnalp4i.com/index.php/khazanah>.

⁸Vina Tri Ramdani, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi Begibung Pada Masyarakat Sasak Di Dusun Tanggak Lombok Tengah," *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains, Geologi, Dan Geofisika (GeoScienceEd Journal)* 6, no. 1 (2025): 557-62, <https://doi.org/10.29303/goescienceed.v6i1.597>.

⁹Zulfa Zainuddin et al., "Dinamika Sosial Masyarakat Muslim: Studi Kasus Tentang Interaksi Antara Agama Dan Budaya Lokal Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kolaboratif Sains* 7, no. 5 (2024): 1777-87, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.56338/jks.v7i5.5358>.

¹⁰Mudrikah Rihadhatul Aisy et al., "Perubahan Nilai Dan Norma Pada Masyarakat: Studi Sosial Di Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Cakrawala Akademika* 1, no. 6 (2025): 2202-19, <https://doi.org/10.70182/jca.vli6.348>.

¹¹Aslan Aslan And Melyana R Pugu, "Pergeseran Makna Religius: Pengaruh Interaksi Budaya Global Terhadap Tradisi Lokal," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Indonesia*, vol. 3, 2025, 158-68, <https://sociohum.net/index.php/Prosidingnasioanal>.

¹²Muhsinah Muhsinah, "Analisis Peran Dakwah Sebagai Alat Transformasi Sosial: Tantangan Dan Strategi Komunikasi Dalam Konteks Masyarakat Modern," *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media* 1, no. 1 (2024): 160-75, <https://ittishal.org/index.php/jkm/article/view/34>.

¹³Rozzaqul Hasan, "Agama Dalam Pandangan Antropolog: Perspektif Sosial-Budaya," *TAJIDID: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Kemanusiaan* 9, no. 1 (2025): 185-99, <https://doi.org/10.52266/tajidid.v9i1.4315>.

¹⁴Siskawaty Sakoan, "Agama Dan Pembentukan Karakter Generasi Alfa Di Era Postdigital," *Jurnal Teruna Bhakti*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.47131/jtb.v6i2.201>.

¹⁵Syifa, "Al-Ijtima' I : Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Volume 1 Nomor 2 Desember (2024) E-ISSN 3062-9411 Integrasi Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Budaya Lokal Sebagai Pendekatan Strategis Untuk Meningkatkan Relevansi Dan Efektivitas Pendidikan Agama Di Masyarakat AL-."

Similarly, Pebriyanto and Siswanto highlighted the revitalization of local cultural values within multicultural da'wah practices in response to globalization challenges. Nevertheless, these studies have not sufficiently explored such dynamics within the specific socio-religious communication context of Lombok, nor have they systematically applied discourse analysis to understand how local cultural meanings are negotiated in ritual interaction. This limitation indicates a clear research gap that necessitates focused investigation of the *Begawe* tradition as a site of socio-religious meaning construction.¹⁶

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide a focused examination of religious leaders as cultural communicators in the *Begawe* tradition of the Sasak community in Lombok. It aims to analyse how religious leaders articulate and negotiate religious values within local cultural frameworks, to identify forms of local wisdom discourse emerging in socio-religious communication processes, and to explain the relevance of religious leadership in strengthening social cohesion and sustaining cultural identity amid contemporary social change. By addressing these objectives, the research highlights the theoretical and practical significance of understanding religious communication as a dynamic process of cultural mediation in plural Muslim societies.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive design with a discourse analysis framework to examine the role of religious leaders as cultural communicators in the practice of local wisdom, *Begawe*, in Lombok. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings, values, and processes of socio-religious communication within the local cultural context. Specifically, this research adopts an interpretive discourse analysis that focuses on how language, symbols, and narratives are constructed and interpreted in social interactions. Through this framework, the research seeks to systematically understand how religious leaders interpret and communicate the values of local wisdom in community life.

This research emphasizes the analysis of socio-religious communication practices in the *Begawe* tradition through the identification of narrative patterns, symbols, and communicative messages. The analysis process was carried out systematically through the stages of data reduction, open and thematic coding, categorization, and interpretation to generate analytical themes. Data analysis refers to the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The validity of the ecosystem was maintained through triangulation of sources and contexts to ensure the consistency and credibility of interpretations.

Data sources were obtained from informants selected through purposive sampling techniques covering three main categories: religious leaders, community leaders, and traditional/cultural leaders. Informant selection was based on criteria such as active involvement in the *Begawe* tradition, knowledge of cultural values, and social influence within the community, thus providing rich and relevant data. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation to gain a comprehensive understanding. This research was conducted in Tirtanadi Village, Labuhan Haji District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, while adhering to ethical research principles such as informant consent, data confidentiality, and respect for local cultural norms. Figure 1 is presented to facilitate the reader's understanding of the data analysis process.

¹⁶Edwin Pebriyanto and Ali Hasan Siswanto, "Kearifan Lokal Dan Multikulturalisme Dalam Dakwah Nusantara: Revitalisasi Nilai Lokal Dalam Merespons Globalisasi," *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara* 1, no. 6 (2025): 756–61, <https://doi.org/10.59435/menulis.v1i6.427>.

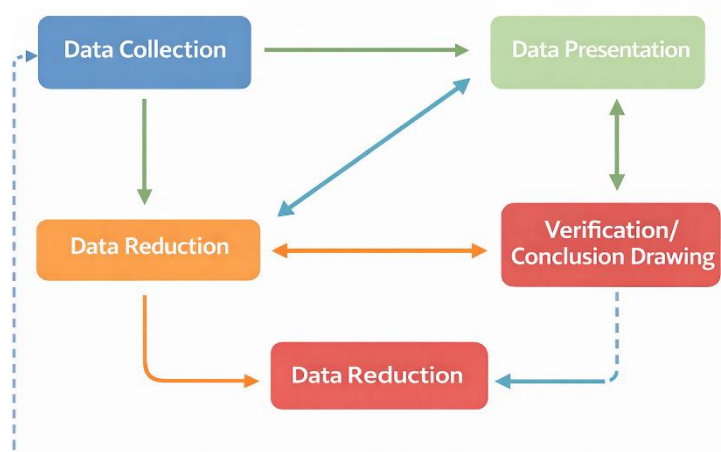


Figure 1. Research Method Flowchart.

Figure 1 illustrates the research flow, emphasizing the integration of the descriptive qualitative design, purposive sampling technique, and data collection methods. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through the stages of reduction, presentation, and verification.¹⁷ Combined with discourse analysis to uncover symbolic meanings and communication strategies in *Begawe* practices. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One of the distinctive cultural elements of the *Begawe* tradition is reflected in the practice of preparing ritual dishes by ran (traditional cooks), which serves not only as a culinary activity but also as a medium of symbolic communication within the communal ritual structure. From a cultural anthropology perspective, ritual culinary practices represent a system of symbols that reflect the structure of social meaning and the collective identity of a community.¹⁸ In this context, the ares dish made from young banana stems cooked with local spices is not simply food, but rather a cultural symbol that embodies the continuity of tradition and the legitimacy of ancestral values. From a symbolic communication perspective, ares functions as a cultural marker that articulates the relationship between religion, custom, and social identity, while also serving as a means of mediation between Islamic values and local cultural practices. These findings suggest that practical materials such as culinary rituals are part of the discussion of strategies used to construct and produce collective meaning in Sasak society.¹⁹ Thus, the presence of ares as a mandatory element in *Begawe* not only represents the preservation of tradition but also demonstrates how religious leaders implicitly legitimize cultural practices through symbolic integration within religious discourse.²⁰

Collective community involvement in the preparation and distribution of ritual dishes reflects the dimension of social cohesion and demonstrates how socio-religious communication operates in a participatory manner. From a sociological ritual perspective,

¹⁷Mathew B Miles et al., *Analisis Data Kualitatif: Buku Sumber Tentang Metode Metode Baru* (Penerbit Universitas Indonesia (UI-Press), 1992).

¹⁸David Morgan, "Religion and Material Culture," *The Matter of Belief*, 2010, 1-12.

¹⁹Emile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life," in *Social Theory Re-Wired* (Routledge, 2016), 52-67.

²⁰Rizkika Putri, "Implementasi Internalisasi Nilai Silaturahmi Melalui Tradisi Tujak Ragi Belek Di Desa Rumbuk Lombok Timur," *Risalah Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 10, no. 3 (2024): 1287-99, https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_risalah.v10i3.1116.

participation in ceremonial activities is an important mechanism in building solidarity and normative integration within society.²¹ Furthermore, this finding can be interpreted as a form of cultural communication practice that strengthens collective identity through symbolic interactions across generations. This participation also demonstrates the role of religious leaders as communication facilitators who bridge religious values with social practices, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of tradition amidst the dynamics of social change. In this context, community involvement is not merely descriptive as a mutual cooperation activity, but represents an adaptive mechanism that allows the *Begawe* tradition to remain relevant in the face of modernization and differences in religious orientation, including potential tensions between the Aswaja and Salafi groups. Therefore, collective participation can be understood as a cultural strategy that simultaneously maintains the continuity of local values and negotiates changes in the social structure of Sasak society.²²

A. Analysis of Local Wisdom on the *Begawe* Tradition

The interview findings indicate that religious leaders in Tirtanadi Village, East Lombok, perceive the *Begawe* tradition as a significant component of the socio-cultural life of the Sasak community. From the perspective of social communication and local wisdom theory, this tradition functions as a communicative arena that facilitates the maintenance and reinforcement of interpersonal relationships, commonly referred to as *silaturahmi*, which denotes the strengthening of kinship, friendship, and social bonds.²³ Religious leaders emphasize that *Begawe* provides opportunities for community members to gather, interact, and renew familial connections, including with relatives who reside outside the village. This moment is interpreted as a process of social reconstruction in which weakened or infrequently maintained relationships can be revitalized through direct participation in ritual activities. Such findings correspond with previous studies suggesting that *Begawe* serves as a medium for reinforcing social capital and collective solidarity within the Sasak community.²⁴

Community leaders expressed comparable interpretations, highlighting that *Begawe* represents a symbolic space of togetherness that reflects the collective social identity of the Sasak people. Rather than being merely ceremonial, the tradition operates as a social practice that reproduces solidarity and unity through mechanisms of mutual cooperation. The strong participation of residents in organizing and implementing ritual activities illustrates how cooperative values are institutionalized and transmitted across generations. In line with theories of social cohesion and cultural sustainability, this participatory engagement can be understood as a process through which communal norms and ethical commitments are continuously reaffirmed. Empirical research by Hidayat also confirms that *Begawe* contributes to the reproduction of collective identity and the strengthening of social relationships among community members.²⁵ Consequently, the tradition functions as a communicative mechanism through which shared meanings and communal belonging are maintained.

²¹Victor Turner, "The Ritual Process: Structure Andanti-Structure," *Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP*, 1969.

²²Yusri Hamzani, "Community Economic Empowerment Through the Implementation of Banjar Traditional Values," *Jurnal Manajemen & Budaya* 4, no. 2 (2024): 81-101, <https://doi.org/10.51700/manajemen.v4i2.691>.

²³Rahma Dhiya Titarani, Sharma Ayu Setyaningsih, and Rahma Kamila, "Konsep Silaturahmi Sebagai Bentuk Persatuan Dalam Bangsa Indonesia," *Islamologi: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan* 1, no. 2 (2024): 725-34, <https://jipkm.com/index.php/islamologi/article/view/147>.

²⁴Ubaidi and Aziz, "Konstruksi Sosial Dalam Tradisi Begawe Pada Masyarakat Dusun Tibulilin Lombok Tengah."

²⁵Ubaidi and Aziz.

Another enduring cultural dimension is the sorong serah procession, which holds both symbolic and philosophical significance related to responsibility, mutual respect, and the formal integration of two extended families, particularly in the context of *Begawe merarik* (marriage ceremonies). Community leaders interpret this ritual as a cultural communication process that reinforces social structure and normative expectations, where the families of the bride and groom establish new relational ties grounded in modesty, social ethics, and traditional honour. The continued preservation of sorong serah demonstrates that, despite gradual transformations in certain ritual components, key symbolic elements remain resilient due to their central role in expressing collective identity and cultural legitimacy.

Nevertheless, the interviews also reveal emerging social transformations influencing the contemporary practice of *Begawe*. Informants noted that some ritual elements have gradually diminished, particularly at the grassroots level, reflecting broader processes of modernization and shifting socio-economic priorities. Increasing religious awareness and the growing emphasis on scriptural interpretations of Islamic practice have led some community members to reconsider the extent of customary participation, especially when traditions are perceived as financially demanding or socially less relevant. At the same time, other groups continue to uphold *Begawe* as an expression of ancestral respect and communal identity. This dynamic illustrates the negotiation between tradition and religious reform, highlighting how cultural practices adapt to changing normative frameworks within society.

From the viewpoint of traditional leaders, the local wisdom embedded in *Begawe* remains highly relevant as a foundation for sustaining communal cohesion. They stress that the essential values of mutual cooperation and collective responsibility extend beyond public interaction to include intra-family relationships within extended kinship networks. *Begawe* is thus perceived as a cultural communication space that reunites dispersed family members and reinforces kinship solidarity. Moreover, the tradition functions as a medium for intergenerational cultural transmission, enabling younger members of the community to internalize traditional structures, symbolic meanings, and social obligations. Supporting cultural studies also indicate that *Begawe* operates as a form of informal cultural education that perpetuates communal values and ethnic identity among the Sasak youth.²⁶ Accordingly, the tradition should be understood not only as a ritual practice but also as a strategic instrument for sustaining cultural continuity.

Beyond its integrative social function, informants emphasized that *Begawe* also represents a marker of identity and cultural existence for the Sasak community. The continuity of this tradition signifies that local cultural values remain relevant within the context of modern social transformation. Although adaptive changes have occurred, *Begawe* continues to embody the core characteristics of Sasak society, particularly the prioritization of harmony, kinship, and social cohesion. This indicates that *Begawe* operates as a flexible socio-cultural institution capable of maintaining its relevance as long as fundamental values such as mutual cooperation, respect, and solidarity continue to underpin its implementation.

B. Integration of Religious and Traditional Values in the Implementation of *Begawe* Tradition

Interviews with religious leaders indicate that the transmission of religious values within the *Begawe* tradition is strongly shaped by the socio-ritual context in which the event

²⁶Ulyan Nasri, Yunita Indinabila, and Abdul Haris Rasyidi, "Sasak Language in Rituals and Traditions: An Anthropological Analysis of Communication in the Lombok Community," *Sabda: Jurnal Kajian Kebudayaan* 19, no. 2 (2024): 89–99, <https://doi.org/10.14710/sabda.19.2.89-99>.

takes place. In *Begawe* associated with *merarik* (marriage processions), religious messages are predominantly oriented toward marital ethics, the complementary responsibilities of husbands and wives, and the aspiration to establish a household characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.²⁷ From the perspective of religious socialization theory, ritual gatherings such as marriage ceremonies function as communicative arenas where moral norms and spiritual orientations are internalized through symbolic interaction and public counsel. Religious leaders therefore regard marriage momentum as a strategic space for embedding ethical guidance and strengthening the moral consciousness of newly formed families. Comparative studies on Islamic marriage traditions in Southeast Asia also highlight the educative dimension of ritual discourse in shaping family responsibility, gender ethics, and spiritual commitment within Muslim communities.²⁸

In contrast, *Begawe* ceremonies conducted in the context of death convey religious messages that emphasize existential awareness, moral accountability, and preparation for the afterlife. Collective practices such as *dzikir*, *tahlil*, and communal supplication form an integral part of the ritual sequence. Within the framework of ritual communication theory, these practices operate not only as expressions of devotion but also as mechanisms for reinforcing collective spiritual solidarity and emotional resilience.²⁹ International anthropological scholarship on mortuary rituals similarly suggests that communal remembrance and prayer function as cultural strategies for coping with loss while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion and shared religious identity.³⁰

Regarding the effort to integrate religious teachings with local cultural values in *Begawe*, religious leaders argue that such synthesis possesses a legitimate epistemological foundation within Islamic jurisprudence. They refer to the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'*, and *qiyas* as primary normative sources, while recognizing *urip* as a local customary concept representing socially embedded traditions that do not contradict Islamic ethical principles.³¹ This interpretative approach reflects broader processes of religious acculturation and cultural hybridization discussed in global studies of Islam and local tradition, where normative religious frameworks interact dynamically with indigenous socio-cultural expressions. In this sense, religion provides a moral-legal structure, whereas customary practices offer contextualized cultural manifestations that enable the practical communication of religious values in everyday life.

In terms of community reception, informants from local leadership circles observe gradual transformations in the implementation of *Begawe* across different social settings. Certain customary elements that were once dominant are now diminishing, while explicitly religious components are becoming increasingly prominent. A notable example is the nine-day commemoration (*nyiwag dina*) in death-related *Begawe* rituals. Historically characterized by strong customary symbolism, contemporary practices tend to emphasize Qur'anic recitation, *tahlilan*, and *yasinan*. This shift illustrates a process often conceptualized in international literature as the Islamization of local tradition, whereby religious norms

²⁷Muhammad Hafidz Ilmi and Ramadhanita Mustika Sari, "Nilai-Nilai Bimbingan Dan Konseling Islam Dalam Tradisi Pernikahan," *Coution: Journal Counseling and Education* 5, no. 1 (2024): 47-62, <https://doi.org/10.47453/coution.v5i1.1617>.

²⁸Muh Said HM, Syafiah Syafiah, and Usman Usman, "Menjaga Tradisi: Dinamika Hukum Adat Dalam Perkawinan Di Asia Tenggara," *Nusantara; Journal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies* 20, no. 2 (2023): 128-43.

²⁹Hamzan Nawawi, "Komunikasi Ritual Pada Kohesivitas Keluarga Muslim Di Bojongsari Depok" (Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, 2025).

³⁰Siti Mubayanah and Nasihun Amin, "Transformasi Makna Ritual Dalam Masyarakat Modern: Analisis Sosiologis Dan Budaya," *GAHWA* 3, no. 1 (2024): 17-33.

³¹S H Qadriani Arifuddin and C Me MH, "Ijma dan Qiyas dalam Hukum Islam," *Hukum Islam*, n.d., 40.

become institutionalized within customary structures. Community members generally interpret this transformation as a form of adaptive cultural negotiation that aligns ritual practice more closely with perceived Islamic values while maintaining elements of inherited tradition.

Traditional leaders further emphasize that the presence of religious authorities constitutes a central pillar in the continuity of *Begawe*. Their involvement is believed to enrich cultural practices by reinforcing the spiritual meanings embedded in each ritual sequence. In events such as the seventh-day and ninth-day commemorations, religious leaders play key roles in guiding collective recitations and prayers, thereby enhancing both the ritual legitimacy and the moral authority of the tradition. This dynamic resonates with sociological theories of religious authority, which view charismatic and institutional leadership as crucial mediators in maintaining normative balance between cultural continuity and doctrinal authenticity. As expressed by Sopian Asri:

*“Begawe cannot run well and smoothly without the involvement of religious leaders because we often ask for their opinions, directions, and decisions regarding the implementation of the activities. And we believe that religious leaders also have a strong ability to maintain a balance between customs and Sharia law”.*³²

Through such mediation, religious leaders symbolically frame cultural values within Islamic ethical discourse to prevent practices perceived as deviant while preserving the essential identity of Sasak cultural heritage. Consequently, the integration of religion and custom in *Begawe* can be understood as an ongoing communicative negotiation involving religious leaders, traditional authorities, and community members, reflecting broader patterns of cultural adaptation and socio-religious transformation observed in Muslim societies globally.

C. The Role of Religious Leaders As Cultural Communicators in the *Begawe* Tradition

Interviews with religious leaders indicate that they occupy a strategic position in maintaining harmony between cultural and religious values in the implementation of the *Begawe* tradition. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, this role reflects the function of religious authority as a normative regulator that guides community practices in accordance with both doctrinal principles and socio-cultural expectations.³³ Religious leaders emphasize that their active involvement in each procession is necessary to ensure that ritual activities remain aligned with Islamic ethical standards while simultaneously respecting established customary norms. Their presence therefore extends beyond ritual leadership to include the role of cultural mediators who facilitate negotiation and consensus when potential tensions emerge during traditional proceedings. In this sense, religious leaders contribute to safeguarding the integrity of both cultural and religious values, enabling them to coexist in a complementary and harmonious manner.

A similar perspective was expressed by community leaders, who highlighted the high social and symbolic significance attached to the position of religious leaders within *Begawe*. The community recognizes them as central figures responsible for guiding sacred ritual segments, particularly in leading collective prayers, *dzikir*, and *tahlil*. This institutionalized position situates religious leaders as integral actors within the cultural communication structure of the event. Ramli further explained:

³²Interview Results with Mr. Sopian Asri ("Customary & Cultural Figure") on November 26, 2025.

³³Theresiani Bheka and Teresia Noiman Derung, "Pengaruh Agama Terhadap Hidup Sosial Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Dan Teologi Indonesia* 1, no. 2 (2023): 197–222.

“The community’s respect for religious leaders can also be seen in the tradition of providing *dulang* (food dishes) specifically for religious leaders who are present as a symbol of appreciation for their position. This is not considered a burden by the community; rather, they are happy to do so as a form of gratitude to religious leaders who have contributed to the community.”³⁴

This practice may be interpreted through the lens of symbolic interactionism, where material offerings function as cultural symbols that reinforce legitimacy, authority, and social recognition.³⁵ Consequently, the role of religious leaders extends beyond the spiritual domain to become embedded within the broader social structure, where their authority is continuously reproduced through symbolic practices and collective acknowledgment.

In addition, community leaders noted that the religious messages delivered during *Begawe* are generally accessible and well understood by community members. This communicative effectiveness can be explained through theories of communication leadership, which emphasize the importance of contextual language use, cultural sensitivity, and rhetorical adaptability in shaping audience reception. Religious leaders tend to employ polite, culturally resonant expressions that correspond to the socio-cultural background of the Sasak community, thereby enhancing message acceptance and interpretive alignment. Although minor debates occasionally occur as part of deliberative social dynamics, such interactions should be understood as communicative negotiation processes through which cultural meanings and religious values are collectively clarified. Rather than weakening authority, these dialogical moments contribute to reinforcing the legitimacy of religious leaders as cultural communicators who actively construct shared understanding through discourse and symbolic engagement.

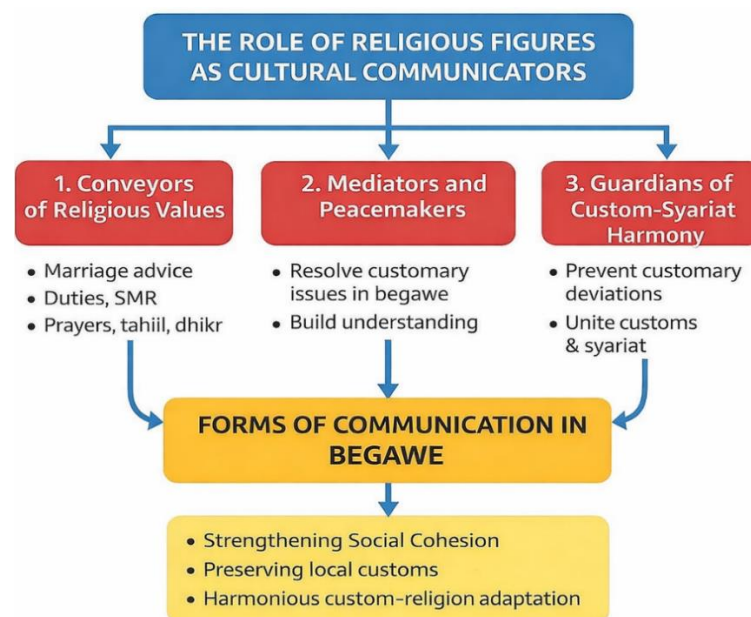


Figure 2. Chart of the Role of Religious Leaders.

Thus, it can be understood that religious leaders play a multidimensional role in the implementation of *Begawe*. They are not only spiritual leaders, but also social mediators,

³⁴Interview Results with Mr. Ramli (Community Leader) on November 26, 2025.

³⁵Roma Ulinnuha, “Kebijakan Publik Berbasis Agama Di Tingkat Lokal: Analisis Kolaboratif Pemerintah Daerah Dan Organisasi Masyarakat Islam Dalam Arena Sidrap Religius,” *Jurnal Kebijakan Pembangunan* 20, no. 2 (2025): 175–88.

guardians of tradition, and authoritative figures who ensure that the integration between customs and religion is maintained in community life. Thus, it can be understood that religious leaders play a multidimensional role in the implementation of *Begawe*. They are not only spiritual leaders, but also social mediators, guardians of tradition, and authoritative figures who ensure that the integration between customs and religion is maintained in community life.

D. Social Dynamics and Cultural Practices in the Implementation of *Begawe*

Interviews with religious and traditional leaders indicate that the implementation of *Begawe* constitutes a socio-cultural arena that reflects social dynamics, ritual practices, and the ongoing integration of religious and customary values within the community of Tirtanadi Village, East Lombok. From a sociological perspective, this tradition illustrates processes of social change and continuity in which communal rituals function as mechanisms for maintaining collective cohesion. In the study of cultural sociology, communal ritual practices of this kind are often understood as a process of social construction that continuously produces solidarity and symbolic order in the life of society.³⁶ The entire sequence of *Begawe* activities, both in the context of *merarik* (marriage) and death rituals, embodies values of togetherness and mutual cooperation. Community members participate actively according to established social roles: men are generally responsible for procuring ritual materials such as dried coconuts, firewood, and banana stems, while women contribute to event preparation, guest reception, and the smooth coordination of activities. These collaborative practices create a shared atmosphere known as *betulung* (mutual assistance), which not only alleviates the practical burden of organizing ceremonies but also reinforces social solidarity and reciprocal trust among residents.

1. Cultural Adaptation and Social Change

From a cultural standpoint, traditional leaders explain that *Begawe* represents a customary institution that continues to evolve alongside shifts in religious understanding and broader modernization processes. From a contemporary anthropological perspective, such changes can be understood as a form of cultural adaptation in which traditional practices undergo reinterpretation to remain relevant within a transforming social structure.³⁷ In the context of *Begawe merarik*, for example, the former practice of *tepalang* symbolizing masculine strength through the secret elopement of the bride has gradually been abandoned due to its potential to generate familial conflict and its perceived incompatibility with contemporary religious norms. Presently, preparations for marriage rituals are conducted more transparently and in alignment with Sharia principles and prevailing social ethics, encompassing stages such as formal proposals, family deliberations, the marriage contract, and the *nyongkolan* procession, which publicly announces the union following the *merarik* process).³⁸ This transformation reflects patterns described in modernization theory, where traditional practices are selectively reinterpreted to maintain cultural relevance within changing normative frameworks.

³⁶Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "The Social Construction of Reality," in *Social Theory Re-Wired* (Routledge, 2016), 110–22.

³⁷Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, vol. 1 (U of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁸Fitri Oktavia Marlina, "Akulturasi Antara Hukum Adat Dan Islam Dalam Tradisi Perkawinan Nyongkolan Suku Sasak Di Lombok Timur" (Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2023), [dSPACE.uui.ac.id/123456789/46207](https://doi.org/10.22373/al-ijtimaiyyah.v12i1.34365).



Figure 3. The process of making jaje (cakes) during the event working.



Figure 4. Nyongkolan procession (parade).

2. Intergenerational Transmission and Cultural Continuity

In death related *Begawe* rituals, the community continues to observe commemorative traditions such as *nelu'* (three days), *mitu'* (seven days), *nyiwa'* (nine days), and *pelayaran* (forty days), demonstrating the sustained integration of customary values with Islamic devotional practices. Collective *tahlilan* gatherings during these periods are understood as opportunities to offer prayers for the deceased while simultaneously strengthening kinship ties and fostering spiritual reflection among family members and neighbours. Traditional leaders further emphasize that participation in *Begawe* is regarded as both a moral and social obligation, particularly for relatives who live outside the village or have limited involvement in everyday communal life. Through such practices, *Begawe* functions as a medium of cultural transmission, enabling the reinforcement of familial bonds, the preservation of social norms, and the continuity of collective identity across generations.



Figure 5. The process of making a coffin from bamboo (funeral ceremony).



Figure 6. The process of making *ngelak ares* (a typical side dish).

Furthermore, traditional leaders emphasize that the people of Tirtanadi Village view *Begaawe* as a means of strengthening family ties and maintaining relationships. Attendance at *Begaawe* is a moral and social obligation, especially for family members who live far away or are rarely involved in other social activities. *Begaawe* is seen as an event that requires attendance because it has high spiritual, emotional, and kinship value, so that absence is often considered a violation of family ties. Thus, *Begaawe* plays a strategic role as a medium for strengthening social cohesion and maintaining the continuity of relationships between families in the community.

3. Ideological Diversity and Religious Pluralism

At the same time, religious leaders acknowledge that evolving patterns of religious interpretation have influenced community perceptions of certain ritual elements within *Begaawe*. Differences in orientation between followers of the *Aswaja* (*Ahlussunnah wal*

Jamaah) tradition and Salafi groups illustrate the presence of internal religious pluralism that shapes socio religious communication dynamics. In studies of religious pluralism, these differences in interpretation are often viewed as a discursive process that allows for the negotiation of religious meaning within the public sphere of Muslim communities³⁹. Communities affiliated with Aswaja generally maintain *Begawe* as a tradition that embodies both social and spiritual significance, whereas some Salafi adherents question practices such as *tahlilan* or death anniversary commemorations due to their perceived lack of explicit scriptural basis and their classification as *bid'ah*. Despite these differences, the majority of residents continue to uphold *Begawe* as a shared cultural institution with integrative social, cultural, and spiritual functions. This situation demonstrates how communal traditions may serve as arenas of negotiation where diverse religious perspectives coexist, thereby sustaining the tradition's relevance as a marker of cultural identity and social cohesion within the Tirtanadi community.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to analyse the role of religious leaders as cultural communicators in the *Begawe* tradition of the Sasak community in Lombok and to examine how local wisdom is constructed, communicated, and sustained within socio-religious interactions. The findings demonstrate that *Begawe* functions as a dynamic space of social, spiritual, and cultural interaction, where collective identity and intergenerational continuity are maintained through symbolic practices. Values of togetherness and mutual cooperation, particularly reflected in *betulung*, serve as the cultural foundation that ensures the persistence of this tradition. Ritual sequences such as *merarik*, *nelu'*, *mitu'*, *nyiwa'*, and cycling further illustrate how local wisdom is preserved under conditions of strong communal participation, shared cultural memory, and continuous symbolic reproduction, thereby reinforcing both social cohesion and spiritual meaning in community life.

The study confirms that religious leaders play a central and strategic role as cultural communicators by mediating the relationship between Islamic values and local traditions through specific communicative mechanisms. These include the use of religious narratives, ritual symbols, sermons, prayers, *dhikr*, and *tahlil* as interpretive tools to align cultural practices with Islamic principles while maintaining local relevance. Through these mechanisms, religious leaders function as agents of normative integration who bridge potential tensions between religion and culture, ensuring that local wisdom is not only preserved but also legitimized within a religious framework. The effectiveness of this mediation is reflected in the community's acceptance of their messages, which contributes to strengthening socio-religious cohesion and sustaining cultural continuity within Sasak society.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the sustainability of the *Begawe* tradition is shaped by ongoing socio-religious dynamics, including modernization and differing Islamic orientations, particularly between Aswaja and Salafi groups. These dynamics create conditions of negotiation in which certain cultural practices are simplified while religious expressions become more prominent, especially in *tahlilan* and death commemorations. Despite these shifts, *Begawe* remains resilient as a marker of collective identity due to its adaptive capacity and the mediating role of religious leaders in managing change. Theoretically, this study advances the fields of cultural communication and the sociology of religion by conceptualizing religious leaders as mediators of local socio-religious discourse and highlighting the role of communication in negotiating continuity and change. Practically, the findings suggest the importance of culturally grounded religious communication strategies in maintaining social harmony in plural societies. However, the

³⁹Dale F Eickelman and James Piscatori, "Muslim Politics," 2018.

limited number of informants and the specific geographical scope remain constraints; therefore, future research is recommended to conduct comparative and multi-sited studies to deepen understanding of local wisdom adaptation in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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