

FROM INDIVIDUAL RITUAL TO COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT: COMMUNITY-BASED ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LOCAL RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN TASIKMALAYA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic community development discourse has largely emphasized top-down financial instruments such as zakat, waqf, and Islamic microfinance, while giving limited attention to endogenous cultural mechanisms. Although Indonesian scholarship has documented the coexistence of Islam and local tradition, these traditions have rarely been theorized as replicable models of community development. This study examines the Sa-uyunan Muharam tradition in Sukakarta Village, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia, focusing on how a locally initiated ritual transformation generates social capital, facilitates non-formal Islamic education, and preserves Sundanese cultural heritage as a model of community-based Islamic development. This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with fifteen purposively selected informants, and document analysis during Muharam 1447 H. Thematic analysis was conducted using Siddiqui's Islamic social development theory, Putnam's social capital framework, and Woodward's concept of Living Islam. The findings show that the tradition's six-stage ritual sequence simultaneously generates bonding, bridging, and linking social capital across familial, communal, and intergenerational dimensions. Universal Islamic values such as ukhuwah, ta'awun, takaful, and tazkiah are expressed through Sundanese cultural idioms without theological dilution, reflecting functional acculturation. The tradition also functions as experiential non-formal Islamic education. This study proposes a four-element model of tradition-based Islamic community empowerment: deliberative multi-institutional initiation, progressive ritual sequencing, intergenerational integration, and balanced theological-cultural legitimacy. The study contributes to Islamic community development theory by demonstrating that a single ritual tradition can simultaneously operationalize all three dimensions of social capital.

Keywords: *Community empowerment, Islamic community development, Living Islam, Local religious tradition, Social capital*

INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic societies (*Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam/PMI*) in contemporary Indonesia faces complex challenges arising from modernization,

globalization, and rapid social change (Syukur and Nugraha, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). Indonesian Islamic civil society organizations are required to navigate both domestic transformation and global engagement, tensions that significantly shape the character of Muslim community

development in the modern era (Latief and Nashir, 2020). Within this context, local religious traditions are often perceived as remnants of the past that have lost relevance under the pressures of modernization (Goshadze, 2024; Ng'etich, 2024). However, recent scholarship suggests that the adaptive capacity of local religious traditions has been underestimated in contemporary development discourse (Koehrsen and Burchardt, 2024; Sabates-Wheeler and Barker, 2024; Smith, Adam, and Maarif, 2024). Empirical evidence demonstrates that traditional *kiai* authority continues to play a significant role in maintaining religious and social cohesion precisely because it is rooted in local practices rather than state-imposed structures. Consequently, local religious traditions may function as important sources of social capital in the development of Muslim communities (Faisal et al., 2022; Jubba et al., 2022; Setiyani, 2020).

One manifestation of this phenomenon is the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition in Sukakarta Village, Jatiwaras District, Tasikmalaya Regency. Since 2021, this tradition has undergone revitalization and institutionalization as a model of community-based Islamic development. Rooted in the Sundanese values of *sa-uyunan* (togetherness) and the sacred month of Muharam, the tradition integrates universal Islamic values with local Sundanese wisdom through communal rituals involving three *Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid* (DKM). Despite its significance, the tradition has received little academic attention, resulting in a gap in understanding how local religious traditions can strengthen social capital, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, and sustainable Muslim community development.

This study examines *Sa-uyunan Muharam* as a model of community-based Islamic development by focusing on its spiritual, social, cultural, and educational dimensions. Three research questions guide the study: (1) how has the tradition

transformed from an individual ritual practice into a structured collective activity since 2021? (2) how does the tradition generate bonding, bridging, and linking social capital among the three DKM communities? and (3) how does it function as a medium of non-formal Islamic education and the preservation of Sundanese culture within the framework of *Living Islam*? Together, these questions move the analysis beyond ritual description toward a theoretically grounded explanation of how local religious traditions can serve as sustainable and replicable models of Islamic community empowerment.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the literature on PMI and social capital, while also offering practical insights into tradition-based community development models that may be adapted by Islamic policymakers and community organizations in similar contexts.

Literature Review

Scholarly discourse on Islamic community development has evolved considerably beyond its early normative foundations. Ife and Fiske (2006) conceptualize community development as an empowerment process through which communities identify their own needs and mobilize collective action. In the Islamic context, this framework is enriched by spiritual principles emphasizing social justice (*'adalah*), solidarity (*ukhuwah*), and collective welfare (*maslahah*). Siddiqui (1997) further operationalizes Islamic community development through the interconnected pillars of *tawhid*, *caliphate*, and *tazkiah*. More recently, Rosman et al., (2022) demonstrate that Islamic social finance instruments such as *zakat*, *waqf*, and voluntary almsgiving can be mobilized institutionally to support sustainable community development. Tok et al., (2022) similarly argue that Islamic social finance possesses significant potential to address humanitarian and development

financing gaps, although its integration into global development frameworks remains constrained by policy fragmentation. While these studies establish important normative and institutional foundations, they remain largely top-down and finance-oriented, giving limited attention to endogenous cultural practices as independent drivers of community empowerment.

A second body of scholarship examines the relationship between Islam and local traditions in Indonesia. Muhaimin (2001) documents the integration of Islam within the cultural context of Cirebon, while Hefner (2000) conceptualizes “Civil Islam” as a democratic force within Indonesian Muslim society. However, both studies remain primarily interpretive rather than operationalizing their insights into models of community development. At the regional level, Ekadjati (2009) and Rosidi (2000) identify distinctive characteristics of Sundanese Islam, particularly its emphasis on harmony, communal solidarity, and reverence for ancestors.

Building on this regional perspective, Jubba et al. (2019) demonstrate that local Islamic practices in South Sulawesi can coexist productively with indigenous spiritual traditions, particularly through the relationship between Muslims and the Towani Tolotang community in Amparita, South Sulawesi, which is sustained by shared social values. Pabbajah et al. (2021) extend this finding by showing that Indonesian Muslims are able to maintain strong religious commitment while simultaneously preserving local cultural traditions, as reflected in the continuing practice of the Hajj Bawakaraeng pilgrimage a negotiated fusion of Islamic identity and Bugis-Makassar ancestral beliefs. Similarly, Mubarak et al. (2025) demonstrate that the *Marakka' Bola* tradition among the Bugis community in Barru embodies Islamic values of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance)

and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), while also facilitating the intergenerational transmission of social values and cultural heritage. Rifqi et al. (2025) further show that the interfaith *lelayu* tradition in Central Java transcends religious boundaries and creates a shared space of solidarity, empathy, and mutual cooperation without generating doctrinal conflict, thereby extending the relevance of cultural coexistence beyond mono-religious settings.

From a broader organizational perspective, Junaidi (2022) examines how Muhammadiyah Indonesia's major reformist Islamic organization initially sought to purify Islam from local religious traditions, but gradually became more accommodating toward such practices over time. This organizational shift, shaped by grassroots dynamics and the emergence of moderate internal factions, reflects the predominantly descriptive and interpretive orientation that characterizes this body of literature. Collectively, these studies affirm the cultural compatibility between Islam and local traditions across the Indonesian archipelago. However, none of them operationalizes this compatibility into a structured and replicable model of community development. The descriptive and interpretive orientation shared across this literature from foundational studies (Hefner, 2000; Muhaimin, 2001; Ekadjati, 2009; Rosidi, 2000) to more recent contributions (Jubba et al., 2019; Pabbajah et al., 2021; Mubarak et al., 2025; Rifqi et al., 2025) constitutes its primary limitation from a development studies perspective.

A third body of scholarship links religious participation to the formation of social capital, thereby providing an empirical bridge between ritual practice and community outcomes. Putnam's (1995) influential framework identifies bonding, bridging, and linking social capital as distinct mechanisms through which associative life generates civic capacity. Deller et al. (2018) extend this

framework to religious communities, showing that higher concentrations of religious congregations are associated with stronger economic and civic activity. Alemayehu et al. (2023) further refine this perspective by identifying structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of religious social capital that facilitate collective action among religiously embedded individuals. In the Indonesian context, Fathani et al. (2024) further demonstrate, within the Indonesian context, that local traditions such as the *Melipo* ceremony among the Mandar community in Majene Regency simultaneously embody the values of Islamic education and function as mechanisms of cultural transmission, an empirical finding that begins to connect religious participation with non-formal community learning in the Indonesian archipelago.

At the same time, Maselko and Kubzansky (2021) provide an important qualification by arguing that the relationship between religious social capital and community well-being is not uniformly positive, but varies across social and cultural contexts. This highlights the need for empirically grounded and context-specific investigation. Moreover, although the social capital literature offers powerful analytical tools, it has been developed predominantly in Western and non-Indonesian settings, leaving its applicability to Sundanese Muslim communities insufficiently examined.

A critical synthesis of these three strands of literature reveals several important gaps that this study seeks to address. Studies on Islam and local traditions in Indonesia remain largely descriptive and interpretive, without producing operational models of community development. This limitation is evident in both foundational works (Ekadjati, 2009; Hefner, 2000; Muhaimin, 2001; Rosidi, 2000) and more recent empirical studies (Jubba et al., 2019; Junaidi, 2022; Mubarak et al., 2025;

Pabbajah et al., 2021; Rifqi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research on Islamic community development continues to emphasize institutional and financial instruments such as *zakat* and *waqf* (Rosman et al., 2022; Tok et al., 2022), while paying limited attention to endogenous cultural mechanisms. Although the social capital literature is empirically robust (Alemayehu et al., 2023; Deller et al., 2018; Putnam, 1995), its application within the context of West Javanese Muslim communities remains limited. Likewise, while Fathani et al. (2024) begin to connect ritual traditions with Islamic education in Indonesia, their study does not integrate social capital generation, Islamic education, and cultural preservation simultaneously.

Most importantly, no previous study has examined how a locally initiated ritual transformation can simultaneously generate bonding, bridging, and linking social capital while also functioning as a medium of non-formal Islamic education and cultural preservation. This developmental, educational, and preservationist triple function constitutes the central contribution of the present study. By examining *Sa-uyunan Muharam*, this research offers an empirically grounded, bottom-up model of Islamic community empowerment that extends both ritual studies and Islamic community development scholarship.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in three theoretically complementary frameworks that collectively address the normative, sociological, and cultural dimensions of tradition-based Islamic community development. The primary framework is derived from Siddiqui's (1997) theory of Islamic social development, which posits that authentic community development within an Islamic paradigm must be founded upon three core pillars: *tawhid* (the oneness of God) as its ontological basis, *caliphate* (human

stewardship) as its epistemological principle, and *tazkiah* (self-purification) as its axiological orientation. This framework provides the normative criteria through which the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition is evaluated, particularly in determining whether it represents a genuine form of Islamic development rather than merely a cultural performance.

Complementing this normative foundation, the second framework draws upon social capital theory to examine the sociological mechanisms through which the tradition fosters community cohesion. Putnam (1995) defines social capital as the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate collective action for the common good, distinguishing among three analytically distinct forms: bonding social capital (intra-group solidarity), bridging social capital (horizontal ties across groups), and linking social capital (vertical relationships between communities and authority structures). Bourdieu (1986) further enriches this framework by emphasizing the relational and structural dimensions of social capital as resources embedded within institutional networks. More recently, Alemayehu et al. (2023) extend this perspective to religious communities, demonstrating that religiously embedded individuals develop a distinctive form of social capital encompassing structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions that uniquely foster collective action and community empowerment. Collectively, these perspectives provide this study with measurable analytical categories for assessing how the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition generates durable inter-community networks.

The third framework is Woodward's (2011) concept of *Living Islam*, which argues that Islamic practice cannot be understood solely through normative texts, but must also be examined as a lived religion that is continuously practiced, interpreted, and negotiated within specific local cultural contexts. In

the Indonesian context, Islamic belief is inseparably mediated through local cultural systems and expressed through culturally meaningful symbols, idioms, and social practices. This framework is essential for interpreting how universal Islamic values (*ukhuwah*, *ta'awun*, and *takaful*) are actualized through Sundanese cultural expressions such as the philosophical triad of *silih asih*, *silih asah*, and *silih asuh*, thereby occupying the analytical space between doctrinal universalism and cultural particularism.

Taken together, these three frameworks form an integrated analytical architecture: Siddiqui (1997) explains whether the tradition embodies authentic Islamic development; Putnam (1995), Bourdieu (1986), and Alemayehu et al. (2023), explain how it generates social cohesion and collective capacity; and Woodward (2011) explains why this particular cultural form remains effective within this specific community context. This theoretical convergence enables the study to move beyond a merely descriptive analysis of ritual practices toward a theoretically grounded explanation of how local religious traditions can function as sustainable engines of community-based Islamic empowerment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to explore the meanings and processes embedded in the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition. An ethnographic approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand cultural and religious phenomena from an insider (*emic*) perspective through in-depth participatory observation (Spradley, 1980). Creswell and Creswell D (2018) further emphasize that ethnography is particularly suitable for examining cultural practices and the meanings constructed within specific communities. In addition, this study incorporates phenomenological

elements to capture the lived experiences of participants engaged in the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition.

The research was conducted in Sukakerta Village, Jatiwaras District, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java, focusing on three villages that serve as the base of the *Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid* (DKM): Sindangsari, Patahanan, and Lumbung. This site was selected because it represents the epicenter of the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition, which has undergone institutionalization since 2021. Fieldwork was carried out intensively during the Muharam 1447 H celebration (June 2025).

A total of 15 informants participated in this study, selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The selection criteria included active involvement in the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition, demographic representativeness (age, gender, and social role), and the ability to provide rich, in-depth information. The participants comprised religious leaders (n = 3), DKM administrators (n = 3), mothers (n = 3), youth (n = 3), and children (n = 3).

Data were collected using three primary techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted during the implementation of the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition in Muharam 1447 H, as well as during preceding preparatory activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all informants using interview guides tailored to each participant group. Document analysis included various artifacts related to the tradition, such as photographs and video recordings of activities, DKM records and reports, as well as social media content and community publications.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), adapted to the study's theoretical framework. The analytical process followed six stages: familiarization with

the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To ensure research rigor, several validation strategies were employed, including triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and reflexivity. This study obtained ethical approval from the institutional ethics committee, and informed consent was secured from all participants.

DISCUSSION

Ritual Transformation as Institutional Innovation in Islamic Community Development

Prior to 2021, Muharram observances in Sukakerta Village were conducted separately by each *Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid* (DKM) in Sindangsari, Patahanan, and Lumbung, with households performing individual pilgrimages and communal activities largely confined within the boundaries of each institution. The transformation into a unified, cross-DKM event emerged through a deliberate process of community deliberation, as articulated by YY:

"The process went through deliberation among leaders from the three DKMs, resulting in an agreement to unify the activities so that they would become more meaningful and involve a larger number of residents" (YY, Personal Communication, June 2025).

This shift was further reinforced by Ustad ZN, who stated:

"Sa-uyunan is not merely a name, but a reality. The three villages are now like one large family; if there is a celebration or a calamity, they help one another" (Ustad ZN, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Siddiqui's (1997) framework of Islamic Social Development, this transformation represents far more than a simple organizational adjustment. Rather, it reflects the actualization of the *caliphate* pillar namely, the principle of communal stewardship in which the

community collectively assumes responsibility for its religious and social well-being rather than delegating such responsibilities to fragmented institutional actors. From this perspective, the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition should not be interpreted merely as an administrative or procedural innovation, but as a living manifestation of grassroots Islamic governance.

The deliberative mechanism through which this transformation emerged also warrants particular theoretical attention. The *musyawarah* (consultative assembly) conducted among the leaders of the three DKMs functioned not merely as a coordination mechanism, but as an enactment of *shura*, the Qur'anic principle of mutual consultation in communal decision-making. This internal civic process resonates strongly with Hefner's (2000) conception of *Civil Islam*, which emphasizes the emergence of civic capacity rooted in Islamic values and developed organically within civil society, independent of state structures or major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.

While Junaidi (2022) highlights the tensions between Muhammadiyah's organizational rationality and local ritual traditions, the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* tradition reveals an alternative trajectory neither a top-down institutional imposition nor a form of resistant traditionalism, but rather a bottom-up, community-generated synthesis. This synthesis simultaneously draws upon Islamic principles of consultation and Sundanese cultural norms of collective decision-making. Consequently, the tradition may be understood as an emergent form of grassroots Islamic civil society whose dynamics remain insufficiently theorized within existing classifications of Indonesian Islam.

Three interrelated motivations drove this transformation, each reflecting a distinct dimension of community agency.

The desire to strengthen *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, the aspiration to collectively welcome the Islamic New Year, and the initiatives introduced by youth groups such as the torch parade and gift distribution together illustrate what Woodward (2011) describes as the generative capacity of *Living Islam*: the ability of religious communities to adapt and expand inherited traditions in ways that preserve doctrinal legitimacy while maintaining generational relevance. These youth-led innovations did not represent departures from tradition; rather, they functioned as creative extensions that embedded new forms of social interaction within the ritual sequence while simultaneously broadening participation beyond the established adult membership of each DKM. This finding aligns with Woodward's (2011) argument that living traditions are distinguished from fossilized forms of heritage precisely through their capacity for organic elaboration without disrupting theological continuity. From the perspective of community-based Islamic development, this finding carries important implications: the sustainable regeneration of tradition depends not solely on preservation by religious elites, but also on the creation of structured spaces in which younger generations become active co-authors of inherited religious practices.

The institutional consolidation that followed including the establishment of cross-DKM organizational structures, standardized ritual sequences, and informal mechanisms of post-event evaluation produced a model of bottom-up Islamic community development that contrasts sharply with dominant paradigms in contemporary scholarship. Rosman et al. (2022) and Tok et al. (2022), for example, primarily conceptualize Islamic community development through top-down financial instruments such as *waqf*, *zakat*, and Islamic microfinance systems that rely heavily on external institutional actors, regulatory structures, and capital flows. By contrast, the *Sa-*

uyunan Muharam tradition derives its developmental capacity from the internal resources of the community itself: cultural memory, religious authority, and pre-existing social relationships. This endogenous character should not be viewed merely as an empirical peculiarity, but rather as a significant theoretical proposition namely, that tradition-based mechanisms, precisely because they are embedded within identity, collective memory, and established social bonds, may constitute more sustainable drivers of community development than externally imposed financial instruments. This proposition invites more systematic engagement from scholars who have thus far tended to treat cultural and financial approaches as complementary, rather than as analytically distinct models operating according to different logics of sustainability.

Mapping Social Capital Generation Across the Ritual Sequence

The six-stage ritual sequence of *Sa-uyunan Muharam* does not generate social capital merely as an undifferentiated byproduct of religious gathering. Rather, it produces bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in a progressive, cumulative, and simultaneous manner that is structurally embedded within the ritual's architecture. Putnam's (1995) tripartite framework provides the primary analytical lens, while Alemayehu et al.'s (2023) elaboration of the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of religious social capital enables a more granular mapping of how each ritual stage operates across distinct yet interconnected social registers. The central argument advanced in this section is that *Sa-uyunan Muharam* constitutes a uniquely integrated mechanism of social capital generation one that existing scholarship has not yet documented as simultaneously performing triple social-capital functions within a single ritual sequence. This represents the article's primary theoretical contribution.

Figure 1. Pilgrimage to the Tombs of Elders in the *Sa-uyunan Muharam* Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The first stage namely, individual pilgrimage to the graves of deceased parents and ancestors during the morning hours (see Figure 1) primarily functions as a generator of bonding social capital within the family unit. Field observations revealed a depth of emotional engagement that distinguished this stage from the collective activities that followed. Participants knelt, wept, and remained in prolonged personal prayer. YN described the experience as follows:

"It feels very moving to make a pilgrimage to one's parents a feeling of still being able to show devotion even though they are no longer here, while hoping that the prayers reach them" (YN, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Ustad AG framed this theologically:

"This is the highest form of birrul walidain teaching children to respect and pray for deceased parents, because remembering the sacrifices of parents brings blessing into one's life" (Ustad AG, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Bourdieu's (1986) perspective, the value of *birrul walidain* internalized through this ritual constitutes a form of cultural capital that, when enacted collectively within a shared sacred space, is transformed into a religious habitus a durable disposition that reinforces broader patterns of social cohesion within the community. The pilgrimage to parental graves therefore operates simultaneously as a deeply

personal devotional act and as a socially consequential practice with wider communal implications.

Figure 2. Pilgrimage to the Teacher's Tomb in the Sa-uyunan Muharam Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The second stage namely, the collective pilgrimage to the teacher's tomb after the *Asr* prayer, led by *ulama* and accompanied by the recitation of *tahlil* and religious guidance (see Figure 2) generates bridging social capital that transcends the institutional boundaries of individual DKMs. Field observations documented participants from all three communities converging at a shared site of religious authority, thereby creating a moment of collective identity formation that no single DKM could have produced independently. AL articulated this dynamic explicitly:

"I always make a pilgrimage to the teacher who taught me to recite the Qur'an as a form of respect. May the knowledge he taught bring blessing; this is a tradition that must be preserved" (AL, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Ustad SL further explained the theological rationale underlying the practice:

"The teacher imparts knowledge to us. Without a teacher, one cannot read, cannot pray, and cannot understand religion. Therefore, pilgrimage to the teacher is an obligation as a form of honor" (Ustad SL, Personal Communication, June 2025).

In Putnam's (1995) terms, the teacher's tomb functions as a node of bridging social capital because the authority of the *ulama* extends beyond the institutional membership of any single DKM and instead serves as a shared

symbolic reference point capable of generating horizontal ties across otherwise distinct communities. This finding extends Faisal et al.'s (2022) analysis of the *kiai*'s role in sustaining social cohesion by demonstrating that religious authority operates not only within individual communities, but also as a bridging mechanism connecting formally differentiated institutions.

Figure 3. Distribution of Food in the Sa-uyunan Muharram Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The third stage namely, the congregational *Maghrib* prayer followed by the distribution of food to all participants (see Figure 3) simultaneously generates bridging social capital and enacts the *tazkiah* pillar within Siddiqui's (1997) framework of Islamic Social Development. Field observations documented a particularly rich arena of social interaction during the food preparation process itself. Women from all three DKM communities collaborated across communal boundaries in organizing, cooking, and distributing food through an extended cooperative encounter that preceded the formal ritual and operated largely outside explicit institutional directives. IH described the theological significance of this practice as follows:

"Food distribution is a form of sadaqah. Especially in Islam, during the month of Muharram one should increase charitable giving" (IH, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Alemayehu et al.'s (2023) relational dimension of religious social capital, the collaborative

process of food preparation constitutes a trust-generating arena that organically produces cross-institutional networks not through formal organizational design, but through the practical demands of shared ritual labor. At the same time, this practice actualizes *tazkiah* namely, spiritual purification through charitable giving which Siddiqui (1997) identifies as a mechanism through which Islamic social development transforms individual piety into collective social welfare.

Figure 4. Torch Parade in the Sa-uyunan Muharam Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The fourth stage namely, the torch parade from DKM Patahanan to DKM Lumbung, including a stop at the tomb of Raden Indrataruna (see Figure 4) generates linking social capital by creating a public ritual of communal visibility that connects the three communities to shared symbols of cultural and spiritual authority. Field observations documented particularly strong participation among youth, whose enthusiasm transformed the parade into the most visually dynamic component of the ritual sequence. NR interpreted the meaning of the event as follows:

“The torch parade is carried out as an expression of joy and welcome for the arrival of Muharram as the Islamic New Year” (NR, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Ustad ZN elaborated further on its symbolic significance:

“The torch symbolizes the light of faith. Muharram is the sacred month marking the beginning of the Islamic year, and the torch parade represents the joy of Muslims in welcoming the new year”

(Ustad ZN, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Woodward's (2011) framework of *Living Islam*, the torch parade represents an authentic negotiation between universal Islamic values particularly *nur* (the light of faith) and local Sundanese cultural idioms. The ritual therefore demonstrates how universal Islamic symbols can be expressed through culturally specific forms without losing their theological substance. This finding extends Pabbajah et al.'s (2021) analysis of Islam–local identity negotiation by demonstrating that linking social capital may emerge not only through hierarchical relationships with formal religious institutions, but also through collective participation in ritually mediated symbolic practices.

Figure 5. Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Local Figures Raden Indrataruna in the Sa-uyunan Muharam Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The fifth stage namely, the pilgrimage to the tomb of the local historical figure Raden Indrataruna, who is believed to have been part of the administrative structure of Tasikmalaya Regency in an earlier period (see Figure 5) generates a distinctive form of linking social capital grounded in historical memory and civic aspiration. Ustad ZN articulated the dual significance of this pilgrimage as follows:

“In visiting the local figure Raden Indrataruna, who is believed to have been part of the government, pilgrims seek not only blessings and prayers but also hope to emulate the example of good leadership” (Ustad ZN, Personal Communication, June 2025).

This form of linking social capital differs from Putnam's (1995) conventional understanding of vertical ties to institutional authority. Instead, it represents a temporally extended form of linking that connects the contemporary community to its historical legacy of local leadership and governance. Interpreted through Ekadjati's (2009) analysis of Sundanese Islam particularly its integration of Islamic devotion, ancestral reverence, and local historical memory this pilgrimage demonstrates how *Sa-uyunan Muharam* embeds the community within a broader continuity of cultural and religious identity. In this sense, the ritual reflects what Woodward (2011) identifies as a defining characteristic of *Living Islam* in the Indonesian context.

Figure 6. Distribution of Gifts in the *Sa-uyunan Muharram* Tradition



Source: Personal Documentation, 2025

The sixth stage namely, the distribution of gifts to all residents, from children to elders, at DKM Lumbung (see Figure 6) functions both as a generator of intergenerational bonding social capital and as a mechanism for the formation of religious habitus among younger participants. IH expressed the perspective of the children involved:

"I am very happy to receive gifts. It makes me eager to join the activity. The ustadz said this is a form of charity that brings happiness" (IH, Personal Communication, June 2025).

RL similarly stated:

"The gift distribution is the most eagerly anticipated moment" (RL, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Ustad ZN interpreted this practice through the lens of Sundanese Islamic philosophy, explaining that the spirit of sharing embodied in the gift distribution reflects the values of *silih asih*, *silih asah*, and *silih asuh* caring for, educating, and nurturing one another which constitute the ethical foundation of Sundanese communal life (Ustad ZN, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Bourdieu's (1986) framework, the gift distribution functions as a mechanism of habitus formation. By associating religious participation with positive emotional experiences, the tradition cultivates durable religious dispositions among children that are likely to sustain their future participation in communal religious life. This finding extends Fathani et al.'s (2024) analysis of the *Melipo* tradition as a medium of intergenerational Islamic value transmission by demonstrating that affective incentive structures particularly the joy associated with receiving gifts can function as legitimate pedagogical instruments within tradition-based religious education.

The synthesis across all six ritual stages reveals the most significant theoretical contribution of *Sa-uyunan Muharam*: its capacity to simultaneously generate bonding social capital (Stages 1 and 6), bridging social capital (Stages 2 and 3), and linking social capital (Stages 4 and 5) within a single integrated ritual sequence, while concurrently functioning as a medium of Islamic education and Sundanese cultural preservation. Comparable studies have not documented this simultaneous triple function within a single ritual structure. Jubba et al. (2019), for example, examine the productive coexistence of Islamic and local traditions but do not analyze the mechanisms through which ritual sequences generate differentiated forms of social capital. Mubarak et al. (2025) provide rich ethnographic insights into the solidarity-building function of the *Marakka'*

Bola tradition, yet limit their analysis primarily to intra-community bonding. Similarly, Rifqi et al. (2025) explore tradition as a space of cross-faith solidarity but do not theorize the sequential and cumulative logic through which ritual stages produce social capital in a structurally embedded manner.

By contrast, *Sa-uyunan Muharam* demonstrates that durable forms of community solidarity emerge not from a single ritual act, but from the cumulative layering of social bonds across a carefully sequenced series of practices that simultaneously engage participants at individual, familial, communal, historical, and intergenerational levels.

Sa-uyunan Muharam as Living Islam Negotiating the Universal and the Particular

The cultural dimensions of *Sa-uyunan Muharam* are better understood not through the lens of syncretism, but through what Woodward (2011) terms *Living Islam* the dynamic negotiation between universal Islamic principles and local cultural forms that preserves theological integrity while enabling authentic cultural expression. This perspective is reflected in Ustad ZN's statement that "*silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* is Sundanese philosophy preserved in *Sa-uyunan Muharam*" (Ustad ZN, Personal Communication, June 2025). These principles caring for, educating, and nurturing one another are understood by the community not as alternatives to Islamic teachings, but as their Sundanese articulation. Through Muhaimin's (2001) framework, this represents functional acculturation rather than doctrinal syncretism: universal Islamic values are expressed through Sundanese cultural forms without incorporating pre-Islamic spiritual elements incompatible with Islamic theology.

The relationship between Islamic values and Sundanese cultural expressions within *Sa-uyunan Muharam* is analytically

traceable. *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) is embodied in *sa-uyunan*, the Sundanese ideal of unity and harmonious

cooperation. *Ta'awun* (mutual assistance) is enacted through collective food preparation and gift distribution across DKM boundaries. *Takaful* (communal solidarity) appears in spontaneous collective responses to hardship, as reflected in MM's observation that residents now immediately help neighbors facing illness or calamity without being asked (MM, Personal Communication, June 2025). Likewise, *sedakah* (voluntary charity) is materialized through the communal distribution of food and gifts. Through Woodward's (2011) framework, these practices demonstrate that Islamic obligations become meaningful and enduring when embedded within culturally resonant communal practices.

Comparison with the characteristics of Sundanese Islam described by Ekadjati (2009) and Rosidi (2000) particularly communal harmony, solidarity, and reverence for ancestors and local historical figures shows that *Sa-uyunan Muharam* not only preserves these traditions, but also reinterprets them within an Islamic framework. Communal harmony is reframed as *ukhuwah*, ancestral respect is grounded in *birrul walidain* and *ziyarah*, and solidarity is extended across formally distinct DKM communities. This finding supports Jubba et al.'s (2019) argument regarding the productive coexistence of Islam and local tradition, while also extending Rifqi et al.'s (2025) analysis by showing that tradition-based solidarity operates not only across religious boundaries, but also within Muslim communities themselves through mechanisms of internal cohesion, bridging, and historical consciousness..

One of the most significant dimensions of *Sa-uyunan Muharam* is its role as a medium of non-formal Islamic education. Ustad SL explained that children directly experience Islamic

teachings such as honoring parents, pilgrimage, congregational prayer, and sharing, making these lessons more meaningful than classroom instruction alone (Ustad SL, Personal Communication, June 2025). FB, a young participant, similarly stated that the activities provided direct experiences of Islamic history, pilgrimage etiquette, and brotherhood, leaving a stronger impression because they involved practical participation (FB, Personal Communication, June 2025).

Analyzed through Fathani et al.'s (2024) framework of tradition-as-education, *Sa-uyunan Muharam* represents a form of experiential Islamic learning that enables the embodied, emotionally engaged, and multi-sensory transmission of religious values through participation in ritually structured communal life. This finding suggests that tradition-based learning environments can complement and, in some dimensions, exceed the effectiveness of formal classroom instruction in cultivating durable religious dispositions. Consequently, curriculum development in Indonesian Islamic education should engage more seriously with living traditions as educational resources, a policy implication that extends beyond Tasikmalaya to broader Islamic education reform in Muslim-majority Southeast Asia.

Toward a Replicable Model of Tradition-Based Islamic Community Empowerment

Synthesizing the findings from the preceding sections, *Sa-uyunan Muharam* can be theorized as a four-element model of tradition-based Islamic community empowerment whose components are analytically distinct yet operationally interconnected. The first element is deliberative multi-institutional initiation. The *musyawarah* process through which leaders from three DKMs collectively designed and legitimized the unified tradition represents an inclusive

governance mechanism grounded in participatory consensus rather than hierarchical authority. The second element is progressive ritual sequencing. The six-stage ritual structure generates expanding circles of social connection, beginning with intimate family bonds at parental graves and extending toward broader communal and intergenerational engagement through activities such as the torch parade and gift distribution. The third element is intergenerational integration. The differentiated participation of *ulama*, mothers, youth, and children as documented by MM (Personal Communication, June 2025) ensures the continuous reproduction of the tradition across generations rather than its concentration within a single age group. The fourth element is balanced theological and cultural legitimacy. The authority of the tradition derives simultaneously from Islamic theological foundations and Sundanese cultural resonance, enabling it to avoid accusations of *bid'ah* while also preventing its reduction to mere cultural performance devoid of devotional meaning.

Together, these four elements constitute a model that differs fundamentally from dominant paradigms in Islamic community development literature. Rosman et al. (2022) and Tok et al. (2022), for example, emphasize development models based on external financial instruments such as *waqf*, *zakat*, and Islamic microfinance, all of which depend on institutional infrastructure, regulatory systems, and stable capital flows. By contrast, *Sa-uyunan Muharam* demonstrates that endogenous cultural mechanisms rooted in collective identity, religious memory, and existing social relationships can generate social capital, strengthen Islamic education, and foster community solidarity without relying on external institutional support. The significance of this model lies not in claiming the superiority of tradition-based approaches in all contexts, but in

highlighting their distinct logic of sustainability: their continuity depends primarily on the reproduction of meaning, identity, and social bonds rather than financial resources alone. This suggests that resilient forms of Islamic community empowerment may emerge most effectively from existing cultural and religious endowments within communities themselves.

At the same time, the replication of this model depends on several important conditions. First, a baseline level of socio-cultural cohesion appears necessary. *Sa-uyunan Muharam* emerged within a rural Sundanese Muslim community characterized by shared ethnic identity, language, and longstanding inter-family relationships, and it remains uncertain whether the model would function similarly in more socially fragmented urban settings. Second, the presence of *ulama* whose authority is recognized across institutional boundaries is structurally essential, as such authority enables the generation of bridging and linking social capital. Third, the model requires local traditions that retain strong emotional and historical resonance within the community. Traditions disconnected from lived memory or lacking affective significance are unlikely to generate the forms of solidarity achieved by *Sa-uyunan Muharam*. Accordingly, this study acknowledges its limitation as a single-case ethnographic study situated within a specific rural Sundanese context. Broader generalizations regarding the applicability of this model to other communities or regions require further comparative research.

The findings of this study open several important directions for future research. First, longitudinal and quantitative studies examining the social capital outcomes of *Sa-uyunan Muharam* and similar tradition-based practices would strengthen empirical evidence regarding their developmental impact beyond what ethnographic

approaches alone can capture. Second, comparative studies involving non-Sundanese, urban Muslim, and non-Indonesian contexts are needed to identify which elements of the four-part model are context-specific and which are transferable across communities. Third, comparative analysis with tradition-based community development models in other Muslim-majority regions such as North Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia would help position *Sa-uyunan Muharam* within a broader global typology of Islamic civil society formation. Finally, future scholarship should examine the role of digital media and social networks in the transmission, preservation, and reinterpretation of local traditions among younger generations. If intergenerational continuity is a prerequisite for tradition-based community empowerment, understanding how digital culture sustains or disrupts that continuity becomes a critical agenda for future research.

CLOSING

The transformation of *Sa-uyunan Muharam* from fragmented individual rituals into a structured cross-DKM communal tradition since 2021 demonstrates that grassroots Islamic civic capacity can emerge organically through the reinterpretation of inherited traditions grounded in *shura* and community-based agency rather than external institutional intervention. Its six-stage ritual sequence functions as an integrated mechanism that simultaneously generates bonding social capital (parental pilgrimage and gift distribution), bridging social capital (teacher pilgrimage and collaborative food preparation), and linking social capital (the torch parade and pilgrimage to Raden Indrataruna). This simultaneous triple function has not been sufficiently theorized in comparable studies of tradition-based religious practice.

At the same time, *Sa-uyunan Muharam* exemplifies Woodward's

(2011) concept of *Living Islam*, in which universal Islamic values such as *ukhuwah*, *ta'awun*, *takaful*, and *tazkiah* are negotiated through Sundanese cultural expressions including *sa-uyunan*, *gotong royong*, and *silih asih/silih asah/silih asuh*. This process produces functional acculturation without theological dilution while also creating a form of experiential Islamic education whose pedagogical depth extends beyond formal classroom instruction.

This study contributes theoretically in three ways. First, it demonstrates that endogenous cultural mechanisms constitute a distinct model of Islamic community empowerment whose sustainability depends on identity, memory, and social relationships rather than financial infrastructure alone. Second, it shows that bonding, bridging, and linking social capital can be generated simultaneously within a single sequential ritual structure. Third, it provides ethnographic evidence that the negotiation between universal Islamic principles and local cultural forms occurs through specific ritual practices rather than merely at the level of abstract communal identity.

Nevertheless, this study remains limited by its single-case ethnographic design, which restricts broader generalization and does not allow causal measurement of social capital outcomes. Future research should therefore pursue comparative studies across diverse Muslim contexts, develop quantitative indicators for tradition-based social capital, and examine the influence of digital media on the intergenerational continuity of local traditions. Ultimately, this study advances the broader proposition that cultural and religious traditions remain among the most significant yet under-theorized resources for sustainable Islamic community development.

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Interview :

- Interview With ZN (Religious Figures), 2025.
- Interview With AG (Religious Figures), 2025.
- Interview With SL (Religious Figures), 2025.
- Interview With YY (Chairman of DKM Sindangsari), 2025.

Interview With MM (Chairman of DKM Patahunan), 2025.
Interview With AT (Chairman of DKM Lumbung), 2025.
Interview With YN (Mother Participant), 2025.
Interview With ID (Mother Participant), 2025.
Interview With IT (Mother Participant), 2025.
Interview With FB (Youth Participant), 2025.