

# PRESERVING RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF COASTAL COMMUNITY

## An Ethnographic Study of Pencak Macan in Gresik<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyse the religious expressions embedded in the local culture of the *Pencak Macan* among the coastal community of Gresik, East Java. The research method used in this study is qualitative research, employing an ethnographic approach combined with the study of cultural ecology in coastal communities. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document research, and focus group discussions. The informants were cultural practitioners of *Pencak Macan* from three sub-districts in the Gresik, namely Bungah, Sidayu, and Gresik districts. The results illustrate that *Pencak Macan* is a distinctive traditional procession for the coastal community of Gresik. It is a traditional art symbolizing the journey of life, particularly marriage. Featuring tigers as husbands, monkeys as wives, and *Gondorwo* as conflict, it portrays the domestic trials needing patience and faith. This Gresik tradition, performed during bridal processions, emphasizes faith and piety, serving as a warning against succumbing to temptations that distort human nature.

**Keywords:** Religious expression, local culture, pencak macan, cultural ecology, coastal communities.

### Introduction

The broad and profound teachings of Islam must be studied and understood by Muslims who wish to practice them in their entirety.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge the funding support from the DRTPM Kemendikisaintek (Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology) Indonesia and the opportunity provided by the LPPM Universitas Terbuka.

Understanding the values or elements contained in Islamic teachings is also important. The teachings of Islam among its people are a manifestation of the ideal to preserve, transfer, instill, and transform Islamic values for the next generation.<sup>2</sup> Thus, a Muslim must essentially be able to translate the values of Islamic teachings based on faith and piety to Allah SWT into daily life. Absolute obedience to Allah SWT signifies total surrender to Him. Within the values of Islamic teachings, there are several dimensions that encompass ideal values, which can be categorized into three groups. First is the dimension of improving the welfare of human life in the world. Second is the dimension that encourages individuals to attain happiness in the hereafter, and the third is the dimension that combines worldly life with the hereafter (*ukhrawi*).<sup>3</sup>

The values of Islamic teachings encompass all aspects of life, including the relationship between humans and their creators, humans and other humans, or the relationship between humans and their environment. These Islamic values, when viewed from the source, can be classified into two types.<sup>4</sup> First, divine values are those derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. In theological aspects (such as the principles of faith), these values are immutable and not subject to change based on human desires. However, their practical aspects may adapt over time in response to societal and environmental changes.<sup>5</sup> Second, soft values are those that emerge and evolve based on human consensus. This human value will continue to develop in more advanced and refined ways. These values are derived from *ra'yu*, customs, and natural reality.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rahimi Rahimi, "Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam Masa Nabi Muhammad SAW Periode Makkah," *Al-Liqo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2021): 170–83, <https://doi.org/10.46963/alliqo.v6i2.397>.

<sup>3</sup> Donny Khoiril Aziz, "Akulturasi Islam Dan Budaya Jawa," *Jurnal: Fikrah* no. 2 (2015): 253–86, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v1i2.543>.

<sup>4</sup> Ika Ayulanda and Abdul Basith, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Komik Liqomik" *Jurnal Fenomena*, 16, no. 1 (2024): 31–47, <https://doi.org/10.21093/fj.v16i1.9108>.

<sup>5</sup> Novi Adriani, Maraimbang, and Muhammad Hidayat, "Peran Pondok Pesantren Modern Baitussalam Dalam Memperkuat Nilai Aqidah Islam Masyarakat Desa Naga Jaya 1 Kec. Bandar Hulan," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi Dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): 39–53, <https://doi.org/10.51900/alhikmah.v4i1.11973>.

<sup>6</sup> Mubasyaroh, "Pendidikan Penanaman Sistem Nilai Dalam Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlaq," *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2013): 291–310, <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v8i2.755>.

It can be said that a Muslim is not only one who obeys Allah and His Messenger but also one who practices social piety, demonstrating care for the surrounding community and environment.

In maintaining social relations with other human beings and the environment, a Muslim must be able to uphold a system of values and social norms in society based on ethical, pragmatic and empirical principles.<sup>7</sup> These values form the foundation for determining what is considered good or bad, failure or success and they reflect the experiences and effects in of social interactions. Due to the vastness of Islamic teachings, particularly the values embedded within them, it can be challenging to achieve a comprehensive understanding, especially for ordinary people living in the coastal areas like Gresik. This challenge is further compounded by the growing spread of puritanical and intolerant religious interpretations, which threaten the sustainability of moderate religious understanding<sup>8</sup> and integration of local culture.<sup>9</sup> A moderate understanding of religion is very important for the Indonesian people, whose society is pluralistic and multicultural<sup>10</sup> as an effort to create a conflict-free civil society order<sup>11</sup>. Being open and accommodating to local culture is one of the hallmarks of a tolerant society,<sup>12</sup> especially considering that,

<sup>7</sup> Ismatul Izzah, "Analisis Kajian Sumber Dan Nilai-Nilai Manajemen Pendidikan Islam," *Mudir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (2022): 117–32, <https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v4i2.189>.

<sup>8</sup> Yudhi Kawangung, "Religious Moderation Discourse in Plurality of Social Harmony in Indonesia," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2019): 160–70, <https://doi.org/10.29332/ijssh.v3n1.277>.

<sup>9</sup> Yusuf Rahman, Kholid Al Walid, and Humaidi, "Critical Thinking and Religious Moderation Instilling Religiously Moderate Values through the Teaching of Islamic Philosophy in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022): 49–74, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.49-74>.

<sup>10</sup> Makhfid Syawaludin, "Multicultural Ukhuwah Concept: The Study Of Various Signification On Ukhuwah Perspective Of Islamic Elite Religion In Pasuruan District," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 20, no. 1 (2020), 69, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.V20i1.5805>.

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Wildan and Ahmad Muttaqin, "Mainstreaming Moderation in Preventing/ Countering Violent Extremism (P/Cve) in Pesantrens in Central Java," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2022): 37–74, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i1.8102>.

<sup>12</sup> Firmansyah, "Class Together In Realizing The Values Of Moderation Of Islamic Education Through Multi Cultural School Culture," *International Journal Education Multicultural of Islamic Society* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.33474/jemois.v2i1.13119>.

historically, Indonesian culture has undergone extensive acculturation.<sup>13</sup> This moderation is not only practice at grassroots level<sup>14</sup> but also conceptually viable.<sup>15</sup> Embracing local culture is our responsibility as the next generation<sup>16</sup> and *Pencak Macan*, for example, is one such cultural expression from the coastal communities in Gresik. Coastal communities These communities face several key challenges in understanding religion, such as limited access to educational resources—including religious education. Local traditions, which are sometimes mixed with syncretic beliefs, can obscure Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the shortage of religious teachers in these areas limits opportunities for people to receive proper religious instruction.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the time-consuming nature of economic activities, since most coastal residents work as fishermen or laborers, demands significant time and energy, often reducing the time available for religious learning and reflection.<sup>18</sup>

Several studies have been conducted on the *Pencak Macan* tradition. For example, Kusumawati's research examined the relationship between the philosophical values and artistic behavior of *Pencak Macan* in Lumpur Village.<sup>19</sup> Inayah conducted a study exploring the uniqueness of the *Pencak Macan* tradition in relation to

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<sup>13</sup> Adisty Nurrahmah Laili et al., “Akulturasi Islam Dengan Budaya Di Pulau Jawa,” *Jurnal Sosbum Insentif* 4, no. 2 (2021): 137–44, <https://doi.org/10.36787/jsi.v4i2.612>.

<sup>14</sup> Wasisto R. Jati et al., “Reevaluating Approaches to Religious Moderation at the Grassroots Level: The Role of Muslim Youth in Advancing Interfaith Dialogue,” *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 62, no. 1 (2024), 185-213.

<sup>15</sup> Zulkifli, Nur Kafid, Herlino Nanang, and Muhamad Fahri, ulkifli, Nur Kafid, Herlino Nanang, and Muhamad FahriteMData":{"DOI":"http:," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 13, no. 2 (2023): 337, nal

<sup>16</sup> Suprpto, “Religious Leaders and Peace Building: The Roles of Tuan Guru and Pedanda in Conflict Resolution in Lombok - Indonesia,” *Al-Jami'ab* 53, no. 1 (2015): 225–50, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2015.531.225-250>.

<sup>17</sup> Arum Rahmawati, Nasruddin, and Imroatus, “Peran Sosial Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Wilayah Pesisir Utara Pulau Jawa,” *Jurnal Nuansa Akademik* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1–12, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47200/jnajpm.v5i1.417>.

<sup>18</sup> Irayanti Nur, Chece Djaffar, and Universitas Andi Djemma, “Kesempatan Memperoleh Pendidikan Pada Masyarakat Pesisir Ponjalae, Palopo: Sebuah Analisis Perspektif Gender” *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial* 30, no. 2 (2020): 109–22, <https://doi.org/10.23917/jpis.v30i2.12235>.

<sup>19</sup> Agni Kusumawati, “Keterkaitan Nilai Filosofi Perilaku Pelaku Kesenian Pencak Macan Di Desa Lumpur Kabupaten Gresik,” *Apron Jurnal Pemikiran Seni Pertunjukan* 1, no. 9 (2016): 82–88.

tourism.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Fikri researched the training and practice of *Pencak Macan* as a traditional art form.<sup>21</sup> This study attempts to fill the gap by providing an analysis of religious expressions found in various versions of *Pencak Macan* culture in Gresik. It is aimed at affirming the cultural richness, which is full of life teachings that contribute to spiritual and economic development, thereby guiding the next generation of Indonesians

This study employed a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants from the Pencak Macan cultural community in three sub-districts of Gresik District: Bungah, Sidayu, and Gresik. A focus group discussion (FGD) was then conducted as a final cross-check of the research data. Then the data were analyzed and discussed using an ecological and cultural theoretical perspective.

### **Religious Expressions in the Local Culture of *Pencak Macan***

*Pencak Macan* is a traditional art from originating from the fishing community along the north coast of Gresik. This tradition has been passed down through generations and is believed to have emerged around 1918-1920.<sup>22</sup> It began as a form of entertainment for fishermen who were weary from their daily work. They practiced Pencak Silat, a martial art that includes many movements inspired by animals such as storks, tigers, snakes, and monkeys. etc.<sup>23</sup> The Lumpur community sought to bring these animal-inspired movements to life through costumes. For instance, tiger movements were performed while wearing a tiger mask. Initially, only masks were used, but eventually, full-body costumes were introduced, resembling the style of *Reog* and other Javanese cultural performances. Palace performances typically used complete gamelan and conveyed values of subtlety, grace, and

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<sup>20</sup> Z. Inayah, M.M. Firdiyansyah, and Y.A. Listadiana, "Pencak Macan: Unique Tradition In Marriage As An Effort To Develop Community Morals Through the Tourism Village," *Proceedings of Asian Academic Society International Conference* (2019), 282–88.

<sup>21</sup> Mohammad Tsaqibul Fikri, "Pelatihan Kesenian Pencak Macan Dalam Rangka Pelestarian Dan Penanaman Nilai Spiritual Melalui Kesenian Tradisional," *Al Ulya: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2018): 97–109, <https://doi.org/10.36840/ulya.v3i1.153>.

<sup>22</sup> Ali Iksan, *Interview* in August 2024

<sup>23</sup> R. Preece, *Awe for the Tiger, Love for the Lamb A Chronicle of Sensibility to Animals: Animals in Myth and Religion* (London: Routledge., 2002).

aristocracy.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the people of the northern coastal areas developed their forms of folk art, namely expressions that were more grounded, bold, and oppositional. These folk traditions emerged partly as a response to the lack of access to palace-sponsored entertainment and cultural refinement.<sup>25</sup>

The northern coastal communities of Java were the first to come into contact with Islam through the arrival of Islamic merchants and later the emergence of *Walisanga* who spread Islam in the land of Java.<sup>26</sup> At that time, in addition to learning religion, coastal communities also learned *Kanuragan* or *Pencak Silat*.<sup>27</sup> As a result, many martial arts schools emerged. To minimize conflicts arising from the proliferation of these schools, a kind of festival or martial arts event was held collectively. This tradition of communal fighting events was often carried out in the Lumpur area, a cultural center for coastal fishermen in Gresik, known for its rich cultural heritage derived from the local wisdom of its people. One such tradition is earth alms (*sedekah bumi*), a kind of folk festival that evolved over time and eventually became a celebration to commemorate the *haul* (death anniversary) of the elder of the 'village tripe' named Kyai Sindujoyo.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Pencak Macan* culture from two other sub-districts, namely Bungah and Sidayu sub-districts, has not been known in detail about its origin. However, in the search for documents about the origins of village naming in the two sub-districts, there is folklore that connects it with the story of Sindujoyo as the figure behind the naming of the village, or the locations that currently exist and develop. The story is contained in the *Serat Sindujoyo* which is a historical reference

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Philip, *A Little History of Music* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Eka Titi Andaryani and Udi Utomo, "Tegalan Song: An Expression of Musical Culture Identity of the Coastal Communities of Northern Coast of Java," *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education* 24, no. 1 (2024): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v24i1.42383>.

<sup>26</sup> Lukman S. Thahir, "Islam of the Archipelago: Cosmopolitanism of Islamic Civilization in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 21, no. 1 (2021): 23–45, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v0i0.5794>.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Keilbart, "How to Be a Good Disciple (to a Martial Arts Master): Critical Reflections on Participation and Apprenticeship in Indonesian Pencak Silat Schools BT - Affective Dimensions of Fieldwork and Ethnography," ed. Thomas Stodulka, Samia Dinkelaker, and Ferdiansyah Thajib (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 233–49, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20831-8\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20831-8_21).

<sup>28</sup> Kris Adji, *Interview* in July 2024

for the Gresik Society<sup>29</sup>. In other words, the *Pencak Macan* originated in the two sub-districts and came from the same origin as the Pencak Macan from Lumpur village, Gresik district.

Pencak Macan is a traditional art that symbolizes the journey of human life in navigating the journey of life, especially in fostering a household. In the Pencak Macan performance, there are three main characters: the tiger symbolizes the husband, the monkey symbolizes the wife, and the *gondoruwo*<sup>30</sup> symbolizes the wrath or the bully in the household. In addition, there are various other figures such as warriors, *Ketopang* bearers, umbrellas, *Pontang Lima*, and prayer readers accompanied by *Hadrah*. Each character has its symbolism. In any religious tradition, symbol is important,<sup>31</sup> and as other rituals elsewhere in Indonesia it always has two or more meanings.<sup>32</sup> This tradition reminds us, especially those who are already married, of the twists and turns of married life, which requires patience and *tawakkal* in facing trials. This tradition has deep philosophical value, depicting domestic conflicts through quarrels between tigers and monkeys, as well as the temptations of the devil depicted by *Gondoruwo*. Pencak Macan is a traditional art that accompanies the bridal procession in the people of Lumpur, Gresik District, Gresik Regency, and is an ancestral heritage that is still preserved today. The philosophy of Pencak Macan focuses on human faith and piety. If faith is not maintained, people can be tempted by Satan and change their nature to become like a tiger, monkey, or *Gondoruwo*. Perfect humans have a disposition like guardians who seek the pleasure of Allah SWT.

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<sup>29</sup> Ronit Ricci, "The Serat Samud within and Beyond Javanese Palace Circles," *Manuskripta* 7, no. 2 (2017), 1-20; Agus Suherman, "Wawacan Pandita Sawang Sebagai Naskah Keagamaan: Tinjauan Kedudukan Dan Fungsi," *Manuskripta* 7, no. 2 (2017), 33-48.

<sup>30</sup> Gondoruwo is a visualization of the embodiment of a terrifying devil's face in Javanese culture. Wahyu Widiastutik, Indah Winarni, and Retno Lestari, "Studi Fenomenologi: Resilience Keluarga Penderita Skizofrenia Di Puskesmas Bantur," *Jurnal Ilmiah Kesehatan Keperawatan* 12, no. 3 (2016): 117-31, <https://doi.org/10.26753/jikk.v12i3.161>.

<sup>31</sup> Hiroshi Takahashi, "Ritual and Symbolism in Religion: A Philosophical Analysis of their Significance and Evolution," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 17, no. 2 (2025), 511 - 526

<sup>32</sup> Agus Cahyono et al., "Between mystical and entertainment: A study on Barongan show in Blora, Indonesia," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2023), 44 - 62

Pencak Macan carries a philosophical meaning, symbolizing the twists and turns of life ahead. The tiger represents the husband, while the monkey is depicted as a wife. In the Pencak Macan, the two appear to fight, symbolizing the challenges and conflicts that may arise in domestic life. Gondoruwo is portrayed as a demon who delights and dances when the bride and groom are in conflict. The warrior represents a mediator, someone who helps resolve disputes and calms anger within the household. Pencak Macan serves as a reminder to the bride and groom not to forget their Creator and to remember that marriage requires mutual care and the ability to overcome selfishness. This way, the challenges of married life can be navigated with patience and generosity.<sup>33</sup>

The structure of the *Pencak Macan* performance involves 10 men as dancers and *pencak* performers, along with 10 musicians. *Pencak Macan* has a structure that consists of several parts. The first is the procession of the groom to the bride's house. This procession accompanied by musical instruments, including *gamelan*, *gong*, *kenong*, *jidor*, *kendang* and *balungan*. The accompaniment of the Pencak Macan, in addition to playing musical instruments, is also accompanied by singing the *Salawat* of the Prophet and the Coastal Macapat. The music that accompanies *Pencak Macan* has the theme of Islam, namely *Kasidah*, *Samroh*, *Diba'* or *Hadrah*.<sup>34</sup> This musical accompaniment continues to be played until the bride's house and the groom is juxtaposed with the bride. After that, it will enter the core part, namely dance performances and Pencak Macan moves. When displayed, a narrative and message for the bride and groom are conveyed by dancers who play the roles of monkeys, tigers and *gondoruwo*. They wear costumes according to their respective roles. First, the tiger depicts the groom. Philosophically, tigers are protective animals and kings of the forest.<sup>35</sup> This symbolizes the hope will become a good family leader and be able to protect all members of his family.

The monkey is described as the bride because the monkey is seen as a lively and deceitful animal. This symbolizes the perception that a woman is, by nature, more easily tempted by the devil's influence, as illustrated in several stories from the Quran, such as that of Prophet

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<sup>33</sup> Mahrus, *interview* in August 2024

<sup>34</sup> Mutimmatul Faidah et al., "Islamic Wedding Attraction in Entrepreneur Vocational Perspective" *Proceedings of the International Conference on Indonesian Technical Vocational Education and Association* (2018): 293–96.

<sup>35</sup> Preece, *Ave for the Tiger, Love for the Lamb A Chronicle of Sensibility to Animals*, 77.

Adam and Eve, and is more prone to being drawn toward negative influences. Therefore, it is hoped that the husband can control the behaviour of the bride and avoid the demons played by *gondoruwo*, who seeks to disturb their household.<sup>36</sup> Another symbol is a tiger with white and yellow colors. The yellow tiger is considered a male tiger and is symbolized as a mighty man who has a tough nature but has a high attitude and sense of responsibility. While the white tiger symbolizes purity or goodness, so it is hoped that men can direct the ark of their household in a better direction. The monkey, on a monkey mask, depicts the character of a woman or wife. Because the movements carried out by monkey characters tend to be agile, that's why she is interpreted as a woman. Although he is talkative, he is diligent in managing the household.



**Figure 1.** The content of *Serat Sindujoyo* inspired the birth of *Pencak Macan*

Meanwhile, *Gondoruwo*, which is a mask presenting a *gondoruwo* character, is a direct adaptation or transformation of the *Gondoruwo* character on *Serat Sindujoyo* which symbolizes a nature that is thirsty for lust. That is, on the way to sail through a household ark, it is impossible to escape a conflict (problem) triggered by lust as a result of the temptation of Satan<sup>38</sup>. *Gondoruwo* in *Pencak Macan* uses sharp weapons such as scythes, machetes, tridents and others. While other

<sup>36</sup> Faidah et al., "Islamic Wedding Attraction in Entrepreneur Vocational Perspective, 293-6

<sup>38</sup> Ricci, "The Serat Samud, 20; Suherman, "Wawacan Pandita Sawang Sebagai Naskah Keagamaan, 33.

characters do not use weapons or props. If held, this performance lasts about one hour. The narrative of the story ends with the presence of a kiai or knight figure who will convey his advice and advice.

Religious expressions in local cultures can appear in many forms, reflecting how people integrate religious beliefs and practices into their daily lives.<sup>39</sup> Some forms of religious expression are common in local cultures, such as performances that contain religious elements or tell stories from sacred texts and traditional music that has lyrics or religious meanings. Paintings, carvings, or webbing that depict religious symbols. Clothing that reflects cultural and religious identity is worn during religious ceremonies or activities. In the context of the local culture of Pencak Macan in Gresik, this religious expression can be manifested in the form of Pencak dances and performances that contain religious elements, traditional ceremonies that integrate prayers and religious rituals, as well as local wisdom values that are upheld in the daily lives of coastal communities.

The culture of Pencak Macan mirrors the distinct artistic expressions of coastal communities, which differ from the more refined palace traditions. Unlike palace art forms, which emphasize subtlety and elegance, Pencak Macan emphasizes strength, resilience, and communal participation, reflecting the independent spirit of the coastal people. This contrast highlights the broader socio-cultural dynamics in Java, where inland and coastal regions developed distinct yet complementary cultural identities<sup>40</sup>.

The integration of Islamic values into Pencak Macan underscores its role as a medium for religious expression. Coastal communities, being among the first in Java to embrace Islam through trade and the influence of Walisongo, combined martial arts practices with religious teachings. Events like martial arts festivals became opportunities for social gatherings and religious reinforcement. Earth alms ceremonies, originally meant to honor village elders like Kyai Sindujoyo, further demonstrate this syncretism. These rituals blend Islamic prayers, local folklore, and symbolic performances, creating a unique cultural-religious narrative. The philosophical underpinnings of Pencak Macan

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<sup>39</sup> Brian J Zinnbauer et al., "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (2016): 549–64.

<sup>40</sup> Jon M. Erlandson and Scott M. Fitzpatrick, "Oceans, Islands, and Coasts: Current Perspectives on the Role of the Sea in Human Prehistory," *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (2006), 5–32.

emphasize moral lessons about faith, patience, and unity, providing a spiritual framework for resolving conflicts within households and the community. Such integration of religion and culture highlights the adaptability of local traditions in preserving faith while addressing contemporary social dynamics<sup>41</sup>.

A critical review of Pencak Macan reveals its dual role as both entertainment and moral education. The symbolic characters—the tiger, monkey, and *gondorowo*—illustrate the trials of married life, reflecting human virtues and vices. The tiger represents the husband's strength and responsibility, while the monkey embodies the wife's agility and vulnerability. The *gondorowo* serves as a metaphor for temptations and conflicts that threaten harmony. By dramatizing these roles, Pencak Macan provides a reflective space for audiences to contemplate personal and social values. However, its gendered representations warrant closer scrutiny. The depiction of women as vulnerable and easily tempted reinforces patriarchal norms, which may conflict with contemporary gender equality ideals. Despite this limitation, the performance effectively preserves communal identity and moral teachings, offering a dynamic platform for cultural continuity<sup>42</sup>.

The Pencak Macan tradition demonstrates the resilience of local cultural expressions amid modernization. Its structured performances, accompanied by gamelan music and Islamic chants, create an immersive experience that resonates with both spiritual and artistic sensibilities. The inclusion of Salawat and Hadrah further reinforces its Islamic roots, making it not just a cultural performance but also a form of religious devotion. Yet, maintaining the relevance of such traditions poses challenges in an era dominated by globalized entertainment and shifting values. Efforts to document and reinterpret Pencak Macan in contemporary contexts are essential to preserving its heritage. By promoting cultural festivals, educational programs, and community workshops, stakeholders can ensure that this tradition continues to

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<sup>41</sup> Mohamad Karmin Baruadi et al., "Toponymy of Bondaraya Village, Gorontalo Province: A Local Wisdom Study," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 15, no. 1 (2024), 301–9, <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1501.33>.

<sup>42</sup> Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L Esposito, *Islam, Gender, & Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

inspire and educate future generations, bridging the past and present through meaningful cultural narratives<sup>43</sup>.

### **Cultural Transformation of *Pencak Macan***

The transformation of *Pencak Macan* culture as a form of commodification in traditional arts is a phenomenon that reflects broader cultural development in Indonesia.<sup>44</sup> Traditional arts that once had sacred meaning and social function are now undergoing a transformation to adapt to the demands of the market and the tastes of modern society.<sup>45</sup> *Pencak Macan* had lost public interest because it was overshadowed by popular entertainment such as *dangdut* music. However, the government later sought to preserve this art form by incorporating it into the bridal procession, imbuing it with moral and religious messages. To maintain its appeal, various innovations were made, such as modifying costumes to make them more attractive and incorporating religious music.

In the context of commodification theory, this change reflects how traditional arts undergo modifications in aesthetics, function, and musicality to be more relevant to the development of the times<sup>46</sup>. Aesthetic commodification can be seen in visual refinements, such as costumes that are made more attractive to modern audiences. Not all commodification is good<sup>47</sup>, but if it is needed, there is nothing wrong with it. The change in function is also evident when *Pencak Macan* is no longer just a pure performing art, but is repackaged as part of a wedding procession that contains moral and religious values. The role

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<sup>43</sup> D. Lesmana et al., "Local Wisdom as a Medium for the Existence of the Ancient Town of the City-Case Study: Kampong Lawas Maspati Surabaya," *Civil Engineering and Architecture* 11, no. 3 (2023): 1245–54, <https://doi.org/10.13189/cea.2023.110310>.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Dunbar-Hall, "Culture, Tourism and Cultural Tourism: Boundaries and Frontiers in Performances of Balinese Music and Dance," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 22, no. 2 (2001): 173–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860120069594>.

<sup>45</sup> Chamil Arkhasa Nikko Mazlan et al., "Discovery the Intersection of Performing Arts in Cultural Tourism: A Scoping Review," *Discover Sustainability* 6, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-00805-w>.

<sup>46</sup> John Finn, "Contesting Culture: A Case Study of Commodification in Cuban Music," *GeoJournal* 74, no. 3 (2009): 191–200, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-008-9220-2>.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Sayer, "(De)Commodification, Consumer Culture, and Moral Economy," *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 21, no. 3 (2003): 341–57, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d353>.

of the Gresik district government in this commodification process is very significant. The government not only encourages the preservation of traditional arts but also packages them to fit certain social and political narratives. *Pencak Macan* festivals held at the district level, for example, are a means to instil cultural values in the younger generation while maintaining the existence of this art in the contemporary cultural landscape.<sup>48</sup> This effort needs to be appreciated as a good step to preserve local culture, almost the same as what was done in Banyuwangi<sup>49</sup>.

Theoretically, there are three ways to maintain traditions, namely by reviving the old culture according to the conditions, another option is to create a new culture based on a combination of old traditions, and the third option is to introduce a new form of culture that is recognized as a formal identity to replace the old one.<sup>50</sup> *Pencak Macan* is an example of the process of reviving, where this art that was rarely displayed at weddings is now revived with adjustments to make it attractive to the community. Today, *Pencak Macan* is again part of the wedding reception procession. This tradition continues as a form of appreciation for local traditions. However, it has been modified in a way that aligns with Islamic teachings, as well as to convey religious values. This is an accommodating form of religious expression<sup>51</sup>.

*Pencak Macan* is a cultural product that has several recognizable characteristics. Culture is not inherited biologically but through the learning process from the social environment.<sup>52</sup> Culture is inherited through social interaction, either directly or through certain media<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Howard L Hughes, "Culture and Tourism: A Framework for Further Analysis," *Managing Leisure* 7, no. 3 (2002): 164–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/136067102200001-3701>.

<sup>49</sup> Iwan Nurhadi et al., "Cultural Commodification and Ethical Transition of Tourism Development: A Case in Osing Community, Indonesia," *Sodality: Jurnal Sosiologi Pedesaan* 10, no. 1 (2022): 24–43, <https://doi.org/10.22500/10202238564>.

<sup>50</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Maria Cristina Monteiro de Barros et al., "The Role of Spiritual and Religious Experiences in Religious Switching: A Nationwide Study in Brazil," *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 8, no. 1 (2024): 173–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41603-023-00218-5>.

<sup>52</sup> Simon Bronner J, *Following Tradition: Folklore in the Discourse of American Culture* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1998).

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Reisman, "Is Culture Inherited through Social Learning?," *Biological Theory* 2, no. 3 (2007): 300–306, <https://doi.org/10.1162/biot.2007.2.3.300>.

Culture uses symbols to represent ideas, values, and beliefs. Culture is a system that continues to change over time and environmental conditions represent a limited number of patterns of human behavior and experience. Elements in culture interact with each other and influence each other. Culture is expressed through the daily actions and habits of human beings<sup>54</sup>. Culture is more long-lived than the individual or generation that lives it. Culture is needed by man and embodied in his behavior. Culture includes rules that contain obligations, accepted and rejected actions, and prohibited and permitted actions. Culture has a very large function for humans and society, including: Fulfilling the spiritual and material needs of humans and society, culture regulates the behavior of community members through the norms and values embraced and culture provides an identity for individuals and groups in society.

From the perspective of Islamic law, discussions related to traditions like this have been carried out by many researchers such as Himmah et.al who state that such traditions depend on the intention behind the practice. If there is no intention to associate others with Allah SWT (*shirk*), then it is not considered contrary to the teachings of Islam.<sup>55</sup> From the perspective of cultural psychology, Fitriani et.al found the answer that this kind of tradition is to enter the realm of belief that "what you give will return to yourself". which means that what is forbidden is the alms given to other living beings will return to us who give<sup>56</sup>. In essence, all researchers understand that all traditions like this that exist in the coastal communities of Java that have been carried out for generations are traditions that do not contradict Islamic law even though they are still widely debated.

The village of Lumpur is very strategically located. To the north is the Lumpur Bridge which tourists often visit. To the south, there is the

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<sup>54</sup> Shannon Adams, Jessica Fry, and Natalia Henner, "What Is Culture Made of? An Exploratory Study of Ethical Cultures and Provider Perspectives on the Care of Perivable Neonates," *American Journal of Perinatology* (2024) <https://doi.org/10.1055/a-2405-3336>.

<sup>55</sup> Hizmatul Himmah, Sofkhatin Humaidah, and Nur Syam, "Petik Laut Dalam Perspektif Tokoh-Tokoh Lintas Agama: Studi Kasus Ritual Masyarakat Muncar Banyuwangi," *Satwika : Kajian Ilmu Budaya Dan Perubahan Sosial* 7, no. 1 (2023), 55-68 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v7i1.24628>.

<sup>56</sup> Sofia Nurul. et al., "Sistem Kepercayaan (Belief) Masyarakat Pesisir Jepara Pada Tradisi Sedekah Laut," *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 11, no. 3 (2019): 211–18, <https://doi.org/10.15294/intuisi.v11i3.20673>.

tomb of Maulana Malik Ibrahim or Sunan Gresik which is often visited by pilgrims.<sup>57</sup> To the west, there is a pilgrimage parking lot. To the east with a little to the south, there is a village in the Gresik Old Town area. Cultural observers often visit this village. Meanwhile, in the Lumpur area, there is a Kambang hall, which is a historical place. For tourist routes, the Maulana Malik Ibrahim parking lot can be a starting point. From here, visitors to tourist destinations need transportation. Visitors who make a pilgrimage to the tomb of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who is generally a religious Muslim, will most likely also be interested in visiting Lumpur village to see the Pencak Macan. This art spreads the moral message of marriage based on Islamic values. This can be done as long as prior notice about *Pencak Macan* to pilgrims.

### Conclusion

In *pencak culture*, a tradition that has been preserved continuously developed overtime, a staging model is employed. Religious expressions in *Pencak Macan* are conveyed through the characterization, symbols, movements, stabbing techniques and attributes embedded in each performance. These elements contribute to the development of tourism in Gresik regency, especially when combined with pilgrimage visits to the tomb of one of the *walisanga* who spread Islam in Java. Moreover, *Pencak Macan* embodies numerous Islamic values, which are presented through engaging and evolving storylines, making the performances popular among audiences. However, this study did not find a standardized staging package approved by all *Pencak Macan* performers; thus, the specific movements, costumes, and attributes could not be described in detail. This aspect may serve as a valuable subject for future research. []

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<sup>57</sup> Inayah, Firdiyansyah, and Listadiana, "Pencak Macan: Unique Tradition In Marriage, 282-7.

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