

The traditional custom of Tawas Jaa as a means of strengthening social cohesion among the Dayak Deah community

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<p>Article History Accepted: January 11, 2025 Revised: October 14, 2025 Available Online: October 31, 2025</p> <p>*Corresponding dewicca.nadilla@ulm.ac.id</p> <p> 10.22219/satwika.v9i2.39202</p> <p> jurnalsatwika@umm.ac.id</p> <p>How to Cite: Nadilla, D. F., Subiyakto, B., Arisanty, D., Syaharuddin, S., Mardiani, F., & Pambudi, I. G. (2025). The traditional custom of Tawas Jaa as a means of strengthening social cohesion among the Dayak Deah community. <i>Satwika: Kajian Ilmu Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial</i>, 9 (2), 536-544. https://doi.org/10.22210/satwika.v9i2.39202</p> 	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>The Tawas Jaa tradition practiced by the Dayak Deah community in Upau represents a culturally significant ritual imbued with profound spiritual and social values. Beyond its role as a medium of ancestral veneration, this tradition is an integral mechanism for reinforcing communal bonds. The collective participation of all societal strata in the ritual across gender, generational, and religious lines reflects a strong foundation of social cohesion rooted in shared religious and cultural beliefs. This study examines the sociocultural meaning of the Tawas Jaa tradition as a form of religious-based social cohesion within the Dayak Deah community of Kaong. Employing a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, the research was conducted in Kaong Village, identified in 2024 & 2025 as the sole remaining village in the Upau subdistrict actively maintaining the Tawas Jaa practice. Data was collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews, with informants selected via snowball sampling techniques. Data analysis employed source triangulation, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The research findings indicate that the Tawas Jaa tradition serves as a central pillar of community cohesion, facilitating the integration of diverse social segments through collective involvement. The ritual encompasses elements of mutual cooperation, community-driven fundraising, and the symbolic use of cultural artifacts such as <i>ancak</i> and the dragon boat—each reinforcing collective identity and interdependence. In addition to its spiritual dimensions, the tradition underscores the importance of egalitarianism, social solidarity, and communal self-reliance. Furthermore, by embracing religious plurality, the tradition fosters a resilient social structure and affirms the enduring relevance of ancestral values in shaping communal life.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>dayak deah culture, local wisdom, social cohesion, tawas jaa</i></p> <p>ABSTRAK</p> <p><i>Tradisi Adat Tawas Jaa pada masyarakat Dayak Deah di Upau merupakan praktik budaya yang tidak hanya sarat nilai spiritual dan sosial, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai sarana memperkuat kohesi sosial berbasis religi di tengah kehidupan komunitas. Tradisi ini tidak hanya menjadi bentuk penghormatan terhadap leluhur, tetapi juga menjadi sarana mempererat hubungan antaranggota komunitas. Melalui pelaksanaan ritual-ritual yang melibatkan seluruh elemen masyarakat, Tawas Jaa mencerminkan kohesi sosial yang berakar pada nilai-nilai religi yang kuat. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi makna tradisi adat Tawas Jaa sebagai bentuk kohesi sosial berbasis religi bagi masyarakat Dayak Deah Kaong. Metode penelitian yang digunakan kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Dipilihnya Desa Kaong karena pada tahun 2024 & 2025 merupakan satu-satunya desa yang menyelenggarakan Tradisi Adat Tawas Jaa ini di Kecamatan Upau. Data dikumpulkan dari observasi dan wawancara mendalam. Penentuan sampel dilakukan dengan teknik Snowball Sampling. Analisis data menggunakan teknik triangulasi sumber, melalui proses reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan Tradisi Tawas Jaa dalam masyarakat Dayak Deah berfungsi sebagai pilar kohesi sosial, mengintegrasikan seluruh lapisan masyarakat melalui partisipasi lintas gender, generasi, dan agama dalam penyelenggaraannya. Ritual ini melibatkan gotong royong, pengumpulan dana secara mandiri, serta simbol-simbol adat seperti <i>ancak</i> dan <i>perahu naga</i> yang memperkuat identitas budaya mereka. Selain nilai spiritual, Tawas Jaa juga menegaskan pentingnya kesetaraan, solidaritas sosial, dan kemandirian komunitas. Dengan menghormati keberagaman keyakinan, tradisi ini membangun ketahanan sosial dan komitmen terhadap nilai-nilai kolektif yang diwariskan oleh para leluhur</i></p>
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Kata kunci: adat dayak deah, kohesi sosial, kearifan lokal, tawas jaa

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is a complex whole that encompasses knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other abilities acquired by an individual as a member of society (Hardt & Negri, 2004). According to (Shomad, 2016), culture represents an entire system of ideas, actions, and human creations within social life that become part of human existence through the process of learning. Meanwhile, custom refers to a cultural concept consisting of cultural values, norms, traditions, institutions, and customary laws commonly practised within a particular region.

Understanding and preserving customs and culture is essential, so that as Indonesians we may possess a sense of identity and not be easily swayed when facing the challenges of globalization and the influx of new and foreign values through modern literacy. Maintaining and preserving the traditions and culture inherited from our ancestors is not easy. This difficulty often arises from the perception that customs are merely ancient legacies and from people's limited understanding of what customs are, how they are practised, and what roles they play. Consequently, it is unsurprising that certain traditional customs in some regions are beginning to disappear or be forgotten, with some local communities no longer familiar with how these customs are performed.

Social cohesion is a fundamental element within society that enables the formation of social harmony and stability within communities. It is defined as "the force that binds members of a group to remain within the community and actively contribute to it" (Forsyth, 2010). In Indonesia, various communities exhibit strong social cohesion, largely influenced by customary traditions and religious values. Local traditions and cultural beliefs play a vital role in strengthening community interpersonal relationships. For example, the Gayo people in Aceh practise the Rambu Solo tradition, a customary funeral ceremony that reinforces solidarity among community members through collective participation in a meaningful ritual (Mahanani, 2020). Similarly, the Sundanese community celebrates the Seren Taun tradition, an expression of gratitude for the harvest that strengthens social bonds regardless of the members' economic or social status (Hariyanti & Anggara, 2023).

From the cultural theory perspective, Clifford Geertz defines culture as "a system of meanings and symbols manifested in the social practices of a community" (Geertz, 1973). Geertz explains that culture creates a sense of attachment among individuals within a community through symbols that serve as markers of shared identity. Through these symbols, social cohesion can be maintained and even strengthened, as individuals feel connected through common cultural values (Geertz, 1973). For example, in the Gawai tradition of the Dayak people, customary symbols function as connectors among community members, woven together through shared values and symbols (Syahrin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat, an Indonesian anthropologist, states that "culture consists of values, norms, and belief systems that guide people in their actions and interactions" (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

According to Koentjaraningrat, local traditions such as customary ceremonies serve not only as forms of entertainment but also as social mechanisms that strengthen bonds between individuals. These traditions help communities confront the challenges of modernization, which may otherwise erode social cohesion (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). For instance, the community in Buton practises the Mecula Haroa tradition as a customary ritual commemoration that reinforces solidarity and unity (Fauziah et al., 2021).

On the other hand, shifts in lifestyle within modern society have weakened social cohesion across various communities. These changes have diminished the quality of social interaction and reduced the sense of belonging among community members. This condition is further exacerbated by individualistic and pragmatic lifestyles that neglect traditional values as unifying elements within communities (Clarke et al., 2023). Research by (Hariyanti & Anggara, 2023) reveals that some segments of Indonesian society have lost the cohesive values embedded in their traditions, resulting in a growing potential for conflict and social disintegration (Hariyanti & Anggara, 2023).

In the Dayak Deah Kaong community context, the Tawas Jaa tradition continues to be preserved as a form of socially and religiously based cohesion. Tawas Jaa is not merely a customary ritual but a social mechanism to strengthen collective identity and social bonds among individuals. This tradition embodies the values of mutual

cooperation, togetherness, and belief in spiritual power, uniting the community in facing external challenges (Syahrudin et al., 2023). According to Koentjaraningrat, from a structural functionalist perspective, rituals such as Tawas Jaa support balance within the social structure through shared norms and values, thereby helping to prevent social disintegration (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

This study aims to explore the meaning of the Tawas Jaa customary tradition as a form of religiously based social cohesion among the Dayak Deah Kaong community. The urgency of this research lies in uncovering and understanding the significance and role of the Tawas Jaa tradition in strengthening religiously grounded social cohesion within the community. This tradition embodies cultural and spiritual values that provide insight into how the community maintains unity, solidarity, and harmony in their social life. The benefits of this study are twofold: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it is expected to provide insights for the people of South Kalimantan, demonstrating that this tradition holds religious and social values essential for maintaining harmony within the community. Practically, it is expected to offer recommendations for developing cultural preservation policies and strengthening socially cohesive networks based on local wisdom within broader society.

Several previous studies have addressed issues related to customary traditions. The first study examines the same object, namely customary traditions, but with a different focus and research location. The study by Shomad & Adinata (2020) indicates that the Selamathan Methik Pari tradition practiced by the Kalistail community remains well preserved, even though the ceremonial practice of this custom has become increasingly rare among local residents.

Another study conducted by Sugara & Perdana (2021) highlights the moral and social values of the Pamali tradition in Kuta customary village as a form of character education. The study's findings show that moral values include discipline, adherence to rules and regulations, and environmental care, which are demonstrated by not disturbing or damaging the surrounding nature. Social values include humility, reflected in behaviours that avoid arrogance or a sense of superiority over others. This study shares a similarity with the previous research in that it focuses on the social aspects of traditions within the community, although it differs in terms of research focus and location.

Another study by Andriani (2022) examines the Nyadran tradition among the Javanese community as a

form of spiritual expression and a means of strengthening social bonds among residents. The findings indicate that the tradition functions as a social adhesive through mutual cooperation and collective rituals. Meanwhile, the study by Hariyanti & Anggara (2023) on the *Gawai* tradition among the Dayak people in West Kalimantan shows that participation in customary ceremonies can strengthen intergenerational solidarity and help preserve cultural identity.

Furthermore, Panjika & Firman (2024) examine the *Hampahari* tradition among the Dayak Dusun in Malang as a means of conflict resolution and the formation of socially based customary bonds. Although all five studies discuss customary traditions and their social values, most focus on symbolic, moral, or spiritual aspects within their respective cultural contexts. There has yet to be a study examining *Tawas Jaa* as a form of religiously based social cohesion practised by the Dayak Deah Kaong community. Therefore, this research is important to fill this gap and to expand the discourse on the role of local traditions in maintaining social resilience within customary communities.

This study holds significant urgency as it focuses on the *Tawas Jaa* customary tradition, which has received limited attention in scholarly literature, particularly regarding its role in reinforcing religiously based social cohesion among the Dayak Deah Kaong community. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the *Tawas Jaa* tradition, which has not been previously examined, particularly within the context of the Dayak Deah Kaong community. Furthermore, this study offers a new perspective by analyzing the *Tawas Jaa* tradition as a form of religiously based social cohesion rather than merely a customary ritual or cultural expression. The scarcity of previous studies highlights a research gap that needs to be addressed to broaden understanding of the social functions of customary traditions in fostering community solidarity. The tangible contribution of this research lies in providing empirical data that can be used to support the preservation of local traditions as a strategy to strengthen social resilience within indigenous communities.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The research was conducted in Kaong Village, part of the Cultural Village of Kampung Sepuluh, located in the Upau District of Tabalong Regency. Kaong Village was selected because, in 2024 and 2025, it was the only village in the Upau District that continued to carry out the *Tawas Jaa* customary tradition.

Data were collected through field observations and interviews from 27 to 31 August 2024 and 27 to 31 August 2025. Observations were carried out during both the preparation and implementation of the customary event. Interviews took place on the day of the ceremony with several informants, including Mr. Suparin (56 years old), the Dayak Deah Customary Chief of the Upau area, who discussed the implementation of the Tawas Jaa tradition in Kaong Village; Mr. Srikandi (43 years old), a Balian or customary shaman, who focused on the philosophical meaning of each stage of the ritual; Mrs. Helwi (38 years old), a cultural practitioner and women's representative in Kaong Village, who explained the role of women in the tradition; Mr. Rusdianto (50 years old), the Head of Kaong Village, who addressed community support for the ritual; and Mrs. Nana (81 years old) and Mrs. Maria (46 years old), community members who assisted from the preparation to the execution of the event, with questions for Mrs. Nana focusing on the community's response to the ritual. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian using a structured interview guide and recorded for subsequent analysis.

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which comprises three main stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. To ensure data validity, the researcher also applied source triangulation by comparing information obtained from various informants and data collection methods. In addition, the researcher reviewed several village documents and other relevant references related to the Tawas Jaa customary tradition as a form of social cohesion among the Dayak Deah Kaong community.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the study's main findings concerning the *Tawas Jaa* customary tradition practised by the Dayak Deah community, particularly in the Upau District. The primary focus of this section is to describe the meaning, implementation and forms of social participation within the tradition. The findings are presented thematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of how this tradition is practised and the values embedded within it.

The Meaning and Implementation of the Tawas Jaa Customary Tradition among the Dayak Deah

Tawas Jaa is one of the customary traditions regularly held by the Dayak community, especially

under the customary jurisdiction of the Dayak Deah Kampung Sepuluh in Upau District, which includes the villages of Kinarum, Pangelak and Kaong. The term *Tawas Jaa* literally means "to guard the village," referring to the act of protecting the community from *sampar*, or both physical and spiritual afflictions, as well as other misfortunes. In essence, this tradition functions as a ritual of warding off calamities among the Dayak Deah people.

According to Mr. Suparin (56 years old), one of the community elders:

"This ritual is held every year to protect all families of the Dayak Deah, especially those in Kaong, Pangelak, and Kinarum villages, from harm and disaster."

Based on an interview with Mr. Suparin (56 years old), the tradition is performed regularly to protect all Deah families, particularly those living in the villages of Kaong, Pangelak and Kinarum, from harm. He explained that the offerings prepared serve as a medium to transfer negative energy, which is then prayed over to seek protection from ancestral spirits believed to dwell in the elements of water, earth and air.

The preparation for the *Tawas Jaa* ritual involves nearly all community members. The process includes cleaning and decorating the ritual area, preparing offerings (*aruh*), arranging materials for *melemang* (bamboo-cooked glutinous rice), and organizing cultural performances. Women are responsible for preparing offerings and food, while men prepare ritual structures and materials..

The ritual series begins with *Mengantar Toga*, a procession where carved wooden figures resembling human faces are carried to the edge of the village. These figures, known as *toga*, are placed at the settlement's boundary at dawn. As explained by Mr. Srikandi (43 years old), a *balian* or ritual specialist :

"Before sunrise, we place the toga at the border of the settlement so that it can guard the people as they start their day."

The ritual *Mengantar Toga* ("Delivering the Toga") is the initial stage of the *Tawas Jaa* ceremony. In this ritual, carved wooden figures known as *toga*, shaped to resemble human faces, are carried to the boundary of the settlement before sunrise. The placement of these figures at dawn marks the community's symbolic act of entrusting their safety and well-being to ancestral guardians. The ritual demonstrates the belief of the Dayak Deah Kaong people that these figures serve as

protectors who will safeguard the village throughout the day.

The act of carrying and installing the *toga* at the settlement's edge also reflects the community's awareness of the cosmic balance between light and darkness. As daylight gradually dispels the night, it metaphorically drives away malevolent forces and uncertainties that might threaten the well-being of the people. In this sense, the ritual becomes a performative expression of harmony between the visible and invisible realms, reinforcing the belief that protection and peace are achieved through continuous alignment with the rhythms of nature.

Furthermore, the ritual serves as a reminder of vigilance, unity, and gratitude at the start of each day. The *toga* stands as silent guardian symbols of discipline, collective consciousness, and spiritual resilience. *Toga* can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. *Toga* ritual statue symbolizing ancestral protection and representing the spiritual connection between the living family members and their ancestors.

Following the *Mengantar Toga* procession, the *Tawas Jaa* ceremony proceeds with a communal buffalo sacrifice. The buffalo was slaughtered by the Head of Upau District according to Islamic procedures. This practice allows the Dayak Deah community and Muslim residents from nearby villages to participate and share the meat. The buffalo meat is cooked collectively by the community's women and later consumed as a communal meal.

Additionally, prayers are recited according to three religious traditions: Christian, Muslim, and Hindu, reflecting the religious diversity of Upau District. Representatives from each religion lead a portion of the prayer sequence before the main ritual begins. Field data also show that this interfaith cooperation is well-accepted by both customary and religious leaders, indicating a shared understanding that the *Tawas Jaa*

ceremony functions not only as a ritual of protection from calamities but also as a medium for strengthening social cohesion among residents of different faiths.

The next stage is *ngantor saji* and *basoyokng Tawas Jaa*, which constitute the core activities of the ritual. During this phase, rice is ritually cleansed by Deah women under the guidance of a female *balian* (spiritual leader). Simultaneously, male *balian* begin burning incense as part of the invocation of ancestral spirits.

This is followed by the *batapung tawar* ritual, a spiritual purification ceremony involving the entire community. Afterwards, the sanctified rice is used to invoke ancestral spirits through prayers and incantations in the Dayak and Banjar languages.

While the *balian* leads the ritual process, other community members prepare *ancak* (ritual platforms) and dragon boats as offering media. The women prepare various kinds of offerings, including glutinous rice, chicken eggs, black, red and white chickens, *lemang* (bamboo-cooked rice), *kue cucur*, *wajik*, *inti*, *bubur habang* (red porridge) and *bubur putih* (white porridge). According to interviews with Mrs Maria (81 Thn) and Mrs Nana (43 Thn), all offerings must be prepared by women because they are believed to represent the upper realm in Deah cosmology.

The next stage is the making of *ampers*, which are small wooden effigies representing each family member. Based on an interview with Mrs Nina, the woods used include *akar darah*, *tapus*, *benio*, and thorned wood. Each type of wood carries its own symbolic meaning. The *Ampers* figures are placed in small baskets containing offerings, yellow rice and black thread.

Figure 2 shows the dragon boat (*perahu naga*) being floated on the river to ward off calamities originating from the water.



Figure 2. Dragon boat (*Perahu Naga*) floated on the river to ward off calamities originating from the water.

After all the *Ampers* figures have been gathered, the male *balian* performs a ritual recitation of sacred chants.

Each basket and wooden effigy is consecrated as a symbolic substitute for human beings, intended to divert misfortune so that any malevolent forces will be deceived and attach themselves to the effigies instead. Figure 3 shows a calamity-warding statue, each of which represents one member of the family.



Figure 3. *Amper* is Calamity-warding statue; each statue represents one member of the family.

The baskets containing offerings are then hung above the entrance doors of houses and must not be opened until the following year. The ritual continues with *batapung tawar*, a purification ceremony conducted for the entire community. Afterwards, the cooked buffalo meat is distributed among all participants as a collective expression of gratitude.

Towards the evening, the *ancak* and dragon boats filled with offerings are set adrift in the Kaong River. The release is carried out by the *balian* together with the customary leader. The boats are decorated with young coconut leaves (*janur*) and flags in four colours, red, blue, yellow and white, each symbolizing a natural element.

The final stage involves placing *ancak* at the village boundaries as a protective symbol to ward off incoming misfortune. Meanwhile, the women at the customary hall prepare for the *sidang adat* (customary council meeting), which marks the closing of the ritual series before the community enters the *nyepi* period in accordance with Kaharingan beliefs.

The Tawas Jaa Traditional Ritual as a Manifestation of Solidarity and Social Participation

This tradition involves all community members, including men, women, children, and the elderly. Each individual takes part according to their abilities. Men are responsible for physical tasks such as installing the

ancak, while women prepare the offerings and ritual necessities.

Figure 4 shows the spirit of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) among community members in preparing the event, regardless of religious affiliation.



Figure 4. Shows the spirit of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) among community members in preparing the event, regardless of religious affiliation.

The funding for implementing *Tawas Jaa* is obtained through community self-help initiatives in the form of collective contributions from residents and support from local sponsors. Community participation is evident throughout all stages, from preparation to the event's conclusion.

Figure 5 shows women collectively preparing ritual offerings (*sesaji*) for the safety of their families.



Figure 5. Women collectively prepare ritual offerings (*sesaji*) for the safety of their families.

The women also create *amper* for family members who cannot attend as a form of prayer and protection for children and grandchildren far from their homeland. This tradition is observed by people of various ages and backgrounds, demonstrating intergenerational involvement in preserving and maintaining the customary values of the Dayak Deah community.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal that the *Tawas Jaa* customary tradition holds profound meaning for the Dayak Deah community in Upau District. This ritual functions not only as a means of spiritual protection from misfortunes and diseases (*sampar*), but also as a medium for strengthening social relations among community members. The implementation of *Tawas Jaa*, which involves all segments of society, including men, women, children and the elderly, demonstrates a strong collective awareness of the importance of communal solidarity. The symbolic meanings embodied in various stages of the ritual, such as the launching of the dragon boat, making amper offerings, and sacrificial slaughter of buffaloes, reaffirm the harmonious relationship between humans, nature and their ancestors. This interpretation underscores that the *Tawas Jaa* ritual acts as both a cultural and ecological mechanism that maintains harmony between the physical and spiritual realms while reinforcing the collective identity of the Dayak Deah people. It also illustrates that *Tawas Jaa* is not merely a ceremonial event but a living system of values transmitted across generations to maintain both social and spiritual equilibrium within the community.

These findings are consistent with Turner (1969) concept of *communitas*, which refers to the sense of togetherness emerging from collective ritual experiences. The implementation of traditions can certainly strengthen social relationships and make a significant contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage (Aditya & Ramadhan, 2024). Within the *Tawas Jaa* context, all members of the community, regardless of social status or religion, participate in every stage of the ritual, thereby fostering strong social bonds. Furthermore, the results align with Rappaport's (1968) argument that ritual serves both ecological and social functions in maintaining balance between humans and their environment. In *Tawas Jaa*, the offering of *sesaji* to the river and the installation of *ancak* at the village boundary symbolize equilibrium between the human and spiritual worlds, while also reflecting ecological adaptation. In contrast to Rappaport's findings among the Tsembaga Maring in Papua New Guinea where rituals primarily regulate resource use, the *Tawas Jaa*

practice integrates social, ecological, and interfaith dimensions, demonstrating a broader cultural adaptation to multi-religious realities. This cross-cultural comparison demonstrates that the Dayak Deah ritual not only sustains ecological balance but also promotes religious inclusivity, an aspect that enriches anthropological discussions on ritual pluralism

These results also resonate with the study by Hua & Brown (2024) conducted in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, which emphasized the significance of social cohesion in enhancing community resilience against social and economic challenges. However, within the Dayak Deah community, such resilience is cultivated through collective economic practices and deeply spiritual cultural rituals. Meanwhile, the incorporation of Islamic values into the buffalo sacrifice ritual illustrates the process of acculturation and cultural inclusivity, supporting Abdullah, Haryanto, & Marzuki (2020) and Saniyah & Zustiyanoro (2025), who argue that cultural flexibility enables local traditions to adapt without losing their intrinsic values. This comparative insight suggests that *Tawas Jaa* embodies an intercultural negotiation that strengthens inter-religious harmony a dynamic less visible in similar Southeast Asian indigenous rituals. This finding contributes new empirical evidence to regional cultural studies, indicating that religious plurality can be maintained through customary frameworks rather than imposed institutional systems.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to cultural anthropology and the sociology of religion by deepening the understanding of how traditional rituals function as social instruments that reinforce community cohesion. Within the *Theory of Social Cohesion framework*, *Tawas Jaa* serves as a tangible example that social solidarity can be fostered through spiritual values and local wisdom. Practically, these findings carry significant implications for preserving regional cultural heritage. The *Tawas Jaa* tradition may serve as a foundation for developing community empowerment programmes based on local cultural values, particularly to maintain social resilience and strengthen cultural identity amid modernization. From a policy perspective, this study offers insights for local governments and cultural institutions to integrate the

preservation of customary rituals into socially oriented development strategies that prioritize community values. The findings also extend the theoretical discussion by illustrating that ritual-based cohesion can operate across both religious and ethnic lines, offering an empirical model of pluralistic solidarity.

Practically, these findings carry significant implications for the preservation of regional cultural heritage. The *Tawas Jaa* tradition may serve as a foundation for developing community empowerment programs based on local cultural values, particularly in efforts to maintain social resilience and strengthen cultural identity amid modernization. From a policy perspective, this study offers insights for local governments and cultural institutions to integrate the preservation of customary rituals into socially oriented development strategies that prioritize community values. Such integration could contribute to the formulation of cultural education programs in schools, promoting interfaith tolerance and ecological awareness through the lens of local tradition.

This research, however, is not without limitations. Firstly, the data collected were limited to the Dayak Deah community in Upau, making generalizations to other Dayak subgroups tentative. Secondly, the study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach, which does not quantitatively measure the extent to which *Tawas Jaa* influences social cohesion. Thirdly, as much of the data were derived from interviews and participatory observations reliant on the researcher's interpretation, some subjective bias may have been unavoidable.

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of the study to other Dayak communities across Kalimantan to enable comparative analysis of similar traditions. In addition, future studies employing quantitative or mixed-methods approaches could measure the influence of such traditions on specific social variables, including trust, solidarity and community participation. A digital ethnographic approach may also be developed to explore how younger generations interpret the *Tawas Jaa* tradition in the modern era. Furthermore, collaboration between anthropologists, educators, and policymakers could explore how rituals like *Tawas Jaa* can be integrated into

curriculum development, contributing to cultural sustainability education.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that *Tawas Jaa* functions as more than a customary ritual; it symbolizes the Dayak Deah community's social and spiritual resilience. This tradition successfully sustains social harmony while reinforcing community identity through collective participation, shared values, and cross-cultural adaptability. Thus, this study makes a tangible contribution to the preservation of local culture and enriches academic understanding of how traditional rituals can serve as vital sources of social cohesion and community resilience amid contemporary change. Overall, this discussion has provided a theoretical, practical, and policy-oriented framework that clarifies how ritual-based solidarity can sustain cultural continuity in plural societies.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the meaning of the *Tawas Jaa* customary tradition as a form of religiously based social cohesion within the Dayak Deah Kaong community. The findings indicate that this tradition not only functions as a protective ritual but also plays a central role in strengthening social solidarity through participation across gender, generations, and even religious lines. Values of mutual cooperation, independence, and respect for diversity are reflected throughout the entire sequence of the tradition, from preparation to the closing customary session. Cultural symbols, such as the *ancak* and dragon boat, reinforce collective identity and serve as a medium for transmitting ancestral values that remain actively preserved today.

The limitation of this study lies in its scope, which is restricted to a single village, and therefore cannot capture the dynamics that may occur in other Dayak Deah areas. Consequently, future research is recommended to expand the geographical coverage and incorporate a comparative approach between villages or sub-ethnic groups.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on social anthropology and the study of religiously based social cohesion within indigenous communities. Practically, its findings can serve as a foundation for

formulating policies on preserving local culture and strengthening social resilience based on traditional wisdom.

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