

## Research Article

# “Forbidden” Ritual as a Mechanism of Social Resilience in the Gorontalo Farming Community in Indonesia

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**Abstract.**

This research explores the local wisdom of Muslim farmers in Gorontalo through the practice of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience passed down through generations. Three important aspects are highlighted: i. the disturbances caused by supernatural beings that threaten social resilience, ii. the role of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience, and iii. the legitimacy of the ritual's conduct. This study employs a qualitative approach, involving research participants consisting of elderly and young farmers representing both modernist and traditional Islamic circles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, with thematic analysis used for data analysis. The research findings reveal that the *mopoa huta* ritual serves as an effort to ward off disturbances caused by supernatural beings that may affect plants, livestock, and humans. Farmers acknowledge that these disturbances have negative impacts on their social resilience. However, over time, modernist Islamic circles reject this ancestral heritage, while traditional Islamic circles argue that their actions are not a form of polytheism. They view this ritual as an expression of faith in unseen creatures created by God as disruptors of humans. This study provides a deeper understanding of the significance and role of the *mopoa huta* ritual in the context of Muslim farmers' lives in Gorontalo. The research findings contribute to understanding the mechanisms of social resilience related to religious practices and local wisdom in an agrarian society.

**Keywords:** Mopoa Huta ritual, supernatural beings, social

## 1. Introduction

Farmers in Molalahu, Gorontalo, routinely face socio-economic disturbances, including plant pests, livestock deaths, and unusual diseases, which sometimes lead to mass fatalities in the community. These disturbances are believed to originate from supernatural beings that coexist with humans. To address these disruptions, the farming community conducts the *mopoa huta* ritual, held annually or during times of drought (Hunowu et al., 2020). This ritual involves a series of dances (*dayango*) and offerings as a compromise with these supernatural beings. After performing this ritual, the farming community

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can live peacefully and free from disturbances caused by supernatural beings for the next year. Disturbances such as the spread of diseases affecting plants, livestock, and humans can be overcome. This mechanism once created harmony among all living beings in the past.

The mopoa huta ritual has become an important mechanism of social resilience in facing disease outbreaks affecting all living beings in the social and cultural environment of the farming community in Molalahu. However, with the growing influence of Islam, this ritual faces the threat of prohibition from modernist Islamic circles (Hunowu, 2022). Nevertheless, traditional Islamic circles, especially the elderly, continue to uphold the practice of this ritual despite the controversy. In 2018, tension arose between the elderly and security forces regarding the denied permission to hold the ritual. Eventually, after escalating tensions, the regent of Gorontalo granted permission for the mopoa huta ritual. This underscores the importance of the ritual to the local community, despite conflicts and debates surrounding its practice.

To the extent of the author's investigation, three studies have been conducted regarding the mopoa huta ritual and social resilience. The first group focuses on describing forbidden acts within the ritual, with an emphasis on the negative stigma surrounding offerings and the dayango dance, such as accusations of heresy, disbelief, polytheism, innovation, animism, and deviating from religious doctrines (Niaga, 2013; Galuwo, 2018; A. Abbas, 2020). The second group demonstrates that the mopoa huta ritual is conducted as a way to ward off disease outbreaks, pray for rain, and seek fertility (Saud, 2012; Hunowu et al., 2020). This ritual is also linked to mass healing practices and offering to supernatural beings to care for the universe, protect plants, and heal diseases affecting living beings (Niaga, 2013; Galuwo, 2018; Hunowu et al., 2021; Hunowu, 2022). The third group includes studies on ritual and local wisdom as mechanisms of social resilience in a regional context (Savitri et al., 2022; Permana, 2016; Monungo, 2020). However, among these three groups, little attention has been given to staging the mopoa huta ritual as a mechanism of social resilience in facing disasters such as crop failure and disease outbreaks affecting living beings. This indicates a research gap that has yet to be addressed, highlighting the need for further research to gain a deeper understanding of the mopoa huta ritual's role in social resilience and responses to disasters within the Gorontalo farming community.

The purpose of this writing is to inform about two important aspects: first, the forms of disturbances caused by supernatural beings that threaten the social resilience of farming communities in Gorontalo, and second, the role of the mopoa huta ritual as

a mechanism of social resilience in addressing these disturbances. Additionally, this research aims to delve into and understand the legitimacy of the texts that govern the mopoa huta ritual, intending to ensure that the ritual does not violate religious rules or is considered forbidden. Thus, this writing will provide: a comprehensive understanding of supernatural disturbances, the function of the mopoa huta ritual, and the validity of the ritual in the religious and social context of farming communities in Gorontalo.

The purpose of this writing is to support the previous argument that traditional Islamic circles believe in the existence of supernatural disturbances that can threaten the tranquillity of society. These disturbances manifest as diseases that affect humans, plants, and livestock. The mopoa huta ritual is considered a mechanism that can compromise with supernatural beings, thus shielding humans from these disturbances. Furthermore, this writing will also explain the legitimacy of sacred texts that form the basis for traditional Islamic circles in rejecting the views of modern Islamic groups. Verses from sacred texts will reinforce the belief in the existence of unseen beings and demons created by Allah to disrupt humanity. Therefore, this writing will delve deeper into the perspective of traditional Islamic circles regarding supernatural disturbances and assess the validity of their beliefs based on sacred texts.

Based on a literature review relevant to the previous research topic and theme, the author identifies three main concepts that serve as the foundation for discussing and analysing research findings. These concepts will provide a deeper understanding of the issues being researched.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Rituals in Farming Communities

Rituals are an integral part of various cultures worldwide, including in Indonesia. Each ethnic group has its unique rituals, reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country. For example, the Banyuwangi community has the Seblang ritual (Yashi, 2018), while Bandar Lampung and Cilacap communities perform the sea offering ritual (Ruslan, 2014; Suryanti, 2017). The Larung Sesaji ritual on Mount Kelud (Fatimah et al., 2019) and the Sebagaimana ritual among the Baduy tribe (Octavitri, 2013) are also examples of the diverse ritual practices in Indonesia. These rituals serve as formal means for events involving beliefs in powers beyond human capabilities, such as village founders' ancestral spirits or those believed to protect their descendants (Budhisantoso, 1986).

The execution of rituals primarily aims to maintain harmony among living beings. When these rituals are not performed, they may lead to disasters. From the cultural perspective of traditional rural communities, rituals are an inseparable part of their way of life. They aim to create balance and harmony in human relationships with fellow humans, nature, society, and the spirit world. Rural communities hold the understanding and belief that spiritual and material aspects are interconnected and intertwined. They constantly seek and build harmony in all aspects of life, upholding the values of balance and harmony as fundamental principles in the cosmic order (Keraf, 2010).

Traditional wisdom held by local communities is not merely a set of believed truths; it also guides their daily behavior. Geertz accurately states that traditional wisdom plays a crucial role in determining the dignity and position of individuals within their community (Geertz, 1973). This highlights the significance of local wisdom, which encompasses the intelligence, creativity, and knowledge of both elites and the general population in shaping their society's civilization. Furthermore, Geertz's classification of Muslims into *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* provides valuable insights into the interplay between traditionalist and modernist perspectives within these communities. This distinction underscores how traditional wisdom influences cultural practices and social stratification and community dynamics. Consequently, traditional wisdom emerges as a determinant factor in building a strong and sustainable civilization for the community, reflecting the complexities of both modernist and traditionalist influences.

Various forms of traditional wisdom expressed by communities are conveyed through ritual practices, which are distinctive religious ceremonies. As Turner (1987) explained, rituals are formal actions performed periodically, which are not merely technical routines, but also reflect religious beliefs in mystical or supernatural forces (Sambas, 2015). Turner states that rituals serve several important functions, namely (1) resolving conflicts, (2) addressing divisions and fostering community solidarity, (3) reconciling conflicting principles, and (4) providing motivation and renewed strength for individuals in their daily lives within the community (Turner, 1987). Thus, rituals play a significant role in maintaining social harmony and unity and inspiring and energizing the community in their daily pursuits.

## 2.2. Social Resilience in Disaster Management

A study by Leitch suggests that social resilience involves the ability of individuals or groups to act appropriately and adaptively in unstable situations. These individuals or groups can self-regulate, adapt, and actively respond to uncertain conditions (Leitch, 2022). Keck and Sakdapolrak explain that social resilience has three important dimensions. Firstly, coping capacities refer to the ability of individuals or groups to overcome and manage various challenges they face. Secondly, adaptive capacities involve the ability of individuals or groups to learn from past experiences and adjust to future challenges in their daily lives. Thirdly, transformative capacities encompass the ability of individuals or groups to create institutions that promote individual well-being and sustainable societal resilience in facing future crises (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). This conceptual framework implicitly aligns with Talcott Parsons' AGIL model, which emphasizes the necessity of social systems to achieve Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency to maintain stability. Thus, social resilience not only involves adapting, managing challenges, and transforming institutions but also underscores the importance of these foundational functions in achieving well-being and sustainable resilience in the face of potential challenges and crises.

A study conducted by Wahono found that social resilience is influenced by factors such as access to natural resources and income source diversity (Wahono, 2016). Furthermore, Betke states that a community can be considered socially resilient if it: (1) effectively protects its members, including vulnerable individuals and families, from social changes that affect them, (2) invests in social networks that are mutually beneficial, and (3) develops effective mechanisms for managing conflicts and violence (Betke, 2002). This description is the foundation for analyzing the mopoa huta ritual as a social mechanism to address social and economic threats caused by supernatural beings that demand human attention. By understanding the concept of social resilience and the criteria stated by Wahono and Betke, a deeper analysis can be conducted on the role and function of the mopoa huta ritual in maintaining stability and well-being among farming communities in Gorontalo.

## 2.3. Humans and Jin; Two Beings Living

The study of supernatural beings conducted by Shihab (2010) reveals that the existence of supernatural beings has been believed by societies long before the advent of religion.

Supernatural beings have various characteristics; some are invisible to the human eye, while others reveal themselves to specific individuals through specific charms. In human beliefs, a relationship between humans and supernatural beings can be either friendly or hostile.

Some supernatural beings provide benefits, while others pose dangers or harm (Shihab, 2010). This study shows that the relationship between humans and supernatural beings is diverse and real, encompassing both harmonious and disharmonious connections. The coexistence of humans and supernatural beings has been examined by Zahro (2017). The study explains that the Qur'an employs five terminologies referring to humans: Bani Adam, al-basyar, al-Insan, an-Naas, and al-Ins. In this context, "Ins" is always mentioned alongside "jin." "Ins" refers to visible and tangible humans, while "jin" signifies obscure, concealed, and intangible. In the Qur'an, the mention of these two types of beings emphasizes their relationship, where jin are often considered creatures that can mislead humans, while humans seek protection and aid from jin (Zahro, 2017). Additionally, a study by Darmawijaya (2016) on demons explains that demons attempt to deceive humans into worshipping them. Through cunning, demons strive to divert humans from the righteous path according to Allah's teachings (Darmawijaya, 2016).

In the context of belief in supernatural beings, Shihab classifies Western societies as more reliant on reason. In contrast, Indonesian society is part of Eastern societies that rely more on intuition. Eastern societies, including Indonesia, view nature as a soul that, in many ways, requires friendship. Supernatural beings are seen as part of that soul, making it important to establish a friendship with them (Shihab, 2010). A study conducted by Abbas (2021) discusses the friendship between humans and supernatural beings. This perspective provides a significant direction for the study in this article, where the mopoa huta ritual becomes a form of human interaction with jin to forge friendship as a mechanism for creating tranquility.

### 3. Research Methodology

The rural community of Molalahu in Gorontalo carries out the *mopoa huta* ritual every year or during agricultural hardship as a form of compromise with supernatural beings. This ritual has been chosen as the research subject for three important reasons; most of the rural community in Gorontalo, mostly farmers, heavily depend on nature. The mopoa huta ritual serves as a mechanism of social resilience in facing disasters. There needs to be more attention given to the analysis of the mopoa huta ritual as a mechanism of

social resilience for farmer communities. While there have been some analyses of the efforts of the *mopoa huta* ritual in warding off diseases, there has yet to be an in-depth study on the overall role of this ritual as a mechanism of social resilience. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience. However, it has become a source of debate among modernist Muslims due to its perceived violation of religious teachings. These three reasons indicate that a careful understanding of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience has been proven in traditional communities. However, it stirs controversy among modernist Muslims who rely more on technology to address issues.

The *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience in Gorontalo's community can be elucidated through qualitative research that relies on data on the ideas, concepts, and activities associated with the ritual. This research is grounded in a historical approach, in-depth interviews with village elders, and direct observations of the *mopoa huta* ritual tradition. The collected data is used as the basis for analysis to comprehend the mechanism of social resilience involving the implementation of the *mopoa huta* ritual.

This research involves two distinct categories of communities within the context of the *mopoa huta* ritual. First the traditional Islamic community, who are the adherents and organizers of the ritual. Second, the modernist Islamic community, composed of young farmers utilizing advanced agricultural technology and Islamic preaching activists. Both categories of communities are included as participants in the study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perceived threats and disturbances attributed to supernatural beings, the role of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience, and the textual basis used by the traditional Islamic community to legitimize the execution of this ritual. These three aspects are identified and analyzed to elucidate the social and cultural phenomenon as a mechanism of social resilience within the Muslim farming community in rural Gorontalo.

The research on the *mopoa huta* ritual as a "forbidden" mechanism of social resilience within the rural community in Gorontalo is conducted through a series of data collection stages involving interviews and observations. Firstly, through interviews, data is collected to delve into three main aspects: 1) the perceived forms of disturbances experienced by the community and attributed to supernatural beings, 2) the role of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism of social resilience in confronting these disturbances, and 3) the legitimacy of textual sources used by the community as the foundation for the implementation of the *mopoa huta* ritual. Secondly, this study also involves

direct observations of the organization of the mopoa huta ritual, carried out in early January 2020, before the global outbreak of COVID-19. The data obtained from various sources and methods forms a robust foundation for analyzing the mopoa huta ritual as a “forbidden” mechanism of social resilience practised by the rural community in Gorontalo in the face of disasters such as drought, plant pest infestations and consecutive occurrences of human and livestock deaths.

In this research, the data analysis process is conducted through three stages of analysis and two proven effective data analysis techniques. These three stages of data analysis encompass (a) data reduction, where data is systematically organized, primarily based on relevant themes; (b) data display, which involves presenting research findings in the form of tables and relevant interview quotations; and (c) data verification, where the data is confirmed and analyzed to identify emerging trends. The data undergoing these three stages is then analyzed using descriptive methods and presented as tables and diagrams. The data description serves as the foundation for the contextual interpretation process. Through the stages of analysis and the employed analysis techniques, conclusions can be formulated regarding the social resilience mechanism of the farming community in facing disasters caused by the actions of supernatural beings involving the implementation of the mopoa huta ritual.

## 4. Research Findings

The *mopoa huta* ritual is carried out by Muslim farmers in Gorontalo annually or during agricultural scarcity. Implementing this ritual serves as a mechanism for social resilience in facing disasters caused by supernatural beings. These supernatural beings can spread diseases to plants, livestock, and humans. Through the *mopoa huta* ritual, the farming community compromises with these supernatural beings to avoid the disasters they may inflict. The connection between the *mopoa huta* ritual and social resilience against disasters is substantiated by three relevant facts. First, various disturbances caused by supernatural beings threaten the social resilience of the farming community. Second, the mopoa huta ritual functions as a social resilience mechanism that assists the farming community in confronting and mitigating disasters caused by these supernatural beings. Third, implementing the *mopoa huta* ritual is grounded in the legitimacy of textual sources that serve as the foundation for traditional Islamic practice. These facts will be further analyzed in the subsequent sections through meticulous research.



#### 4.1. Forms of Disturbance by Supernatural Beings Threatening Community Social Resilience

Supernatural beings, also known as “*lati-latiyalo*,” coexist with humans and have the potential to be either friends or foes, depending on how humans treat them. A portion still believes disturbances caused by these supernatural beings of the community significantly impact daily life, affecting humans, plants, and livestock. These three targets of disturbances can be described as follows.

First, disturbance to humans. The research findings indicate that traditional farming communities strongly believe in disturbances caused by “*lati-latiyalo*,” which are believed to disrupt human life in various aspects. According to the ritual leader (“*wombuwa*”), several factors can lead to disturbances by these supernatural beings. Firstly, disrespect towards the supernatural beings residing in the grass and trees. When humans pass through these areas without offering greetings, they may experience disturbances (“*langguwolo*”). Therefore, it is important to recite the phrase “*bo wombu amiyatiya*” (we are your grandchildren) when passing through haunted places or during the twilight hours. Secondly, the a need for more attention to supernatural beings. This attention includes offering offerings at specific times, such as during planting, lean, harvest, or the annual ritual of mopoa huta. Offerings or “*hantalo*” can be simple items like betel nuts, betel leaf, or cigarettes placed in the fields or gardens. During the mopoa huta ritual, “*hantalo*” is presented in a special form. Neglecting to pay proper attention to “*lati-latiyalo*” can lead to disturbances in the form of incurable illnesses and even death. Thirdly, Errors in Welcoming “Lati”. During the “*lati*” ritual invocation in the mopoa huta ritual, it is important to pay attention to the type of offerings provided. Each type of “*lati*” has its preferences, and the supply of offerings must be sufficient for the number of them present. Mistakes or shortages in providing offerings can trigger the anger of the “*lati-latiyalo*.” The ritual performers (“*wombuwa*”) and the “*dayango*” dancers become targets of disturbances by “*lati*” if there are errors in welcoming them. These disturbances can manifest as convulsions or even sudden disappearances of the performers.

Thus, this research reveals that “*lati-latiyalo*” can cause disturbances if they are not respected, not given attention, or welcomed incorrectly. The farming community needs to understand and respect the presence of these supernatural beings as part of the social resilience mechanism in facing disturbances and disasters caused by “*lati-latiyalo*.”

Disturbances by supernatural beings, such as “*lati-latiyalo*,” in local cultural contexts are often understood as a direct response to human actions or omissions that violate spiritual norms or traditions, such as not paying respect or neglecting certain rituals. This phenomenon differs from the practice of witchcraft in anthropological contexts, where supernatural disturbances are usually seen as the result of intentional human use of supernatural powers to harm others (Purnama et al., 2024). Whereas the disturbance by “*lati-latiyalo*” emphasises the harmonious relationship between humans and supernatural entities as part of a cultural ecosystem, in the study of witchcraft, humans act as the primary controllers of supernatural entities to achieve certain goals, often with personal or political motives.

Disturbances caused by “*lati-latiyalo*” not only affect the living but also extend to those who are on the brink of death or have already passed away. Therefore, when someone is in the throes of the deathbed, family members accompany them to ensure they are not disturbed by “*lati-latiyalo*.” These disturbances during the deathbed can persist for hours to even days. In such situations, the role of the “*wombuwa*” is crucial. By providing enchanted water or through specific rituals, the process of passing becomes easier. One village healer, Kai Sudi (59 years old), explained this as follows:

“If ‘*lati*’ disturb someone on their deathbed, the condition of that deathbed can last for one to two hours or even several days. However, usually, it will be regulated by the ‘*tamotota*’ (ritual leader). By providing water or through certain rituals, ‘*lati*’ can be appeased, and the process of passing becomes smoother and easier.”

This special ritual process continues throughout the funeral proceedings. The funeral pall used to carry the deceased is layered and covered with white mosquito netting to prevent disturbances from “*lati-latiyalo*.” When the body is placed in the burial pit, it is covered with white mosquito netting from the moment it is lowered from the pall until it is placed in the grave. This practice, known as “*alihi dila me owadupa lo lati*,” ensures that supernatural beings cannot see the deceased.

Second, disturbances to livestock. The farming community in Molalahu not only cultivates rice, corn, and other crops but also engages in animal husbandry. Farmers in Molalahu commonly raise cattle, goats, and free-range chickens. According to livestock farmers, disturbances caused by “*lati-latiyalo*” often result in significant losses. Attacks on poultry can swiftly lead to the sudden death of dozens of chickens. The chickens may exhibit trembling, convulsions, and mucus discharge from their noses and beaks. Some even collapse unexpectedly from their perches during the nighttime. The disturbances

caused by “*lati-latiyalo*” are most evident during instances of mass deaths among the chickens. In contrast, cattle and goats do not frequently experience mass attacks. Typically, one or two cows suddenly die without any clear reason.

According to a story recounted by an informant, one day, their child was playing under a tree when suddenly, they were disturbed by a supernatural being. The child’s father-in-law, a “*wombuwa*” in his time, immediately came to the rescue. Allegedly, the child was being harassed by a “*lati*” residing in that tree (known as “*lati lopuputo*”). Based on this belief, the child was treated with special ingredients. Eventually, the “*lati*” departed. The child recovered and was no longer bothered by the “*lati*.” However, in its place, the “*lati*” disturbed two cows belonging to a neighbour. The disturbance by the “*lati*” led to the sudden death of these two cows. The abrupt death of livestock is only known to “*wombuwa*” and a few specific individuals as a result of the mischievous actions of “*lati-latiyalo*” (Balimbo Tuu, 63 years old).

Third, targets disturbance resolution Mechanisms. Disturbances caused by “*lati*” to crops are carried out by “*bitoohuta*” and “*butulohuta*” (soil microbes) that follow the orders of “*lati*.” These soil microbes can transform into caterpillars, grasshoppers, rats, and various crop pests affecting crops like corn and rice. Pest attacks occur during different seasons. For instance, one season may see an infestation of caterpillars, while another season might experience a grasshopper invasion, and yet another season could be marked by rat infestations. A farmer expressed this as follows:

“The pest attacks on crops vary from season to season, with seasons of caterpillars, grasshoppers, and rat infestations. It does not make sense. That is why we must perform the *mopoa huta* ritual, so that *lati* does not disturb us” (Kadari, 59 years old).

According to the beliefs of traditional farmers, pest attacks on crops are seen as a form of protest by “*lati*”, who feel neglected by humans. Farmers find no other way but to compromise with them. Despite the many modern methods farmers employ, pest attacks continue to increase. The massive scale of these pest attacks is sometimes difficult for farmers to comprehend. For example, opening a single caterpillar hole on a corn plant reveals dozens of caterpillars gathered inside. Similarly, a small rat hole can contain dozens of rats neatly lined up. Farmers believe that such massive pest attacks result from “*lati-latiyalo*” seeking attention from humans. The continuous onslaught of pest attacks wreaks havoc on farmers’ livelihoods and causes distress. Farmers complain to Kapende (the village leader) that there is no other option but to perform the *mopoa huta* ritual, even though its implementation requires high costs and community solidarity has

diminished compared to the past. Many people have lost faith (hipo ma; he). The delay in performing this ritual leads “lati” to protest by disrupting crops through pest attacks. For more information on disturbances caused by supernatural beings affecting human well-being, please refer to the following table:

TABLE 1: Forms of Disturbances by Supernatural Beings.

Targets	Disturbance	Resolution Mechanisms
Human	A mysterious illness that is difficult to cure medically and consecutive deaths within a family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Holding communal rituals</li><li>- Holding personal ceremonies (dayango)</li><li>- Seeking treatment from a traditional healer</li></ul>
Plant	Corn is attacked by pests such as caterpillars, grasshoppers, fungi, and rats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Holding communal rituals</li><li>- Performing personal rituals (<i>panggoba</i>)</li><li>- Burning incense resin (<i>kemenyan</i>) in the middle of the garden</li></ul>
Animal	Cows, goats, and hundreds of chickens die suddenly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Holding communal rituals</li><li>- Personally, driving away supernatural beings by striking the bodies of livestock with branches of castor oil</li><li>- Inviting a traditional healer</li></ul>

4.2. The Function of the Mopoa Huta Ritual as a Mechanism of Social Resilience

In general, based on the beliefs of the informants, the main functions of the mopoa huta ritual can be categorized into two aspects. First, “*limiyodu pilomulo*” aims to nurture crops and ensure successful livestock breeding for human prosperity. Through this ritual, abundant agricultural yields and healthy livestock are hoped to provide a prosperous life for humans. Second, there is “*limiyodu tutumulo*,” which aims to enrich the lives of humans both physically and spiritually. This includes protection from various health issues and other problems, allowing humans to live well, have a long life, and enjoy a normal existence.

According to the informants’ beliefs, the main functions of the *mopoa huta* ritual can be categorised into two aspects. Firstly, there is *limiyodu pilomulo*, which aims to fertilise crops and ensure livestock breeds well for human prosperity. Through this ritual, it is hoped that agricultural products will be abundant and livestock healthy, to provide a prosperous life for humans. Secondly, there is *limiyodu tutumulo*, which aims to prosper humans physically and mentally. This includes protection from various health problems and other issues, so humans can live well, have a long life, and enjoy life normally.

First, Limiyodu Pilomulo. In general, the belief in disturbances caused by supernatural beings (lati-latiyalo) to crops is held by the farming community in Molalahu. These

disturbances can manifest as pest attacks that damage crops, such as caterpillars, rats, grasshoppers, and fungi. According to the farmers' beliefs, these pest attacks are caused by *lati bitoohuta* and *butulohuta*, which transform soil microorganisms into pests. Farmers adopt various methods to address these pest attacks, whether individually, as a community, or through the *mopoa huta* ritual.

One individual approach farmers take is through *molapo*, which involves fumigating the crops by burning specially prepared incense made from benzoin. *Molapo* can be carried out from the first planting day and is repeated several times as the crops develop. Farmers also use magical methods such as rubbing the ends of white bamboo sticks together to ward off rats and piercing caterpillars with bamboo while reciting incantations. *Molapo* is the initial step to protect crops from pest attacks, but if the pest issues persist, the farming community agrees to perform the *mopoa huta* ritual.

In the past, farmers could easily seek guidance and magical incantations from *mongo panggola*, individuals knowledgeable about supernatural methods of dealing with crop pests. However, this knowledge has gradually diminished, and farmers are more inclined towards modern approaches. Nevertheless, the significance of the *mopoa huta* ritual as a mechanism to maintain the fertility of crops and protect them from pest attacks remains understood and practised by the farming community.

Second, *Limiyodu Tutumulo*. *Limiyodu tutumulo* carries the meaning of enriching human life both physically and spiritually. Its success indicator lies in the health of humans being free from various illnesses. When the community collectively experiences diseases and unusual deaths, it signifies that the supernatural beings feel neglected. Consequently, they will disturb humans by sending illnesses. These disturbances range from mild discomfort (*langgu* and *yimonu*) to serious diseases that can lead to mass deaths (*polopu*).

These supernatural beings are spread throughout the realms, known as *tolombiy-atiyo wopato* or the "four cardinal directions." They will disrupt humans if individuals make mistakes, such as using inappropriate language, passing through eerie places at certain hours, or eating in open areas without seeking permission. The *mopoa huta* ritual represents a compromise with the *lati-latiyalo* to ensure that human life remains undisturbed and attains a good quality of life. This ritual aims to safeguard the overall health and well-being of humans.

The available data indicates that the farming community in Gorontalo believes in the existence of supernatural beings (*lati-latiyalo*) that can disrupt human life, plants,

TABLE 2:

Ritual Functions	
Limiyodu Tutumulo	Healthy society, protected from unusual illnesses and consecutive deaths within a single family
Limiyodu Pilomulo	Lush plants, livestock thriving and multiplying

and livestock. The mopoa huta ritual is performed as a compromise mechanism with these supernatural beings, aiming to nourish plants, enrich human lives, and maintain physical and spiritual well-being. The disturbances are believed to result from human neglect towards these supernatural beings. The ritual is conducted through symbolic and magical processes to maintain social resilience and the well-being of the farming community.

4.3. Legitimacy of Texts for the Implementation of the Mopoa Huta Ritual

The Muslim community in Molalahu believes that the existence of supernatural beings is an undeniable reality. They believe these supernatural beings coexist with humans, even though they are not directly visible to humans. According to their belief, supernatural beings possess powers bestowed by God that allow them to interact with and affect humans. To prevent disturbances caused by these supernatural beings, specific mechanisms are in place that must be observed. This belief is also emphasized in the teachings of the Quran. The awareness of the presence of supernatural beings significantly influences their interactions and strengthens the convictions of the Muslim community in Molalahu.

The Molalahu community’s belief in the coexistence of supernatural beings alongside humans and their frequent interference is rooted in their religious convictions, as stated in the Quran. Verses in the Quran, such as Surah Al-Baqarah verse 3 and Surah Al-A’raf verse 17, depict the existence of supernatural beings and the disturbances they may cause. To safeguard themselves from disruptions by these supernatural beings, the people of Molalahu conduct the *mopoa huta* ritual. This ritual involves offering offerings to supernatural beings, feeding them, and conveying messages to ensure they do not disturb humans. The mopoa huta ritual is believed to be a mechanism for maintaining harmony between humans and supernatural beings.

Implementing the *mopoa huta* ritual is regarded by its followers as an effort to protect themselves from disturbances caused by supernatural beings. However, this

perspective becomes controversial among modernist Muslims who claim that the ritual is an act of shirk (polytheism). On the other hand, traditionalist Muslims refute this claim by stating that providing offerings to supernatural beings is not an act of shirk.

Some informants argue that diseases in plants, livestock, and humans are natural phenomena that can be addressed through technology and human efforts. Therefore, they view the *mopoa huta* ritual as a form of worship to supernatural beings, which is prohibited in Islam. “As followers of Islam, we should only worship Allah and refrain from engaging in acts of shirk like that,” emphasized one informant.

However, other informants argue that interactions with supernatural beings occur during the *mopoa huta* ritual, but no worship is directed towards them. These beings possess the power to cause disturbances in various ways, such as damaging crops and livestock, as well as causing illnesses in humans. Therefore, they must be appeased, not worshipped, as only God is worthy of worship. This difference in perspective highlights the ongoing debate within the community regarding the meaning and implications of the *mopoa huta* ritual in a religious context.

Adherents of *mopoa huta* assert that they do not worship supernatural beings; offering food is a compromise mechanism to prevent these beings from disturbing humans. This viewpoint is supported by religious figures who state that local wisdom and Islamic law should go hand in hand, as both have proven strengths and principles. When performing the *mopoa huta* ritual, they visit the tombs of saints (*aulia*) as a means (*wasilah*), conduct the ritual, and conclude with a communal prayer, showcasing the absence of shirk (polytheistic belief). Offering food aims to provide sustenance to supernatural beings to prevent their disturbances. This perspective is still held by a portion of adherents, particularly among the elite and religious leaders. They believe that the sequence of the *mopoa huta* ritual is in line with Islamic law, and offering food is not an act of shirk but rather a compromise with supernatural beings. This viewpoint relies on the legitimacy of sacred texts as a strong foundation for *mopoa huta* followers, who reject accusations of shirk made by modernist Islamic circles.

The diagram above presents two verses from the Quran that serve as the basis for the legitimacy of the *mopoa huta* ritual among its followers. However, modernist Islamic circles do not fully accept this perspective and argue that traditionalist Muslims misunderstand these verses. Modernist Muslims contend that their interpretation of these verses does not align with a correct understanding of monotheism (pure belief in Allah) in Islam. They view providing offerings to supernatural beings as an act of shirk



**Figure 1:** Text Legitimation.

(associating partners with Allah), as worship and reverence should be reserved solely for Allah. This opinion reflects the differing viewpoints and interpretations between traditionalist and modernist Muslims regarding the understanding of Quranic verses related to the practice of the *mopoa huta* ritual.

This research reveals the beliefs of farming communities in Gorontalo regarding the existence of supernatural beings and the importance of maintaining a good relationship with them. In this perspective, supernatural beings can be friends (Abbas, 2021) or enemies of humans (Shihab, 2010), depending on the treatment given. When humans neglect supernatural beings, it allows them to disturb humans through various means, such as causing pests in plants, diseases in livestock, unusual illnesses affecting the community, and occurrences of consecutive deaths within a family. Therefore, the function of the *mopoa huta* ritual is to establish a positive relationship with supernatural beings, with the hope of averting potential threats and dangers. By practising this ritual, farming communities strive to maintain harmony between humans and supernatural beings while minimizing disturbances and disasters that they may cause.

The *mopoa huta* ritual is considered an essential mechanism in maintaining the social resilience of farming communities against threats and potential harm that supernatural beings may cause. However, this perspective becomes controversial as it is perceived as an act of worshipping supernatural beings by modernist Islamic groups. They argue that offering offerings in the ritual is a form of worship. However, traditionalist Islamic groups refute these allegations by claiming that what they do is an expression of faith in the existence of unseen beings created by God and not an act of worship. The statement “This is your part, do not disturb us” is their response to the views of modernist Islamic groups. This debate reflects differences in interpretation and perspectives between traditionalist and modernist Islamic groups regarding the *mopoa huta* ritual and its relationship with supernatural beings.



Based on previous research, it has been proven that rituals have an important function in society. Tuner (1987) found that societies in confusion and despair turn to rituals to connect their hopes with God. The *mopoa huta* ritual not only serves to connect hopes with the ruler of the natural world but also functions as a mechanism of social resilience that protects communities from both natural and non-natural disasters. Despite often carrying a negative connotation, this ritual has significant positive impacts in creating social resilience. However, it should be noted that this social resilience can be disrupted by the massive use of agricultural technology today.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on this research, the *mopoa huta* ritual serves as a solution to address the threats posed by supernatural beings. Its function manifests in abundant agricultural prosperity, successful livestock breeding, and healthy community life. While modernist Islamic groups oppose this ritual and argue that agricultural issues can be resolved through modern technology, traditional Islamic adherents draw upon sacred texts as a foundation for conducting the ritual. Looking ahead, there is potential to blend local wisdom with modern knowledge to address agricultural challenges, which remain the primary needs of rural farming communities. In the Parsonian sense, the negotiation between old and new values within this context reflects a dynamic process of structural stability, where traditional rituals like *mopoa huta* contribute to social cohesion by reaffirming community identity and collective solidarity. Meanwhile, the adoption of modern agricultural technologies symbolizes society's adaptation to global economic changes. Despite frequent criticism, *mopoa huta* demonstrates its resilience as a culturally rooted mechanism of social stability. Conversely, at the macro level, economically driven agricultural technology advances economic growth. However, at the micro level, it risks ensnaring farmers in poverty and causing environmental degradation. Thus, integrating local wisdom and modern technological understanding becomes essential, not only to ensure sustainable solutions for agriculture and rural life but also to maintain and strengthen social cohesion amid these transitions.

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