

The Sining Ritual Tradition in The Gayo Community of Central Aceh as A Form of Revitalization of Educational Values and Local Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the fading existence of the Sining ritual tradition among the Gayo community in Central Aceh, driven by modernization and globalization, which have diminished youth interest in this cultural heritage. The objective is to explore the educational values and local wisdom embedded in Sining and to examine its potential for revitalization as a source of character education. This study employs a literature review method with a qualitative approach. Data were gathered from books, scholarly journal articles, and research reports through documentary study. Analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis, involving data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results reveal that the Sining ritual holds deep symbolic and philosophical meanings, reflecting harmony with nature, gratitude, mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and a sense of divinity. It serves as a medium for transmitting values of character education, such as discipline, responsibility, teamwork, empathy, and social concern. Revitalizing Sining also plays a crucial role in preserving Gayo local wisdom, including botanical knowledge, traditional farming systems, and vernacular architecture. Furthermore, the tradition embodies social values that strengthen community solidarity and religious values that integrate Islamic teachings with local culture. The study concludes that Sining is a comprehensive cultural entity worthy of revitalization as a source of character education grounded in local wisdom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic nation in the world, is blessed with incredibly diverse cultural riches, where each ethnic group possesses traditions and local wisdom that form the foundation of their collective identity and character. Amid the archipelago's cultural mosaic, the Gayo people inhabiting the highlands of Aceh, particularly in Central

Aceh Regency, carry a rich tradition in noble values. One such tradition is the Sining ritual, deeply rooted in their social and spiritual life for centuries. The essence of the Sining ritual goes beyond mere dance; it represents a cultural complexity encompassing systems of knowledge, beliefs, educational values, social norms, and ecological wisdom passed down through generations. This tradition serves as a hallmark of the Gayo people's identity and selfhood amidst the diverse cultures of the archipelago, while also functioning as a social mechanism in maintaining the balance of relationships between humans and nature, humans and each other, and humans and the Creator. As revealed in research on Gayo oral traditions, the educational values enshrined in the cultural heritage include moral, religious, character, and cultural values that have laid the foundation for Gayo society's character education since ancient times [1].

However, the wave of modernization and globalization, affecting every aspect of society, has significantly affected the existence of local traditions, including the Sining ritual in Gayo society. Lifestyle changes, advancements in information technology, and the influx of foreign cultures through various media channels have shifted the value orientation of the younger generation, who are more inclined towards global popular culture than their own cultural heritage. This phenomenon is evident in the concerns of Gayo elders and cultural experts who observe the fading appreciation of language, art, and ancestral traditions among the younger generation. As discussed in a focused conversation on the preservation of Gayo culture, representatives of the Gayo Customary Council expressed their concern over the fact that many young people are now hesitant to use the Gayo language, even within their own families, where distinctive terms like "Ine" are being replaced by terms such as "mother" or "mama," reflecting a worrisome cultural value shift [2]. This situation indicates a cultural identity crisis that, if left unaddressed, will lead in the extinction of invaluable intangible cultural heritage.

Tari Sining, as one of the essential elements in the Sining ritual, holds ritual and sacred value that originally served as an inseparable part of the construction process of Reje (king's house) and the coronation ceremony of Reje (king) in the Gayo community residing in the highlands of Central Aceh. Over time, this dance has also been used as a cultural performance art for entertainment, while its sacred essence is preserved in specific contexts. Unfortunately, with the declining frequency of traditional ritual practices and the diminishing number of elderly individuals knowledgeable about the intricacies of this ritual, the understanding of its symbolic meanings, movement philosophies, and educational values embedded within it is slowly eroding and facing the threat of extinction. Studies on the revitalization of Tari Sining reveal that this dance possesses sacred ritual value and is now being rekindled through various revitalization efforts by art studios such as the Kuta Dance Theater Studio, which engage in reformulation, communication, organization, adaptation, transformation, and routines in the revitalization process [3]. These revitalization endeavors are crucial, considering the strategic role of the Sining ritual as a medium for transmitting character education values and local wisdom that cannot be replaced by formal education alone.

Within the paradox lies the significant potential of Sining rituals to be cultivated as a source of character education values relevant to the challenges of the times, despite

concerns about the extinction of traditions. The Gayo community inherently possesses a strong set of values reflected in various traditions and customary rituals, including the concept of Sumang that governs social norms such as Sumang Kenunulen (norms of sitting), Sumang percereken (norms of speaking), Sumang pelangkahan (norms of traveling), and Sumang penengonen (norms of seeing), all of which are local wisdom that can be reactualized to address the challenges of future generations [4]. In this context, the Sining ritual emerges as a representation of these value systems, where each movement, chant, offering, and participant interaction conveys rich moral and educational messages. Unfortunately, this wealth of values remains undocumented and unexamined systematically, thus its potential as a source of character learning has not been fully utilized in both formal and non-formal education systems in Central Aceh. A systematic approach entails considering all components, acknowledging each component's role and how they interact, so that the established goals can be fully achieved [5].

Character education, currently the main focus of Indonesia's national development, can actually draw from local wisdom that has been tested and deeply rooted in society. Various studies indicate that the Gayo community possesses educational traditions rich in values, such as the Iserahan ku Guru tradition, a sacred process of mutual consent that serves as a binding pledge between both parties, with a shared obligation to guide children towards Insan Kamil. This tradition evolved from non-formal education to a government program aimed at preserving Gayo's local culture [6]. Similarly, the Munyerahni Murid Ku Tengku Guru tradition exemplifies Gayo's local wisdom in the field of education, where parents ceremonially entrust their children to teachers as a symbol of shared responsibility among parents, teachers, and the government in educating future generations [7]. The Sining ritual, with its complexity involving various community elements and profound philosophical values, has tremendous potential to be developed as a source of character education values and relevant local wisdom aligned with current educational needs.

The urgency of this research strengthens when realizing that the young generation of Gayo is currently in a vulnerable position to the influence of global cultures that are not always in line with their own cultural values. A study on child rearing in cross-cultural families in Takengon reveals that the fusion of two cultures within families has led to a fading practice of traditional rituals and the interpretation of the philosophical content within them, whereby Islamic education in families tends to not emphasize specific cultural aspects, and child-rearing patterns are more influenced by the parents' religious understanding and educational background rather than specific tribal cultures [8]. This phenomenon indicates a shift in values that needs to be wisely addressed through efforts to revitalize cultural values that are not in conflict with religious teachings but instead can strengthen the implementation of Islamic values within the framework of local culture. The Sining ritual, which blends Islamic values with local traditions, offers a revitalization model that can serve as an model for preserving other cultures.

The Central Aceh District Government has demonstrated its commitment to preserving Gayo culture through various policies and programs, including efforts to revitalize nearly extinct local traditions. This is reflected in the organization of various cultural festivals, support for art studios, and policies that promote the integration of local

cultural values into the formal education system. During the implementation of the Munyerahni Murid Ku Tengku Guru traditional ceremony held at the start of the new academic year, the Central Aceh Regent emphasized that this activity is not just an annual ceremony, but a tangible manifestation of the Gayo community's commitment to making education a collective responsibility among parents, teachers, and the government, as well as a representation of local wisdom that integrates Gayo cultural values, religious teachings, and the spirit of education [9]. However, the revitalization efforts undertaken are still sporadic and have not deeply engaged with the excavation of philosophical and educational values. Here lies the significance of this research: to comprehensively examine the Sining ritual as a means of revitalizing educational values and local wisdom, thereby making both academic and practical contributions to the preservation of Gayo culture.

Furthermore, the revitalization of the Sining ritual is not only important for the Gayo community but also has broader relevance in building the character of the Indonesian nation. Amidst the moral crisis impacting the younger generation, such as the prevalence of deviant behavior, waning respect for parents and teachers, and the fading spirit of mutual cooperation, local wisdom embedded in the Sining ritual offers an alternative solution grounded in cultural values themselves. Research on the norms of Gayo society within the framework of Islamic education reveals that the increasing impolite behavior among the youth towards their parents signifies a weakening cultural identity, highlighting the need for the reactualization of social norms as local wisdom for future generations, as possessed by the Gayo community through the concept of Sumang, which is used as a guiding principle to avoid actions that contravene norms [10]. The Sining ritual, with all its complexity, serves as one of the mediums through which these Sumang values are transmitted in a more practical and contextual form, making a thorough examination of it highly beneficial for the development of a character education model based on local wisdom.

In a broader perspective, efforts to revitalize traditions such as the Sining ritual are also part of a global movement to safeguard intangible cultural heritage from extinction. UNESCO, through the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, has encouraged countries worldwide to inventory, document, and revitalize their cultural heritage as part of its initiative to preserve the world's cultural diversity. Indonesia, as a country rich in intangible cultural heritage, has a moral responsibility to conserve it, not only for its own national interests but also for the benefit of world civilization. The designation of various Nusantara traditions as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Ministry of Education and Culture marks an important initial step, but sustained revitalization efforts require profound academic research support, as will be undertaken in this study. By comprehensively examining the Sining ritual, this research is expected to enrich the database of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage and to offer a revitalization model adaptable to other endangered traditions.

Research on the "Ritual Tradition of Sining in the Gayo Central Aceh Community as a Form of Revitalizing Educational Values and Local Wisdom" is highly important and urgent to be conducted. The urgency of this research is based on several considerations: first, the Sining ritual as an intangible cultural heritage of the Gayo community is

endangered due to changing times and the lack of interest among the younger generation; second, this ritual embodies educational values and local wisdom that have great potential to be developed as a source of character learning, yet have not been systematically identified and documented; third, the revitalization efforts made so far have been partial and not based on comprehensive academic studies; fourth, this research will contribute to the development of a character education model based on local wisdom that is relevant to the current context; and fifth, the results of this research can serve as a reference for local governments and other stakeholders in formulating more effective and sustainable cultural preservation policies. Therefore, this research is expected not only to provide academic benefits but also practical benefits for the preservation of Gayo culture and the strengthening of the character of the younger generation of Indonesia.

Thus, the fading of the Sining ritual tradition in the Gayo community in Central Aceh is due to modernization and globalization, marked by declining interest among younger generations and the loss of traditional knowledge among elders. As an insight and problem-solving plan, the researcher sees the need for systematic documentation of the educational values and local wisdom in the Sining ritual, which will then be formulated into an academically based revitalization model. The objectives of this study are: (1) to explore the philosophical meaning of the Sining ritual, (2) to identify the educational values and local wisdom within it, and (3) to formulate a revitalization model as a source of character education. The theoretical studies used include character education theory, local wisdom theory, cultural revitalization theory, and the UNESCO framework for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Previous studies have examined the revitalization of the Sining Dance, the shift in the Gayo language, Sumang norms, and the traditions of Iserahan ku Guru and Munyerahni Murid, but none have comprehensively examined the Sining ritual as a complete entity that combines philosophical, educational, and local wisdom values within an integrated revitalization framework. This research gap underpins the urgency of this study. The expected results are a comprehensive documentation of the Sining ritual and an applicable revitalization model. The research's benefits include academic contributions to cultural studies and character education, as well as practical benefits for local governments in formulating cultural preservation policies and for the education sector in integrating local wisdom into the curriculum.

2. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using library research methodology. This type of research was chosen for its focus on exploring the meanings, philosophical values, and educational concepts inherent in the documented Sining rituals across various written sources. Library research involves activities such as collecting literary data, reading, note-taking, and processing research materials specifically related to the studied topic, in which researchers directly engage with texts or numerical data rather than firsthand knowledge from the field or eyewitness accounts of events. In the context of this study, library research enables researchers to delve deeply into various literature on Sining rituals, educational values, the local wisdom of Gayo communities, and cultural revitalization concepts from theoretical and empirical perspectives. The qualitative

approach in this library research emphasizes a profound understanding of the cultural phenomena under study through the interpretation of various relevant texts and documents, leading to rich and comprehensive descriptions of the symbolic, philosophical meanings, and educational values embedded in the Sining rituals [11].

The data sources in this literature review fall into two main categories: primary and secondary sources, all derived from written library materials. Primary data sources are those that directly discuss the Sining ritual in Gayo society, covering its historical context, ritual implementation, symbolic meaning, and the values it embodies, obtained from books, scholarly journal articles, and research reports relevant to the research topic. Secondary data sources are supporting sources that discuss broader contexts, such as Gayo culture in general, concepts of cultural revitalization, character education theories, and the local wisdom of the Aceh community, which can enrich and deepen the analysis of the primary data. The selection of data sources is purposefully based on criteria of relevance, recency, and source credibility, prioritizing publications from 2020 to 2025 to ensure data timeliness and alignment with contemporary contexts [12].

The books used as data sources include academic works on Gayo culture, cultural anthropology, character education, and cultural heritage revitalization, while scholarly journal articles are obtained from various accredited national journals and reputable international journals that contain related research findings. Research reports, including relevant theses, dissertations, and dissertations, also serve as important data sources because they often contain empirically validated data through academic processes. The data collection technique employed in this study was documentary research, involving the gathering and analysis of written documents, both primary and secondary, related to the research focus. Documentary research is an indirect data collection technique that aims not at the research subjects directly but at existing notes or documents. The researcher acts as the key instrument actively tracing, selecting, and gathering data from various library sources [13].

The data collection process began with identifying and searching relevant literature through various channels, such as digital libraries, institutional repositories, academic journal databases, and physical library catalogs, using keywords like "Sining rituals," "Sining dance," "Gayo community," "local wisdom of Gayo," "character education," and "cultural revitalization." Once the literature was gathered, the next step was to select and classify sources based on relevance and source credibility, followed by a close reading of each source to identify sections relevant to the research focus. The discovered data was then documented, categorized, and systematically recorded in the form of data cards or classification tables to facilitate further analysis processes. In this study, the researcher also utilized reflective note-taking techniques to record emerging ideas, interconceptual connections, and critical thoughts during the reading process, which will be highly beneficial in the data analysis and interpretation phase [14].

The data analysis technique in this literature review employs a qualitative content analysis, a systematic method for analyzing meanings, themes, and patterns within texts or documents. Qualitative content analysis involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification, which occur interactively and cyclically

throughout the research process [11]. The data reduction stage begins with processes of selection, focusing, simplification, and abstraction of raw data obtained from various literature sources, where researchers choose relevant information related to the research focus, namely the symbolic and philosophical meanings of the Sining ritual, character education values, revitalization of local wisdom, as well as social and religious educational values.

The reduced data is then presented in a systematic narrative description, enabling researchers to grasp an overall picture or specific aspects of the data grouped according to predefined themes. Data presentation in qualitative research comprises not only narrative text but can also include matrices, charts, or diagrams that facilitate understanding of the interrelationships among data categories. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and verification, in which researchers explore meanings, note regularities and patterns, propose explanations, identify possible configurations, examine cause-and-effect relationships, and formulate propositions from the presented data, then verify these findings with other data to ensure their validity. In the context of this research, the analysis is conducted thematically by identifying main themes emerging from the literature, such as harmony with nature, mutual cooperation, leadership, character education, and cultural revitalization, which are further elaborated through references to relevant literature sources. The validation of data authenticity in qualitative research, including literature research, is a crucial step to ensure that the research findings can be scientifically accounted for. In this study, data authenticity validation is carried out through four main criteria outlined in qualitative research tradition, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are adapted to fit the characteristics of literature research [12].

The credibility test is conducted to ensure that the data collected and interpretations made accurately represent the meanings contained in their original sources, employing techniques such as diligent observation, source triangulation, and discussions with mentors or experts in the Gayo cultural field. Source triangulation involves comparing and cross-verifying the credibility of information obtained from different sources, for instance, comparing data on the philosophical meanings of Sining dance movements gathered from a journal article with data from other books or research reports to ensure data consistency and accuracy. Transferability testing concerns the extent to which research results can be applied or transferred to other contexts or situations, which is attempted in this research through providing rich, detailed, and in-depth descriptions (thick description) of the Sining ritual context, Gayo community, and the values embedded within it, enabling readers to comprehensively understand and consider the possibility of applying the research findings in similar contexts [14].

Dependability testing is conducted to ensure that the research process can be traced and replicated by other researchers, yielding relatively similar results. In the context of a literature review, this is manifested through systematic and transparent documentation of the research procedures, including the literature search, source selection, data collection techniques and the analytical steps taken. Researchers compile detailed notes on the research process, including methodological decisions made during the research, providing

an audit trail for parties interested in evaluating the research's quality [13]. Confirmability testing pertains to the objectivity of research findings, measuring the extent to which the results reflect the collected data rather than being a product of the researcher's construction or subjective bias. In literature research, confirmability is pursued through confirmatory techniques that use original sources, consistently referring back to the original texts of each cited literary source and rechecking interpretations to ensure no distortion of meaning. Additionally, researchers explicitly state the theoretical positions and perspectives used in analyzing the data, enabling readers to understand the underlying framework that informs the interpretations [15]. By consistently applying these four criteria for testing data validity, it is expected that this research output will have a high level of trustworthiness and can be academically accountable as a scholarly contribution to the study of revitalizing the ritual tradition of Sining and the educational values and local wisdom it embodies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines in depth the Ritual Sining tradition in the Gayo community in Central Aceh. This cultural heritage serves not only as an artistic performance but also as a complex entity that holds a wealth of symbolic, philosophical, and educational meanings. Based on the literature analysis, the research findings are presented in four main parts. Firstly, it will describe the symbolic and philosophical meanings embedded in each stage of the ritual process, reflecting the harmony between humans, nature, and spirituality. Secondly, the discussion will focus on the role of the Sining ritual as a medium for transmitting character education values, especially to the younger generation. Thirdly, efforts to revitalize this tradition will be examined as a key strategy in preserving and conserving Gayo's local wisdom amidst modernization trends. Lastly, this section will reveal the integrated social and religious educational values within the ritual, which form the foundation for creating social cohesion and a harmonious spiritual life among the Gayo community.

3.1. Results

Symbolic and Philosophical Meanings in the Sining Ritual Procession

The Ritual Sining in the Gayo community in Central Aceh is a cultural heritage rich in symbolic and philosophical meanings, reflected in every stage of the process. Through an in-depth literature review, it is evident that this ritual is not merely an art performance but a sacred sequence that mediates the relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator. Traditionally, the Sining ritual procession is conducted in two main contexts: as part of the traditional house construction process and as a ritual in the inauguration or purification ceremony of a leader. In the context of house construction, the ritual commences with the selection and cutting of wood in the forest, where a customary elder recites a permission-seeking mantra to the inhabitants of the unseen realm and to the tree itself. The mantra uttered, as documented in literary sources, includes the phrase "Hééé Kayu ari uten rime simörip wan arul pematang... Tuahmu bang si cacak bepilih kati kutebang," which philosophically emphasizes that humans must not be greedy and should seek permission and show respect for the spirits inhabiting the universe [16].

The symbolic meaning of reciting this mantra is harmony with nature, where humans acknowledge themselves as part of an ecosystem that needs to maintain balance rather than exploit recklessly. The Sining dance movements performed on wooden beams (*bere ni umah*) at heights of up to twelve meters are also imbued with symbolism. Mimicking bird behavior, such as fluttering fabric-like wings and leaping lightly from one corner to another, reflects alertness, balance, and wisdom in facing life [17]. These movements symbolize a leader or head of the household who must always be vigilant, agile, and forward-looking, akin to a bird overseeing from above.

Further, the offerings prepared in the Sining ritual, although now practiced with moderation, embody symbols of gratitude and reverence to ancestors. Literary sources explain that elements in the offerings, such as various types of traditional foods, symbolize the harvest and natural wealth bestowed, making these offerings a form of thanksgiving to God and ancestral spirits believed to safeguard the village and land fertility [18]. The interaction among ritual participants, especially between dancers on beams and those on the floor, illustrates the communication and interdependence between the upper realm (spiritual world) and lower realm (human world). The vertical floor patterns they create, known as *reje tiang*, symbolize the harmonious unity and coordination in constructing a life structure, both physically in building homes and socially in developing society [19].

The philosophy of mutual cooperation is also evident in the process of pulling wood from the forest to the village, carried out collaboratively by a group of adult men accompanied by cheers and songs. This activity is not merely physical labor but a representation of collective spirit and togetherness that form the primary foundation of Gayo society, later revitalized in every ritual process to instill the value that heavy work lightens when done shoulder to shoulder [20]. The values of faith within the framework of Gayo's local culture are reflected in the prayers offered, which, despite using local cultural mediums, remain directed towards the Almighty God. This procession demonstrates how Gayo society has long integrated universal spiritual values into its cultural practices, in which every customary activity commences and concludes with requests for safety and blessings from Allah SWT, reflecting an acculturation of deeply Islamic values with entrenched local traditions [21].

The Sining Ritual as a Medium for Transmitting Character Education Values

The ritual tradition of Sining serves a crucial function as a platform for non-formal education among the Gayo community, particularly in instilling character values in the younger generation. Based on the literature review, this ritual provides a dynamic learning space outside the formal education system, where noble values are instilled through direct participation and observation of traditional processes. Values such as discipline and responsibility are exemplified in the meticulous preparation and execution of the ritual in accordance with long-established customary rules. Each participant, whether a dancer, musician, or cultural mentor, carries specific roles and duties that must be performed with precision and a sense of responsibility, as even minor errors during the process can be deemed a violation of sacred customary norms [22].

Involving the youth in various stages, from preparing props and learning dance movements to participating in the ritual, indirectly teaches them the importance of commitment and the consequences of their actions. They learn that a tradition can only thrive when each individual upholds the entrusted responsibilities, a vital foundation for shaping a responsible character. Collaboration or mutual cooperation, as previously mentioned, becomes the core of the preparation and execution process of the Sining ritual. A literature review reveals that the process of extracting reje tiang wood from the forest to the construction site cannot be accomplished by one or two individuals but requires the collective strength of the entire village community. It is in these moments that the younger generation witnesses and directly experiences how unity can overcome significant physical obstacles, fostering a spirit of solidarity and empathy towards others. They learn to assist each other selflessly, understanding that collective success reflects community strength [23].

Furthermore, a strong work ethic is also transmitted through this ritual. The construction of the traditional house is not a simple task; it demands perseverance, diligence, and specific skills in selecting wood, carving, and assembling structures without nails. This work ethic is observed and internalized by the younger generation as they see their elders working with dedication and expertise, teaching that quality results can only be achieved through hard work and determination [24]. Furthermore, the Sining ritual serves as a platform to instill values of empathy and social concern. During each customary ritual, a communal feast is typically organized involving all community members. The food is prepared collaboratively by the women and young girls, then served to the laborers and all participants in the ritual. This gathering fosters a sense of caring for sharing blessings and happiness with others. The younger generation learns not only to consider themselves but also to pay attention to the broader community's needs [25].

In the context of the ritual bathing of the king (Turun Ku Lut), the character values taught are even more profound. This procession, which incorporates elements of the Sining dance, serves as a form of local wisdom self-critique towards the leader. A good populace is willing to remind its leader, and a good leader is willing to better themselves. Through this ritual, the younger generation is taught about the values of justice, courage to voice the truth, and humility to accept criticism, a character lesson highly relevant in shaping good citizens for the future [26].

Thus, the Sining ritual functions as a life curriculum, teaching various dimensions of character and shaping the Gayo generation to be not only intellectually sharp but also emotionally, socially, and spiritually mature through active participation in their cultural heritage.

Revitalizing Sining in Maintaining and Preserving Gayo Local Wisdom

Revitalizing the Sining tradition plays a crucial role in preserving the local wisdom of the nearly extinct Gayo community. According to the literature review, revitalization is not merely about reviving artistic performances but a process of reactualizing the traditional values and knowledge embedded within them to ensure their relevance and sustainability amidst modernization and globalization. The diverse elements of local

wisdom inherent in the Sining ritual include traditional knowledge about various types of forest wood. The incantation recited before felling trees mentions names such as Jempa, Gesing, Kuli, Keruwing, and Medang, demonstrating the deep botanical knowledge that Gayo people once held about the characteristics and uses of different wood types for construction. Revitalizing this tradition entails revitalizing local knowledge of biodiversity and its sustainable use, an invaluable resource in today's environmental crisis [27]. Moreover, the traditional agricultural system is reflected in the ritual of giving thanks for the harvest in the form of offerings and collective prayers, teaching the community to always be grateful and preserve the fertility of the land as a life source. Local wisdom in this context centers on the understanding that nature sustains life and that humans must responsibly care for it [28].

The traditional customs governing the procedures for constructing a house, ranging from site selection and determining the orientation of the house based on qibla and cardinal directions to the process of erecting the main pillar, embody local wisdom in traditional architecture. This knowledge is not only about the technical aspects of construction but also about spiritual and social values. A house is not simply a physical dwelling but also a representation of the cosmos and the harmonious relationship between inhabitants and the universe. The revitalization of Sining helps preserve this vernacular architectural knowledge, preventing the loss of cultural identity in modern housing development that tends to be uniform and devoid of meaning [29]. In a social context, these ritual practices serve as a cohesive force that strengthens the cultural identity of the Gayo community. Amidst the onslaught of globalization, which often erodes local values, the revitalized Sining ritual becomes a marker of existence and pride for the Gayo people. The involvement of the younger generation in art studios that revitalize this dance, such as the Kuta Dance Theater, not only teaches them the dance movements but also instills a sense of love and pride for their ancestral heritage. They learn about the history, philosophy, and values contained within it, thereby fortifying their cultural identity ([30].

This revitalization process also involves adaptation and innovation to ensure this tradition remains engaging and communicative for the current generation. The presentation of Sining, originally highly sacred and held only within specific traditional contexts, is now packaged as a cultural attraction, shorter, more concise, and more artistic for tourism and cultural festival purposes, without losing its essence and core values. Strategies to ensure the sustainability of the Sining tradition are carried out not only by artists and cultural experts but also require strong support from various parties, especially local governments and academics. Government policies that incorporate local content on Gayo culture into school curricula, as well as funding support for cultural revitalization and promotion activities, are key factors in preservation efforts. Government-funded art innovation programs, as seen in other regions, can serve as models for integrating digital technology in promote Sining, such as creating documentary films, social media content, and interactive digital platforms that introduce this tradition to a wider audience, including the digital-native generation [31].

Additionally, the role of customary institutions and elders as fountains of knowledge and the highest authorities in tradition is crucial. They are tasked with ensuring

that the revitalization process stays true to the original customs and philosophies, thus safeguarding the noble values intended to be passed down. Collaboration between older generations versed in ritual essence and younger, technologically adept individuals forms an ideal formula for Sining revitalization, ensuring that this tradition not only endures as a cultural relic but thrives and evolves dynamically, addressing contemporary challenges while remaining firmly rooted in its traditional essence [32].

Social and Religious Educational Values in the Sining Ritual Tradition

The ritual tradition of Sining is a cultural entity rich in educational values, especially in the intertwined social and religious dimensions that shape the harmonious and cultured Gayo community. Socially, this ritual serves a significant function in strengthening solidarity, social cohesion, and mutual assistance among residents. The ritual process, as evidenced by the construction of traditional houses, involves nearly all segments of the community, from children to the elderly, men and women, each contributing with their respective roles. Men are tasked with fetching wood and erecting pillars, while women prepare provisions. This collective involvement fosters intense social interaction, reinforces bonds of friendship, and cultivates a sense of ownership over the collaborative process and its outcomes [33].

The social educational value instilled here is that unity and solidarity are essential assets for achieving common goals. A strong community is one in which its members care for each other and collaborate rather than being individualistic. In the context of the coronation or purification ritual for a leader (king), the value of social solidarity is also evident. The people have the right and duty to remind their leader through customary rites, while the leader demonstrates humility by consenting to purification and criticism. This teaches about the balanced reciprocal relationship between leaders and the led, a crucial foundation for a democratic and just society [34]. The interaction among ritual participants, marked by decorum and respect in accordance with Gayo customs, also serves as an effective social learning medium for how to behave and communicate within society.

Meanwhile, from a religious perspective, the Sining tradition is a manifestation of the Gayo community's efforts to integrate Islamic values with local customs, often described as a dynamic, contextual form of cultural syncretism. Although rooted in pre-Islamic traditions, the principles of monotheism and Islamic spirituality have beautifully amalgamated in its development. The mantras, which originally may have contained invocations to guardian spirits, are now, in their revitalized practice, more directed as prayers for safety and blessings from Allah SWT. The recitation of the slamet prayer before and after the ritual procession reaffirms that all human efforts and endeavors must be accompanied by prayer and submission to God. This aligns with findings in various other Nusantara traditions, where religious values form the core of cultural practices [35].

Spiritual values such as gratitude, sincerity, and closeness to the Almighty are profoundly embedded in each stage of the ritual. Gratitude is expressed through prayers and offerings for bountiful harvests or successful house constructions. Sincerity is taught through selfless communal work and acceptance of all natural conditions. Closeness to God is reflected in the orientation of the entire procession, aiming not only for worldly

purposes but also to seek His mercy and protection in the hereafter. For instance, the process of seeking the qibla direction during house construction demonstrates how spiritual aspects serve as guidance in worldly activities, teaching that life should always revolve around divine values [36].

Thus, the Sining ritual functions as an effective religious education tool, instructing the younger generation not to separate social and spiritual life. They learn that fostering good relationships with fellow humans (*hablum minannas*) must coincide with cultivating a strong bond with God (*hablum minallah*). Therefore, the revitalization of this tradition is crucial to continuously instill a solid moral and spiritual foundation for the Gayo community, ensuring that societal progress does not lead them to forsake the noble values derived from local wisdom and religious teachings [37].

3.2. Discussion

Symbolic and Philosophical Meanings in the Sining Ritual Procession

The ritual of Sining among the Gayo community in Central Aceh is a cultural heritage rich in symbolic and philosophical significance, reflected in each stage of the process. Through an in-depth review of the literature, this ritual is revealed to be more than just a performance of art, but rather a sacred sequence that mediates the relationship among humans, nature, and the Creator. Textual analysis of the Sining tradition reveals that the Gayo people perceive sining as movements and songs that hold a crucial position as an opener in every customary procession, where the sung songs called *jangin* serve as calls to spiritual power and as a reminder of past events [1]. The traditional ritual of Sining is carried out in two main contexts, as part of the construction of an indigenous house and as a ceremony in the bathing and enthronement of a king. In the context of house construction, the ritual commences with the selection and felling of wood in the forest, where a customary elder recites a plea to the inhabitants of the unseen realm and to the tree itself. The recited mantra contains phrases that philosophically emphasize that humans should not be greedy and must seek permission and respect the spirits dwelling in the universe, a practice reflecting local wisdom in maintaining ecosystem balance [38].

The symbolic meaning of reciting this mantra is harmony with nature, where humans acknowledge that they are part of an ecosystem that must maintain balance, not exploit it arbitrarily. The Sining dance movements performed on wooden blocks at heights of up to twelve meters are also rich in symbolism, with gestures imitating bird behavior such as fluttering cloth-like wings and making small leaps from one corner to another, reflecting vigilance, equilibrium, and wisdom in facing life [39]. These movements symbolize a leader or head of the household who must always be vigilant, agile, and far-sighted, like a bird overseeing from above. Furthermore, the offerings prepared in the Sining ritual, although moderated in practice, symbolize gratitude and respect for ancestors. Elements in the offerings, such as various traditional foods, symbolize the harvest and natural wealth bestowed, making these offerings a form of gratitude to God and ancestral spirits believed to protect the village and land fertility [18].

The interaction among ritual participants, especially between the dancers on the blocks and those on the ground, illustrates the communication and interdependence

between the upper world, as the spiritual realm and the lower world, as the human realm. Vertical floor poles that they shape, known as pillar reje, symbolize the harmonious integration and coordination in constructing a life structure, both physically in building houses and socially in developing society. Ethnographic studies indicate that the Sining dancer's position above the wooden beam that spans the two main pillars of the traditional house reflects a visionary leadership concept and a responsibility for the safety of all community members [40].

The philosophy of mutual cooperation is also evident in the collective process of hauling wood from the forest to the village, accompanied by cheers and songs. This activity is not merely physical work, but a representation of collective spirit and togetherness that forms the primary foundation of Gayo society, which is then revitalized in every ritual procession to instill the value that heavy work feels light when done together. Research on social values in Gayo society confirms that the integrated, mutually cooperative tradition in customary rituals serves as an effective mechanism for strengthening communal solidarity [41]. The values of monotheism within the framework of the local Gayo culture are reflected in the prayers offered, which, despite using local cultural media, remain directed towards the One Almighty God. This procession shows how the Gayo society has long integrated universal spiritual values into its cultural practices, in which every customary activity is initiated and concluded with requests for safety and blessings from Allah SWT, a form of acculturation between Islam's strong values and rooted local traditions [42].

The Sining Ritual as a Medium for Transmitting Character Education Values

The tradition of ritual singing plays a crucial role as a non-formal educational tool for the Gayo community, particularly in transmitting character education values to the younger generation. Based on the literature review, this ritual serves as a living learning space outside the formal schooling system, where noble values are instilled through direct participation and observation of traditional processes. The revitalization process undertaken by various art studios, including the Kuta Dance Theater Studio, proves that the Sining dance can be adapted as an effective learning medium for the younger generation through stages of reformulation, communication, organization, adaptation, transformation, and structured routines [3]. Values of discipline and responsibility are reflected in the meticulous preparation and execution of rituals that must adhere to long-established customary rules. Every individual involved, whether as a dancer, musician, or traditional elder, has specific roles and tasks that must be carried out with precision and a sense of responsibility, as even minor errors in the process can be deemed violations of sacred customary norms [43].

Involving the younger generation in various stages, from preparing props and learning dance movements to participating in the rituals, indirectly teaches them to understand the significance of commitment and the consequences of their actions. They learn that a tradition can only thrive if everyone firmly upholds the entrusted responsibilities, a crucial foundation in shaping responsible character. The value of cooperation or mutual assistance, as previously mentioned, becomes the core of the

preparation and implementation process of the Sining ritual. Literature studies reveal that the procession of pulling the reje pole wood from the forest to the house construction site cannot be carried out by just one or two individuals, but requires the collective strength of the entire village community. During this moment, the younger generation witnesses and directly experiences how unity can overcome significant physical obstacles, fostering a spirit of solidarity and empathy towards others. They learn to help each other selflessly, understanding that shared success reflects the community's strength [23].

Additionally, a strong work ethic is also transmitted through this ritual. The process of constructing a traditional house is not a simple task; it demands diligence, perseverance, and specialized skills in selecting wood, carving, and assembling the structure without nails. This work ethic is observed and internalized by the younger generation as they see their elders working with dedication and expertise, teaching that quality results can only be achieved through hard work and determination. Studies on character education grounded in local wisdom affirm that transmitting work ethic values through participation in traditional rituals is more effective than formal learning because it involves direct experience and authentic social contexts [44].

Furthermore, the Sining ritual also serves to instill values of empathy and social concern. During each customary ritual execution, a communal feast is typically held for all residents. The preparation of this food is carried out collectively by the mothers and young ladies of the community, and later served to the workers and all participants of the ritual. This moment of togetherness nurtures a sense of care in sharing sustenance and joy with others. The younger generation learns not only to consider themselves but also to attend to the needs of the wider society [45]. In the context of the ruler's ritual bathing, the character values taught go even deeper. This procession, which also includes elements of the Sining dance, represents a form of local wisdom's self-critique towards the leader. A good citizen is willing to remind their leader, and a good leader is open to self-improvement. Through this ritual, the younger generation is instructed in the values of justice, the courage to speak the truth, and humility in accepting criticism, crucial character lessons for shaping virtuous citizens in the future [46].

Thus, the Sining ritual functions as a life curriculum that teaches various dimensions of character, molding the Gayo generation to be not only intellectually astute but also emotionally, socially, and spiritually mature through active participation in their cultural heritage. Research on the role of the Sining dance in tourism development also reveals that the involvement of the younger generation in preserving this dance indirectly transmits the values of entrepreneurship and creativity, essential assets in facing modern economic challenges [47].

Revitalizing Sining in Maintaining and Preserving Gayo Local Wisdom

The revitalization efforts of the Sining tradition play a crucial role in preserving and safeguarding the Gayo community's local wisdom heritage, which is on the brink of extinction. Based on the literature review, revitalization is not merely about reviving art performances, but rather a process of reactualizing the traditional values and knowledge embedded in them to remain relevant and sustainable amid modernization and

globalization. The designation of Sining Dance as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is a strategic step in protection and preservation efforts, providing a legal foundation and policy for local governments to develop sustainable revitalization programs [10].

The diverse elements of local wisdom inherent in the Sining ritual include traditional knowledge about various types of forest woods. The chants recited before tree felling mention wood names such as Jempa, Gesing, Kuli, Keruing, and Medang, indicating that ancient Gayo society possessed profound botanical knowledge of the characteristics and uses of different types of wood for construction. Revitalization of this tradition also means revitalizing local knowledge of biodiversity and its sustainable utilization, a valuable resource in today's era of environmental crisis [48].

Furthermore, traditional farming systems are reflected in gratitude rituals for the harvest manifested through offerings and communal prayers, teaching people to always be thankful and preserve soil fertility as a source of life. Local wisdom in this regard holds that nature provides life, and that humans are obligated to responsibly care for it. Customary rules that regulate the procedure of house construction, ranging from site selection and determination of the house's orientation based on the qibla and cardinal points to the ceremony of setting up the main pillar, embody local wisdom in traditional architecture. This knowledge is not only associated with technical aspects of construction but also with spiritual and social values. A house is not merely a physical dwelling place but also a representation of the cosmos and the harmonious relationship between inhabitants and the universe. The revival of Sining contributes to preserving this vernacular architectural knowledge, preventing the loss of cultural identity in modern house development that tends to be uniform and devoid of meaning [49].

In a social context, these ritual practices serve as a bond that strengthens the cultural identity of the Gayo community. Amidst the onslaught of globalization, which often erodes local values, the revitalized Sining rituals serve as markers of existence and pride for the Gayo people. Involving the younger generation in art communities that revive these dances not only teaches them the dance movements but also instills a sense of love and pride for their ancestral heritage. They learn about the history, philosophy, and values embedded in these traditions, thus fortifying their cultural identity [3].

This revitalization process also includes adaptation and innovation to ensure that these traditions remain appealing and communicative to the present generation. The presentation of Sining, once highly sacred and only performed in specific customary contexts, is now packaged as a cultural attraction that is more concise, condensed, and artistic for tourism and cultural festivals, without diminishing its essence and core values. The strategy to ensure the sustainability of the Sining tradition is not carried out solely by artists and cultural experts; it also requires strong support from various parties, especially local governments and academics. The revitalization program conducted by the Aceh Cultural Heritage Conservation Center through stages of survey, focus group discussions, reconstruction, writing training, workshops, and performances has made a significant contribution to reviving the nearly extinct art of Sining [50]. Government policies that incorporate local content about Gayo culture into school curricula, as well as funding

support for revitalization activities and cultural promotion, are key factors in preservation efforts.

Government-funded art innovation programs can serve as models for integrating digital technology in promote Sining, such as creating documentary films, social media content, and interactive digital platforms that introduce this tradition to a wider audience, including the digital-native generation. Studies on the role of Sining dance in tourism development indicate that this dance not only serves as a cultural attraction through documentary videos and performances in various events but also brings positive economic impacts to local communities while serving as an effective entertainment medium [51].

Furthermore, the role of traditional institutions and elders as sources of knowledge and the highest authorities in matters of custom is crucial. They are tasked with ensuring that the revitalization process stays true to the original customs and philosophies, thereby preserving the noble values meant to be passed down. Collaboration between the older generation, knowledgeable about ritual essence, and the younger, creative, and tech-savvy generation forms an ideal formula in Sining revitalization, guaranteeing that this tradition not only survives as a cultural relic but thrives dynamically, addressing contemporary challenges while remaining firmly rooted in its traditional heritage [35].

Social and Religious Educational Values in the Sining Ritual Tradition

The tradition of Sining rituals is a culturally rich entity that abounds with educational values, especially in its intertwined social and religious dimensions, shaping the harmonious and civilized societal order of the Gayo community. On the social front, this ritual serves a crucial function in strengthening solidarity, social cohesion, and the communal cooperation system among residents. The ritual process, as exemplified by the construction of traditional houses, engages nearly all segments of society, from children to the elderly, men and women, each with their roles and contributions. Men handle tasks such as logging and pole erection, while women prepare food. This collective involvement fosters intense social interactions, strengthens bonds of kinship, and instills a sense of ownership over the collaborative process and outcomes [52].

The social educational value instilled here is that unity and solidarity are essential assets for achieving shared objectives. A resilient community thrives on citizens caring for one another and working together, not on individualistic tendencies. In the context of inaugurating or purifying leaders, the value of social solidarity is also evident. Citizens have the right and role to remind their leaders through customary rites, while leaders exhibit humility by consenting to be purified and criticized. This teaches about a balanced reciprocal relationship between leaders and the led, a critical foundation for a democratic and just society [53]. The interaction among ritual participants, steeped in etiquette and respect according to Gayo traditions, also serves as an effective social learning medium on how to behave and communicate within the community.

From In religious perspective, the Sining tradition is a manifestation of the Gayo community's efforts to integrate Islamic values with local customs and traditions, often described as a dynamic, contextual form of cultural syncretism. While rooted in pre-Islamic traditions, these rituals have evolved to beautifully incorporate the principles of

monotheism and Islamic spirituality. Originally containing invocations to guardian spirits, the revitalized practice now focuses more on supplicatory prayers for safety and blessings from Allah SWT. The recitation of the slamet prayer before and after the ritual procession reaffirms that all human endeavors and efforts must be accompanied by prayer and submission to God. This aligns with findings in various other Nusantara traditions where religious values form the core of cultural practices [35].

Spiritual values such as gratitude, sincerity, and closeness to the One Almighty God are deeply ingrained in every stage of the ritual. Gratitude is expressed through prayers and offerings for bountiful harvests or successful home constructions. Sincerity is taught through selfless communal work and acceptance of natural provisions. Closeness to God is reflected in the overall orientation of the procession, which aims not only for worldly gains but also for divine approval and protection in the afterlife. For instance, determining the qibla direction during house construction exemplifies how spiritual aspects guide worldly activities, underscoring that life should always be centered on divine values [36].

With that being said, the Sining ritual functions as an effective religious educational medium, teaching the younger generation not to separate social and spiritual life. They learn that building a good relationship with fellow humans must go hand in hand with building a good relationship with God. Therefore, the revitalization of this tradition becomes crucial to continue instilling a strong moral and spiritual foundation for the Gayo community, ensuring that the progress of time does not lead them to lose the noble values rooted in local wisdom and religious teachings. Studies on the structure of Sining dance movements reveal that each movement inspired by nature, such as the owl and the woodpecker, conveys moral messages about the balance between worldly and spiritual responsibilities. Research on the role of traditional dance in character education emphasizes that the integration of social and religious values in a unified ritual like Sining provides a holistic experience that is hard to obtain solely from formal education, as participants not only learn cognitively but also experience affectively and psychomotorically in an authentic communal context.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Sining ritual tradition in the Gayo community of Central Aceh constitutes a comprehensive cultural entity encompassing profound symbolic and philosophical meanings, serving as a medium for transmitting character education values such as discipline, responsibility, teamwork, empathy, and social concern, as well as preserving local wisdom, including botanical knowledge, traditional agricultural systems, and vernacular architecture. The ritual also embodies social values that strengthen community solidarity and religious values that integrate Islamic teachings with local culture. The implications of this research are twofold. In practice, the findings can be used by the Central Aceh District Government, educational institutions, and cultural practitioners to design character education programs grounded in local wisdom and to formulate sustainable cultural preservation policies. Academically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage and provides a theoretical foundation for future research on the intersection of character education and

local wisdom. This research is limited to a literature-based qualitative analysis of the Sining ritual as practiced in Central Aceh. The findings are based solely on documentary sources and do not include direct field observation or empirical measurement of the ritual's impact on character development among the younger generation. Therefore, the conclusions are interpretive in nature and specific to the cultural context of the Gayo community. For future research, empirical studies involving ethnographic fieldwork, participatory observation, and impact assessments are recommended to validate and expand upon the findings of this study. Subsequent research may also explore comparative analyses with other traditional rituals across Indonesia to develop a broader framework for culture-based character education. This research contributes to the general public by providing a documented reference on the Sining ritual, accessible to educators, cultural practitioners, and the wider community, thereby supporting efforts to preserve Gayo cultural heritage and strengthen local identity in the face of globalization.

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