



## Public Communication Strategies of the Sultan of Ternate in Revitalizing the Moloku Kie Raha Cultural Identity: A Case Study of the Legu Taranoate Tradition

Athirah Rizki Salsabila<sup>1\*</sup>, Syahrir Ibnu<sup>2</sup>, Alwi Abdul Haq<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Khairun, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Al-Azhar University, Egypt

\*Correspondence: syahrir.ibnu@unkhair.ac.id

### Article History

Received  
10/04/2026

Accepted  
20/06/2026

Published  
25/06/2026

Copyright ©  
2026 The  
Author(s): This  
an open-access  
article  
distributed  
under the terms  
of the Creative  
Commons  
Attribution  
ShareAlike 4.0  
International  
(CC BY-SA 4.0)



### Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis strategi komunikasi publik Sultan Ternate dalam merevitalisasi identitas budaya Moloku Kie Raha melalui tradisi Legu Taranoate 2025. Penelitian berangkat dari persoalan bagaimana otoritas tradisional non-negara mempertahankan legitimasi budaya di tengah demokrasi modern, globalisasi, dan perluasan media digital. Dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, analisis dokumen, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan dua belas informan kunci, meliputi pejabat kesultanan, pemimpin adat, pengelola media, pelaku budaya, dan akademisi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Kesultanan Ternate memadukan komunikasi ritual, tata ruang sakral, simbol kerajaan, dialog publik, partisipasi pemuda, dan verifikasi konten digital untuk memperkuat kesinambungan identitas lokal. Secara vertikal, Sultan mengoperasikan modal simbolik melalui ritus Orom Sasadu dan Kololi Kie. Secara horizontal, Legu Taranoate menjadi ruang publik budaya yang memungkinkan warga menegosiasikan nilai adat dengan isu kontemporer. Artikel ini juga menunjukkan bahwa media digital dapat memperluas jangkauan budaya apabila tetap dikendalikan oleh protokol adat. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa revitalisasi budaya berlangsung melalui perpaduan otoritas simbolik, partisipasi masyarakat, dan adaptasi media.

### Abstract

This article examines the public communication strategies used by the Sultan of Ternate to revitalize Moloku Kie Raha cultural identity through the 2025 Legu Taranoate tradition. The study addresses how a non-state traditional authority maintains cultural legitimacy within modern democracy, globalization, and expanding digital media. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through participant observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with twelve key informants, including sultanate officials, customary leaders, media managers, cultural practitioners, and academics. The findings show that the Sultanate of Ternate combines ritual communication, sacred spatial arrangement, royal symbols, public dialogue, youth participation, and verified digital content to strengthen the continuity of local identity. Vertically, the Sultan operationalizes symbolic capital through

*rituals such as Orom Sasadu and Kololi Kie. Horizontally, Legu Taranoate functions as a cultural public sphere where citizens negotiate adat values with contemporary issues. The study argues that cultural revitalization is achieved through symbolic authority, community participation, and adaptive media practices.*

**Keywords:** *Public Communication Strategy, Sultan of Ternate, Legu Taranoate, Cultural Public Sphere, Symbolic Power, Cultural Revitalization.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The preservation and revitalization of cultural identity have become increasingly important in contemporary communication studies because local communities are now required to negotiate their inherited values in a rapidly changing public environment. Globalization, digital media, urban mobility, and the circulation of transnational popular culture have created new opportunities for cultural exchange, but they have also intensified the risk that local knowledge may be simplified, commercialized, or disconnected from the communities that produce it. For post-colonial societies, this problem is not merely aesthetic. It concerns the continuity of social memory, the legitimacy of customary institutions, and the ability of local communities to define themselves within national and global structures.

Indonesia provides a particularly rich context for examining this issue because the archipelago contains diverse systems of customary law, ritual authority, local kingdoms, and regional identities. In many regions, traditional institutions no longer possess formal administrative power, yet they remain socially meaningful because communities continue to recognize their cultural authority. This recognition is produced and maintained through communication. Traditional institutions must therefore communicate not only historical continuity, but also contemporary relevance. They must show that inherited symbols, rituals, and narratives can still help communities interpret present-day challenges.

North Maluku is an important site for this discussion because its cultural history is closely associated with Moloku Kie Raha, the symbolic constellation of the four island sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo. Historically, these sultanates were maritime centers located within global spice-trade routes. Their political authority was connected to religious legitimacy, sacred geography, customary law, and inter-island alliances. The cultural memory of this constellation continues to shape regional identity, even though the modern Indonesian state has transformed the formal position of traditional rule.

Within this constellation, the Sultanate of Ternate occupies a significant position. The Sultanate does not operate as a modern administrative government, but it continues to function as a guardian of collective memory, palace protocol, sacred objects, oral history, and customary values. Community participation in royal ceremonies, respect for adat leadership, and the continued visibility of palace rituals demonstrate that authority can survive outside formal bureaucracy when it is recognized as morally and culturally legitimate. The Sultanate's contemporary

relevance therefore depends on its capacity to communicate symbolic authority in ways that remain intelligible to present publics.

The annual Legu Taranoate tradition is the central public arena through which this communication can be observed. Traditionally associated with the commemoration of the Sultan's birth and the reaffirmation of relations between ruler, people, land, and ancestry, Legu Taranoate has developed into a large public cultural event. It combines palace ritual, traditional performance, civic gathering, cultural dialogue, youth involvement, public documentation, and digital circulation. The festival does not simply display tradition as a relic of the past. It activates tradition as a communicative practice through which Moloku Kie Raha identity is narrated, performed, and renewed.

This article understands Legu Taranoate through a ritual view of communication. Communication is not treated only as the delivery of information from sender to receiver, but as a symbolic process through which people create, maintain, and transform shared reality. In the festival, meaning is communicated through ceremonial drums, sacred attire, seating arrangements, royal movements, public speeches, ritual journeys, and shared participation. These forms communicate because they are embedded in a cultural system that participants recognize. The festival therefore works as a public language of identity.

The literature on cultural revitalization suggests that globalization often produces two simultaneous effects. On the one hand, it can weaken local traditions by encouraging younger generations to identify more strongly with external cultural forms. On the other hand, it can motivate communities to recover and reassert local identities as a response to perceived cultural loss. Revitalization is therefore not a simple return to an untouched past. It is an adaptive process through which communities select, reinterpret, and communicate inherited values in new social conditions. Traditional institutions become important because they provide symbols and narratives that can anchor this process.

In post-authoritarian Indonesia, regional decentralization also created new openings for customary institutions and traditional monarchies to reappear as public actors. In some cases, this revival has been linked to local autonomy, cultural tourism, heritage politics, and identity formation. However, the success of such revival depends on communication. A traditional institution must persuade diverse publics that its symbols are not merely ceremonial, but relevant to social cohesion, education, historical consciousness, and civic life. The Sultanate of Ternate offers a strong example because it relies not on coercive power, but on symbolic recognition and public participation.

Previous studies on North Malukan culture have often provided valuable historical and anthropological descriptions of sultanates, rituals, and regional identity. However, relatively less attention has been given to the communication logic through which traditional authority is made public, persuasive, and participatory. At the same time, mainstream communication research often focuses on government communication, corporate public relations, electoral politics, or digital campaigns. This leaves a gap in understanding how a non-state traditional institution uses ritual, space, symbols, and media to maintain legitimacy.

This study addresses that gap by integrating the literature review and theoretical framework into the introduction, following the journal format that does not require separate sections for those elements. The first theoretical lens is the

concept of the cultural public sphere. While the classical public sphere emphasizes rational debate among citizens, the cultural public sphere recognizes that public meaning can also be formed through performance, emotion, memory, aesthetics, and ritual. Legu Taranoate can be interpreted as such a sphere because it gathers diverse publics and allows them to encounter, discuss, and reinterpret shared cultural identity.

The second theoretical lens is Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital and symbolic power. Symbolic capital refers to recognized prestige, honor, lineage, cultural knowledge, and institutional legitimacy. Symbolic power is the capacity to shape social meaning through symbols that the public accepts as valid. In the Ternate context, royal lineage, palace protocol, sacred regalia, ritual geography, and historical narratives are forms of symbolic capital. During Legu Taranoate, these resources are converted into symbolic power when the public voluntarily participates in rituals, respects palace guidance, and understands cultural involvement as a moral obligation.

By combining these two perspectives, the article analyzes Legu Taranoate as a dual-axis communication system. The vertical axis concerns symbolic authority: the Sultanate structures meaning through ritual hierarchy, sacred protocol, and inherited legitimacy. The horizontal axis concerns public participation: citizens, youth groups, artists, government actors, media workers, and diaspora audiences engage with the festival through dialogue, performance, documentation, and digital circulation. The main research question is how the Sultanate of Ternate communicates, negotiates, and reproduces Moloku Kie Raha cultural identity through Legu Taranoate. The objective is to explain how symbolic authority, civic participation, and adaptive media practices are combined into a strategy of cultural revitalization.

The importance of this study also lies in the fact that cultural identity is never communicated in a neutral space. Every public performance of identity involves choices about what should be emphasized, who has the authority to explain it, which audiences are being addressed, and how far sacred knowledge may be opened to public view. In Legu Taranoate, these choices are visible in the selection of ritual sequences, the ordering of public space, and the way palace actors frame the festival as both ancestral inheritance and contemporary civic resource. The Sultanate therefore communicates identity through careful selection rather than simple repetition.

The integration of literature review and theoretical framework into the introduction is also necessary because the article's argument depends on connecting empirical description with conceptual explanation from the beginning. The phenomenon cannot be adequately understood if ritual is separated from communication theory or if communication is treated only as media management. The festival shows that public communication in a traditional society may involve voice, body, place, hierarchy, emotion, memory, and mediation at the same time. For that reason, the introduction establishes the theoretical vocabulary required to read ritual as a form of public communication.

The case further demonstrates that local identity is not only inherited but also organized. Moloku Kie Raha becomes visible to the public because the Sultanate and its supporting networks create occasions where the identity can be seen, heard, discussed, and shared. The festival organizes this visibility through

repeated annual performance. Repetition gives stability, while adaptation gives relevance. This combination explains why Legu Taranoate can remain meaningful even as audiences, media technologies, and public expectations change.

## 2. METODOLOGI

This research employs a qualitative case-study design focused on the 2025 Legu Taranoate festival in Ternate, North Maluku. A qualitative approach was selected because the research examines meanings, symbols, ritual practices, and public interpretations rather than numerical measurement. A case study is appropriate because Legu Taranoate is a bounded cultural event in which the Sultanate's public communication strategy can be observed in concrete form across planning, performance, public participation, and media dissemination.

The research site includes palace spaces, festival grounds, community gathering areas, and digital platforms associated with the Sultanate's communication activities. The study treated the festival not as a single ceremonial moment, but as a communication cycle that includes preparation, ritual execution, public reception, and post-event circulation. This broader view is necessary because cultural meaning is produced before, during, and after the main ceremonies. Preparatory meetings, community mobilization, social media announcements, and public discussion all contribute to the communicative life of the festival.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling. The selection aimed to include actors who possessed direct knowledge of the festival, formal or informal responsibility within adat structures, practical involvement in event organization, expertise in local cultural history, or experience in media production. Twelve key informants were interviewed. They included senior sultanate officials, customary leaders, palace ritual specialists, festival organizers, youth representatives, cultural performers, media personnel, journalists, and academic observers. This composition allowed the research to capture institutional, community, generational, and interpretive perspectives.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis. The semi-structured interviews explored informants' understanding of ritual meaning, public communication intention, the role of adat in contemporary life, the involvement of youth, and the use of digital media. This format allowed the researcher to ask comparable questions while giving informants sufficient space to explain local terms and culturally specific experiences. Special attention was given to terms such as adat, Kedaton, Bobato, Orom Sasadu, Fere Kie, and Kololi Kie because these terms carry meanings that cannot be fully captured by direct translation.

Participant observation was conducted to examine communication as it occurred in practice. Observation focused on ceremonial sequence, spatial arrangement, use of symbolic objects, interaction among palace officials and community members, public responses to ritual performance, and media activity during the festival. Field notes documented both descriptive details and interpretive reflections. The research also observed how audiences moved through festival spaces, how attention was directed toward ritual centers, and how formal communication interacted with informal conversations among participants.

Documentary analysis complemented the interview and observation data. Documents included festival schedules, public speeches, royal announcements, social media posts, audiovisual materials, and explanatory content produced around the event. These materials were examined to identify the official narrative promoted by the Sultanate and the ways adat symbols were translated for broader audiences. Digital materials were not treated as separate from the ritual event, but as part of a wider communication ecology that extends the public life of Legu Taranoate beyond the physical festival space.

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to identify patterns related to symbolic communication, spatial meaning, symbolic power, civic participation, youth engagement, and digital mediation. Initial codes were grouped into broader themes and interpreted through the integrated framework of the cultural public sphere and symbolic power. This analytical procedure allowed the study to remain grounded in the empirical case while also contributing to broader debates in communication studies.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation by comparing information across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted with senior administrative informants to verify the interpretation of sensitive adat terms and ritual protocols. Ethical attention was given to the representation of sacred practices. The article avoids unnecessary disclosure of esoteric details and presents ritual meanings in a respectful academic manner. This is important because the aim of the research is to analyze public communication without reducing sacred traditions to mere objects of spectacle.

**Tabel 1.** Informant Profiles and Selection Criteria

Informant Code	Institutional Role / Affiliation	Selection Criteria / Area of Expertise
INF-01	Jogugu of Kesultanan Ternate	Senior administrator and coordinator of institutional communication.
INF-02	Tulilamo	Expert on royal protocols and public declarations.
INF-03	Fanyira, Kampung Sabia	Custodian of traditional land laws and community ritual coordination.
INF-04	Fanyira, Kampung Dufa-Dufa	Representative for community mobilization and horizontal communication.
INF-05	Bobato Dalam	Palace ritual specialist and guardian of sacred regalia.
INF-06	Media and Public Relations Bureau	Coordinator of digital communication strategy.
INF-07	Legu Taranoate 2024 Committee	Operational planner for logistics and public events.
INF-08	Ternate Indigenous Youth Alliance	Coordinator for youth engagement and cultural performances.
INF-09	Cultural anthropologist	Academic observer of Moloku Kie Raha

		history.
INF-10	Lead Legu dance performer	Cultural practitioner trained in traditional kinetic communication.
INF-11	North Maluku Adat Council	Liaison for inter-sultanate cultural relations.
INF-12	Local journalist and digital creator	Media professional documenting the festival.

Source: *Research field design, 2025.*

The study also considered the researcher’s role in interpreting culturally embedded communication. Because several practices observed during Legu Taranoate are connected to adat authority, the analysis avoided treating ritual objects and sacred terms as merely decorative symbols. Instead, each element was interpreted in relation to the social actors who used it, the public setting in which it appeared, and the meanings attributed to it by informants. This interpretive caution was necessary to maintain analytical depth and cultural respect.

During the analysis, special attention was given to the consistency between interview data and observed practices. For example, statements about the importance of spatial order were compared with field observations of ceremonial arrangement, while statements about digital verification were compared with documentary materials and public content. This comparative procedure strengthened the validity of the findings by ensuring that the analysis did not rely only on retrospective explanation or official claims.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Legu Taranoate

The findings show that the Sultanate of Ternate uses Legu Taranoate as a multidimensional public communication platform. The strategy operates through symbolic ritual performance, spatial organization, civic dialogue, youth participation, and digital mediation. These mechanisms are not isolated activities. They form an integrated cultural communication system that enables the Sultanate to maintain public legitimacy, strengthen Moloku Kie Raha identity, and connect traditional authority with contemporary social life.

A central finding is that communication begins before any formal speech is delivered. In Legu Taranoate, the sound of ceremonial drums, the appearance of royal attire, the movement of ritual actors, and the arrangement of ceremonial objects prepare the public to enter a cultural atmosphere structured by adat. These elements signal that the festival is not ordinary entertainment, but a collective encounter with ancestral memory. The public learns that meaning is communicated through sound, movement, dress, space, and rhythm, not merely through verbal explanation.

The Orom Sasadu procession illustrates this symbolic communication clearly. During this event, the spatial arrangement of participants reflects the social order recognized by adat. Customary elders occupy positions that correspond to their institutional responsibilities, while the wider public gathers around the ceremonial center. This arrangement communicates hierarchy, responsibility, and belonging. It visually teaches how authority is distributed and how the community is

connected to that authority. Participants do not simply observe structure; they physically experience it.

The repeated performance of ritual creates an intergenerational learning environment. Older participants recognize continuity with inherited practice, while younger participants encounter adat in an embodied and public form. Identity is therefore not transmitted only through written history or formal instruction. It is learned through participation, observation, sound, movement, and collective attention. Legu Taranoate functions as a communicative archive because it preserves cultural memory by performing it publicly each year.

Another important finding is that Legu Taranoate functions as a cultural public sphere. The palace courtyard and festival grounds become shared spaces where customary leaders, government officials, merchants, students, artists, journalists, youth groups, and ordinary residents meet. The festival does not erase differences in status, but it places different groups within a shared communicative environment. In that environment, people encounter the Sultanate not only as spectators, but also as participants in a wider cultural conversation.

The Fere Kie dialogue sessions extend the festival beyond ritual display. These sessions enable contemporary regional issues to be discussed through the language of tradition. Environmental responsibility, cultural education, community solidarity, and historical awareness are framed as collective obligations rooted in local values. This demonstrates that adat is not limited to the repetition of old practices. It can provide a moral vocabulary for interpreting present social challenges and imagining regional futures.

Communication within this cultural public sphere moves both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the Sultanate communicates guidance, values, and historical narratives through ritual authority and formal addresses. Horizontally, community groups exchange ideas, organize performances, reinterpret artistic forms, and participate in festival production. The festival therefore avoids becoming either a rigid royal spectacle or a completely informal celebration. Its strength lies in the balance between authority and participation.

The Sultanate's authority is rooted in symbolic capital. Royal lineage, historical prestige, sacred geography, palace protocol, and public recognition of adat all function as valued cultural resources. During Legu Taranoate, these resources are converted into symbolic power. The Sultanate does not rely on state coercion to mobilize participation. Community members take part because participation is understood as respect, belonging, and cultural duty. This confirms that symbolic power can produce real social effects when the public accepts its legitimacy.

Symbolic power is visible in community preparation before the festival. Neighborhood groups, youth organizations, cultural performers, and customary networks contribute to event organization, space preparation, and ritual order. Their participation cannot be explained only by logistical need. It is shaped by the moral force of adat recognition. When the Sultanate calls for involvement, the call carries symbolic weight because it is associated with ancestral continuity and communal dignity.

The Kololi Kie ritual demonstrates how symbolic capital is tied to sacred geography. The movement around the volcanic mountain of Ternate communicates the relationship between ruler, people, land, and history. The island

is presented not as neutral space, but as a meaningful cultural landscape. The ritual journey reaffirms that Moloku Kie Raha identity is anchored in places, routes, waters, mountains, and inherited narratives. Geography becomes a medium of communication.

Youth participation is another crucial finding. The festival committee and palace communication actors involve youth organizations in performances, community stages, documentation, livestreams, and short-form explanatory content. This involvement shifts young people from passive receivers of heritage into active producers of cultural meaning. Youth groups help translate complex adat symbols into formats that are more accessible to their peers, especially through digital media.

Digital communication expands the reach of Legu Taranoate beyond the physical boundaries of Ternate. Livestreams, video recaps, infographics, captions, and official social media posts allow the Sultanate to communicate with diaspora communities and wider publics. Digital platforms make the festival visible to audiences who cannot attend in person and create opportunities for educational explanation. This visibility increases the public circulation of Moloku Kie Raha identity.

However, digital communication also creates the risk of simplification. Sacred rituals may be reduced to attractive images when circulated without adequate explanation. To respond to this problem, the Sultanate applies verification procedures for content related to ritual meaning and adat protocol. Materials explaining sacred symbols or historical practices are reviewed by palace ritual specialists before publication. This ensures that digital expansion does not remove cultural meaning from authorized interpretation.

The public encounters the Sultanate through both formal and informal communication. Formal communication appears in speeches, official announcements, ceremonial sequences, and verified digital posts. Informal communication appears in conversations among residents, explanations offered by elders to younger participants, neighborhood preparation, and public discussion after performances. These two levels reinforce each other. Official communication provides authority, while informal communication helps meanings circulate through everyday social networks.

The findings also show that visual organization is a powerful element of the festival’s communication strategy. Audiences may not understand every historical reference, but they can recognize order, reverence, color, rhythm, and collective attention. Visual grammar guides interpretation by showing which actions are central, which actors hold ritual responsibility, and how the public is invited to participate. This visual dimension is especially significant in digital circulation because images and short videos often travel farther than long explanations.

**Table 2. Digital Communication Strategy in Legu Taranoate 2025**

Digital Medium	Target Audience	Cultural Communication Objective
High-definition livestreams	Diaspora and regional publics	Expands access to rituals beyond geographic boundaries.
Short-form explainer videos	Youth audiences	Translates adat symbols into accessible contemporary formats.
Interactive infographics	General public and educators	Documents historical details and supports accurate interpretation.

Verified captions and narratives	Digital viewers	Protects sacred meanings from simplification and misinterpretation.
----------------------------------	-----------------	---

Source: Field observations and documentary analysis, 2025.

The findings also reveal that the Sultanate’s communication strategy depends on timing. Ritual sequences are arranged so that public attention gradually moves from preparation to performance, from symbolic recognition to civic participation, and from local presence to digital circulation. This sequencing helps audiences understand the festival as an ordered cultural process rather than a collection of unrelated events. Timing therefore becomes part of communication because it shapes how the public experiences meaning.

Another significant pattern concerns the role of elders as informal interpreters. During public activities, elders and customary figures often provide explanations to younger participants about the meaning of symbols, movements, and ceremonial positions. This informal interpretation is important because it translates ritual knowledge into everyday language without removing it from its cultural setting. It also shows that revitalization is distributed across multiple communicators, not only centered on the Sultan or official media bureau.

The festival also produces a temporary sense of collective attention. In ordinary social life, community members may be separated by occupation, generation, neighborhood, education, or media habits. During Legu Taranoate, these groups are gathered around shared symbols and public events. The concentration of attention makes cultural identity more visible and memorable. It also gives the Sultanate an opportunity to frame identity as a common responsibility rather than a private attachment.

Digital content produced around the festival extends this collective attention into mediated space. Posts, videos, captions, and livestreams allow the event to be revisited, shared, and discussed after the physical ceremony ends. This extension is important because cultural revitalization requires memory to circulate beyond the immediate moment of performance. Digital media therefore functions as a secondary public arena where the meanings introduced in ritual space can continue to travel.

### 3.2 Symbolic power in Public Sphere

The findings demonstrate that Legu Taranoate should be understood as a strategic communication platform rather than merely a cultural festival. Its communicative power lies in the integration of ritual performance, spatial symbolism, civic participation, and digital mediation. The Sultanate uses the festival to make Moloku Kie Raha identity visible, intelligible, and emotionally meaningful. This strategy is important because the Sultanate lacks formal administrative authority. Its influence depends on maintaining recognition and persuading the public that adat remains relevant to contemporary life.

From the perspective of the cultural public sphere, Legu Taranoate expands the meaning of public communication. Public deliberation in this setting does not occur only through formal debate or written argument. It occurs through ritual participation, collective viewing, ceremonial movement, public dialogue, artistic performance, and symbolic interpretation. The festival allows citizens to encounter shared values in embodied form. Communication studies should therefore pay greater attention to cultural and ritual forms of publicness, especially in societies where oral, performative, and spatial practices remain central to public life.

The case also complicates the assumption that tradition and modernity are opposing categories. Legu Taranoate is traditional in its reliance on adat, sacred geography, royal regalia, and ritual hierarchy. At the same time, it is modern in its use of digital media, youth participation, public forums, and civic issue framing. Rather than replacing tradition with modern technology, the Sultanate combines them. Cultural revitalization is therefore a process of selective adaptation in which core meanings are preserved while communication channels are updated.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power helps explain why the Sultanate's strategy is effective. Royal attire, ritual sound, palace space, and sacred journeys are not arbitrary signs. They carry accumulated historical value. When the public responds to these symbols, they participate in reproducing the Sultanate's authority. This authority does not operate through force, but through recognition. People participate because they accept the moral value of the symbols being performed.

Symbolic power, however, is not automatic. It must be continually renewed. If the Sultanate repeated ritual forms without connecting them to contemporary concerns, younger generations might view the festival as distant from everyday life. The inclusion of Fere Kie dialogues, youth-led content production, and digital dissemination is therefore strategically important. These elements convert inherited authority into contemporary relevance by linking adat to current issues, public education, and future-oriented cultural participation.

The role of youth is especially important. In many preservation programs, youth are treated as audiences who must be taught tradition. In Legu Taranoate, they are also positioned as communicators. They produce digital content, perform cultural expressions, help manage public stages, and translate adat narratives into contemporary media language. This participatory model strengthens ownership because young people become responsible for circulating cultural meaning rather than only receiving it.

The use of digital media creates a tension between openness and control. Digital platforms reward speed, brevity, visual appeal, and wide circulation. Sacred ritual meanings often require context, restraint, and interpretive authority. The Sultanate's verification mechanism responds to this tension by allowing media expansion while protecting against inaccurate or shallow representation. The challenge is not whether tradition should enter digital space, but how it can enter digital space without losing interpretive depth.

The integration of ritual and digital media also expands the meaning of authenticity. Authenticity is often imagined as the preservation of an unchanged past. The findings suggest a more dynamic view. In Legu Taranoate, authenticity is maintained not by refusing change, but by ensuring that change remains accountable to adat authority and community recognition. Digital media can support authenticity when it documents, explains, and connects cultural practice to wider audiences.

The study offers practical implications for cultural policy and festival management. Heritage festivals should not be designed only as tourism attractions or commercial events. When structured thoughtfully, they can become civic spaces that support dialogue, education, intergenerational exchange, and community cohesion. Legu Taranoate demonstrates that festivals can connect symbolic

authority with participatory communication. This model may be useful for other communities, although each must adapt it to its own cultural protocols.

The case also shows that non-state traditional institutions can contribute to contemporary civil society. They provide moral language, historical continuity, and symbolic resources that state institutions or market actors may not easily supply. In Ternate, the Sultanate helps organize participation and sustain local identity. This does not mean that traditional authority should replace democratic institutions. Rather, it shows that cultural institutions can coexist with democratic life when they create inclusive spaces and respond to contemporary public concerns.

Overall, the analysis supports the dual-axis model proposed in the introduction. The vertical axis of symbolic authority anchors the festival in adat legitimacy and historical continuity. The horizontal axis of public participation enables identity to be shared, negotiated, and renewed by the wider community. Legu Taranoate succeeds as a communication strategy because it connects these two axes while maintaining the dignity of royal hierarchy and opening space for civic dialogue, youth creativity, and mediated public engagement.

The study also cautions that visibility alone is insufficient for cultural revitalization. A festival may attract attention, generate images, and circulate widely, yet still fail to strengthen identity if it lacks interpretive structure. Legu Taranoate avoids this limitation by combining visibility with explanation, participation, and verification. The public is invited not only to watch, but also to understand, discuss, and contribute. This is why the festival functions as public communication rather than merely spectacle.

These findings indicate that the relationship between tradition and media should be understood as reciprocal. The Sultanate uses media to expand the reach of tradition, but tradition also shapes how media is used. The verification of digital content, the careful selection of images, and the explanation of adat terminology show that media practice is disciplined by cultural authority. This differs from purely promotional communication because the primary aim is not only visibility but meaningful and responsible circulation.

The case also contributes to debates on heritage communication by showing that heritage is not simply an object to be preserved but a relationship to be continuously renewed. Legu Taranoate renews this relationship by connecting palace authority, community participation, youth creativity, and diaspora visibility. Each group encounters heritage differently, yet the festival provides a shared framework through which those differences can be coordinated. This coordination is one of the main achievements of the Sultanate's communication strategy.

The discussion further suggests that cultural legitimacy depends on both continuity and responsiveness. Continuity is maintained through ritual order, sacred geography, and palace protocol. Responsiveness is shown through public dialogue, youth involvement, and digital communication. If continuity is absent, the festival may lose its cultural depth. If responsiveness is absent, the festival may lose its contemporary audience. Legu Taranoate remains effective because it combines both dimensions.

Finally, the Ternate case demonstrates that symbolic power can be productive rather than merely restrictive. Although symbolic hierarchy is present, it provides a framework for collective orientation, not only a mechanism of exclusion. The Sultanate's authority becomes productive when it enables public learning,

cultural pride, community mobilization, and intergenerational exchange. This does not remove the need for critical analysis, but it shows that traditional authority can play a constructive role when it is linked to participatory communication.

The article therefore positions Legu Taranoate as a communication model that is simultaneously cultural, civic, and institutional. Its value is not limited to the preservation of ritual form, because the festival also organizes relationships among actors who may otherwise remain separated by generation, occupation, education, or distance from the palace. The Sultanate's communication strategy is effective because it does not ask the public simply to remember the past; it provides structured opportunities for the public to experience the past as a source of present meaning and future orientation.

This point is particularly relevant for understanding cultural revitalization in island societies where geography, mobility, and diaspora networks shape public life. Many members of the Moloku Kie Raha community encounter cultural identity from outside the immediate ritual space, especially through digital platforms and family narratives. By combining ceremonial authority with mediated circulation, Legu Taranoate creates a layered public sphere that connects those who attend physically with those who participate symbolically from a distance. The festival's communication strategy thus extends belonging beyond the boundaries of place while still grounding identity in Ternate's sacred geography.

## KESIMPULAN

This study concludes that the Sultanate of Ternate revitalizes Moloku Kie Raha cultural identity through a multidimensional public communication strategy centered on Legu Taranoate. The festival operates as a symbolic, spatial, participatory, and digital communication platform. Through ceremonial performance, sacred spatial arrangement, public dialogue, youth involvement, and verified media dissemination, the Sultanate sustains cultural authority even without formal administrative power.

The integration of literature review and theoretical framework into the introduction shows that the case can be understood through the combined lenses of the cultural public sphere and symbolic power. Legu Taranoate functions as a cultural public sphere because it creates a public arena where collective meaning is negotiated through ritual, performance, dialogue, and participation. It also illustrates symbolic power because the Sultanate converts lineage, ritual legitimacy, sacred geography, and historical memory into voluntary civic participation.

Practically, the findings indicate that cultural festivals should be organized not merely as ceremonial repetition or tourism spectacle, but as participatory civic spaces. The involvement of youth and the careful use of digital media are essential for sustaining identity across generations. At the same time, cultural institutions must maintain interpretive safeguards so that sacred meanings are not simplified or commercialized in digital circulation.

The study is limited by its focus on the core island of Ternate and the 2025 Legu Taranoate festival. Further research should compare the communication strategies of the other Moloku Kie Raha sultanates, especially Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo, and examine how peripheral communities interpret or negotiate centralized cultural narratives. Longitudinal research is also needed to evaluate how digital

media may reshape ritual authority, cultural memory, and youth participation over time.

## REFERENCES

- Amal, A. (2007). *Kepulauan rempah-rempah: Perjalanan sejarah Maluku Utara 1250–1950*. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Andaya, L. Y. (1993). *The world of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the early modern period*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Polity Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Carey, J. W. (2009). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society* (Revised ed.). Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The power of identity: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (Vol. 2). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Christomy, T. (2020). Media lokal, bahasa dan politik identitas: Representasi Sultan Ternate dalam media cetak. *Linguistik Indonesia*, 38(1), 45–58.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davidson, J. S., & Henley, D. (Eds.). (2007). *The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics: The Nusantara awakening*. Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT Press.
- Hasan, M. (2024). Peran kesultanan dalam pelestarian budaya. *Jurnal Sejarah Nusantara*, 9(2), 89–105.
- Hasim, R., Hasim, D., & Amelia, R. (2023). Ternate Sultanate palace: A multifaceted hub at the crossroads of culture and politics. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 6(12), 7795–7801. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v6-i12-18>
- Irsyandi, H. (2018). Legu Gam sebagai refleksi relasi antaretnik pada kemajemukan masyarakat Ternate. *Etnohis: Jurnal Ilmiah Sejarah dan Kebudayaan*, 2(2), 33–48.

- McGuigan, J. (2005). The cultural public sphere. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(4), 427–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549405057827>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mulyana, D. (2020). *Ilmu komunikasi: Suatu pengantar*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nasrullah, R. (2022). *Media sosial dan budaya*. Kencana.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ritzer, G. (2021). *Sociological theory*. McGraw-Hill.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of heritage*. Routledge.
- Van Klinken, G. (2007). *Communal violence and democratization in Indonesia: Small town wars*. Routledge.