

Syncretic Religious Communication: The Dialectic between Islamic Sharia and the Teachings of Aluk Todolo in the Rambu Solo Ceremony: A Communicative Ethnography Study

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the process of religious communication and the dialectic between Islamic Sharia and Aluk Todolo in the Rambu solo Ma'tambun ritual in Tana Toraja. Religious communication theory (Jaco Beyers) and dialectic dialogue (Mikhail Bakhtin), employed as analytical tools alongside a communicative ethnographic approach, reveal that Ma'tambun operates through a dual dimension: (1) the dimension of transcendence, where the ritual serves as a space to reaffirm monotheism towards Allah SWT through the contextualisation of Puang Matua as Allah, and the implementation of Islamic Sharia by expediting the burial, recitation of the Qur'an, prayers, shalawat, and calligraphy amidst traditional symbols. (2) the horizontal dimension as communication maintaining kinship with the Ma'rapu Tallang through the processes of ma'kombongan ada', ma'lalan ada', and ada' kaokkoran. The heteroglossia between the voice of Aluk Todolo and the voice of Islamic sharia does not lead to open conflict, but rather to a dynamic configuration. Traditional communicators act as guardians of horizontal relations, whilst religious communicators operate within the dimension of transcendence—namely, the implementation of Islamic sharia and the vertical relationship between humanity and Allah SWT. This research contributes by elucidating the symbolic dialectic between Aluk Todolo and Islam as a vital asset for the construction of social cohesion, whilst demonstrating that religious syncretism is not always stereotyped as a corruption of Islamic doctrine, but rather constitutes a meaningful dialogical context within the religious life of Muslim minority communities.

Keywords: Religious communication; Rambu Solo; Aluk Todolo; Toraja Islam; Syncretism.

INTRODUCTION

Religious communication plays a central role in multi-religious and multi-cultural societies, where diversity is both a social reality and a challenge in building social cohesion. Religious communication serves as a means of conveying teachings, strengthening beliefs, and facilitating inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. It is a process whereby individuals and groups engage in dialogue and negotiate differences to foster mutual understanding, thereby creating a space that supports diversity without compromising the integrity of each religion or belief.

Multi-religious and multi-cultural societies such as Tana Toraja are required to foster an ethos

of maintaining unity amidst diversity (Santoso et al., 2022). Religious communication thus becomes a medium enabling efforts at interaction between differences and syncretism. A process of integration that combines elements from various religions and cultures into a coherent and adaptive unity (Pabebang et al., 2022). Although this presents challenges, it also demonstrates the community's ability to maintain social harmony in the face of differences. Therefore, religious communication is essential for strengthening faith whilst serving as a social strategy to create a balance between diversity and unity in religious life. On the other hand, cultural identity is also very strong in passing on values in the form of traditional rituals that are maintained from generation to generation. This is the case with the Tana Toraja community, which has a portrait of religious diversity that is strongly integrated with the teachings of their ancestors known as *Aluk Todolo*.

Aluk Todolo is the ancestral religion of the Toraja people (Di et al., 2021). The word '*Aluk*' means 'path' or 'way of life' and governs every aspect of life, both worldly and spiritual. According to Kobong, *Aluk* is the foundation that provides an understanding of human existence and one's place within the cosmic order (Theodorus Kobong, 2008) Furthermore, Handayani explains that *Aluk* is a divine law, meaning all creatures must submit to *it* (Rivi Handayani, 2024). *Aluk*, inherited from the ancestors (*Todolo*), is a deeply rooted local belief system that has encountered new religions and interacts with them. Religion, as a human belief system relating to an absolute God whose teachings are derived from holy scriptures, differs from culture as a product of human intellect; yet religion and culture can influence one another, giving rise to new cultural forms (Yuli Darwati, 2018).

Aluk serves as the fundamental principle of religious life in Tana Toraja, from before the arrival of organised religions to the present day. Various teachings, particularly death rituals or *Rambu Solo*, are still upheld amidst the religious communities in Tana Toraja. Islam began to spread from 1876, Christianity arrived in 1908, and Catholicism in 1938 (Baturante, 2019). The composition of religious adherents is known as '*ditulak tallu*'. This means that society is sustained by three groups of religious adherents and their respective religious codes: *Alukta* (Hindu), *Kasaranian* (Protestant and Catholic Christians), and *Kasallangan* (Islam).

The table data shows that Muslims are spread across 19 sub-districts, with their numbers accounting for approximately 11% of the total population. An interesting reality regarding the social dynamics of the encounter between Islamic teachings and elements of *Aluk Todolo*, a belief system that has been held by the Toraja people since the earliest days of the. Islam arrived in Toraja around the 17th century and became the first Abrahamic religion to enter the region. Despite the historical trauma of the Toraja people regarding confrontational communication, Muslims have continued to uphold the existence and dissemination of their teachings to this day. Today, religious communication for da'wah activists and Islamic religious figures is more adaptive, acting as communicators who accommodate culture within Islamic da'wah, striving for a shared life that promotes the coexistence of the heterogeneous society of the '. The challenge lies in preserving the identity of *Aluk Todolo* and Islamic

sharia in the face of death rituals. Death in the teachings of *Aluk Todolo* is based on sacred rituals accompanying the spirit's return to Puya (Hidayah, 2018). Due to *Aluk Todolo* beliefs, the deceased are not buried immediately as they are considered 'to makula' (the sick), and are only deemed dead after the *Rambu Solo* ceremony has been held. The arrival of Islamic teachings in the 17th century (Q. Tahir et al., 2021), became the antithesis of the existing burial system.

The conduct of funeral rites in accordance with Islamic law stands in contrast to the teachings of *Aluk Todolo*. Yet both remain within a dialectical process that reflects the reciprocal relationship between religion and culture as a practice of *Aluk Todolo* passed down through generations. On the one hand, Islamic teachings emphasise that funeral rites should be carried out promptly. On the other hand, *Aluk Todolo* culture holds that death rituals serve as a test of kinship, and the separation of the body from the soul is a test for the spirit to return to the Creator, a process that must be conducted through sacred ceremonies. This demonstrates that within the *Rambu Solo* ceremony, there is a process of communication and a dialectical relationship between religion and culture rooted in the teachings of *Aluk*. This dialectic in communication, as conceptualised by Mikhail Bakhtin, is termed 'multivocality', wherein various voices interact dialogically, involving tensions and negotiations of meaning between differing voices.

Dialogism, as a process of unification through difference as conceived by Martin Buber, is viewed as ethical communication (Griffin, 2012). It emphasises mutuality in the form of conversation to foster equality, mutual support and a more humane regard for one another. A number of issues arise as part of the dialectical process, such as the problem of proportional representation of differing voices (Klyashev & Sadikov, 2024). The problem of conflicting religious ideologies that will be internalised between *official discourse* and *unofficial discourse* (Michael Holquist, 2002). In the context of syncretism, official discourse represents the dominant ideology disseminated by religious and state authorities. Meanwhile, unofficial discourse encompasses popular beliefs, local practices, or rituals that are alive within the community. Consequently, in the process of syncretism, there is often tension between organised official beliefs imposed by the authorities, and unofficial beliefs that are more rooted in local practices or folk traditions. Thus, a dialogical ethical approach is urgently needed in religious communication.

Previous research has examined various forms of interaction between customary law and Islamic law in Indonesia. Customary traditions that are consistent with Islamic law are preserved, whilst those that conflict with it are abandoned (Mutawali, 2021). The success of legal pluralism in integrating Islamic sharia with customary law and state law (Djawas & Nurzakia, 2018). The use of traditional symbols is often understood as a reflection of culture blended with transcendental meanings in Islamic teachings (Aziz et al., 2020; Holillah, 2017). The importance of a dialogical-integrative approach in the process of the Islamisation of customary law (Pairin et al., 2024).

Previous research has focused more on the harmonisation or acculturation of law and custom, while the aspect of religious communication in the process of syncretism between customary law and Islamic sharia has not been sufficiently examined. Religious communication plays a key role in maintaining the balance between these two entities, particularly within societies characterised by cultural and religious diversity. Studies on Rambu Solo have also tended to view the ritual primarily from a cultural perspective, without adequately exploring the religious communication dimensions underlying the practice. This study therefore addresses this gap by focusing on the mechanisms of communication, negotiation strategies, and meanings constructed within the syncretic encounter between Islamic sharia and the teachings of Aluk Todolo in the Rambu Solo ceremony. Based on this gap, the main research question guiding this study is: how does religious communication mediate the dialectic between Islamic sharia and the teachings of Aluk Todolo in the Rambu Solo ceremony among the Muslim Toraja community? Specifically, this study aims to analyse the forms of religious communication, the negotiation of transcendental and horizontal meanings, and the communicative strategies through which Islamic sharia and Aluk Todolo are dialogically articulated in the practice of Rambu Solo.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a communicative ethnographic approach to examine the process of religious communication in the Rambu Solo ceremony, particularly the dialectic between Islamic sharia and the teachings of Aluk Todolo. Communicative ethnography was selected because it enables the researcher to analyse how communication creates culture, how culture shapes communicative practices, and how ritual communication constructs shared identity within a culturally and religiously plural society (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2024). The research was conducted in Tana Toraja Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, a region characterised by multicultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic diversity (Yunus & Mukoyyaroh, 2022). The main fieldwork was carried out from January to September 2025, following several preliminary contacts with local religious and customary actors.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, focused discussions, and documentation. Participant observation was conducted during Rambu Solo and Ma'tambun-related ritual activities to record verbal expressions, ritual sequences, spatial arrangements, symbolic objects, gestures, and interaction patterns among customary and religious actors. In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 informants selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the Rambu Solo ceremony and the religious-cultural negotiation surrounding it. The informants consisted of customary leaders, Islamic religious leaders, Christian and Catholic religious figures, Aluk Todolo/Hindu representatives, government officials, ritual specialists, Tongkonan representatives, and community members. The selection criteria included: direct involvement in Rambu Solo or Ma'tambun practices, recognised authority in customary or

religious interpretation, experience in mediating religious-cultural issues, and the ability to provide emic perspectives on the relationship between Islamic sharia and Aluk Todolo. Documentation was also used to examine ritual photographs, local records, religious-cultural documents, media reports, and relevant institutional data.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis supported by the interactive logic of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis began with the transcription and repeated reading of interview and observation notes, followed by open coding of relevant statements, ritual actions, and symbolic practices. The codes were then grouped into thematic categories related to transcendental communication, horizontal kinship communication, symbolic negotiation, reinterpretation of ritual elements, and the dialectic between Islamic sharia and Aluk Todolo. These themes were interpreted through the theoretical lenses of religious communication and dialogic dialectics to explain how religious and customary voices interact within the ritual space.

To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation of sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from religious leaders, customary leaders, government actors, ritual specialists, and community members. Method triangulation was conducted by cross-checking interview data with observation notes, focused discussions, and documentation. Time triangulation was applied by collecting data across different ritual moments and interview periods. The researcher acted as a non-native ethnographic observer who participated in the field in a limited and reflexive manner, maintaining analytical distance while building sufficient rapport with informants and local gatekeepers. Field notes were used to record the researcher's reflections, contextual observations, and potential interpretive bias during the research process.

Research ethics were maintained throughout the study. Before each interview or field interaction, informants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the research. Informed consent was obtained verbally or in writing, depending on the field situation and the informant's preference. The identities of informants were anonymised by using initials or role-based descriptions, except where public institutional roles were relevant and permission had been granted. The researcher also respected local customary protocols, religious sensitivities, and restrictions on the documentation of sacred or private ritual moments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious communication is the process of reconciling people who have been separated from their spiritual nature from one another and from God (Galvin et al., 2018). This theory focuses on two key objectives: (1) to persuade the audience to believe in God by influencing their minds and hearts; (2) to inspire moral action based on that belief, and to instil religious awareness and identity in the audience.

Religious communication always concerns transcendence in relation to *the Unzugängliches* (the inaccessible). *Religious communication* takes various primary forms, including: between the transcendent and the immanent; amongst members of the same religious system; between adherents of different religions (or those without a religion); and religion as a system of communication within society. Schematically, Beyers distinguishes between a vertical axis (communication between the transcendent and the immanent) and a horizontal axis (communication between religion and society) (Jaco Beyers, 2022). Thus, Beyers' theory of *religious communication* is a way of viewing religion as a network of communicative acts, connecting humans with the divine (vertical) whilst also connecting humans with one another and with society (horizontal).

Religious communication assumes that traditions of belief regarding the meaning and purpose of life originate from and are grounded in sacred texts and collective beliefs, as well as communal religious experiences. The word 'religious' derives from the Latin *religo*, meaning 'to bind' or 'to bind together', and the root of the word 'communication' is *communicatus*, signifying the symbolic expression of thoughts and feelings. Jaco Beyers' theory of religious communication examines religion as a dynamic phenomenon that constantly interacts with culture within the context of social life. Religion is a social force capable of shaping, being influenced by, and adapting to cultural changes within society.

Communication occurs at internal, external, and inter-religious levels (Weyel et al., 2022). At the internal level, religious communication is oriented towards strengthening identity and values of belief through the use of rituals and symbols, as well as interactions such as worship, prayer, and sermons or lectures. The external level serves the purposes of spreading teachings, maintaining reputation, and supporting or opposing relevant or conflicting doctrines. Meanwhile, the inter-religious and cross-cultural level is oriented towards the exchange of ideas to foster harmonious living, overcome stereotypes, build collaboration within a pluralistic environment, and establish interfaith dialogue for cooperation.

These levels encompass layers of configuration and direction of communication that operate simultaneously. Beyers distinguishes four main configurations in religious communication: first, the transcendence–immanence dimension, namely vertical communication between humans and God or the divine in the form of prayer, supplication, and praise. "*Communication between transcendence and immanence constitutes a vertical line of communication. Communication between religions and society constitutes a horizontal line of communication.*" (Jaco Beyers, 2022). Second, intra-religious communication, namely the exchange of meaning among members of the same religious community to strengthen identity, shared values, and internal cohesion. Thirdly, *inter-religious* communication, namely dialogue and negotiation of meaning between adherents of different religions or those who are non-religious in the public sphere; and fourthly, religion as a communication system within society, where religious expression interacts with other social systems such as politics, economics, and culture to shape a broader social narrative.

As stated by Beyers, in the context of religious rituals, including *the Rambu solo* in Tana Toraja, this constitutes a multi-dimensional communicative context that simultaneously activates several of these configurations. When the Toraja people perform *the Rambu solo*, the ritual involves vertical communication: prayers and supplications to God. Intra-community horizontal communication: the presence of all family members or *to ma'rapu* and the Toraja community at the ceremony affirms strong bonds as a sustained form of horizontal communication. Furthermore, it serves as a space to communicate Toraja's cultural identity to other religious groups, to the government and the state, and to the global community—demonstrating that the Toraja possess a unique spiritual belief system and heritage worthy of preservation and respect.

Rambu solo, within the process of religious communication, involves religious communicators and traditional communicators who act as spiritual leaders and bear the responsibility of conveying the Transcendent (God) and facilitating human relationships in maintaining bonds between people. Both these relationships form the foundation of the *aluk* teachings, which are held firmly even after the adoption of Islam. One informant remarked:

“Every human being possesses a sense of the divine; when religion entered Toraja, it did not encounter a vacuum. No religion enters a region into a vacuum. And the people there already possessed a sense of the divine, or believed in a supernatural force that governs them.” (NB. Interview 2 February 2025).

This statement articulates a fundamental concept regarding the universality of human religious consciousness, including within the Tana Toraja community, which already possessed a transcendent relationship with God prior to the arrival of Islam. The notion that ‘religion did not enter Toraja into a vacuum’ is the core reason why syncretism was inevitable. Toraja has a historical tradition regarding the concept of God prior to the arrival of Islam; this is an argument regarding the impossibility of total replacement. When a religion enters a region that already possesses an established system of belief, social institutions, and ritual practices, that religion cannot immediately erase what already exists. Instead, the religion must negotiate with the local cultural elements that are already deeply rooted.

The presence of God from an Islamic perspective is a repetition and reinforcement, as the concrete historical subjects already possessed their own sense of divinity before Islam arrived. God already existed within a robust cognitive and emotional structure, which had been reproduced over centuries through rituals, myths, and social practices. *Aluk Todolo* believed that there was a supernatural force governing them as an indicator that God exists.

When Islam entered Toraja and was embraced by the community, the process of syncretism did not occur merely due to religious unconsciousness, but was a logical consequence of the pre-existing theological conditions. Islam did not need to create an awareness of God's ‘ ’ from scratch. Islam reinterpreted, translated, or integrated the Islamic concept of God into the existing local theological

framework. In other words, Islam entered through the door of religious consciousness that already existed within Torajan society.

The dilemma between the sense of universal divinity in Islamic teachings and the cultural richness of Toraja creates a powerful pressurising mechanism. Toraja is steeped in the teachings of *Aluk Todolo* with rituals rooted for hundreds of years; Islam must engage in dialogue, seeking harmony that yields compromises through syncretism. If a Muslim were to attempt to completely abandon *Rambu Solo* or refuse to make an economic contribution to traditional rituals, they would face social deviance, be assumed to have severed ties with the social network built up over generations, and even be considered to have violated caste obligations. In other words, the Toraja's non-vacuum social structure creates social pressure that drives syncretism, rather than promoting a clean separation between Islam and *Aluk*.

Syncretism ultimately served as a bridge for the Muslim Toraja community, enabling an adaptive mechanism through which they could embrace Islamic teachings alongside a new concept of divinity. They discovered a new concept of God and expressed it in accordance with a new language (the Qur'an, hadith, and fiqh). Although this process created tension, it also generated a powerful adaptive force.

This integration occurred because Islam and *Aluk Todolo* are committed to the same theological substance: belief in 'the unseen being that governs the self'—namely *Puang Matua* in *Alukta* and Allah SWT in Islam. Thus, Toraja Muslim syncretism can be understood as a form of adaptive theology, in which the Toraja people maintain their fundamental commitment to the transcendent, whilst altering the names, narratives, and institutions used to express that commitment. A similar view was expressed by the chairman of the Toraja MUI, Zainal Muttaqin, as follows:

“The Toraja have *Aluk*, and all Toraja people are bound by *Aluk*—it is even prioritised over religion. For example, they are deeply attached to the Tongkonan. Regardless of their religion, they return to the Tongkonan. This includes the values of *Aluk*, which are still firmly upheld because there are teachings that align with Islam. (H. ZM. Interview, 30 September 2025).

Aluk is a living and active entity within contemporary Toraja society. As a priority, it reflects a hierarchy of values in daily practice, serving as a determinant of behaviour—particularly in maintaining horizontal relationships that are continually nurtured despite differences in religion. The Tongkonan, as an institution binding the entire clan, serves as the centre of emotional bonds, identity, and social obligations for families united as *To ma'rapu*.

To make the coding process more transparent, the following thematic summary table presents the relationship between selected interview citations, initial codes, thematic categories, and interpretive meanings. The table functions as an analytical bridge between the empirical data and the discussion of transcendental and horizontal religious communication in the Muslim Rambu Solo or Ma'tambun ritual.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Citations, Codes, and Interpretations

No.	Selected Citation	Initial Code	Thematic Category	Interpretation
1	“The Toraja people, in their belief in Aluk Todolo, believe that power resides in three elements... ancestors, Deata, and God as the supreme ruler...” (PC, interview, 5 March 2025).	Three layers of supernatural power; ancestors–Deata–Puang Matua; ritual access to transcendence	Multilayered transcendental communication	Aluk Todolo constructs transcendence through a hierarchical cosmology. Communication with the divine is mediated through ritual, ancestors, and cosmic entities. This provides the symbolic background against which Islamic monotheism later reinterprets the meaning of transcendence.
2	“Many of the traditions within that ancestral religion are still practised, provided they do not conflict with Tawhid... offerings are no longer practised, but food is served to be eaten together, preceded by recitation of the Qur’an or a religious sermon.” (DKB, interview, 27 January 2025).	Removal of offerings; Qur’anic recitation; ritual adjustment; Tawhid boundary	Purification and recontextualisation of ritual practice	Islam does not abolish the ritual form entirely, but redirects its theological meaning. Offerings to ancestors are transformed into communal meals framed by Qur’anic recitation, shifting the ritual from ancestral mediation to worship, charity, and social solidarity under Tawhid.
3	“I continue to use the term Puang Matua to refer to the One and Supreme God, but Puang Matua is explained within an Islamic context as the Giver of Life, the Bestower of Blessings who must be worshipped.” (SM, interview, 19 June 2025).	Puang Matua as Allah; local divine terminology; Islamic theological explanation	Vernacularisation of Islamic monotheism	The use of Puang Matua functions as an anchor code that connects Torajan cultural memory with Islamic theology. The local term is retained, but its meaning is purified through Islamic attributes: the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the only One worthy of worship.

4	“The innate nature developed by the Toraja people regarding life is bertongkonan—that is, being present to show oneself as part of the clan... people of all faiths show themselves present at the Tongkonan during a funeral.” (NB, interview, 2 February 2025).	Bertongkonan; presence in grief; clan solidarity; interfaith attendance	Horizontal kinship in communication	Rambu Solo operates as a performative medium for maintaining the to'ma'rapu bond. Physical presence at the Tongkonan communicates belonging, solidarity, and shared grief beyond formal religious boundaries.
5	“Attending or being present at the Tongkon is also part of Islamic teachings... there is a call from the heart to be present and honour the bereaved family, and that aligns with Islamic teachings.” (HUS, interview, 3 March 2025).	Presence as religiously legitimate; honouring the bereaved; Islamic social ethics	Integration of custom and Islamic muamalah	The Torajan obligation to attend mourning rituals is reinterpreted as compatible with Islamic ethics. Customary participation becomes an expression of silaturahmi, empathy, and social responsibility rather than a theological compromise.
6	“Some Muslim Torajans still practise Rambu Solo in this way out of humanity; there is a sense of kaokkoran... Now, let us fill this with da'wah as a space where we remind one another of death, in the sense of inan sipakilala.” (SM, interview, 19 June 2025).	Kaokkoran; compassion in grief; da'wah; mutual reminder of death	Ma'tambun as humanitarian and da'wah space	Ma'tambun is not merely a preserved custom, but a communicative space where Torajan compassion and Islamic moral teaching intersect. The ritual becomes a medium for emotional support, social cohesion, and religious reminder.

Source: Field interviews, 2025.

The table shows that religious communication in Ma'tambun operates through two interconnected dimensions. The first is the transcendental dimension, in which the cosmology of Aluk Todolo is reinterpreted through Islamic monotheism. The data from PC, DKB, and SM demonstrate a movement from a multilayered cosmology involving ancestors, Deata, and Puang Matua towards a purified theological orientation centred on Allah. However, this shift does not occur through total symbolic replacement. Instead, it takes place through recontextualisation: ritual forms are retained, but

their theological meanings are redirected. The continued use of the term Puang Matua illustrates this strategy. It preserves cultural familiarity while inserting Islamic attributes that affirm Tawhid.

The second dimension is horizontal communication, which is evident in the codes of bertongkonan, kaokkoran, to'ma'rapu, and inan sipakilala. These codes indicate that the Muslim Rambu Solo is not sustained primarily because of its former function as a ritual for ancestral spirits, but because it continues to serve as a mechanism for kinship maintenance, social compassion, and communal presence. The ritual gathers family members and neighbours across religious identities, allowing the Tongkonan to remain a shared social centre. In this sense, Ma'tambun functions as a boundary object: it enables Muslim Torajans to participate in Torajan customary life without abandoning Islamic theological commitments.

Overall, the thematic mapping confirms that syncretic religious communication in Ma'tambun is not a passive mixture of Islam and Aluk Todolo. It is an active communicative negotiation in which religious communicators, customary actors, and family members reinterpret symbols, regulate ritual boundaries, and maintain social cohesion. The dialectic between Islamic sharia and Aluk Todolo is therefore organised through a dual logic: purification at the level of transcendental meaning and accommodation at the level of horizontal social relations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The construction of transcendental religious communication in Islamic Rambu Solo, locally known as Ma'tambun, shows that the ritual functions as a post-burial cultural-religious space where Islamic sharia and Torajan customary values are dialogically articulated. Ma'tambun contextualises Puang Matua within Tawhid by interpreting Puang Matua as the sole Creator and ruler of heaven and earth, while rejecting spirits, ancestors, or other cosmological mediators as supernatural authorities. This affirms a direct monotheistic relationship between humans and Allah SWT through Qur'anic recitation, prayer, sermons, shalawat, Islamic calligraphy, and funeral procedures conducted according to Islamic law. At the horizontal level, Rambu Solo is maintained as a mechanism for preserving kinship, solidarity, and the dignity of ma'rapu tallang through ada' kaokkoran within the Tongkonan. The findings indicate that syncretism in Ma'tambun is not a passive mixture of Islam and Aluk Todolo, but a communicative dialectic in which theological purification and cultural accommodation occur simultaneously. Islamic sharia provides normative boundaries for Tawhid, halal practices, burial, and prayer, while Torajan values sustain matorayaan, collective mourning, and social cohesion.

Practically, the local government should protect Rambu Solo as intangible cultural heritage while facilitating interfaith dialogue involving customary leaders, Islamic scholars, Christian leaders, Aluk Todolo representatives, and local communities. Religious leaders should clarify the distinction between cultural participation and theological belief so that Muslim involvement in Ma'tambun does not generate doctrinal misunderstanding. The Toraja community should preserve Tongkonan, kaokkoran,

and to 'ma'rapu values while filtering ritual elements that conflict with religious principles. This study is limited to Muslim Toraja experiences in selected Ma'tambun contexts and does not fully compare Christian, Catholic, or Aluk Todolo practices. Future research should examine comparative religious patterns, generational reinterpretation, gender dynamics, economic dimensions, and digital media representations of Rambu Solo.

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