

Islamization of Local Traditions in Barus, Central Tapanuli

A Model of Cultural Integration and Purification of Islamic Faith

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Article	Abstract
Article History : Received: Oct 09, 2025 Reviewed: Oct, 18, 2025 Accepted: Oct, 19, 2025 Published: Oct 20, 2025	The Islamization of local traditions in Barus, Central Tapanuli, is a significant event in the history of Islam's spread in the Indonesian archipelago. As a trading hub since the 7th century AD, Barus became a gateway for Muslim merchants and scholars from the Middle East, Persia, and Gujarat. This study aims to explain the process of Islamization through cultural adaptation and peaceful da'wah, emphasizing the purification of faith while preserving local traditions that align with the principles of tawhid (monotheism). The research employs a qualitative method with a historical and descriptive-analytical approach, examining historical sources, ancient manuscripts, and interviews with historians and religious leaders. The findings reveal that Islamization in Barus occurred peacefully and persuasively, transforming local traditions such as customary rituals, leadership systems, and social norms into Islamic values. This process not only strengthened the community's belief in tawhid but also led to the establishment of Islamic institutions and the emergence of scholars who played crucial roles in the development of Islam in the region.
Keywords: <i>Islamization, Local Traditions, Barus, Islamic Creed, Cultural Da'wah.</i>	

INTRODUCTION

Barus is a coastal region in the western part of North Sumatra, now part of Central Tapanuli Regency. This area is known as one of the first entry points for Islam into the archipelago, playing a crucial role in the history of its spread. Since the 7th century AD, Barus has been a bustling center of international trade, visited by traders from the Middle East, Persia, and Gujarat. Their arrival brought not only valuable commodities but also Islamic values and teachings, which were disseminated through social, economic, and cultural interactions. The encounters between local communities and Muslim traders gave rise to new dynamics in the religious life of the Barus community. Through these trade routes, Islam spread peacefully and gradually became part of the local social structure (Fatonah et al., 2024).

The encounter between Islamic teachings and local culture in Barus gave rise to an acculturation process known as the Islamization of local traditions. This process extends beyond religious conversion to include the adaptation, refinement, and reinterpretation of cultural values to align with the teachings of monotheism. The community's animistic and syncretic traditions were adapted to the principle of the oneness of Allah SWT through a polite and peaceful approach to preaching. In this context, Islam did not come to eradicate all local traditions but sought to instill new values aligned with the teachings of faith. This demonstrates that Islamization in Barus proceeded wisely through cultural adaptation methods that maintained the community's local identity (Jenuri et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic creed, the Islamization process in Barus has profound theological significance because it is directly related to efforts to purify faith and belief in Allah SWT. The teachings of monotheism serve as the primary foundation for filtering out local cultures deemed contrary to the principle of the oneness of God. All forms of religious practices

containing elements of polytheism, animism, or polytheism are gradually eliminated through the process of preaching and religious education. However, neutral cultural elements are still accommodated as part of contextual Islamic preaching. This process demonstrates that Islamization in Barus is carried out persuasively, without forcing change, thus creating a harmonious integration between Islamic teachings and local culture. (Latri Khasanah, 2022) .

The main problem in this research is the extent to which Islamization is able to shape the mindset, belief system, and cultural practices of the Barus community without eliminating their cultural identity. Islamization in this context is not a destructive process of customs, but rather a form of internalization of Islamic values into the social system of society. This transformation is evident in various aspects of life, such as kinship systems, burial procedures, and the implementation of religious rituals that are starting to be based on Islamic teachings. This phenomenon demonstrates a peaceful process of blending values between faith and tradition, thus creating a distinctive Islamic character in the coastal region of North Sumatra (Maulidya & Iqbal, 2024) .

Previous studies on Islamization in Barus have generally focused more on historical and socio-cultural aspects, while discussions examining it from the perspective of Islamic creed are still rare (Abdul Gani Jamora Nasution et al., 2023) . This limitation indicates a research gap that needs to be filled through more in-depth theoretical studies. The Islamic creed approach is important because it can explain the meaning of faith behind the process of socio-cultural change that occurs (Supriadin & Pababari, 2024) . By understanding Islamization as a process of purifying creed, this study seeks to uncover the theological dimensions underlying the acceptance of Islam in Barus more fully.

Therefore, this study aims to critically examine the process of Islamization of local traditions in Barus during the early days of Islam by examining the values of monotheism and the teachings of Islamic faith. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic creed studies, particularly in understanding the interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture in the historical regions of the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore, the results of this study are also expected to enrich understanding of the form of Islamic da'wah that is peaceful, adaptive, and respects local wisdom without compromising the purity of the teachings of monotheism that are the core of Islamic creed (Panca Putera & Amri, 2025) .

RESEARCH METHOD

This research focuses on the process of Islamization of local traditions in Barus, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, from the perspective of Islamic faith using a qualitative case study method (Bahiyah & Gumiandari, 2024) . Researchers went directly to the field to observe, record, and understand how Islamic values influence the traditions of the Barus community through a historical and descriptive-analytical approach so that the data obtained describe socio-religious changes factually. Research data were obtained from two sources, namely primary and secondary (Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2023) . Primary data were collected through interviews with religious leaders, local historians, and community members who understand the history of Islamization in Barus, while secondary data were obtained from history books, scientific journals, and regional archives that discuss the development of Islam in the region. Researchers used three main techniques in data collection: in-depth interviews, direct observation of traditional and religious activities, and documentation in the form of photographs, audio recordings, and field notes as empirical evidence (Sarmini et al., 2021) .

Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions, where important information was selected, arranged narratively, and then interpreted to gain a deep understanding of the process of Islamization of local traditions in

Barus which took place peacefully, persuasively, and based on the value of monotheism. (Rohman et al., 2021) .

To ensure the validity of the data in this qualitative study, the researcher applied several validation techniques, including source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews with various informants, such as religious leaders, community leaders, and local historians, with data from observations and documentation. Technical triangulation was used by checking the consistency of information obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the results are more objective and accountable. Meanwhile, member checking was conducted by requesting confirmation from key informants regarding the interview results and the researcher's interpretations to ensure appropriateness of meaning and avoid misinterpretation. By implementing these validation steps, this study is expected to have a good level of credibility, dependability, and confirmability, so that the results can be tested and replicated by other researchers in similar contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Islamization and the Foundation of Islamic Faith

Islamization is a dynamic process in the history of Islamic civilization that encompasses not only changes in belief but also the internalization of the values of monotheism in all aspects of human life. The word Islam comes from the root word *salima*, meaning submission, obedience, and surrender to God. In this context, Islam is referred to as *din*, a system of life that binds humans to obey God's will and laws in all their activities. According to Edi S. Ekajati, the term Islamization comes from the English word "Islamization," which means conversion to Islam or the process of converting someone to Islam. Thus, Islamization is not a momentary event, but rather a continuous process that takes place vertically, strengthening humanity's relationship with God and horizontally, instilling Islamic values in society's social and cultural life (Abdullah et al., 2022) .

From the perspective of Islamic faith, Islamization is based on the principle of *tawhid*, namely the belief in the oneness of God as the source of all truth and law of life. Faith is the primary foundation of the Islamization process because every social and cultural change must be based on the oneness of God and the rejection of all forms of polytheism. The Islamization process is not only aimed at encouraging non-Muslims to embrace Islam, but also at Muslims themselves to return to the purity of their faith by correctly understanding and practicing Islamic teachings. This is emphasized in the words of Allah SWT in Surah *An-Nahl* verse 125:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَإِذَا لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِكَ فَإِنِ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ فَاغْلُظْ ۚ وَاعْلَمْ بِمَنْ لَدُنْكَ عِلْمٌ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ

ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom (424) and good teaching and debate them with a better way. Indeed, your Lord is He who knows best who has strayed from His path and He (also) knows best who is guided."

This verse shows that Islamization must be carried out in a wise manner, full of gentleness, and oriented towards spiritual awareness, not coercion. In the context of *aqidah*, Islamization invites humans to know and realize Allah, as the purpose of creation is explained in Surah *Az-Zariyat* verse 56 :

وَمَا بَالُكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَ الْإِنسَانَ إِلَّا لِيعْبُدُونِي

"I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me."

This verse emphasizes that the entire purpose of human life, including the process of Islamization, is rooted in devotion to God. Therefore, Islamization is not only a process of spreading teachings, but also the formation of a monotheistic consciousness that organizes culture, ethics, and traditions to align with Islamic values. In the view of classical theologians such as Al-Ash'ari and Al-Maturidi, the principle of monotheism serves as a rational and spiritual foundation that protects the purity of Islamic teachings from deviations in thought and cultural syncretism. Al-Ash'ari emphasized that the oneness of God is not merely believed in theoretically, but must be evident in behavior and social systems that reject all forms of associating partners with God. Meanwhile, Al-Maturidi emphasized the importance of using reason in understanding monotheism so that Islamization is not dogmatic but is able to touch the intellectual consciousness of the people. Ibn Khaldun also explained that the success of Islamization in history is inseparable from the power of 'asabiyyah (social solidarity) combined with the values of faith, thus forming a civilization based on divine faith and morality.

In the Barus context, the Islamization of local traditions is not intended to erase culture, but rather to purify it from elements of shirk and syncretism, so that customs continue to live within the framework of Islamic beliefs. Thus, Islamization is not just a historical event, but also a spiritual and intellectual process that continues in the lives of Muslims until the present (Al Wekhian, 2015).

History of the Arrival of Islam in Barus

Tracing the history of the arrival of Islam in Barus, Central Tapanuli, it is important to understand how Islamic teachings adapted to local culture without erasing long-standing traditions within the community. When Islam arrived in Barus, its teachings did not immediately eliminate local customs but instead sought to integrate them with Islamic values in a wise and gradual manner. Traditions that aligned with the principle of monotheism were maintained, while those that contradicted them were directed toward purifying the faith. This harmonization process gave rise to a fusion of Islam and local culture that shaped the character of a religious and moral community. These local wisdom values became a moral force that nurtured the social and spiritual life of Muslims in the region. (H. Nasution et al., 2022).

The Islamization process in Barus demonstrates that the spread of Islam in the archipelago was not carried out through coercion, but rather through a cultural approach and exemplary behavior. Islamic teachings were disseminated peacefully, tolerantly, and wisely, thus being widely accepted by the local community. Islamization in Barus was not merely a process of conversion, but also the instillation of Islamic values in the social, economic, and cultural behavior of the community. Through this approach, Islam grew into a spiritual force that enriched the nation's identity. Understanding this history provides important lessons on how Islam can thrive amidst diversity without losing its core values (NL Nasution et al., 2024).

Barus City is known as a producer of camphor, a substance famous throughout the Middle East, including Egypt and other major cities. Camphor was used in the embalming process for corpses or mummies during Ancient Egypt, and was even used to preserve the bodies of Pharaohs, which can still be found in the Ramses Museum in Cairo. This fact indicates that Barus has long been widely known as a region that played a vital role in international trade networks. Barus' strategic position on the west coast of Sumatra made it a major port where various nations and cultures met, including Muslim traders who played a role in the spread of Islam. (Ambo, 2023).

Besides camphor, this region also produces frankincense, resin, pepper, animal skins, and other agricultural products traded to various regions. These commodities originate from the hinterlands of Toba, Singkil, Tanah Karo, Simalungun, and the surrounding islands. This wealth of natural resources has made Barus an important trading center since the 12th century AD, and possibly even earlier. Historical records indicate that Barus established trade relations

with Persia, Tamil, Armenia, China, and other Indonesian communities. Through these trade interactions, Islamic teachings were introduced and spread naturally through social and economic relationships between local residents and Muslim traders (Ulya, 2022) .

Barus played a crucial role in the early history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. Marco Polo's travelogue, which included a stopover in Barus, indicates that the city was already known as a bustling and cosmopolitan trading center. Cultural diversity and international interaction created an open space for the spread of Islam in the region. From Barus, Islamic teachings spread to various regions in Sumatra and the Indonesian archipelago, forming the foundation for the development of Indonesian Islamic civilization. Reviving the historical values of Islam in Barus emphasizes the importance of preaching based on wisdom, tolerance, and respect for local culture in building a faithful and civilized society (Sukkar, Fareed, Yahia, Abdalla, et al., 2024) .

Integration of Local Traditions

The integration of local traditions and Islamic teachings in Barus, a historic city on the west coast of North Sumatra, reflects a harmonious acculturation process between local culture and Islamic values. As one of the early regions where Islam spread in the archipelago, Barus serves as a clear example of how Islamic teachings can blend with local traditions without losing the essence of both. The coastal communities of Barus still preserve various traditions that have adapted to Islamic values, including *kenduri laut* (sea food), *tolak bala* (warding off disasters), and *Turun Karai*: Introducing Babies to the House of Allah (Abdelghani et al., 2025).

First, Kenduri Laut (Jamu Lauik). The *Kenduri Laut* tradition on the coast of Barus has long historical roots, reflecting the community's close relationship with the sea as a source of livelihood. As a trading center and the initial spread of Islam in the archipelago, Barus inherited traditions that demonstrate a blend of maritime culture and religious values. *Kenduri Laut* serves as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the abundant marine resources, as well as a prayer for the safety of fishermen. This ritual has been passed down from generation to generation and continues to transform according to the social and religious dynamics of the local community (Ahmatnihar et al., 2025) .

Before the arrival of Islam, sea feasts were held as a tribute to the guardian spirit of the sea and a request for safety for fishermen. This ceremony is usually accompanied by offerings, such as a buffalo head which is released into the sea as a symbol of offering to supernatural beings. This belief is rooted in an animistic religious system which considers the safety of fishermen to depend on the blessing of spirits who guard the sea (Barus & Mawaddah, 2025) .

After the arrival of Islam, this tradition underwent an Islamization. Offerings were eliminated and replaced with communal prayers and thanksgiving led by a religious teacher. The ceremony was accompanied by the recitation of Surah Yasin, *tahlil*, and *dhikr*, with the belief that sustenance and protection come only from Allah SWT. The religious scholars and preachers in Barus did not immediately eradicate local traditions, but instead adapted them to align with Islamic teachings. This reflects an effort to harmonize religious teachings and ancestral culture.

Sea feasts now carry not only spiritual significance, but also social and cultural significance. This tradition strengthens relationships between residents, fosters a spirit of mutual cooperation, and serves as a means of fostering camaraderie among coastal communities. According to Mr. Nariwan Tanjung, a community leader in Barus, sea feasts are part of a collective tradition passed down through generations. The sea is viewed not only as a source of livelihood but also as a symbol of natural balance that must be respected. The ritual involves fishermen, religious leaders, and traditional figures who join in prayer, remembrance, and feasting as a form of togetherness.

Furthermore, sea feasts play a role in strengthening social solidarity in coastal communities. All residents participate, from preparing the food to praying together, reflecting the values of mutual cooperation and brotherhood. Over time, this tradition has become a cultural identity that persists amidst the tide of modernization. According to Mr. Zainul, before the arrival of Islam, sea feasts contained elements of polytheism due to the offerings to supernatural beings. However, after the spread of Islam, these elements were removed and replaced with Islamic nuances such as Quranic recitation, dhikr, and blessings.

Kenduri Laut in Barus is now understood through the concepts of 'urf shahih (customs that do not conflict with the Shari'a) and maslahah murlah (benefits that are not explicitly mentioned in the texts). As long as it does not conflict with the faith, this tradition can be accepted as part of Islamic culture. In this way, the sea kenduri becomes a symbol of harmonious acculturation between culture and religion which strengthens the spiritual and social identity of the Barus coastal community.

According to Mr. Sapriansyah, the values within this tradition reflect humanity's relationship with nature as a form of gratitude for God's gifts. This tradition teaches the importance of preserving nature as a legacy from our ancestors, rich in meaning and philosophy of life. Therefore, preserving the sea feast not only preserves culture but also instills ecological and spiritual awareness in coastal communities.

Second, Reject Bala. Rejecting reinforcements is an Indonesian term which means rejecting or avoiding disaster or calamity. Which is often used in the context of belief or belief to protect oneself or expel negative energy with means or prayers. Denial can also refer to actions taken to avoid disasters or negative events that might occur. The purpose of this repulsion is to avoid or protect oneself from danger, disaster, or bad events that might occur. This is often associated with a person's spiritual beliefs or beliefs. By repelling these reinforcements, in the hope of getting protection or keeping away these bad things. Rejecting reinforcements can be done with prayer or certain actions to reject reinforcements (Nujula, 2025) .

Before the arrival of Islam, the tradition of tolak bala (warding off evil spirits) was carried out to ward off evil spirits believed to bring disease, crop failure, or natural disasters. People typically prepared red and white porridge and burned incense as offerings to the spirits to prevent them from disturbing human life. After the arrival of Islam, the meaning of "tolak bala" (warding off disaster) shifted to a communal prayer seeking God's protection from all dangers. This ritual involved the recitation of Surah Al-Falaq, An-Nas, and the Ayatul Kursi, as well as a communal prayer led by a religious figure. Community beliefs shifted: protection was believed to come only from God Almighty, not from supernatural beings.

According to Ms. Lela, a community leader in Barus, tolak bala is performed to ward off evil, both disturbances from spirits and natural disasters. Ms. Rahmayanti echoed this sentiment, stating that this tradition aims to protect the community from calamities and dangers. Meanwhile, Mr. Rahmad Fauzan Meuraxa, a young historian in Pasar Terendam Village, explained that tolak bala has existed since the time of our ancestors and was once intended to ward off danger. After the arrival of Islam, this tradition changed its meaning to a collective prayer for Allah to protect the village from disasters. He added that this tradition also strengthens ties and fosters social awareness among residents.

Thus, both the sea feast and the ward off disaster in Barus reflect the harmonious acculturation of Islam and local culture. These traditions possess not only spiritual but also social and cultural value, and serve as concrete evidence of how Islam exists peacefully, respecting local wisdom, and enriching the cultural identity of the coastal communities of North Sumatra.

Third, Turun Karai (Introducing Babies to the House of God) . The *Turun Karai* tradition is a cultural heritage of the Pesisir Barus ethnic group in Central Tapanuli, which has been practiced since the 10th century AD. This ceremony is performed to introduce babies to their environment and the spiritual values of the community. Before the advent of Islam, *Turun Karai* was performed when babies were 40 days old, or after their umbilical cords had dried. The day of the ceremony was determined by the village shaman based on traditional calculations. The baby was dressed in brightly colored traditional clothing as a symbol of courage and prosperity, and seven-colored threads were wrapped around the wrists or ankles to ward off evil. Water from a well or spring was sprinkled on the baby as a symbol of cleansing from evil spirits. This ceremony was believed to protect the baby from supernatural disturbances and disease, with the shaman as the main figure leading the prayers and rituals (Tan & Sianipar, 2023) .

After the arrival of Islam, *Turun Karai* underwent adjustments in its values and meaning. It is performed on the 7th, 14th, or 40th day after birth, no longer based on customary auspicious days, but rather on a time that suits the family. The ceremony begins with the recitation of the sholawat (prayer) or "marhaban" (prayer), followed by the cutting of a small portion of the baby's hair accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving. The baby is then taken to the mosque as a symbol of introduction to the house of God, so that he will grow into a diligent worshipper. Afterward, the baby is paraded around the house while traditional foods such as itak-itak are distributed to the surrounding community as an expression of gratitude. This tradition is not only a cultural custom, but also reflects the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom, with aqiqah being a crucial part of its implementation.

According to Sjawal Pasaribu, a Barus historian, *Turun Karai* holds high spiritual value because it is carried out within the framework of Islamic teachings. This tradition strengthens social ties and introduces the baby to the community and places of worship. In practice, the baby is carried to the mosque under a yellow umbrella as a symbol of protection and purity. Upon arrival at the mosque, the muezzin calls the call to prayer to welcome the baby into the world. The baby is then bathed with ablution water and lime juice as a symbol of purification. The accompanying group usually performs the Dhuha prayer before returning home, then distributes itak-itak cakes to local residents as a symbol of sharing fortune and goodness.

The meaning of *Turun Karai* for the Barus community is not only a hereditary custom, but also a manifestation of gratitude to God for the birth of a child. As expressed by Ibu Dosma, a Barus resident, this tradition serves as a means of praying that the child will grow into a pious person, useful to religion, nation, and family. After leaving the mosque, the baby is greeted by grandparents with a sprinkling of turmeric water mixed with flowers while saying "Welcome, munak allee!" as a symbol of welcome and prayers for goodness. The event then concludes with a thanksgiving ceremony for the aqiqah, the recitation of blessings, and the shaving of the baby's hair as a sign of the completion of worship.

According to Barus historian Maskuddin Simanjuntak, the *Turun Karai* tradition demonstrates the acculturation process between Islam and local culture. In the early days of Islamization, preachers did not immediately abolish old traditions but adapted them to the teachings of monotheism. Traditional ceremonies continued to be performed, but their meaning was transformed into Islamic prayers, such as tahlilan (religious gatherings) or kenduri (celebrations). Symbols such as incense and perfume were still used, but they were interpreted as a form of purification for prayer to Allah, rather than as offerings to ancestral spirits. Even traditional leadership was respected, but imbued with Islamic values. This process demonstrates that Islamization in Barus was peaceful and emphasized the gradual instillation of faith.

Islamization through the *Turun Karai tradition* emphasizes that Islam can engage in dialogue with culture without eliminating local identity. Islamic teachings, which emphasize the purity of monotheism, transform the meaning of traditional symbols into forms of worship to Allah. This aligns with Allah's words in Surah An-Nahl, verse 125: "*Call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and refute them in a manner that is good.*" This verse describes the method of *da'wah* used by scholars in Barus, namely through a cultural and wise approach. Through this method, the community can accept Islam peacefully and interpret it as a complement to existing traditions. Thus, *Turun Karai* serves as a concrete example of the integration of Islamic values and local culture based on the creed of monotheism (Sukkar et al., 2024).

In the context of Islamic theology, the process of Islamization and integration of local traditions in Barus reflects the real application of the principles of monotheism *rububiyah*, *uluhiyah*, and *asma wa nature* in filtering cultural values. The principle of *rububiyah* monotheism emphasizes that only Allah is the regulator and maintainer of the universe, so that all forms of tradition that previously depended on forces other than Allah, such as sea spirits or spirits, were removed and replaced with recognition of Allah's power as the only source of protection and sustenance. The principle of monotheism *uluhiyah* is applied by directing all forms of rituals and prayers solely to Allah SWT, not to intermediaries or other spiritual entities. This can be seen in the change in the meaning of the sea feast and repulsion of evil, which is now carried out with *dhikr*, prayer and reading verses from the Koran. Meanwhile, the principle of monotheism *asma wa nature* is reflected in people's efforts to understand and emulate the qualities of Allah, such as *ar-Rahman* (the Most Compassionate) and *al-Hakim* (the Most Wise), which is then manifested in attitudes of compassion, mutual cooperation and wisdom in maintaining social and environmental balance. Through the application of these three dimensions of monotheism, the process of Islamization in Barus not only changes the external form of tradition, but also purifies its meaning to align with pure Islamic faith, making local culture a means of worship and strengthening the faith of coastal communities.

Archaeological Relics as Evidence of Islamization

Barus, a coastal city on the west coast of North Sumatra, played a significant role in the history of Islamization in the archipelago. Various archaeological remains in this region provide concrete evidence of the arrival and development of Islam since the 7th century AD (Roza et al., 2025).

Table 1. Archaeological Remains of Islamization in Barus, Central Tapanuli

Site / Tomb Name	Location	Description and Key Findings	Historical Context & Meaning of Islamization
Mahligai Tomb Complex	Aek Dakka Village, ±5 km north of the center of Barus District	The complex covers approximately 3 hectares and boasts over 200 tombstones. One of the oldest is that of Sheikh Rukunuddin, who died around 672 CE / 48 AH.	Showing the existence of the oldest Muslim community in Barus, indicating Barus as the initial center of the spread of Islam in the archipelago.
High-Plank Tomb	Pananggahan Village, hilltop ±215 meters above sea level (more than 700 steps)	Tomb of Sheikh Mahmud of Hadramaut, Yemen, 7th century AD. The tombstone is decorated with ancient Arabic calligraphy.	Evidence of the influence of Middle Eastern scholars in the early spread of Islam and the acculturation of Islamic-Arab culture in Barus.
Old Lobu Site	Barus coastal area	International trade artifacts were found: Chinese ceramics, Indian beads, and Middle Eastern goods.	Showing Barus as a cosmopolitan trading port and the entry point for Islam through peaceful trade routes.

Inscriptions on Ancient Tombstones	Several ancient tomb complexes in Barus	Arabic inscriptions with beautiful calligraphy, including those on Sheikh Rukunuddin's tomb.	Evidence of an established Muslim community since the 7th century AD, as well as mastery of Arabic script and Islamic culture in Barus.
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Archaeological remains in Barus, such as the Mahligai Tomb complex, the Papan Tinggi Tomb, the Old Lobu site, and inscriptions on ancient gravestones, provide strong evidence that Islam has been present and developing in this region since the 7th century AD. These findings emphasize the important role of Barus as one of the main gateways for the entry of Islam into the archipelago.

Implications of the Islamization of Tradition on the Islamic Identity of the Barus Community

The process of Islamization in Barus, Central Tapanuli, not only brought about changes in belief systems but also formed a distinctive Islamic identity among coastal communities. Islam entered this region through a peaceful approach, through trade, social interaction, and cultural acculturation. This approach enabled the acceptance of Islam without rejecting deeply rooted local cultures. The integration of Islamic values into Barus traditions, such as *sea feasts* and *ward off disasters*, is clear evidence that Islam did not exist to eliminate tradition, but rather to purify its meaning to align with the principles of monotheism (Mardia & Sari Febriani, 2025).

The Islamic identity of the Barus people was formed through a long process of aligning culture and Islamic teachings. Before the arrival of Islam, the Barus people's belief system was dominated by animism and dynamism, which placed nature and spirits as sources of supernatural power. After the arrival of Islam, this view shifted to the belief that supreme power belongs solely to Allah SWT. This paradigm shift demonstrates the internalization of religious values in the community's daily lives. Traditional rituals, once magical, were transformed into forms of gratitude and prayer to Allah, so that the community's religious identity was no longer syncretic but rather Islamic with a touch of local culture (Mayang et al., 2024).

The Islamization of tradition also impacts how the Barus community expresses its religiosity. Islamic values are evident not only in formal religious practices but also in social behavior, such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, and gratitude for nature. Islamized traditions serve as a means of moral education, instilling spiritual awareness in all levels of society. Through this process, a moderate coastal Muslim identity is formed, open to culture, yet firmly adhering to the principle of monotheism. Thus, the Islamization of tradition in Barus serves as a bridge between ancestral cultural heritage and modern religious awareness (Mekonnen et al., 2022).

In addition to strengthening spiritual aspects, the Islamization of traditions also strengthens the social structure of the Barus community. Religious activities, packaged in local traditions, provide a space for social interaction that fosters a sense of togetherness. Values such as mutual assistance, deliberation, and respect for religious scholars and traditional figures characterize the religious and cultured Barus community. Traditions imbued with Islamic values also play a role in maintaining harmony between groups of people from diverse social backgrounds. In this context, the Islamization of traditions impacts not only individuals but also the broader social order (Farwati et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Islamic faith, the Islamization of traditions in Barus demonstrates an effort to restore human spiritual meaning to the pure concept of monotheism. Rituals such as *the sea feast*, originally oriented toward the worship of supernatural beings, have been transformed into a means of gratitude to Allah SWT. This demonstrates that the Islamization process in Barus is not a compromise with old beliefs, but rather a process of refining cultural values so that they do not conflict with the principles of faith. This phenomenon serves as a concrete example of how Islam can adapt to local wisdom without losing the purity of its teachings.

Furthermore, the Islamization of traditions helped strengthen Barus' identity as the center of the early spread of Islam in the archipelago. The friendly, open, and moderate religious image of the Barus people is a legacy of this acculturation process. These Islamized traditions symbolize the continuity of Islamic history in the region and emphasize that Islam can be deeply rooted in local culture without erasing it. The Islamic identity of the Barus people is ultimately reflected in the balance between respect for ancestral traditions and a commitment to the values of monotheism (Febriani & Fitriani, 2024).

Thus, the implications of the Islamization of tradition in Barus are not only theological, but also cultural and social. Islamization becomes the foundation for the formation of a community identity that is both religious and cultural. This process affirms that Islam, as a religion blessed with the universe, has the ability to engage in dialogue with culture without negating the essence of monotheism. Barus represents that the Islamization of tradition is not a form of compromise on faith, but rather a cultural da'wah strategy that fosters a contextual, moderate, and deeply rooted Islam in the lives of the coastal communities of North Sumatra.

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, the process of Islamization in Barus occurred peacefully, persuasively, and harmoniously. Islam entered the region not through coercion, but through a social and cultural approach that respected the local traditions of the community. Various traditional rituals, leadership systems, and social norms previously rooted in ancient beliefs underwent a transformation to become more grounded in Islamic values without erasing existing cultural identities. This process not only strengthened the community's faith in the teachings of monotheism but also gave rise to Islamic institutions and religious figures who played a crucial role in spreading and fostering religious life in Barus.

The implications of this research suggest that an Islamization model that prioritizes local wisdom can serve as an effective da'wah strategy in a multicultural society. This gentle, culturally respectful, and contextual approach can strengthen social ties and strengthen the religious identity of the local community. For future research, a more in-depth study of the role of trade networks, religious scholars, and cultural interactions in expanding Islamic influence in Barus is recommended. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine how Islamic values established during the early days of Islamization persist and adapt amidst the challenges of modernization and globalization today.

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