

# Lived religion: the Rapai tradition through conflict and post-conflict in Aceh, Indonesia

**Muhammad Maulana**

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

e-mail: [mokmaulana04@gmail.com](mailto:mokmaulana04@gmail.com)

**Muhammad Hendri**

Institut Seni Indonesia, Indonesia

e-mail: [hendririmung@gmail.com](mailto:hendririmung@gmail.com)

**Gustira Monita**

Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

e-mail: [gustiramonitaa@gmail.com](mailto:gustiramonitaa@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This study examines how religious meaning is publicly expressed and sustained through the Rapai, a communal frame-drum performance tradition from Aceh, Indonesia, and how its continuity across conflict and post-conflict periods reflects social resilience. Using a lived religion perspective, the article draws on qualitative document and visual analysis of publicly available materials, including textual, visual, institutional, and academic sources. The findings show that Rapai persisted through actions such as safeguarding instruments, maintaining intermittent performances during conflict, reorganising groups, and transmitting repertoire through schools, festivals, and community associations in the post-conflict era. These patterns indicate that Rapai operates as an embodied cultural-religious practice in which coordinated participation, devotional language, bodily discipline, and intergenerational learning support communal orientation during instability and recovery. The study analyses publicly documented expressions of lived religion rather than private religious experience. By situating the analysis in

a Muslim-majority and post-conflict context, the article contributes to broader discussions of lived religion, cultural performance, and social resilience by showing how Rapai sustains religious memory, social ties, and communal orientation across conflict and post-conflict conditions. The article therefore treats Rapai as a public practice where art, devotion, memory, and communal discipline intersect in the work of surviving violence and rebuilding social life after the conflict in Aceh.

Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana makna keagamaan diekspresikan dan dipertahankan secara publik melalui tradisi Rapai di Aceh, Indonesia, serta bagaimana keberlanjutannya pada masa konflik dan pascakonflik mencerminkan ketahanan sosial. Dengan menggunakan perspektif lived religion, artikel ini bertumpu pada analisis dokumen dan visual secara kualitatif terhadap data publik yang tersedia, meliputi sumber tekstual, visual, institusional, dan akademik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Rapai tetap bertahan melalui berbagai upaya, seperti menjaga instrumen, mempertahankan pertunjukan secara terbatas selama konflik, menyusun kembali kelompok, dan meneruskan materi pertunjukan melalui sekolah, festival, serta komunitas masyarakat pada masa pascakonflik. Pola tersebut menunjukkan bahwa Rapai bukan hanya pertunjukan budaya, tetapi juga praktik budaya-keagamaan yang hidup dalam masyarakat. Melalui partisipasi bersama, ungkapan keagamaan, keteraturan gerak, dan pembelajaran antargenerasi, Rapai membantu menjaga rasa kebersamaan masyarakat pada masa konflik dan pemulihan. Studi ini menganalisis ekspresi lived religion yang terdokumentasi secara publik, bukan pengalaman keagamaan yang bersifat privat. Dengan menempatkan analisis dalam konteks masyarakat Muslim mayoritas dan pascakonflik, artikel ini berkontribusi pada kajian lived religion, pertunjukan budaya, dan ketahanan sosial dengan menunjukkan bagaimana Rapai menjaga memori keagamaan, ikatan sosial, dan kebersamaan masyarakat sepanjang masa konflik dan pascakonflik. Dengan demikian, Rapai dipahami sebagai praktik publik tempat seni, agama, ingatan kolektif, dan kebersamaan masyarakat bertemu dalam proses bertahan dari kekerasan dan membangun kembali kehidupan sosial setelah konflik di Aceh.

**Keywords:** *Lived religion, Religious expression, Rapai tradition, Post-conflict resilience.*

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## Introduction

Religious life is sustained through the everyday practices and social relations that organise communal experience, extending far beyond the reach of formal institutional structures. The lived religion perspective provides an analytical approach for observing how individuals and communities generate and maintain religious meaning through ordinary activities that organise their social worlds (Ammerman, 2021). This perspective is useful for examining practices that cannot be reduced either to doctrine or to secular culture because religious meaning often appears through repeated gestures, material objects, bodily discipline, narrative memory, and communal participation (Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). Across various settings, traditional practices continue to mediate how people relate to religious and moral values, and this pattern is also evident in Indonesia where local traditions remain integrated with religious expressions (Ismail & Asso, 2024). In Aceh, religion and culture interact within communal activities that carry social and historical significance (Khalsiah et al., 2018). One example is the Rapai tradition, a collective percussion practice performed in groups and used in communal cultural-religious settings, where coordinated rhythm and shared participation express forms of everyday moral and religious orientation (A'la & A'la, 2023). The Rapai tradition encompasses several established forms, including Rapai Pasee (large ensemble drumming), Rapai Puloet Geurimpheng (drumming, movement, and sung verse), Rapai Daboh (drumming for martial-spiritual performances), Rapai Geleng (synchronised drumming and dance), and Rapai Iringan (accompaniment for music and dance), each differentiated by performance style, ensemble composition, and context of use (Karina & Putra, 2019). Its continued presence in public and communal life provides a context for examining how religious meaning becomes visible through shared traditional practices rather than only through formal religious institutions (Syai et al., 2024).

Existing research on the Rapai tradition in Aceh has developed across cultural, educational, musical, and historical fields, documenting its background, structural features, and communal functions (A'la, 2023; Daud et al., 2022; Karina et al., 2022). Some studies describe Rapai as a medium of da'wah, highlighting the religious messages conveyed through its poetic and performative elements (Agustya et al., 2020; Hermaliza et al., 2017; Syai, 2021). Other studies emphasise preservation, musical transcription, symbolic communication, and the role of education in maintaining the tradition (Karina et al., 2022; Syai, 2021; Syai et al., 2024). While these contributions are useful, they often emphasise formal expression, cultural heritage, or textual communication rather than the ways religious meaning is enacted through practice across changing social conditions. As a result, existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined how Rapai is sustained across conflict and post-conflict conditions or how its continuity may involve forms of resilience that operate through collective participation. The present study addresses this gap by approaching Rapai as a lived practice in which religious meaning and resilience are maintained in everyday communal engagement.

This study does not treat every form of cultural continuity as religious continuity. Rapai is read as lived religion when the evidence connects performance with religious orientation, such as *salawat* (invocations of blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *kalimah tayyibah* (pious Islamic utterances), Islamic *sha'ir* (Islamic poetic verses), the authority of a *sheikh* (religious leader), commemorative settings, and the discipline of collective performance. In this sense, cultural participation becomes religiously meaningful when it is tied to remembrance, da'wah, gratitude, moral order, and communal attachment.

The concept of lived religion provides a useful analytical framework for understanding how religion is enacted through everyday practices and social relations rather than solely through institutional doctrines (Ammerman, 2021).

Within this perspective, religion is understood as embodied, relational, and contextual, emerging through interactions among people, materials, and shared values in historical and cultural settings (Ammerman, 2021). Studies of lived religion increasingly emphasise how religious life is expressed through local traditions, communal participation, and everyday social practices that sustain moral orientation and collective belonging beyond formal religious institutions (Nggiku et al., 2024; Laksana & Wood, 2019; Ngabalin et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2024). Such practices can also be understood in relation to resilience, which recent scholarship conceptualises as a dynamic and relational process through which individuals and communities maintain orientation, adapt, and rebuild social life when facing disruption or adversity (Gitau, 2022; Alamdari et al., 2022; Suen et al., 2025). In the Acehese context, where Islamic moral frameworks intersect with local cultural traditions, Rapai offers an empirical entry point for examining how religious practice, communal participation, and cultural continuity interact within a society shaped by armed conflict and post-conflict recovery.

The purpose of this study is to examine how religious meaning emerges within the Rapai practice and how this practice is maintained in both conflict and post-conflict contexts. This study is guided by the question of how the continuity of the Rapai tradition across conflict and post-conflict Aceh reveals the relationship between lived religious practice and social resilience. This focus places Rapai within a wider discussion on how local religious-cultural practices sustain meaning, attachment, and social orientation after disruption.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach through document and visual analysis. The data consist of publicly available traces of Rapai, including news reports, photographs, cultural-institutional records, social media materials, and academic studies. These materials are suitable for this article because the focus is the public continuity of Rapai as religious-cultural practice, not the reconstruction of private experience. Document analysis is used to

review, categorise, and interpret these materials systematically (Bowen, 2009), while visual analysis was used to examine publicly available images of Rapai performances, including instruments, performers, performance settings, bodily coordination, and signs of religious-cultural expression (Snelson, 2016).

Data were accessed between July and November 2025 through structured searches using terms such as 'Rapai Aceh,' 'conflict Rapai,' 'Rapai Pasee,' 'Rapai Geleng,' 'Rapai Uroh,' 'Rapai Daboh,' and 'Aceh traditional performance.' The materials were selected according to their relevance to Rapai practice, identifiable time and location, connection to conflict or post-conflict continuity, and evidence of religious-cultural meaning or communal participation. The analysis moves from data presentation, restatement of the issue, description of the pattern, and interpretation. This procedure follows qualitative analysis as a movement from data display and pattern recognition toward meaning making in social context (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles et al., 2014).

To strengthen credibility, media reports are read together with academic studies, cultural-institutional descriptions, and visual documentation. Event reports are used to document the existence of performances, festivals, or community activities. Claims about religious meaning are supported by indicators such as Islamic sha'ir, salawat, dhikr, ritual context, or scholarly descriptions of Rapai as da'wah and religious communication. Claims about resilience are linked to observable mechanisms such as revival, transmission, group reorganisation, youth participation, and collective reassembly after disruption.

This article argues that Rapai's continuity becomes important when it is connected to concrete mechanisms such as safeguarding instruments, maintaining repertoire, continuing performance when conditions allowed, reorganising groups, involving young performers, and reactivating Rapai through public events. These mechanisms show how a local percussion tradition can preserve social relations and religious-cultural memory across conflict and post-conflict settings. The contribution is therefore not limited to Aceh. Rapai offers

a case for understanding how embodied religious practice can sustain communal resilience in societies affected by violence.

### **Rapai tradition in a conflict situation**

Rapai tradition experienced shifting conditions across the DI/TII conflict in 1953–1962 and the GAM–RI conflict from the late 1970s to 2005 (Zulkarnaini, 2023). These accounts show that Rapai moved between periods of prohibition, restriction, and allowance as communities negotiated uncertainty and security pressure. Such shifts emerged because the practice was evaluated differently by armed groups and local authorities, while communities also responded according to their concerns for safety and cultural preservation. The evidence includes moments when Rapai instruments were hidden to prevent destruction, periods when performances were intermittent, and situations where Rapai was permitted and briefly reduced tension during confrontations. Taken together, these cases indicate that Rapai continued to exist through multiple conflict episodes, revealing a pattern of continuity that persisted despite fluctuating levels of risk and control in different parts of Aceh, Indonesia. See Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Rapai tradition in Darul Islam/Indonesian Islamic Armed Forces (DI/TII) and Free Aceh Movement–Republic of Indonesia (GAM-RI) conflict situation**

| <b>Case</b>                                 | <b>Status</b> | <b>Narration</b>                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Concealment of rapai instruments            | Prohibited    | Syeh Naza and Syeh Daud are afraid that rapai would be destroyed by members of the DI/TII around 1950, North Aceh(Zulkarnaini, 2023). |
| Intermittent performances under restriction | Restricted    | Indonesia army restricted the event of rapai tradition around 1970-2005, North Aceh (Zulkarnaini, 2023).                              |
| The decline of Rapai tradition              | Prohibited    | The conflict in Aceh has crippled various artistic activities, including rapai around 1970-2005, Lhokseumawe (Kompas.com, 2010).      |

|                                                         |            |                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Temporary easing of hostility during Rapai performances | Allowed    | Indonesian army and GAM military forces involved in the war will forget their enemies for a moment because of the rapai performance 1970-2005, in Aceh several regions (Warsidi, 2023). |
| Limited continuity of Rapai practice during conflict    | Restricted | Rapai Pasee group in North Aceh still play rapai, until DOM start in there this tradition become rare (Portalsatu.com, 2018).                                                           |

*Source: Compiled from online media reports cited in the table*

Table 1 describes several observable forms of continuity that appeared as communities engaged with Rapai during armed conflict in Aceh. Reports from North Aceh during the DI/TII conflict in 1953-1962 show that practitioners concealed instruments to prevent their loss, indicating attempts to preserve the practice during a period of prohibition. Comparable patterns emerged during the GAM-RI conflict between the late 1970s and 2005, when performances became intermittent due to security restrictions and shifting local conditions. Some accounts describe how Rapai Pasee groups restored buried instruments and revived their activities when circumstances allowed. Other descriptions indicate that in areas less affected by confrontation, performances continued and offered brief moments of relief within tense situations. These observations suggest that continuity relied on concrete actions such as protecting instruments, sustaining gatherings, and maintaining everyday engagement with Rapai during periods of conflict.

The data in Table 1 show that Rapai did not continue in a stable situation. Its continuity appeared through prohibition, restriction, concealment, interruption, and temporary permission. The main issue is therefore not simply that Rapai survived, but how it survived. The evidence points to practical actions. Instruments were hidden, performances were paused or resumed, and groups continued when security conditions allowed. These actions show that Rapai was treated as a valuable practice that had to be protected.

This pattern can be restated as continuity under pressure. The data describe communities that preserved instruments, memories, repertoire, and performance relations during conflict. The buried or hidden instrument was not only an object. It carried the possibility that people could meet again, rehearse again, and recognise the sound of Rapai as part of social life. The resilience claim belongs in this second step of interpretation. Resilience here refers to relational capacities that are kept alive through repeated social practices under pressure (Gitau, 2022).

The religious dimension appears through the elements attached to Rapai practice. Salawat, kalimah tayyibah, Islamic poetic messages, the role of the sheikh, and collective discipline show that Rapai was not only an artistic object. It was also a medium through which moral and religious orientation could be expressed. The concept of lived religion helps read this pattern without claiming that the cited literature discusses Rapai directly. Religious meaning can be observed through sound, body, memory, and material objects, not only through formal doctrine or institutional teaching (Ammerman, 2021).

Rapai is performed through rhythm, movement, listening, and synchronised response. These embodied elements create shared attention and collective timing. In conflict settings, such forms of togetherness matter because they preserve social bonds when ordinary life is disturbed. Rapai Geleng, Rapai Geurimpheng, Rapai Daboh, and Rapai Pasee each show how sound and bodily coordination can carry religious-cultural meaning in different ways.

The interpretation is that Rapai functioned as a modest mechanism of social resilience. It did not end violence or replace political peace. Rather, it preserved capacities that communities needed to continue. These capacities include remembering a repertoire, protecting meaningful objects, recognising performers and sheikh, gathering when possible, and reassembling when conditions became safer. This reading places the Rapai case within a broader understanding of resilience as the maintenance of social orientation, relation, and adaptive capacity in disrupted settings (Ager et al., 2015).

Seen from the conflict data, Rapai's survival should not be read as a simple story of continuity. The accounts of concealed instruments, restricted performances, temporary permission, and continued activity show that communities actively preserved the tradition under pressure. This pattern suggests that Rapai helped maintain memory, social relations, and moral orientation during periods of disruption.

### Rapai tradition in post-conflict situation

The Rapai tradition continued to develop across various settings in post-conflict Aceh. These examples show that Rapai Geleng, Rapai Pasee, Rapai Uroh, and Rapai Debus remained active through public performances, school competitions, community gatherings, and formal festivals organised by local institutions. Such activities emerged as practitioners and local authorities created different spaces where groups could rehearse, perform, and transmit their repertoires. The cases include mass Rapai Geleng performances, the revival of community-based Rapai Uroh, the return of Rapai Debus through regional festivals, school-level competitions, and international recognition for groups such as Bur'am. Together, these cases indicate that Rapai persisted as a living tradition and adapted to new environments, illustrating continuity supported by community participation, generational involvement, and broader institutional engagement in the post-conflict period. See Table 2.

**Table 2. Rapai tradition in post-conflict situations**

| Case                                                                    | Narration                                                                                                                                                                                    | Visual documentation                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mass Rapai Geleng Performance (2,019 participants), 2019 Southwest Aceh | A total of 2,019 young participants from 152 villages performed a mass Rapai Geleng presentation during the 74th Indonesian Independence Day ceremony. The performance was led by a syeh and |  |

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                         | opened with flute accompaniment and introductory verses. Participants trained for one month, and the event sought to revitalise the tradition and encourage youth participation in positive cultural activities (Noviandi, 2019).                                                                               |                                                                                      |
| Aga Khan Music Award – Bur'am Group, 2022 – Oman        | Zulkifli and the Bur'am group received the Aga Khan Music Award in Muscat, Oman. The group is known for rapai performances that include verses on divine unity, remembrance, and blessings. The award was regarded as motivation to sustain the tradition and expand youth involvement (Bakri, 2022).           |    |
| Revival of the Rapai Uroh Community, 2024 – Lhokseumawe | The Rapai Uroh community in Lhokseumawe, previously inactive for several years, resumed its activities through a gathering of 48 participants. A new organisational structure was formed to maintain and strengthen the tradition across the city and its surrounding sub-districts (Bidikindonesia.com, 2024). |  |
| Rapai Geleng School Competition, 2025 – Southwest Aceh  | Nineteen Rapai Geleng groups from elementary to senior high schools participated in a cultural and micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) expo organised by the local government. The event emphasised the role of art                                                                                      |  |

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                           | studios (sanggar) in cultural transmission and encouraged the emergence of new practitioners (Mizani, 2025).                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
| Aceh Perkusi Festival – 80 Rapai Pasee, 2025 – North Aceh | The closing night of Aceh Perkusi 2025 featured 80 Rapai Pasee performers at the Samudera Pasai Islamic Monument. Led by Syeikh Fauzan, the three-day event served as a communal setting for maintaining cultural identity and facilitating public participation (Mufti, 2025). |   |
| Revitalisation of Rapai Debus, 2025 – South Aceh          | South Aceh recorded 45 Debus studios (sanggar), with 80 percent inactive. The 2025 Debus Festival was organised to revitalise these studios, encourage new participants, and reaffirm Debus as part of the region's cultural heritage (Line1news.com, 2025).                    |  |

*Sources: Compiled from online media reports cited in the table.*

The data in Table 2 describe a range of observable developments in Rapai practice across public, educational, and community settings. Mass Rapai Geleng performances involved coordinated movements and collective training among participants from different villages, while school competitions brought younger practitioners into structured learning environments. The Aceh Perkusi festival featured a large ensemble of Rapai Pasee, showing how the practice remains significant in public cultural gatherings. The revival of Rapai Uroh in Lhokseumawe demonstrates how community groups reorganised their membership and leadership to sustain the tradition, while the revitalisation of Rapai Debus in South Aceh illustrates how previously inactive studios returned

to activity through regional festivals. International recognition for Bur'am further indicates how Rapai practices have gained visibility beyond local contexts. Taken together, these examples indicate that Rapai continues to be maintained through regular practice, intergenerational participation, and a variety of public events in the post-conflict period.

These post-conflict developments show that Rapai entered new arenas after conflict. It appeared in community groups, school competitions, youth training, government-supported festivals, and international cultural recognition. Each arena produced a different kind of continuity. Community practice preserved local memory. School-based transmission produced new performers. Public festivals created visibility and recognition. Together, these arenas show how Rapai moved from survival to regeneration. The analytical point is that resilience works through transmission and reassembly when a meaningful practice becomes teachable, repeatable, and publicly recognisable.

Lived religion is visible in the post-conflict period where Rapai practice continues to be linked with devotional language, moral discipline, and inherited Islamic-cultural memory. Religious elements appear in syair associated with Rapai groups, including verses of remembrance and blessings that continue to be performed in certain repertoires. Institutional descriptions of Rapai Geleng also identify the performance as a medium of da'wah through art, combining syair, movement, gratitude, and praise to Allah (A'la & A'la, 2023; Syai et al., 2024). The concept of lived religion is used here as an interpretive lens. It names the way religious meaning becomes public through repeated practice, bodily discipline, and communal participation (Ammerman, 2021). Similar Indonesian cases also show that local practice can become a public form of lived religion when religion is carried by custom, memory, and communal participation (Nggiku et al., 2024).

The post-conflict data also show how continuity can become resilience through transmission. The participation of 2,019 young performers in a mass

Rapai Geleng event and the involvement of nineteen school groups in Southwest Aceh indicate that Rapai is not only being remembered by older practitioners but also taught to younger generations. Training, repetition, and performance allow young participants to learn discipline, coordination, respect for the syeh or instructor, and attachment to Acehnese Islamic-cultural identity. Rapai's Geurimpheng also show that preservation occurs through education and that the tradition carries values such as cooperation, honesty, discipline, and responsibility (Syai et al., 2024). The resilience reading begins from this process of renewal because social capacities and moral memory are transmitted across generations (Ager et al., 2015).

Institutional involvement gives Rapai wider visibility, but it also changes the setting of performance. Festivals, competitions, and cultural programs may support preservation by providing stages, resources, and recognition. At the same time, they can shift Rapai toward heritage display, tourism, cultural branding, and the risk of commodification. This does not erase religious meaning, but it changes how that meaning is performed. Post-conflict Rapai is therefore not a simple story of preservation. It is a negotiation between religious memory, cultural policy, public performance, and community transmission.

This negotiation is visible in the language of preservation. Rapai is often presented as identity, heritage, education, and cultural potential. Such framing helps the tradition remain public, but it may also select the most displayable elements, including large ensembles, synchronised movement, spectacular sound, and visual attractiveness. Elements that are slower, devotional, local, or morally demanding may become less visible. The issue is not whether festivalised Rapai is authentic or inauthentic, but how religious, cultural, political, and economic meanings are assembled. A lived religion perspective helps explain this process because religion does not appear only in formally sacred spaces. A festival can still be a site of lived religion when devotional language, bodily discipline, moral memory, and communal participation remain active within it. Yet the same

festival can also turn religious meaning into heritage spectacle when performance is detached from local learning and remembrance. The concept therefore helps avoid a simple sacred and secular division. It allows the same performance to be read as da'wah, identity, policy, tourism, and community memory at once (Knibbe & Kupari, 2020).

The case of Rapai Daboh further shows that lived religion is not always harmonious or linear. Rapai Daboh includes debus-like attractions involving bodily invulnerability, sharp objects, and claims of spiritual power (Daud et al., 2022). This form is often accompanied by Islamic symbols and *syair*, but it can also raise theological questions in communities shaped by formal Islamic authority and the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh. Such practices may be interpreted by some as inherited spiritual discipline and by others as excessive, magical, or insufficiently aligned with formal religious norms. The point is not to judge Rapai Daboh theologically, but to show that lived religion involves negotiation, ambivalence, and contestation. Including this tension prevents the article from presenting Rapai as a simple example of harmonious cultural religion and instead shows how religious meaning is continuously negotiated within Acehnese public life.

This point is especially relevant in Aceh because religious authority is not only communal but also institutional. Aceh's public life is shaped by Islamic law, official religious authority, local ulama, *dayah* (Traditional Islamic School Boarding) networks, and institutions of customary tradition. Recent studies show that this setting is not neutral. Aceh's sharia ecosystem places ulama authority, state resources, and *dayah* networks within contested relations, while customary tradition and Islamic law coexist in an unequal and asymmetrical form (Permana, 2021; Salim, 2021). Within such a setting, a performance like Rapai Daboh can be valued as Islamic heritage while also becoming vulnerable to critique when its invulnerability displays are read as magical, excessive, or insufficiently controlled by orthodox norms. The tension does not weaken the lived religion argument. It

strengthens it. The lived religion perspective can take religious practice seriously while still analysing how embodiment, authority, and critique operate within contested religious worlds (Knibbe, 2020; Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). Rapai Daboh therefore shows that Acehese cultural-religious practice is dynamic rather than static.

Theological tension also helps distinguish cultural continuity from religious continuity. If Rapai Daboh is performed only as spectacle, its continuity may be primarily cultural. If it is performed with *sha'ir*, discipline, remembrance, and communal moral meaning, it may function as lived religion. If it is criticised by formal religious actors, it becomes a site where the boundaries of acceptable religious culture are negotiated. This layered reading prevents the article from forcing one interpretation onto all forms of Rapai. It also shows that the lived religion perspective can analyse ambivalence. Rapai can preserve Islamic memory, strengthen identity, invite youth participation, support post-conflict social repair, and still be shaped by debates over sacredness, entertainment, and proper religious practice.

Post-conflict Rapai activities show how embodied communal performance can sustain social interaction and shared identity. Rehearsals, competitions, and festivals create occasions for people to coordinate movement, sound, and memory. In this sense, Rapai works not only as performance but also as a social practice through which communities rebuild familiarity and transmit religious-cultural belonging. Recent work on embodied religion helps clarify this point. Religious community depends on bodily presence, sensory practice, material objects, and communal participation, not only on verbal belief (Črnič & Jurekovič, 2026).

The wider significance of Rapai lies in this connection between local practice and social repair. Religion and resilience show that faith communities and religious activities can support solidarity and recovery in disrupted societies (Ager et al., 2015). Research on Indonesian disaster recovery also shows that

religious belief, leadership, and networks can shape response and recovery (Joakim & White, 2015). Rapai adds a more specific contribution to that discussion because it shows how resilience may be carried not only by institutions or leaders, but also by rhythm, instruments, bodies, and intergenerational learning. Studies of community music and faith-based conflict prevention help read this form of resilience as cultural and relational rather than merely institutional (Gibson & Gordon, 2018; Payne, 2020). This is the point at which a local Acehnese tradition becomes globally legible. It offers a case of how embodied lived religion can sustain social capacity after conflict.

The post-conflict argument can therefore be read through the same sequence. The data show mass performance, school competition, community revival, festival organisation, and the return of inactive studios. The restatement is that visibility after conflict must be explained as more than survival. The description reveals a pattern of regeneration through schools, government events, community groups, and public stages. The interpretation is that this pattern contributes to resilience by rebuilding social familiarity, transmitting religious-cultural memory, and giving communities repeated occasions to coordinate bodies, sounds, and identities. In conceptual terms, Rapai shows that resilience can be enacted through public cultural-religious practice, while lived religion explains why such practice remains meaningful beyond formal ritual space.

Rapai also works as a bridge between memory and future orientation. Conflict can interrupt transmission, weaken groups, and separate younger generations from older repertoires. Post-conflict Rapai activities respond to this problem by making the tradition teachable, repeatable, and publicly recognisable. School competitions prepare future performers. Community revivals reconnect older and younger participants. Festivals place local tradition within wider provincial and national narratives. International recognition shows that the tradition can speak beyond Aceh. This makes the main finding sharper. Rapai is

not only evidence of cultural survival, but a practice through which religious-cultural memory is reorganised for post-conflict social life.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the continuity of Rapai reflects the relationship between lived religious practice and social resilience by demonstrating how a cultural-religious performance can preserve religious meaning, collective participation, and social coordination across conflict and post-conflict conditions in Aceh. This continuity emerges because Rapai functions not only as a cultural performance but also as a shared practice through which communities maintain religious meaning, collective participation, and social coordination in everyday life. Evidence from the analysis indicates that during conflict periods communities safeguarded instruments, maintained intermittent performances, and continued gatherings when security conditions allowed, while in the post-conflict period Rapai reappeared through revived community groups, youth participation, school competitions, and public festivals. The social meaning of this continuity is reflected in the expression '*meunyo ka di meusu rapai uroh, lagee dipiyoh di meusu beude*' [if the rapai uroh has already sounded, it is as if the sound of weapons has ceased] (Rahman, 2025), which associates the sounding of Rapai with the easing of violence and the restoration of social calm.

The article has argued that the link between Rapai and resilience should be understood through mechanisms rather than assumed from continuity alone. During conflict, resilience appeared through the protection of instruments, preservation of repertoire, maintenance of memory, and temporary continuation of social gathering. In the post-conflict period, resilience appeared through revival, transmission, public recognition, and renewed participation among younger generations. These mechanisms show how Rapai can sustain orientation, reinforce shared identity, and rebuild social interaction after disruption. At the

same time, the article has also shown that post-conflict revival is not free from tension. Government festivals, cultural branding, tourism, and school competitions may preserve Rapai while also transforming its sacred and communal dimensions into public heritage performance. Rapai Daboh further illustrates that lived religion in Aceh involves negotiation and theological ambivalence rather than a single stable meaning.

The contribution of this study lies in showing how a local religious-cultural performance can be read as a mechanism of social resilience. Studies of post-conflict Aceh often discuss religion, customary tradition, peace, and social harmony at a broad level. This article contributes from a more specific point because Rapai shows how resilience is enacted through rhythm, bodily discipline, devotional language, instruments, group memory, and intergenerational learning. Conceptually, the article links lived religion and resilience in conflict and post-conflict situations. Practically, it shows how local traditions can support post-conflict social repair without being reduced to formal peace programs or cultural tourism.

The scope of this study is limited to publicly documented expressions of Rapai. For that reason, the article distinguishes observed religious expressions from lived religious experiences by analysing observable religious-cultural practices rather than claiming direct access to the inner experiences of performers. This boundary does not weaken the argument. It defines the level of evidence used in the article. Within that boundary, Rapai can be understood as a public practice through which Acehnese communities preserve memory, transmit values, and rebuild social relations after conflict.

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