



Cultural Communication Messages in the Dabus Traditions of Ternate and Tidore

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Abstract

Comparative studies of cultural communication in the Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore remain limited, particularly concerning symbolic meanings, Islamic values, and cultural identities. This study aims to analyze the construction, symbols, meanings, and transmission of cultural communication messages and compare Dabus traditions in both regions. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study explores practitioners' and participants' subjective experiences, focusing on the processes, motives, and messages embedded in Dabus practices. Six informants, comprising two key and four supporting informants, were selected through purposive sampling based on their expertise, experience, and involvement. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, then analyzed inductively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that cultural communication messages are constructed through ritual symbols, social interactions, and collective participation conveying religious, social, and historical meanings. Dabus communicates religious values, courage, social solidarity, and collective identity through ritual stages and collective actions. Both regions similarly employ rituals as symbolic media for conveying religious values and social solidarity but differ in their emphasis on meaning and symbolic orientation.

Keywords: Komunikasi budaya; Konstruksi pesan; Ternate dan Tidore; Tradisi Dabus.

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INTRODUCTION

Local cultural customs, which include social, religious, and symbolic communication values, are a significant part of community identity. The Dabus tradition is one that is still practiced and growing in the areas of Ternate and Tidore, North Maluku Province. This custom serves as a vehicle for cultural communication messages full of spiritual significance, social solidarity, and symbols of communal resiliency in addition to being an artistic performance (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2025). In actuality, Dabus offers attractions pertaining to physical invulnerability, prayer recitation, and the usage of particular instruments that depict the interrelationships between people, local cultures, and belief systems. From the standpoint of creating cultural communication messages, these features make the Dabus tradition very fascinating to study (Kurniawati et al., 2024; Sukmawati & Tuhuteru, 2023).

The Dabus tradition's existence in Ternate and Tidore has historical relevance in relation to the growth of regional kingdoms and the spread of Islam (Situmorang & Aslam, 2020). This custom developed as a way to improve social cohesiveness within the society and as a vehicle for the spread of religion (Rahayu et al., 2020). Additionally, a sophisticated system of nonverbal communication is formed by the symbols used in Dabus performances, including body language, the chanting of dhikr, and the employment of particular props (Emecen & Sariçoban, 2023). The local community's ideals of collectivism, bravery, and spirituality are all communicated through this communication method (Iman & Damayanti, 2025). As a result, the Dabus tradition can be viewed as both a performing art and a deeply meaningful cultural communication channel (Jilcha et al., 2025; Hasan & Sazali, 2026).

However, local cultural traditions face unique problems as modernity and globalization progress (Hasanovich, 2025; Zhang, 2019). Understanding of the symbolic connotations ingrained in the Dabus tradition has declined due to changes in communal habits, especially among younger generations (Wang, 2024). Without understanding the cultural themes it conveys, many people prefer to view it as nothing more than amusement (Widiya, 2024). Philosophical ideals passed down through the generations may change as a result of this circumstance (Arief et al., 2024). Thus, in order to chronicle and comprehend the meanings of the Dabus tradition, research is required to understand how cultural communication messages are constructed (Zhang, 2019; Ni'amah & Pratiwi, 2026).

The historical, theological, or performing arts facets of the Dabus tradition have typically been the focus of earlier research. For example, studies on the acculturation of Islam and Malay culture within the Dabus ritual have concentrated primarily on religious practices, ritual purposes, and changes in performance forms across time (Chan et al., 2024). Furthermore, anthropological research on Dabus has emphasized its performative aspect and social role as a technique of bodily invulnerability in traditional performances. Though ritual communication methodologies have been applied to several other traditions to gain a deeper understanding of cultural meanings, there are still few studies that precisely examine the development of cultural communication messages through symbols, language, and social behaviors. This suggests a study gap that provides avenues for additional investigation of the Dabus tradition's cultural communication dimension (Vredenburg, 1973; Kurniawati et al., 2024).

Additionally, the sociocultural backgrounds of the Ternate and Tidore groups differ, which may result in distinct communication message constructions within cultural practices (Abubakar et al., 2025). The historical dynamics and social structures that emerged under the two sultanates—



each with unique social and cultural systems—are inextricably linked to these distinctions (Situmorang & Aslam, 2020). The symbolic meanings that arise in regional cultural practices may be influenced by differences in social development and royal history. The symbols employed in customs serve as communication tools in the framework of cultural rituals, and their meanings are influenced by social interaction and the past experiences of local communities. Comparative studies between Ternate and Tidore are somewhat uncommon, nevertheless, as the majority of cultural communication research in the area still concentrates on a single community or cultural group. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the differences in the development of cultural communication messages within the Dabus tradition, this constraint highlights a significant research gap that has to be filled (Macpherson, 2024; Subuh et al., 2024).

According to Rakhmat and Najmuddin's (2022) study, "Salai Jinn Communication Ritual in Tidore Island Community," the Salai Jinn ritual is a type of cultural communication in the Tidore community that serves as a conduit between people and the supernatural world, especially the jinn, who are thought to represent ancestral spirits (Papa se Tete). The ritual also includes mystical, traditional healing, social, religious, and cultural aspects that are still practiced today. Additionally, the ceremony has social, religious, cultural, metaphysical, and traditional healing aspects that are being practiced today. This tradition reflects a process of cultural acculturation between local Tidore customs and Islamic teachings, allowing it to remain recognized as an integral part of the community's cultural identity without disregarding religious values. Additionally, the ritual's implementation under the leadership of the Sowohi demonstrates a strong social function in strengthening community solidarity, maintaining harmonious relationships between humans and nature, and preserving the local cultural values of the Tidore people. By reflecting a process of cultural acculturation between Islamic teachings and indigenous Tidore customs, the tradition is able to maintain its status as an essential component of the community's cultural identity without compromising religious principles. Additionally, the Sowohi's leadership of the ritual's execution shows a powerful social role in conserving the Tidore people's unique cultural values, fostering community cohesion, and upholding harmonious human-nature ties.

According to Kaddas et al.'s (2025) study, *Understanding Intercultural Encounters: Communication Practices of Bugis and Ternate People in Ternate*, intercultural communication between the Bugis and Ternate communities occurs through processes of adaptation, cultural negotiation, and social interaction based on mutual respect and understanding of cultural differences. The study shows that language, nonverbal expressions, local values, and intercultural communication competence play important roles in fostering harmonious relationships between Bugis migrants and the Ternate community as the host culture. Additionally, everyday interactions reflect a process of cultural acculturation that strengthens social solidarity, tolerance, and harmony within Ternate's multicultural society. The study shows that the development of harmonious relationships between Bugis migrants and the Ternate community as the host culture is significantly influenced by language, nonverbal cues, local values, and intercultural communication skills. Additionally, the relationships formed in daily life demonstrate a process of cultural acculturation that enhances harmony, tolerance, and social solidarity in Ternate's multicultural culture.

The significance of maintaining local culture through interpretive and constructivist methods is emphasized by current challenges in cultural communication studies. According to these perspectives, social contact, community involvement, and symbolic representation within cultural practices all contribute to the production of meaning in culture. Constructivist theory holds that



communities actively participate in creating cultural narratives and meanings rather than just being passive consumers of cultural messages. This method allows researchers to understand how cultural messages are created and passed down through generations in the context of local customs through shared experiences, social activities, and symbols. However, the growth of digital media offers new ways to record and share culture through community involvement and interactive visual communication. However, due to adaptation processes to new communication formats and digital experiences that deviate from traditional practices, the use of digital media also has the potential to change perceptions of cultural meanings (Pereda et al., 2025; Zhang & Yim, 2025; Zhang & Xu, 2024).

It is clear from the discussion above that additional in-depth and contextual research is still required to fully understand how cultural communication messages are constructed within the Dabus tradition. Understanding how the Dabus tradition's symbols, rituals, and social behaviors influence the communities in Ternate and Tidore's cultural communication system is crucial. Additionally, by providing more methodical and scientific interpretations, this study can support initiatives to protect regional culture (Zhang et al., 2026; Alfarab et al., 2025).

The research gap lies in the limited number of studies comparing the construction of cultural communication messages within the Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative analysis of symbolic meanings and message-construction processes through social interactions within the distinct local contexts of both regions. This study contributes to the advancement of cultural communication scholarship, the preservation of local traditions, and the strengthening of community identity in North Maluku.

The following formulation of the research question can be made in light of the background and the identified research gap: 1. How does the Dabus tradition in Ternate and Tidore demonstrate the creation of cultural communication messages? 2. What cultural connotations and symbols are incorporated into the Dabus tradition's application? 3. How does the Dabus ceremony convey cultural meanings to the community? 4. How do the Dabus traditions in Ternate and Tidore construct cultural communication messages differently and similarly?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand subjective experiences, meaning-making, and the construction of cultural communication messages in the Dabus tradition in Ternate and Tidore. According to Creswell (2010), qualitative research aims to collect descriptive data in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of social processes. Meanwhile, Moustakas (1994) explains that the phenomenological approach emphasizes understanding individuals' lived experiences within their social context. Therefore, this study adopted an emic approach, which seeks to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of individuals directly involved in the practice of Dabus.

This approach enabled the researcher to explore in depth the experiences of performers and community members concerning symbols, Islamic values, cultural identity, and the process of message transmission in each stage of the ritual. The study was conducted in Ternate City and Tidore Islands City, North Maluku, because the Dabus tradition remains alive and continues to be transmitted within the socio-religious practices of the local communities. Fieldwork was carried out over three months in 2024, covering the stages of preparation, data collection, verification, and confirmation of findings with the informants.



The study involved six informants, consisting of two key informants and four supporting informants. The informants were selected purposively based on the relevance of their experience and knowledge of the Dabus tradition. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling enables researchers to select informants who have the most comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. The key informants were the main practitioners who possessed in-depth knowledge of the history, ritual stages, symbols, and values embedded in the Dabus tradition. Meanwhile, the supporting informants included members of Dabus groups, community leaders, religious leaders, and community members who had been directly involved in the implementation of the tradition.

The inclusion criteria required informants to reside or be actively involved in activities in Ternate and Tidore, have knowledge of Dabus, be directly involved in ritual practices, be able to explain their experiences and symbolic meanings, be at least 18 years old, and be willing to participate voluntarily. Informants who did not complete the interview process or withdrew from the study were excluded from the final analysis. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), combining multiple data collection methods enables researchers to obtain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data were collected through direct observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The observations focused on the stages of the ritual, symbolic objects, communication, interaction, and community involvement in the Dabus tradition. The observation findings were recorded and documented after obtaining permission. Face-to-face interviews, lasting approximately 45 minutes, explored informants' experiences, motives for involvement, symbolic meanings, Islamic values, cultural identity, and message transmission. With the informants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and followed up when clarification or further data elaboration was required.

The data were analyzed inductively through several stages, namely data organization, comprehensive reading of the transcripts, data reduction, coding, grouping codes into categories, theme identification, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. According to Giorgi (2009), phenomenological analysis aims to identify major themes emerging from human experience and to examine the essence of that experience through in-depth description. The analysis in this study focused on informants' experiences related to the construction, symbols, meanings, and transmission of cultural communication messages in the Dabus tradition. The findings from Ternate and Tidore were then compared to identify similarities and differences in the orientation of meanings and symbols in the two regions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and peer debriefing to enhance the credibility of the research findings.

The study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles. Prior to data collection, each informant was provided with an explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, benefits, and potential risks. Participation was voluntary and confirmed through informed consent. Informants had the right to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study without any consequences. Informants' identities were protected through the use of codes or pseudonyms, while recordings, transcripts, and documentation were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. Photographs and recordings of the ritual were taken only after obtaining permission from the informants and relevant authorities, while respecting the religious values, customs, and cultural norms of the communities in Ternate and Tidore.

Figure 1 below presents the research flowchart based on an explanation of the procedures used.

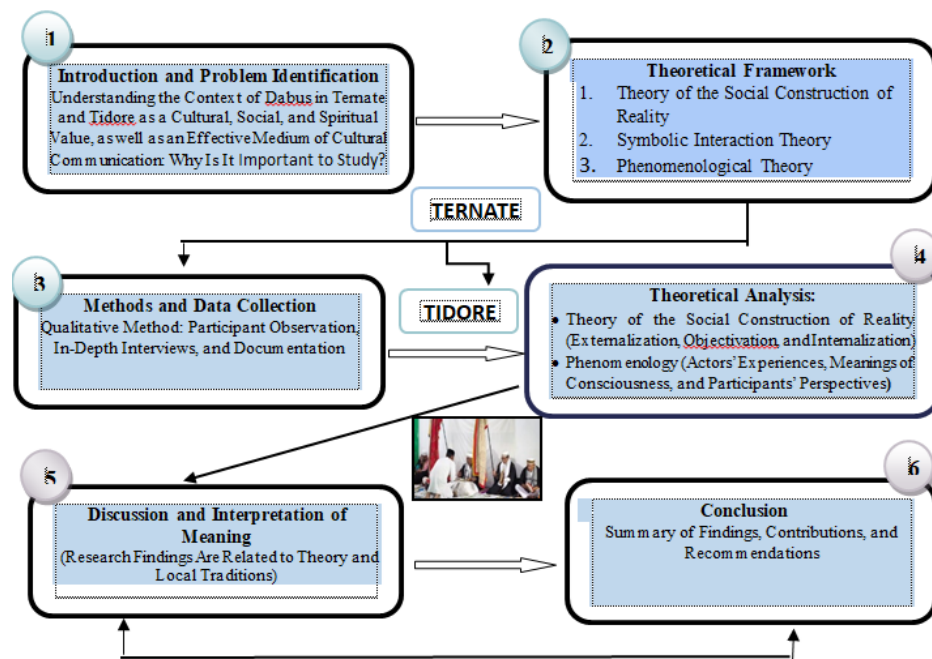


Figure 1. Research Flowchart of the Construction of Meaning in the Dabus Tradition in Ternate and Tidore

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how the Dabus tradition in Ternate and Tidore, two areas with comparable historical backgrounds but different sociocultural traits, constructs cultural communication messages. The study looks at how ritual structures, participant roles, and the meanings of symbols that emerge throughout Dabus rituals in both groups are used to produce religious, symbolic, and social messages. In order to comprehend the process of meaning building, cultural communication and symbolic anthropology approaches are used. This allows for the identification of both comparable and different elements in the transmission of cultural messages. As a result, this discussion not only highlights the role of ritual as a collective communication tool, but it also shows how local social and historical factors affect how messages created within the Dabus tradition in Ternate and Tidore are interpreted and oriented differently.

Construction of Cultural Communication Messages in the Dabus Tradition in Ternate and Tidore

Ritual symbols with deep religious and social connotations are how the Dabus tradition in Ternate and Tidore constructs cultural communication messages. Every phase of the ritual, from the recitation of dhikr to the use of ancient instruments to acts of bodily invulnerability, creates cultural messages through symbolic gestures rather than spoken words. Research on the Tidore community's Dabus ritual highlights that it is a type of ritual art that is supported by various groups and that it evolves in line with the social dynamics of the community. As a result, communication styles adapt to the cultural environment of the area (Kader, 2018). The ritual communication theory of James

W. Carey, which sees communication as a process of exchanging meaning through symbols and group participation in cultural rituals, is consistent with this conclusion.

In the Dabus/Badabus ritual, the recitations used are not limited to general dhikr, but also include a sequence of ratib, wirid, tawassul, shalawat, and prayers led by a Syekh or Jou Guru. In the Taji Besi tradition, the ritual recitation may begin with the offering of Al-Fatihah to the syekh or teacher, followed by Qur'anic wirid, supplications addressed through Sufi figures such as Rifa'i or Syekh Abdul Qadir Jailani, and praises upon the Prophet. One verse mentioned as the opening of the wirid is Qur'an Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 28, which concerns the tranquility of the heart through remembrance of Allah. At the final stage of the ritual, the recitation may be concluded with Qur'anic verses, such as Surah Al-Kahf verses 107–110.

Table 1. Differences in symbols between Ternate and Tidore.

Symbolic aspect	Ternate	Tidore
Term for the main performer	Led by a Joguru, who is addressed as Sheikh during the ritual.	Led by a Jou Guru/Sheikh, khalifah, or Qur'anic teacher who possesses mastery of Sufi order teachings.
Ritual recitation	The wirid and dhikr are described as combining Ternate and Arabic, with some parts regarded as esoteric or confidential.	It is more commonly referred to as Ratib Taji Besi and is accompanied by responsive dhikr, poetic chants, prayers, and tahlilan.
Primary medium	The Dabus implements consist of sharp iron instruments, frame drums, cikir, a dhikr manuscript, incense, charcoal, and an incense burner.	Iron spikes, frame drums, incense, a white bowl filled with water, a pillow, and lefo, namely a book or manuscript of ritual practices.
Symbol of purity	The Sheikh wears a white robe and sits facing the qibla, while the participants follow the prayers and dhikr.	The performers must be Muslims and in a state of ritual ablution; the white bowl filled with water is interpreted as a symbol of purity.
Social symbol	Dabus is associated with vows, communal celebrations, and Islamic traditions that have developed in Ternate.	Badabus in Tuguwaji, Tidore, is strongly understood as a symbol of social fellowship, family unity, prayers for the deceased, and thanksgiving ceremonies for pilgrimage, graduation, or a new house.
Local distinctive characteristics	Emphasis is placed on the structure of the Rifa'iyyah Sufi order and the dhikr manuscript that accompanies the ritual.	It contains distinctive local elements such as sarabati, a beverage made from lime, ginger, and palm sugar that is consumed after the ritual.

Additionally, symbolic contact between ritual performers and the community shapes cultural communication messages within the Dabus tradition. Traditional clothing, prayers, physical gestures, and musical instruments are examples of symbols that serve as media for spreading messages like bravery, religion, and social cohesion. According to the symbolic interactionism viewpoint, social meaning is created by interactions between people using symbols that are common to their culture. According to research on Ternate's traditional rites, symbols are crucial for fostering relationships between the community and customary leaders as well as for generating collective meaning (Macpherson, 2024). As a result, the Dabus tradition strengthens the cultural identity of

the communities in Ternate and Tidore by acting as both a performance and a venue for symbolic communication.

The findings show that religious, social, and historical messages constitute the three main categories that shape cultural communication messages within the Dabus tradition. Religious messages are reflected in the recitation of prayers, dhikr, ratib, tahlil, salawat, and Qur'anic verses that accompany the procession. In several references on Taji Besi/Dabus, ritual recitations may include the dedication of Al-Fatihah to the sheikh, Qur'anic wirid, supplications associated with Rifa'i or Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani, salawat upon the Prophet, and QS. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 28, which concerns the tranquility of the heart through remembrance of Allah. This is also consistent with accounts stating that the Dabus procession is performed through specific ratib and wirid within tahlilan and is led by a joguru or sheikh (Bakti et al., 2021).

Based on the interview, the informant stated that before the performance began, they recited tahlil, salawat, and prayers for safety (Informant P1, Dabus practitioner).

The quotation indicates that religious messages in Dabus are conveyed not only through verbal expressions, but also through ritual actions that affirm self-surrender to God, prayers for safety, and the belief that human strength remains under Allah's authority.

The social category is reflected in the involvement of the community, families, religious figures, joguru, and ritual practitioners in preparing and carrying out the procession. The Dabus tradition in Tidore is described as a ritual art form supported by groups with different functions; therefore, this practice does not stand as an individual act, but as a collective community activity.

Based on the interview, the informant stated that community members contributed by helping to prepare the venue, ritual equipment, food and beverages, and by attending the ritual as an expression of communal solidarity and togetherness (Informant M1, community member).

This quotation reinforces that the social message in the Dabus tradition lies in cooperation, solidarity, respect for ritual leaders, and community involvement in preserving the continuity of the tradition.

The historical category is reflected in the use of ritual symbols such as sharp iron instruments or alwan, tambourines, banners, lefo or books of remembrance, incense, water, pillows, and sarabati. In sources on Taji Besi, alwan is described as a sharp iron instrument measuring approximately 30–40 cm, tambourines are used to accompany the recitation of zikir, while lefo contains prayers, zikir, and the genealogies of the auliya. These symbols record the historical traces of Dabus' relationship with Islam, Sufi orders, reverence for spiritual teachers, and ancestral heritage.

Based on the interview, the informant explained the origins of Dabus, the meaning of sharp iron instruments, lefo, banners, and the ritual's connection with ancestors and former teachers (Informant R1, ritual leader).

The quotation links historical messages to the community's collective memory. Dabus is understood not merely as a performance of bodily invulnerability, but as a medium for transmitting values, local Islamic history, and reverence for predecessors.

Additionally, ritual language and nonverbal cues influence how cultural communication messages are constructed within the Dabus tradition. Movement patterns, musical rhythms, and body gestures all function as communication tools that transmit certain symbolic meanings. Cultural signals are frequently embedded in symbols and ritual activities that represent community identity and collective values, according to ethnographic communication studies of Maluku cultural rituals

(Ridwan et al., 2020). Therefore, rather than just exchanging words, communication in the Dabus tradition stresses latent meanings that are perceived through shared cultural experiences.

The results also show that the Dabus tradition's cultural communication messages are created collectively and passed down through the generations. The Dabus tradition functions as a method for maintaining local culture because community participation from a variety of age groups acts as a medium for the transmission of cultural values. Cross-generational involvement in cultural rituals is a crucial strategy for preserving the continuation of community identity and values, according to studies on ritual communication. As a result, the Dabus tradition can be viewed as a means of cultural exchange that enhances the communities of Ternate and Tidore's collective memory.

All things considered, the Dabus tradition's building of cultural communication messages in Ternate and Tidore shows that this ritual makes up a sophisticated system of cultural communication. Symbols, social interaction, and collective community engagement are the means by which religious, social, and cultural identity messages are created. In cultural communication, the interpretative method highlights that meaning is generated through social experiences and symbolic exchanges within society rather than being fixed. These results show that the Dabus tradition serves as a means of communication that consistently conveys spiritual ideals, social solidarity, and local identity in addition to being a cultural performance.

Ritual Symbols and Dabus Performances as a Medium of Cultural Communication are illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Ritual Symbols and Dabus Performances as a Medium of Cultural Communication

The discussion of how the Dabus tradition constructs cultural communication messages through ritual symbols, the recitation of dhikr, the use of traditional instruments, and displays of bodily invulnerability that reflect the community's religious and social values is supported by Figure 2.

Symbols and Cultural Meanings Embedded in the Implementation of the Dabus Tradition

A variety of cultural symbols are used in the Dabus tradition's application to convey religious principles, bravery, and social unity. In addition to being ritual components, symbols like sharp objects, prayer recitation, and particular body motions are interpreted as symbols of the community's faith in spiritual strength and heavenly protection. According to the viewpoint of symbolic anthropology, culture is a system of meaning that is embodied in symbols that are passed down through the generations and utilized by communities to make sense of their everyday experiences. This perspective is consistent with symbolic theory, which holds that ritual symbols serve to foster societal motivation, emotion, and value orientation, allowing cultural traditions to endure in social interactions (Sugiharti et al., 2022).

In the Dabus culture, symbols can have spiritual and cosmological connotations. The sequence of opening rites, the use of sharp weapons, and practices of bodily invulnerability are frequently seen as emblems of self-purification and defense against supernatural forces. According to ethnographic research on the cosmological aspect of Dabus, the performance is viewed as a symbolic area that links the material and spiritual realms, where rituals are carried out in order to obtain consent and spiritual support for protection or healing. According to Rahman (2016), these symbols show the presence of a belief system that views Dabus as a conduit for communication between transcendent forces and mankind.

The perspective of symbolic anthropology, which holds that culture is a system of symbols that groups employ to create meaning and uphold life values, is theoretically consistent with these findings. Symbols in rituals are interpreted as communication media that convey messages about religion, society, and collective identity in a variety of cultural communication studies. According to studies on cultural communication symbols in regional customs, symbols can be things, behaviors, or words that serve to uphold cultural identity and foster social cohesion. As a result, symbols in the Dabus tradition are understood both individually and collectively as ways to maintain the tradition and strengthen social cohesiveness (Li & Champadaeng, 2025).

Additionally, the Dabus tradition's social role as a means of bolstering community identification is connected to its symbolic meanings. Symbols of social hierarchy and collective solidarity are reflected in the position of ritual leaders, the performance's framework, and community involvement. According to anthropological research on Dabus in Indonesia, this performance serves to show the group's bravery, invulnerability, and spiritual legitimacy, all of which ultimately aid in the formation of a collective identity among its supporters. As a result, the Dabus tradition is viewed as a symbolic system that incorporates religious, social, and cosmological elements into communal life overall in addition to being a cultural performance (Vredenburg, 1973).

Figure 3 illustrates the Dabus tradition's cosmological and spiritual meanings.



Figure 3. The Dabus Tradition's Cosmological and Spiritual Significance

The cosmological and spiritual aspects of the Dabus tradition, which are viewed as a means of communication between people and transcendent forces through ritual symbols and practices of corporeal invulnerability, are explained in Figure 3.

The Process of Conveying Cultural Messages through the Dabus Ritual in the Community

The Dabus ritual's use in society to transmit cultural messages shows that significant ritual structures, symbols, and actions are just as important as words in communication. Ritual is viewed

as a type of symbolic communication that allows communities to convey their shared ideas from the standpoint of cultural communication. According to James W. Carey, communication in the ritual view is more than just information transmission; it is a process of communicating meaning and upholding shared ideas within a society. The Dabus ritual serves as a participation medium in this setting that promotes unity, solidarity, and the perpetuation of cultural values that have been passed down through the centuries. The community's collective participation in the ritual's phases, including the opening, prayer recitation, and symbolic performances with social and religious connotations, facilitates the transmission of messages (Subtil, 2014).

Every phase of the Dabus ritual has an organized communicative role, according to the research findings. While the core stage of the ritual displays symbols that represent messages of spirituality, bravery, and protection, the first stage is used to communicate goals and cultural legitimacy. Ritual can be viewed as a cultural text that needs careful interpretation, according to Clifford Geertz's symbolic anthropology perspective, which emphasizes that culture is a "web of meanings" read through symbols. Physical gestures, prayers, and the instruments used in the Dabus rite serve as symbols that convey religious and moral lessons. This procedure shows that cultural meaning is created by the community's collective interpretation of ritual symbols rather than emerging naturally (Costa, 2023).

Victor Turner's ritual theory, which highlights that rituals comprise stages of separation, liminality, and reintegration, can also be used to evaluate the process of communicating cultural messages. Participants in rituals are in a transitional state during the liminal period, which permits the deep assimilation of cultural beliefs. This stage is visible in the primary performance of the Dabus ritual, which displays emblems of collective togetherness and spiritual strength. At this point, members feel a strong sense of unity and social boundaries are blurred, making it easier for the group to accept and assimilate cultural teachings. This procedure demonstrates that ritual serves as a tool for social change and cultural identity reinforcement in addition to being a performance (Lan, 2018).

Within society, ritual communication serves as a means of maintaining cultural values. Research on ritual communication highlights that ritual is symbolic action in social contexts that conveys certain signals associated with a community's worldview. In reality, communication takes place in a contextual and cultural way since only the participating group fully comprehends the symbols ingrained in rituals. Therefore, the Dabus ritual serves as a vehicle of cultural transmission that consistently passes down religious beliefs, social solidarity, and collective identity from one generation to the next, rather than just serving as traditional amusement (Lamabawa et al., 2025).

Similarities and Differences in the Construction of Cultural Communication Messages between the Dabus Traditions in Ternate and Tidore

The role of ritual as a symbolic communication medium for expressing religious values, social solidarity, and cultural legitimacy is crucial to the production of cultural communication messages in the Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore. Sequences of dhikr, prayers, the use of traditional instruments, and symbolic acts that denote bravery and spiritual protection are all used in these locations to generate cultural meanings. According to James W. Carey's ritual communication perspective, communication is meant to uphold shared values and ideas through shared symbolic practices rather than only provide information. The Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore, which emphasize ritual as a way to jointly reproduce cultural meaning, reflect this



methodology. Symbols, traditional music, and ritual acts serve as media for the development of meaning and social connections within the community, according to research on Ternate's cultural traditions (Macpherson, 2024).

Along with these parallels, it was discovered that the Dabus tradition of Tidore places more focus on group structure and the role of performance art in the social dynamics of the community when constructing cultural messages. In order to create cultural messages through organized social coordination, the Dabus ritual in Tidore clearly divides roles among the ritual leader, performers, and followers. According to a cultural anthropology perspective, this role structure is a reflection of a group communication process that strengthens community ties. According to research on the Dabus tradition in Tidore society, shifts in social dynamics and artistic function have an impact on how cultural messages are delivered during rituals (Kader, 2018).

On the other hand, oral tradition and the incorporation of regional Islamic values are more closely linked to the creation of cultural messages in the Dabus tradition of Ternate. Prayers, symbolic expressions, and ritual acts that show how religious rules are internalized in community life are ways that cultural communication signals are sent. Cultural meaning is created through repeated social encounters, according to Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionist theory. This is consistent with research on Ternate's oral traditions, which shows that religious symbols used throughout generations in cultural communication serve to uphold societal norms and ethics (Abdullah, 2023).

The orientation of the manufactured cultural messages is another distinction. While the Dabus tradition in Tidore emphasizes the performance dimension as a manifestation of community identity, the Dabus tradition in Ternate tends to emphasize religious themes and spiritual legitimacy as the core of cultural communication. According to Clifford Geertz's symbolic anthropology approach, ritual is a system of symbols that conveys a community's worldview. In this environment, the religious connotations of the Dabus symbols are retained in both locations, but their interpretations vary depending on the social context of each group. These variations in perception show how cultural signals are constructed contextually and under the impact of regional social institutions (Sigdel, 2018).

The Dabus traditions in Ternate and Tidore are comparable in how they build cultural communication messages because ritual serves as a vehicle for spreading social cohesion and religious ideals. The emphasis on meaning, participant structure, and symbolic orientation produced within ritual activities, however, show the distinctions. These results support Stuart Hall's theory of cultural communication, which holds that cultural messages are created through encoding and decoding processes in line with the community's social environment. As a result, the Dabus customs of Ternate and Tidore show that cultural transmission is not uniform but rather tailored to the local identity, history, and social context of each group (Hall et al., 1980).

The following presents a more specific comparison of the similarities and differences in the construction of cultural communication messages between the Dabus traditions in Ternate and Tidore, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Similarities and Differences in the Construction of Cultural Communication Messages between the Dabus Traditions in Ternate and Tidore.

Aspect	Similarities between Ternate and Tidore	Distinctive Features of Ternate	Distinctive Features of Tidore
Ritual Stages	Both begin with preparation, the recitation of prayers/dhikr, the performance of attractions, and closing rituals.	It is similarly initiated with preparation, followed by the recitation of prayers/dhikr, the performance of ritual attractions, and a closing stage.	It is more strongly characterized as a ritual procession bound by structured sequencing, spiritual authorization, and reverence toward previous teachers.
Actors	Involves Dabus practitioners, ritual leaders, religious figures, family members, and the wider community.	The role of performers and artistic groups is more prominently reflected in the presentation of the performance.	The role of performers and artistic groups is more prominently reflected in the presentation of the performance.
Symbols	Both use ritual symbols such as sharp iron objects, prayers, dhikr, tambourines, and ritual attributes.	Symbols are more commonly interpreted as markers of bravery, strength, and cultural identity.	Symbols such as alwan, lefo, panji, incense, water, pillows, and sarabati are more strongly interpreted as spiritual and historical heritage.
Meaning	Both contain religious, social, and historical messages.	Cultural meaning and local identity are more prominently emphasized.	Spiritual meanings, Sufism (tarekat), reverence for ancestors, and connections to previous spiritual teachers are more strongly emphasized.
Social Function	Both strengthen togetherness, solidarity, and the preservation of tradition.	Serves as a medium for cultural expression and community identity.	Serves as a medium for transmitting values, collective memory, and reverence for local religious traditions.
Message Orientation	Both convey religious, social, and cultural messages.	The message orientation tends to emphasize cultural representation, bravery, and ritual entertainment.	The message orientation tends to emphasize spirituality, safety, ritual legitimacy, and the historical continuity of local Islam.

These differences occur because Dabus in Ternate and Tidore developed within socio-cultural contexts that are not entirely identical. In Ternate, Dabus appears more as an expression of cultural art that represents community identity, bravery, and ritual performance. Meanwhile, in Tidore, Dabus is more strongly understood as a ritual practice closely connected to local Islamic teachings, Sufi orders, reverence for the joguru, ancestors, and previous teachers.

CONCLUSION

In the Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore, ceremonial symbols, social interactions, and collective community participation are used to construct cultural communication messages that reflect religious, social, historical, bravery-related, social cohesion, and communal identity values. These messages are conveyed nonverbally through prayers, movements, music, sharp weapons, and symbolic performances that represent belief in divine protection and the relationship between the

material and spiritual worlds. Thus, the Dabus tradition is not merely a performance but also functions as a system of symbolic communication that strengthens social cohesion, cultural order, and communal legitimacy, while serving as a medium for transmitting spiritual values, social solidarity, and cultural identity across generations.

Through ritual stages, actions, and collective community participation imbued with religious and social meanings, the Dabus traditions of Ternate and Tidore symbolically convey cultural messages. The perspectives of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner indicate that symbols, ritual phases, and liminal experiences play a role in the internalization of cultural values, while James W. Carey emphasizes ritual as a medium for the collective communication of meaning. Although both traditions function as media for communicating religious values, social solidarity, cultural legitimacy, and collective identity, the Dabus tradition in Ternate places greater emphasis on oral tradition and the integration of religious values into ritual practices, whereas the Dabus tradition in Tidore more strongly highlights group organization and performative dimensions as representations of communal identity. These differences demonstrate that cultural messages within the Dabus tradition are constructed contextually in accordance with the social dynamics of the community. Thus, Dabus serves as a flexible system of cultural communication that strengthens social cohesion across generations and continuously transmits values, identity, and collective meaning.

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