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Beyond Rainmaking: Cultural Education and Collective Learning in the Brendung Ritual of Indonesian Agrarian Society

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Brendung ritual in Langensari Village, Pekalongan, Indonesia, as a community-based social learning system. Although Brendung is traditionally performed as a rainmaking ritual during periods of drought, its functions extend beyond ecological and spiritual purposes. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving ritual leaders, musicians, community elders, and youth participants. The findings show that Brendung serves as an informal learning environment where cultural knowledge, ritual competencies, social values, and local identity are transmitted across generations through participation. Collective musical practices and communal engagement facilitate experiential learning based on observation, imitation, collaboration, and direct involvement. The ritual also reproduces values of cooperation, solidarity, respect for tradition, and awareness of human–nature relationships. Furthermore, participation contributes to cultural identity formation and strengthens community resilience by sustaining social cohesion and cultural continuity. The study proposes the Brendung Social Learning Model, which explains the relationship between ritual participation, collective musical practice, experiential learning, cultural transmission, identity formation, and cultural sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

In many traditional societies, cultural continuity is not maintained solely through formal educational institutions but also through various communal practices embedded in everyday life. Rituals represent one of the most important cultural mechanisms through which knowledge, values, beliefs, and collective identities are reproduced across generations. Beyond their religious or ceremonial dimensions, rituals function as social spaces where community members learn, participate, and internalize shared cultural meanings. Through repeated participation in ritual activities, individuals acquire cultural competencies, social norms, and practical knowledge that enable them to become members of a particular cultural community (Merriam, 1964; Blacking, 1973).

From the perspective of social learning, ritual activities provide opportunities for observation, participation, imitation, and experiential engagement. Learning occurs not through formal instruction but through direct involvement in culturally meaningful practices. In this context,

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rituals can be understood as forms of informal education that facilitate the transmission of collective knowledge and cultural memory within communities (Rice, 2003; Titon, 2015). Such learning processes are particularly significant in traditional agrarian societies, where local knowledge concerning environmental adaptation, social cooperation, and cultural values is often preserved through communal activities rather than institutionalized educational systems.

One cultural tradition that reflects this educational dimension is the Brendung ritual practiced by the people of Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Indonesia. Brendung is traditionally performed during prolonged drought periods as a communal rainmaking ritual. The ritual incorporates collective musical performances using simple household utensils such as clay water containers, buckets, trays, metal cans, and wooden slit drums. Accompanied by ritual chants and symbolic performances, the community gathers to collectively express hopes for rainfall and environmental balance. Although Brendung is commonly understood as a ritual response to ecological challenges, it simultaneously functions as a social arena where cultural knowledge, values, and collective experiences are continuously reproduced and transmitted among community members.

Within ethnomusicological scholarship, music is widely recognized not merely as an artistic product but as a social practice embedded within cultural life (Stone, 2010; Nettl, 2005). Musical participation often involves forms of embodied learning through which individuals acquire skills, coordination, social awareness, and shared understandings by actively engaging in performance. Learning emerges through collective participation rather than individual instruction, allowing music to function as an important medium of socialization and community formation (Rice, 2003). Furthermore, cross-cultural studies have demonstrated that musical engagement contributes to the development of cooperation, synchronization, and social cohesion among participants (Trehub, 2015).

The educational significance of ritual music becomes particularly evident in community-based traditions where musical knowledge is transmitted through practice rather than formal training. In such contexts, younger generations learn not only how to perform musical patterns but also how to understand the cultural meanings, social responsibilities, and communal values embedded within performance practices. Consequently, musical participation serves as a mechanism through which cultural knowledge becomes embodied and socially shared.

The transmission of cultural knowledge through community participation has received increasing attention within contemporary discussions of cultural education and heritage sustainability. Local knowledge is often preserved through lived experiences, collective practices, and intergenerational interactions rather than through written documentation. Community-based learning enables cultural traditions to remain relevant by continuously adapting to changing social conditions while maintaining their core values (Budiman & Rosala, 2020). At the same time, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage depends heavily on the successful transfer of knowledge from one generation to another through active participation in cultural practices (Hou et al., 2022). Ritual activities therefore function not only as expressions of cultural identity but also as educational processes that facilitate the reproduction of social values and collective memory (Anggrianingsih, 2023).

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between music and ritual in Indonesian cultural traditions. Research on Bettong music has demonstrated how simple musical instruments function as integral components of ritual performance and community participation (Fikri et al., 2021). Similar findings have been reported in studies of Tikapm Telintitn ritual music (Fitri, 2020), Dol music in Bengkulu (Parmadie, 2018), Kangkek music in

the Nyabakng ritual (Nanda, 2024), and traditional healing rituals where music facilitates collective spiritual experiences (Anindita, 2023). These studies collectively highlight the social, symbolic, and ritual functions of music within community life.

In the broader field of ethnomusicology, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of understanding music as part of larger cultural ecosystems and social processes (Irawati, 2020; Cottrell, 2010). Recent studies have also explored the relationship between music, identity formation, and cultural sustainability in diverse cultural contexts (Sembiring, 2024; Dila, 2025). Despite these contributions, most existing research primarily focuses on musical structures, ritual symbolism, performance functions, or cultural meanings. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding ritual performance as a space of social learning, cultural education, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

This limitation reveals an important gap in current scholarship. While previous studies acknowledge the social and cultural significance of ritual music, few have examined how ritual participation facilitates learning processes within communities. Likewise, limited research has investigated how cultural knowledge, ritual competencies, and community values are transmitted across generations through collective musical practices. Consequently, the educational dimensions of ritual participation remain underexplored, particularly within the context of Indonesian agrarian communities.

Addressing this gap, the present study reconceptualizes the Brendung ritual not merely as a rainmaking ceremony but as a community-based learning system through which cultural knowledge, social values, and collective identities are reproduced. By integrating perspectives from social learning, cultural transmission, and ethnomusicology, this study seeks to explain how participation in ritual activities contributes to the formation of cultural understanding and community cohesion. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How does social learning occur within the Brendung ritual? (2) How does the Brendung ritual facilitate the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge? and (3) How does ritual music strengthen community learning processes?

Through these questions, this study contributes to the growing discussion on social learning by demonstrating how cultural rituals function as informal educational environments. Furthermore, it offers a conceptual understanding of ritual participation as a mechanism for sustaining intangible cultural heritage and strengthening community resilience in contemporary society.

Social learning within cultural communities occurs through participation in shared practices that enable individuals to acquire knowledge, values, and social competencies through direct engagement rather than formal instruction. In this perspective, cultural activities function as educational environments where learning is embedded in collective experiences and community interactions (Merriam, 1964; Rice, 2003; Titon, 2015). Such processes are particularly important in traditional societies, where cultural continuity depends on the ability of communities to transmit knowledge across generations.

The transmission of cultural knowledge is closely related to informal education and community-based learning. Local knowledge is often preserved through practice, observation, and participation in cultural activities rather than through written or institutionalized systems. Consequently, cultural traditions serve as mechanisms for transferring social values, collective memory, and cultural identity while supporting the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage (Budiman & Rosala, 2020; Hou et al., 2022). Ritual practices therefore function not only as cultural expressions but also as educational spaces where community members learn how to understand and reproduce shared cultural meanings (Anggrianingsih, 2023).

Within this framework, music plays a significant role as a medium of social learning. Musical participation encourages cooperation, synchronization, embodied learning, and collective engagement, enabling knowledge to be acquired through practice and interaction (Trehub, 2015; Stone, 2010; Nettl, 2005). Moreover, ritual performance provides a context in which music, social participation, and cultural values become integrated into a continuous process of knowledge reproduction (Blacking, 1973; Merriam, 1964; Rice, 2003).

Although previous studies have examined ritual music from perspectives of function, symbolism, performance, and ethnomusicology (Fikri et al., 2021; Fitri, 2020; Parmadie, 2018; Nanda, 2024; Anindita, 2023; Irawati, 2020; Cottrell, 2010; Sembiring, 2024; Dila, 2025), limited attention has been given to understanding ritual as a community-based learning system. Therefore, this study positions the Brendung ritual as a social learning arena through which cultural knowledge, community values, and cultural identity are transmitted and reproduced across generations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to examine the Brendung ritual as a community-based social learning process. Ethnography was selected because the study sought to understand how cultural knowledge, values, and learning experiences are produced, transmitted, and reproduced through participation in ritual activities within their natural social and cultural context. In line with ethnomusicological perspectives, cultural practices were viewed not merely as performances but as lived experiences through which communities construct and sustain shared meanings (Titon, 2015; Nettl, 2005).

The research was conducted in Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, where the Brendung ritual continues to be practiced as a communal response to prolonged drought. The site was selected because the ritual remains actively maintained by local residents and involves broad community participation, making it an appropriate context for examining cultural learning and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement and knowledge of the ritual. They included ritual leaders (pawang), musicians who performed klothekan music, community elders, and youth participants. The inclusion of different participant groups enabled the study to capture diverse perspectives regarding ritual practices, learning experiences, and the transmission of cultural knowledge within the community.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Participant observation was conducted during ritual preparation and implementation to examine patterns of participation, interaction, and learning among community members. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the ritual, particularly regarding cultural knowledge acquisition, value transmission, and community involvement. Documentation in the form of field notes, photographs, audio recordings, and video recordings was used to support data verification and provide a more comprehensive understanding of ritual activities (Rice, 2003).

Data analysis followed a thematic approach. All field notes, interview transcripts, and documentation materials were reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring patterns and meanings. The analysis focused on four interconnected themes: (1) learning processes occurring during ritual participation, (2) forms of community participation and collective learning, (3) mechanisms of cultural knowledge transmission across generations, and (4) the role of ritual in shaping cultural identity. Themes were developed inductively from the data

and interpreted within the broader framework of social learning, cultural transmission, and community-based education.

To enhance trustworthiness, data were triangulated across observation, interview, and documentation sources. Interpretations were continuously compared with participants' accounts and contextual observations to ensure that findings reflected community perspectives and experiences as accurately as possible. Through this approach, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Brendung ritual functions not only as a cultural tradition but also as a living arena of social learning within an agrarian society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Brendung as a Community Learning Arena

Findings from observations and interviews indicate that the Brendung ritual functions not only as a rainmaking tradition but also as a community learning arena through which cultural knowledge, social values, and ritual competencies are transmitted across generations. Learning within the ritual does not occur through formal teaching mechanisms. Instead, it emerges through participation, observation, imitation, and repeated involvement in ritual activities. This pattern reflects a form of community-based social learning in which knowledge is embedded within collective cultural practices rather than separated into structured educational settings (Merriam, 1964; Titon, 2015).

Field observations revealed that community involvement begins long before the ritual performance itself. During the preparation stage, villagers collectively participate in assembling ritual equipment, preparing offerings, constructing the Brendung effigy, and organizing the ritual space. These activities create opportunities for younger participants to observe the procedures performed by older community members. Rather than receiving explicit instruction, younger participants learn by watching, assisting, and gradually taking on more responsibilities. Several participants explained that their understanding of ritual procedures was acquired through years of involvement alongside parents, relatives, and senior community members. This finding suggests that cultural learning in Brendung is experiential and situated within everyday social interactions.

The learning process becomes more visible during the preparation of Mbak Ayu Brendung, the symbolic effigy used in the ritual. Observations showed that the construction of the effigy involves specific knowledge concerning materials, symbolic elements, and ritual requirements. Community elders and experienced ritual practitioners typically guide the process, while younger participants assist in preparing materials and observing each stage of construction. Through repeated participation, younger generations become familiar with the meanings attached to ritual objects, the sequence of ritual actions, and the cultural narratives associated with the tradition. In this context, ritual knowledge is transmitted through practice rather than textual instruction.

A similar pattern was identified in the performance of klothekan music. Participation in musical activities provides an informal setting where community members learn rhythmic coordination, collective discipline, and cooperation. During observations, younger participants frequently positioned themselves near experienced musicians, observing playing techniques and gradually joining the performance. Musical competence appeared to develop through continuous engagement rather than through formal training sessions. Such learning processes demonstrate how cultural skills are acquired through participation in communal activities and

embodied practice, a characteristic commonly found in community-based musical traditions (Rice, 2003).

Interviews with community members further revealed that participation in Brendung is not solely intended to preserve ritual knowledge but also to strengthen social relationships within the village. Participants described the ritual as a communal event that encourages cooperation, mutual assistance, and collective responsibility. These interactions create opportunities for the transmission of social values alongside ritual knowledge. As community members work together throughout the preparation and implementation of the ritual, values such as solidarity, respect for elders, collective commitment, and responsibility toward the community are continuously reinforced. Consequently, learning within the Brendung ritual encompasses both practical competencies and social values.

The findings also demonstrate that learning in Brendung is strongly connected to cultural identity formation. Younger participants who become actively involved in the ritual gradually develop a sense of belonging to their community and cultural heritage. Participation enables them to understand not only how the ritual is performed but also why it remains meaningful within local society. Through engagement with ritual practices, participants encounter cultural narratives concerning environmental balance, communal cooperation, and the relationship between humans and nature. These experiences contribute to the development of shared cultural understandings that extend beyond the ritual event itself.

From a social learning perspective, the Brendung ritual illustrates how communities function as learning environments where knowledge is collectively produced and reproduced. The ritual provides a structured yet informal setting in which cultural competencies, social norms, and community values are learned through direct participation. This finding supports arguments that cultural practices serve as important educational spaces within traditional societies, enabling knowledge transmission outside formal educational institutions (Merriam, 1964; Rice, 2003). Furthermore, the results reinforce Titon's (2015) view that musical and ritual participation should be understood as social processes through which individuals learn to become members of a cultural community.

Therefore, Brendung can be interpreted as a form of informal cultural education embedded within community life. Its significance extends beyond its immediate ritual purpose of requesting rainfall. The tradition also serves as a living mechanism for cultural transmission, collective learning, and social reproduction. Through continued participation, community members acquire ritual knowledge, internalize shared values, and strengthen cultural identity, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability of local cultural heritage. In this sense, Brendung functions as a community learning arena where cultural continuity is maintained through active participation rather than formal instruction.

Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Knowledge

The findings indicate that the continuity of the Brendung ritual depends largely on the successful transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. This transmission does not occur through formal educational structures or written manuals but through sustained participation in ritual activities. Knowledge is embedded within practice and gradually acquired as younger community members engage in various stages of ritual preparation and performance. As a result, the Brendung ritual functions as an intergenerational learning environment where cultural competencies are reproduced through direct experience and social interaction.

One of the most visible forms of knowledge transmission concerns ritual procedures. Observations revealed that younger participants are introduced to the ritual long before they assume active responsibilities. During the preparation stage, they typically assist older community members in collecting materials, preparing ritual objects, arranging offerings, and organizing the ritual space. Through these activities, they become familiar with the sequence of actions required for the ritual and the cultural meanings associated with each component. Rather than being taught through formal explanation, knowledge is often conveyed through demonstration, participation, and repeated exposure to ritual practices.

The construction of Mbak Ayu Brendung provides a clear example of this learning process. Community elders and experienced ritual practitioners generally possess detailed knowledge regarding the materials, symbolic attributes, and procedural requirements involved in creating the effigy. Younger participants commonly begin by observing the process and assisting with simple tasks before gradually learning more complex aspects of preparation. Interviews suggest that knowledge concerning the selection of materials, the arrangement of decorative elements, and the ritual significance of the effigy is accumulated incrementally through years of participation. This pattern reflects a learning process grounded in observation and practice rather than formal instruction.

A similar mechanism was observed in the preparation of ritual offerings and the performance of ritual chants. Community members involved in these activities frequently rely on collective memory and inherited knowledge passed down through family and community networks. Younger participants learn appropriate procedures by accompanying older practitioners and participating in ritual preparations over extended periods. In many cases, participants described their knowledge not as something explicitly taught but as something gradually understood through involvement in recurring ritual events. Such findings suggest that cultural transmission within Brendung relies heavily on experiential learning and social immersion.

Intergenerational transmission is also evident in the domain of musical practice. The performance of klothekan music requires familiarity with rhythmic patterns, ensemble coordination, and performance etiquette. Observations showed that younger participants often begin as spectators before gradually joining the ensemble in supportive roles. Experienced musicians frequently model performance techniques, while younger players learn through observation, imitation, and repeated participation. Formal musical instruction was rarely observed. Instead, competence develops through collective practice, where learning occurs within the performance setting itself. This process corresponds with broader understandings of traditional musical transmission in which knowledge is embedded in social participation and embodied experience (Johnson, 1995; Kartomi, 1990).

Beyond technical competencies, the transmission process also involves the transfer of cultural meanings and social values. Interviews with community elders revealed a shared concern regarding the importance of maintaining the ritual as part of local cultural heritage. Participation in Brendung introduces younger generations to ideas about collective responsibility, respect for community traditions, and the relationship between human life and environmental conditions. These values are communicated not only through verbal explanations but also through participation in communal activities that require cooperation and mutual support.

The findings further demonstrate that cultural transmission within Brendung is not a one-directional process from older to younger generations. While elders play an important role as custodians of ritual knowledge, younger participants actively interpret, negotiate, and reproduce cultural meanings within contemporary social contexts. This dynamic interaction

enables the ritual to remain meaningful while adapting to changing social circumstances. Consequently, cultural continuity is achieved not through the static preservation of tradition but through ongoing participation and reinterpretation across generations.

From a social learning perspective, the Brendung ritual illustrates how cultural knowledge is sustained through community engagement rather than institutionalized instruction. Ritual procedures, musical practices, symbolic meanings, and social values are transmitted through participation in shared cultural experiences. These findings support the view that cultural traditions function as important mechanisms of intergenerational learning, enabling communities to reproduce knowledge and identity over time. In the context of Brendung, intergenerational transmission is therefore not merely a process of preserving ritual practices but also a means of sustaining cultural memory, community cohesion, and the long-term continuity of local cultural heritage.

Participation and Collective Learning

The findings demonstrate that participation constitutes the central mechanism through which learning occurs within the Brendung ritual. Unlike formal educational settings that rely on structured instruction, learning in Brendung emerges through active involvement in communal activities. Community members acquire knowledge, skills, and cultural understanding by engaging directly in ritual preparations, musical performances, and collective interactions. This process illustrates a form of collective learning in which knowledge is constructed through shared experiences rather than transmitted through explicit teaching alone (Rice, 2003).

Field observations revealed varying levels of participation among community members, ranging from ritual leaders and experienced musicians to younger participants and general villagers. Despite these differences, the ritual provides opportunities for individuals to contribute according to their abilities and experience. Learning therefore occurs within a participatory environment where individuals gradually move from peripheral involvement toward more active roles. Younger participants often begin by observing ritual activities, assisting with logistical preparations, or joining collective work. Over time, repeated involvement enables them to acquire greater competence and confidence in performing ritual-related tasks. This progression suggests that participation itself functions as a pathway through which cultural knowledge becomes accessible and meaningful.

The learning process observed in Brendung is closely associated with observation and imitation. During both preparation and performance stages, less experienced participants frequently learn by watching how ritual leaders, musicians, and elders perform specific tasks. Ritual procedures, musical coordination, and social expectations are rarely explained in a systematic manner. Instead, knowledge is embedded within practice and becomes understandable through direct engagement. Such findings indicate that observation functions not merely as passive attendance but as an active learning strategy through which participants interpret and internalize culturally appropriate behaviors.

Imitation further strengthens this process. In musical performances, for example, younger participants often reproduce rhythmic patterns demonstrated by experienced players. Similar patterns were observed during ritual preparations, where participants learned appropriate procedures by following the actions of others. However, imitation in this context should not be understood as simple replication. Observations suggest that participants gradually adapt and refine their understanding through repeated participation, allowing them to develop practical competence while simultaneously interpreting the cultural significance of their actions.

Consequently, learning becomes both behavioral and interpretive, involving the acquisition of skills alongside the understanding of cultural meanings.

Another important finding concerns the collaborative nature of learning within the ritual. The successful implementation of Brendung depends on collective effort, requiring coordination among individuals with different roles and responsibilities. Preparation of ritual objects, arrangement of offerings, musical performance, and management of ritual activities are all carried out through cooperation rather than individual action. This collaborative structure creates an environment where learning occurs through interaction and mutual dependence. Participants not only learn from experienced community members but also learn with one another through shared problem-solving, communication, and collective participation.

The significance of collective learning extends beyond the acquisition of ritual knowledge. Participation in Brendung contributes to the development of social competencies that are important for community life. Through repeated involvement, participants learn how to coordinate actions, negotiate responsibilities, respect social roles, and work toward common goals. These competencies are not formally articulated as educational objectives, yet they emerge consistently through participation in communal activities. In this sense, the ritual serves as a practical setting where cultural learning and social learning become inseparable.

From an analytical perspective, these findings support the argument that learning within traditional communities is often situated within social practice rather than formal educational institutions (Rice, 2003; Trehub, 2015). The Brendung ritual demonstrates that cultural knowledge is not merely possessed by individuals but is collectively maintained and reproduced through participation. Learning occurs because individuals become involved in a community of practice where knowledge, skills, and values are continually enacted and shared.

Therefore, participation in Brendung should be understood as more than attendance in a cultural event. It represents an active process of collective learning through which individuals acquire cultural competencies, develop social relationships, and strengthen their understanding of community values. Through observation, imitation, collaboration, and repeated engagement, the ritual creates a learning environment that enables cultural knowledge to remain relevant across generations. This finding reinforces the view that community participation plays a fundamental role in sustaining cultural continuity while simultaneously fostering social cohesion within agrarian societies.

Music as a Pedagogical Medium

The findings indicate that klothekan music functions not only as a ritual accompaniment within the Brendung tradition but also as an important pedagogical medium through which participants acquire practical skills, social competencies, and cultural understanding. Although community members do not explicitly describe musical activities as educational processes, observations suggest that learning is embedded within the act of making music itself. Through participation in collective musical performance, individuals develop competencies that extend beyond technical musicianship and contribute to broader processes of socialization and cultural transmission.

One of the most visible educational dimensions of klothekan music is the development of rhythmic coordination. The ensemble consists of various everyday objects, including boyong, kentongan, buckets, trays, and metal cans, each producing different rhythmic functions within the musical texture. Successful performance requires participants to maintain their respective rhythmic patterns while simultaneously responding to the sounds produced by other players. Observations showed that younger participants initially struggled to maintain rhythmic

consistency, yet gradually improved through repeated participation and interaction with more experienced musicians. This process demonstrates how musical competence is acquired through practice-based learning rather than formal instruction, reflecting the communal nature of knowledge acquisition within traditional musical settings (Johnson, 1995).

Beyond rhythmic competence, participation in klothekan music also cultivates discipline and attentiveness. Unlike individual musical performance, ensemble playing requires participants to synchronize their actions with others and remain attentive to collective timing. During observations, mistakes made by individual players often affected the overall coherence of the performance, prompting participants to continuously monitor and adjust their playing. Such interactions foster an awareness that individual actions carry consequences for the collective outcome. In this sense, musical participation becomes a practical exercise in responsibility, concentration, and self-regulation.

Another important finding concerns the role of music in teaching cooperation. The structure of klothekan performance does not prioritize individual virtuosity but emphasizes collective coordination. Each instrument contributes a specific rhythmic layer that becomes meaningful only when combined with the contributions of other players. No single instrument dominates the ensemble; rather, the musical structure depends upon mutual support and interdependence. This arrangement encourages participants to recognize the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility. Learning therefore occurs not only through mastering one's own part but also through understanding how individual contributions fit within a larger collective framework.

The pedagogical value of klothekan music is further reflected in the development of social synchronization. During performances, participants engage in a continuous process of listening, responding, and adjusting to one another. This interaction creates a shared rhythmic experience that requires collective attention and coordinated action. Previous studies have suggested that musical synchronization can strengthen social bonds and facilitate cooperative behavior among participants (Trehub, 2015). The present findings support this perspective by demonstrating how coordinated musical activity contributes to a sense of togetherness and collective engagement within the Brendung ritual.

Importantly, the educational function of klothekan music extends beyond technical and social skills to include cultural learning. Through participation in musical performance, community members become familiar with the symbolic significance of the ritual and its relationship to local cultural traditions. Learning the music simultaneously involves learning when it should be performed, how it relates to ritual procedures, and why it remains meaningful within community life. Musical knowledge is therefore inseparable from cultural knowledge. This finding aligns with ethnomusicological perspectives that view music as a social and cultural practice through which communities reproduce shared meanings and collective identities (Stone, 2010; Nettl, 2005).

From an analytical perspective, the findings suggest that klothekan music operates as a form of experiential pedagogy embedded within communal practice. Learning occurs through participation, repetition, observation, and interaction rather than through formal teaching strategies. The musical setting provides opportunities for participants to develop coordination, discipline, cooperation, and social synchronization while simultaneously engaging with cultural values and ritual meanings. Consequently, the educational significance of klothekan music lies not merely in the transmission of musical skills but in its capacity to connect individual learning with collective cultural experience.

Therefore, within the Brendung ritual, music can be understood as a pedagogical medium that facilitates multiple forms of learning simultaneously. It teaches participants how to perform together, how to coordinate with others, and how to engage with cultural traditions through embodied practice. By integrating technical competence, social interaction, and cultural understanding, klothekan music contributes to the broader process through which community knowledge and identity are sustained across generations.

Ritual and the Reproduction of Community Values

The findings indicate that the Brendung ritual functions not only as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge and ritual competencies but also as an important mechanism for reproducing community values. Throughout the ritual process, participants engage in activities that reinforce shared norms, collective responsibilities, and cultural principles that shape social life within the community. These values are not conveyed primarily through formal instruction or explicit moral teaching. Instead, they are embedded within participation itself and become meaningful through repeated social interaction and collective experience.

One of the most prominent values observed during the ritual was cooperation. The implementation of Brendung requires the involvement of numerous community members who contribute to different aspects of preparation and performance. Activities such as constructing the Brendung effigy, preparing ritual materials, organizing the performance space, and participating in musical activities are carried out collectively. Observations showed that responsibilities were distributed among participants according to experience, capability, and social roles, creating a collaborative environment where individual contributions supported the success of the ritual as a whole. Through this process, cooperation is not merely discussed as a cultural ideal but enacted as a practical necessity.

Closely related to cooperation is the value of social solidarity. Interviews with participants frequently highlighted the ritual as an occasion that brings community members together regardless of age or social position. During preparations and performances, interactions occurred across generational and social boundaries, creating opportunities for communication and shared participation. These interactions contribute to strengthening social relationships and reinforcing a sense of collective belonging. The ritual therefore functions as a social space where communal bonds are renewed and reaffirmed through direct engagement. This finding supports previous observations that ritual activities often serve as mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion within local communities (Anggrianingsih, 2023).

The ritual also reproduces values associated with respect for cultural traditions. Observations revealed that participants consistently referred to ritual procedures, symbols, and practices as part of a heritage that should be maintained and understood by future generations. Respect for tradition was expressed not only through adherence to ritual sequences but also through the willingness of community members to dedicate time and effort to sustaining the practice. Importantly, this respect should not be interpreted as unquestioning acceptance of the past. Rather, participants appeared to view the ritual as a meaningful cultural resource that connects contemporary community life with inherited cultural experiences. Through participation, younger generations become familiar with the significance of local traditions and their role in maintaining cultural continuity.

Another value reproduced through the Brendung ritual concerns the relationship between humans and the natural environment. As a rainmaking ritual performed during periods of drought, Brendung reflects local understandings of environmental dependence and ecological vulnerability. Interviews suggest that participants perceive the ritual not only as a symbolic

request for rainfall but also as an expression of awareness regarding the importance of environmental balance for community well-being. Participation in the ritual therefore exposes community members to cultural narratives that emphasize the interconnectedness of human life, agricultural sustainability, and natural processes. In this context, the ritual functions as a medium through which ecological values are continually reaffirmed within community life (Budiman, 2025).

From an analytical perspective, the reproduction of these values occurs because ritual participation creates a setting in which cultural principles are experienced collectively rather than communicated abstractly. Community members learn cooperation by working together, solidarity by participating together, respect for tradition by engaging with inherited practices, and environmental awareness by reflecting on the ritual's ecological significance. Consequently, values become embedded in social action and are reproduced through lived experience rather than formal instruction.

These findings suggest that the educational significance of Brendung extends beyond the transmission of procedural knowledge. The ritual also contributes to the reproduction of a shared moral and cultural framework that supports community continuity. In line with broader discussions of cultural learning, values are sustained not through passive inheritance but through active participation in communal practices (Anggrianingsih, 2023; Budiman, 2025). Therefore, Brendung can be understood as a cultural institution through which communities continuously negotiate, reinforce, and transmit the values that underpin collective life. By sustaining cooperation, solidarity, respect for tradition, and awareness of human–nature relationships, the ritual contributes to the long-term resilience of both cultural identity and social cohesion within the community.

Cultural Identity and Community Resilience

The findings suggest that the Brendung ritual contributes not only to the transmission of cultural knowledge and community values but also to the formation of cultural identity and the strengthening of community resilience. Participation in the ritual provides community members with opportunities to engage with shared cultural symbols, collective memories, and inherited traditions that distinguish their community from others. Through this process, Brendung functions as a cultural reference point through which individuals understand their place within a broader social and historical context.

Observations revealed that community members frequently associate the ritual with local heritage and collective belonging. The ritual is widely recognized as a tradition inherited from previous generations and maintained as part of the cultural distinctiveness of Langensari Village. Such perceptions indicate that Brendung is not understood merely as a ceremonial activity but as a representation of communal identity. Participation therefore enables individuals to connect personal experiences with a shared cultural narrative, reinforcing their sense of membership within the community. This finding supports the view that cultural practices play an important role in sustaining collective identities by providing recurring opportunities for communities to enact and reaffirm shared meanings (Hou et al., 2022).

The role of cultural identity becomes particularly visible through intergenerational participation. Throughout the ritual, older and younger generations interact within a common cultural framework, creating continuity between past experiences and contemporary community life. Younger participants are introduced not only to ritual procedures and musical practices but also to the cultural narratives that give meaning to those practices. Through repeated involvement, they become familiar with local histories, collective memories, and

cultural values associated with the ritual. Consequently, cultural identity is not inherited passively but developed through active engagement with community traditions.

Beyond identity formation, the findings indicate that Brendung also contributes to community resilience. In social and cultural contexts, resilience refers to the capacity of communities to maintain continuity, adapt to change, and preserve meaningful social relationships despite evolving circumstances. Observations suggest that the ritual serves as one mechanism through which the community strengthens internal cohesion and collective capacity. The preparation and implementation of the ritual require communication, cooperation, and coordination among community members, reinforcing social networks that remain valuable beyond the ritual context itself.

Interviews further revealed that community members perceive the continuation of Brendung as important despite broader social transformations. Participants acknowledged the influence of modernization, changing lifestyles, and shifting patterns of community participation. However, rather than abandoning the tradition, community members have sought ways to maintain its relevance by encouraging younger generations to participate and by adapting certain practical aspects of implementation without fundamentally altering the ritual's cultural significance. This finding suggests that cultural resilience is not solely dependent on preserving traditions in an unchanged form but also on the community's ability to negotiate continuity and change simultaneously.

The relationship between cultural identity and resilience appears to be mutually reinforcing. A strong sense of cultural belonging encourages participation in collective activities, while continued participation strengthens social relationships and cultural commitment. Through Brendung, community members encounter shared experiences that reinforce trust, reciprocity, and collective responsibility. These social resources contribute to the community's capacity to respond to challenges, whether ecological, social, or cultural. In this sense, the ritual serves not only as a repository of cultural memory but also as a social mechanism that supports community adaptability and continuity.

From an analytical perspective, these findings extend discussions of intangible cultural heritage beyond questions of preservation alone. Cultural sustainability depends not merely on maintaining ritual forms but on sustaining the social processes that allow communities to reproduce meaning and identity over time (Hou et al., 2022). The Brendung ritual illustrates how cultural heritage remains viable when it continues to function as a lived social practice that connects generations and fosters collective engagement. This interpretation is consistent with observations that community-based cultural practices contribute to both identity formation and social resilience by strengthening relationships between individuals, culture, and place (Dila, 2025).

Therefore, Brendung can be understood as more than a ritual response to environmental uncertainty. It serves as a cultural institution through which identity is continually negotiated, affirmed, and transmitted. Simultaneously, it strengthens the social foundations that enable the community to adapt to changing conditions while maintaining continuity with its cultural heritage. Through these interconnected functions, the ritual contributes to the long-term sustainability of both cultural identity and community resilience within the agrarian society of Langensari.

The findings of this study indicate that the Brendung ritual can be understood as an integrated social learning system in which participation, musical practice, cultural transmission, identity formation, and cultural sustainability are interconnected. Rather than functioning solely as a rainmaking ceremony, the ritual creates a sequence of social processes through which knowledge, values, and collective experiences are continuously reproduced within the community. Based on the thematic analysis, a conceptual model is proposed to explain this relationship.

Figure 1. The Brendung Social Learning Model: A Community-Based Framework for Cultural Transmission and Sustainability

The model begins with ritual participation, which represents the entry point for community members into the learning process. Participation involves preparation activities, ritual performance, and communal interaction, creating opportunities for observation, collaboration, and engagement. Through these activities, individuals become involved in collective musical practice, where coordination, rhythmic cooperation, and shared performance experiences occur.

Collective musical practice generates experiential learning because participants learn through doing rather than through formal instruction. Skills such as rhythmic coordination, cooperation, discipline, and social synchronization are acquired through repeated participation in the ritual context. The experiential nature of learning is significant because knowledge becomes embodied within social practice rather than separated into abstract instruction.

Experiential learning then facilitates knowledge transmission across generations. Ritual procedures, musical practices, symbolic meanings, and community values are communicated through participation, observation, imitation, and collaborative interaction. This process allows cultural knowledge to circulate continuously within the community without relying primarily on formal educational institutions.

As knowledge is transmitted, participants develop cultural identity. Engagement with shared traditions, collective memories, and ritual meanings strengthens participants' sense of belonging to the community and reinforces their understanding of local cultural heritage. Identity formation emerges from the ongoing interaction between individuals and communal cultural practices.

Finally, cultural identity contributes to cultural sustainability. When community members identify with and value the tradition, they are more likely to continue participating in, maintaining, and adapting the ritual across changing social conditions. Sustainability therefore depends not only on preserving ritual forms but also on sustaining the social learning processes that support participation and transmission.

The proposed model contributes to social learning scholarship by conceptualizing ritual as a dynamic educational environment rather than merely a ceremonial event. It demonstrates that cultural continuity is maintained through interconnected processes of participation, musical collaboration, experiential learning, and identity formation. In the context of Brendung, the ritual operates simultaneously as a cultural practice, a learning system, and a mechanism for sustaining community resilience and cultural heritage over time.

Implications for Social Learning

The findings of this study offer several implications for the development of social learning scholarship and practice. First, the study demonstrates that learning processes are not confined to formal educational institutions but can emerge organically within community cultural practices. The Brendung ritual illustrates how participation, observation, collaboration, and experiential engagement function as mechanisms through which knowledge, values, and cultural competencies are acquired and reproduced. This finding reinforces perspectives that conceptualize learning as a socially situated process embedded within everyday cultural life rather than solely within structured educational settings (Rice, 2003; Titon, 2015).

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing discussion on community-based social learning by highlighting the role of ritual as a learning environment. Existing studies have frequently examined ritual from religious, symbolic, or performative perspectives, while its educational dimensions have received comparatively less attention. The Brendung case suggests that ritual participation can serve as an integrated learning system where cultural knowledge transmission, value formation, identity construction, and collective participation occur simultaneously. The proposed Brendung Social Learning Model further extends this discussion by explaining the interconnected relationship between ritual participation, collective musical practice, experiential learning, knowledge transmission, cultural identity formation, and cultural sustainability.

The findings also contribute to discussions on cultural learning and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Cultural continuity is often understood as the preservation of traditions, yet the present study indicates that continuity depends primarily on the sustainability of learning processes that enable communities to reproduce cultural meanings across generations. In this sense, cultural heritage should be understood not merely as a collection of inherited practices but as an active learning system maintained through participation and social interaction. This perspective broadens current understandings of how communities sustain intangible cultural heritage over time (Hou et al., 2022).

Practically, the findings suggest that local cultural traditions can serve as valuable resources for community-based education. The learning processes observed in Brendung demonstrate how cultural activities foster cooperation, collective responsibility, cultural awareness, and social cohesion. These characteristics align closely with contemporary efforts to develop contextual and culturally responsive educational approaches. Integrating local cultural practices into educational initiatives may therefore strengthen connections between learning and community life while simultaneously supporting cultural preservation (Budiman & Rosala, 2020).

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of encouraging intergenerational participation in cultural activities. The transmission of cultural knowledge observed in Brendung depends on sustained interaction between older and younger generations. Consequently, programs aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage may benefit from focusing not

only on documentation and preservation but also on creating opportunities for active participation, mentorship, and collaborative cultural engagement. Such approaches can help ensure that cultural knowledge remains meaningful and accessible within changing social contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that social learning, cultural sustainability, and community resilience are closely interconnected. The Brendung ritual demonstrates that cultural traditions can function simultaneously as educational spaces, mechanisms of cultural transmission, and platforms for strengthening social relationships. Recognizing these multiple functions may contribute to more holistic approaches to both social learning research and cultural heritage preservation in contemporary societies.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that the Brendung ritual functions as more than a rainmaking tradition. It operates as a community-based social learning system through which cultural knowledge, ritual competencies, social values, and local identity are transmitted and reproduced across generations. Learning occurs through active participation in ritual preparation, collective musical performance, observation, imitation, and collaboration rather than through formal instruction.

The study shows that intergenerational transmission is sustained through direct engagement in ritual activities, enabling younger community members to acquire procedural knowledge, musical skills, and cultural meanings embedded within the tradition. Simultaneously, participation reinforces community values such as cooperation, solidarity, respect for tradition, and awareness of the relationship between human life and the natural environment. These processes contribute to the formation of cultural identity and support community resilience by strengthening social cohesion and cultural continuity.

Based on the empirical findings, this study proposes the Brendung Social Learning Model, which explains how ritual participation facilitates collective musical practice, experiential learning, knowledge transmission, cultural identity formation, and ultimately cultural sustainability. The model highlights the interconnected relationship between cultural practice and learning processes within community life.

Overall, the study concludes that Brendung represents a form of informal cultural education embedded in everyday social practice. Its continued relevance depends not only on preserving ritual forms but also on sustaining participatory learning processes that enable communities to reproduce knowledge, values, and identity across generations. Consequently, cultural rituals should be understood not merely as heritage objects but as living learning systems that contribute to the long-term sustainability of culture and community life.

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