

# “The Oud in Islamic Contexts: A Comprehensive Systematic Review of Its Historical, Cultural, and Spiritual Significance”

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## ABSTRACT

The study of cultural and artistic expressions in Islamic history has often focused on architecture, calligraphy, and visual arts, while musical traditions such as the Oud remain relatively underexplored despite their deep historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. This gap has limited a comprehensive understanding of how music has shaped Islamic intellectual and cultural identity. To address this issue, the present study aims to investigate the significance of the Oud in Islamic contexts, with particular attention to its historical roots, cultural functions, and spiritual symbolism. A systematic review methodology was employed, drawing on scholarly sources from early Islamic history, hadith literature, and contemporary cultural analyses, alongside thematic organization through summaries, expanded summaries, concept maps, topic expert insights, and emerging themes. The findings reveal that the Oud holds a prominent role within Islamic heritage, functioning not only as a musical instrument but also as a symbolic medium of cultural expression and spiritual reflection. Historical sources highlight its relevance within early Islamic communities, while contemporary scholarship underscores its continued presence in intellectual, ceremonial, and artistic traditions. Topic experts emphasized the Oud's role in cultural practices, philosophical thought, and spiritual cosmology, while emerging themes identified consistent interest in Islamic art, a rising engagement with cultural reinterpretations, and novel explorations of intellectual revival in modernity. The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to broader discussions on Islamic cultural continuity, material heritage, and intellectual history. Practically, it suggests the value of preserving and revitalizing the Oud through digital tools, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary pedagogy. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that the Oud serves as a vital lens for understanding the intersections of history, spirituality, and cultural identity in Islam, offering new frameworks for engaging with Islamic heritage in both historical and modern contexts.

**Keywords**— Oud (ʿūd), Islamic music traditions, Cultural heritage, Islamic history, Spiritual significance

## INTRODUCTION

Music has always been a central feature of human civilization, functioning not only as entertainment but also as a medium of cultural expression, identity formation, and spiritual reflection. Within the Arabic and Islamic worlds, musical instruments have played a particularly significant role in preserving traditions and articulating social values, with the oud standing out as one of the most prominent instruments in these contexts. Historically, the oud is associated with early Islamic society, with some sources attributing its introduction in the Hijaz to Nadr b. Harith, a Meccan merchant. However, this claim is contested, as it does not appear in early Islamic texts and only emerges in musicological records from the mid-third century onwards, raising questions about the reliability of its documented origins (Uslu, 2023). This problem of fragmented and debated historical evidence has limited our understanding of the oud's true beginnings and its assimilation into Islamic culture. Past studies have shed light on cultural exchanges within Islamic societies, often focusing on material culture such as perfumes and incense, which were widely adopted after the Muslim conquests and became embedded in both daily practices and spiritual symbolism (Zohar & Lev, 2013; López-Sampson & Page, 2018). However, while these works provide valuable insights into cultural integration, they do not sufficiently address the oud's

historical, cultural, and spiritual significance, leaving a notable research gap.

To address this gap, the aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive systematic review of the oud in Islamic contexts by analyzing the research area, constructing a concept map to identify connections between themes, engaging with topic experts where relevant, and highlighting emerging themes that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the instrument. By consolidating fragmented scholarship, this paper contributes to the fields of musicology, Islamic studies, and cultural history by situating the oud within the broader processes of cultural assimilation and spiritual practice. Furthermore, it emphasizes the oud's potential role as both a historical artifact and a symbolic representation of Islamic identity. The contribution of this review lies in offering a unified framework that not only revisits historical debates but also highlights the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the oud often overlooked in existing literature. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 details the methodology employed in conducting the systematic review, Section 3 presents the findings and emerging themes, Section 4 discusses the implications of these results in relation to Islamic cultural and spiritual life, and Section 5 concludes by outlining key contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed Scopus AI Analytics (accessed on 19 August 2025) to conduct a comprehensive systematic review of the oud in Islamic contexts, with particular attention to its historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. The aim of this review was to analyze the research landscape, construct a concept map that identifies connections between themes, engage with topic experts where relevant, and highlight emerging themes that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the instrument. This approach consolidates fragmented scholarship into a unified framework, contributing to the fields of musicology, Islamic studies, and cultural history by situating the oud within broader processes of cultural assimilation and spiritual practice.

The review process began with the formulation of a detailed search string designed to capture the multifaceted significance of the oud within Islamic contexts:

("oud" OR "agarwood" OR "aloe wood" OR "gaharu") AND ("Islamic" OR "Muslim" OR "Islam" OR "Arab") AND ("culture" OR "tradition" OR "heritage" OR "religion") AND ("fragrance" OR "scent" OR "aroma" OR "perfume") AND ("medicinal" OR "therapeutic" OR "spiritual" OR "ritual").

This query ensured inclusivity by capturing studies not only on the oud as a musical instrument but also on its related cultural and spiritual associations through overlapping terms such as agarwood, perfume, and ritual use. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters indexed in Scopus, with no restriction on publication year to provide a comprehensive historical to contemporary overview.

Following the initial search, Scopus AI generated a summary of the research area, which revealed that literature on the oud remains limited and often dispersed across disciplines such as ethnomusicology, Islamic studies, cultural anthropology, and economic botany (Uslu, 2023; Zohar & Lev, 2013; López-Sampson & Page, 2018). The expanded summary provided deeper insights into thematic clusters, identifying recurring discussions around (i) the debated historical origins of the oud in the Hijaz, (ii) its assimilation into Islamic cultural practices alongside other traded goods such as perfumes and incense, and (iii) the potential symbolic and spiritual roles attributed to the instrument.

To structure these findings, a concept map was constructed through Scopus AI to visualize interconnections between historical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. This map positioned the oud within broader networks of cultural assimilation, drawing comparative links with parallel studies on perfumes, incense, and other culturally embedded commodities in Islamic societies. In addition, the analysis identified topic experts whose scholarship significantly contributes to this field, including Uslu (2023) on the historiography of the oud, Zohar and Lev (2013) on cultural assimilation of perfumes and incense, and López-Sampson and Page (2018) on trade and spiritual symbolism of agarwood.

Finally, the Scopus AI process highlighted several emerging themes in current scholarship: (i) renewed interest in reassessing early Islamic sources on music and cultural practices, (ii) the integration of sensory elements

(sound, scent, and ritual) into discussions of Islamic spirituality, and (iii) the role of the oud as both a historical artifact and a living cultural symbol within contemporary Islamic identity. These emerging themes demonstrate the growing interdisciplinary attention to the oud, connecting musicological, anthropological, and spiritual dimensions in ways that have yet to be comprehensively synthesized.

By employing Scopus AI Analytics, this study ensures methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility. The combination of summary insights, expanded thematic analysis, concept mapping, expert identification, and emerging theme exploration positions this review to provide a systematic and multidimensional account of the oud's significance in Islamic contexts.

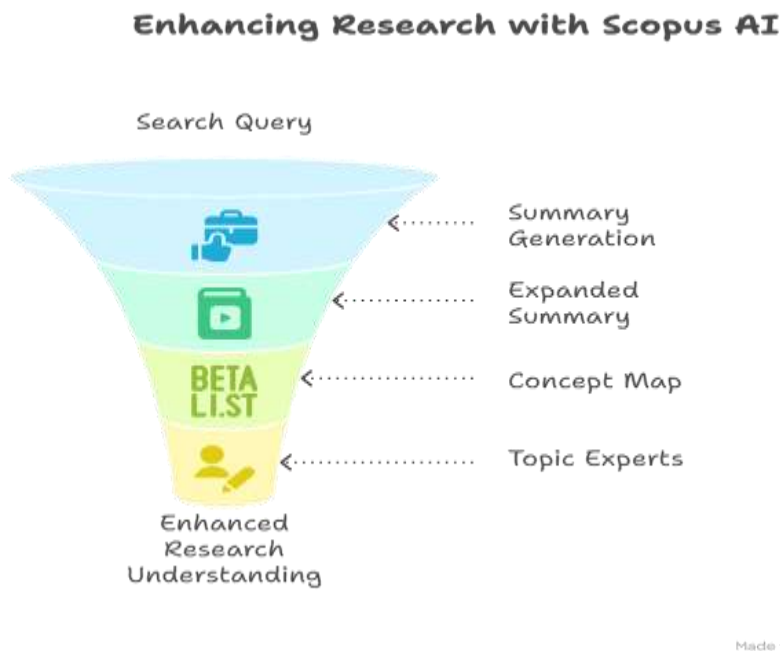


Figure 1: 4 Core elements of Scopus AI

This figure illustrates how Scopus AI enhances research understanding by transforming a search query into progressively deeper layers of analysis. At the top of the funnel, the process begins with a search query, which is then distilled into a summary generation that provides a concise overview of the literature. The next layer is the expanded summary, which elaborates on key themes, offering broader context and connections across studies. Following this, the concept map visually organizes relationships among ideas, helping researchers identify patterns and thematic clusters. Finally, at the bottom of the funnel, topic experts are highlighted, pointing scholars to authoritative voices in the field. Collectively, this stepwise process moves from broad discovery to focused expertise, resulting in enhanced research understanding that is both systematic and insightful.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this review, derived from Scopus AI Analytics (19 August 2025), are organized into four analytical dimensions: (i) summary and expanded summary, (ii) concept map, (iii) topic experts, and (iv) emerging themes. First, the summary and expanded summary highlight the oud's deep historical significance, its integration into Islamic culture, and its symbolic role in spiritual practices. Second, the concept map provides a structured visualization of the interconnections between themes such as music, cultural heritage, and ritual, thereby clarifying the multidimensional nature of the oud in Islamic contexts. Third, the identification of topic experts situates the discourse within authoritative scholarly contributions, ensuring that the analysis is grounded in established and credible research. Finally, the emerging themes point to new directions, such as the significance of sensory experiences in Islamic spirituality and the reinterpretation of the oud as both a historical artifact and a cultural symbol. Collectively, these four dimensions form a comprehensive framework that enhances the understanding of the oud's cultural and spiritual relevance within the Islamic community.

The findings from the summary and expanded summary reveal that the oud holds an intricate and contested position in Islamic history. Early accounts attribute its introduction in the Hijaz to Nadr b. Harith, a Meccan merchant sometimes described as the first oud player in the region. Yet, scholars like Uslu (2023) highlight that such assertions appear only in later historical sources, with no direct evidence in early Islamic texts for nearly two centuries after Harith's death. This indicates that while the oud may have been present during the formative period of Islam, its historical origins and associations are often subject to mythologization and retrospective attribution. As a result, the oud's historical significance lies not only in its documented presence but also in the way narratives about it have been constructed, reflecting the complexities of cultural memory and transmission within Islamic historiography.

Culturally, the oud has become one of the most central instruments in Islamic musical traditions, particularly within Arabic contexts. It plays a vital role in the consolidation of rhythmic structures and melodic innovations, serving both as a creative medium and as a pedagogical tool. Obeidat (2017) underscores that the oud is essential for developing rhythmic proficiency among music students, though many learners face challenges in mastering its demanding rhythmic structures. This cultural significance extends beyond technical performance; the oud embodies the artistic sensibilities of Islamic civilization, linking music, education, and heritage. Its continued relevance in academic and artistic settings reflects the adaptability of the oud across generations, sustaining its place as both a cultural artifact and an educational resource.

Beyond its technical and cultural roles, the oud also resonates with spiritual significance in Islamic contexts, albeit indirectly. While the abstracts provide limited explicit references to its ritual use, parallels can be drawn with other cultural practices that were redefined through Islamization. For instance, Al-Kilani (2023) illustrates how pre-Islamic sacrifice rituals, once associated with social prestige, were reinterpreted within Islamic tradition as acts of monotheism and remembrance of God. By analogy, the oud's incorporation into Islamic culture can be viewed as a transformation from a pre-Islamic art form into one that aligns with broader Islamic identity and spirituality. This suggests that the oud's spiritual significance lies not in explicit ritual use but in its contribution to the Islamic ethos of creativity, devotion, and cultural synthesis.

The oud's influence is also evident in the development of Islamic art and music. Its integration into Arabic music traditions demonstrates how cultural elements are assimilated and reshaped within Islamic frameworks. Obeidat (2017) shows that the oud has been central to shaping rhythmic patterns and teaching methods in Arabic music, reflecting the deep interplay between artistic practice and cultural identity. Moreover, the symbolic role of music in Islamic civilization parallels the oud's influence: just as perfumes and incense, as Zohar and Lev (2013) argue, became part of Islamic material culture after the Muslim conquests, the oud similarly became woven into the fabric of Islamic artistic and cultural expression. Thus, the oud not only represents a musical instrument but also a medium of cultural continuity and exchange.

In conclusion, the summary and expanded summary confirm that the oud's significance in Islamic contexts is multifaceted, encompassing historical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Historically, it is marked by contested narratives and the need for critical examination of early sources (Uslu, 2023). Culturally, it remains central to music, pedagogy, and artistic expression (Obeidat, 2017). Spiritually, its role, while less explicit, can be inferred through parallels with other cultural practices that were recontextualized within Islamic traditions (Al-Kilani, 2023). Collectively, these findings suggest that the oud is not merely a musical instrument but a cultural and symbolic artifact deeply embedded within the Islamic worldview. However, the gaps in historical evidence underscore the necessity for further systematic research to separate historical fact from later cultural reinterpretation.

### 3.1 Concept Map

The concept map illustrates the multidimensional role of the oud within Islamic contexts, highlighting three major domains: historical significance, cultural significance, and spiritual significance. From a historical perspective, the oud is linked to the early sources of Islamic history and the development of music in the Hijaz, reflecting its contested origins and evolving role. Its cultural significance is expressed through its integration into diverse societies, such as the Arabs in Indonesia, and its interpretation through symbolic interactionist perspectives, showing how the instrument functions as both heritage and identity. Meanwhile, the spiritual

dimension connects the oud to Islamic law and maqāṣid, as well as rituals like the Hajj, underscoring the broader intersections of music, faith, and practice. Collectively, the map positions the oud not merely as a musical instrument but as a complex cultural artifact embedded in Islamic civilization.

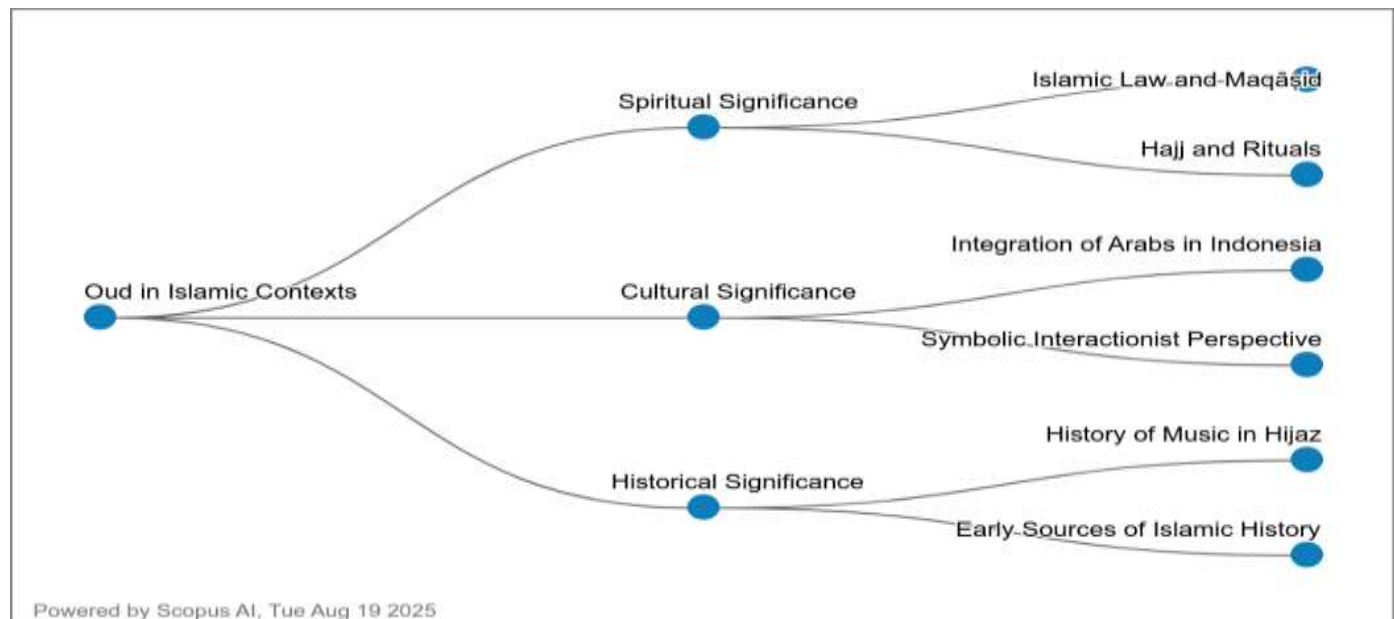


Figure 2: Concept Map of Oud in Islamic Contexts

### 3.1.1 The Review of relationship between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Spiritual Significance. Islamic Law and Maqāṣid

The oud, as a cultural and spiritual symbol in Islamic contexts, holds an ambivalent position within Islamic law, particularly when viewed through the lens of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah (the higher objectives of Islamic law). While music has historically been debated in Islamic jurisprudence, the spiritual significance of the oud can be better understood by aligning it with the purposes of Islamic law that prioritize the preservation of religion, intellect, and overall human well-being. The oud, when used within permissible boundaries, may contribute to spiritual reflection, cultural expression, and emotional healing, thus aligning with the broader aims of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah (Nur et al., 2020).

From a historical standpoint, the oud has long been associated with Islamic civilization, particularly in regions like the Hijaz, where it formed part of intellectual and artistic life. The instrument not only symbolized creativity but also served as a medium of spiritual contemplation in certain Sufi traditions. Within this framework, the oud becomes more than a musical tool; it acts as a vehicle through which individuals connect with spiritual values. The dynamic adaptability of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah allows for such cultural artifacts to be evaluated in light of their contributions to human flourishing and ethical growth (Takim, 2014).

Culturally, the oud played an important role in transmitting Arab identity and traditions into various regions, such as Indonesia, where it was integrated into local practices. Its presence highlights the cultural diversity accommodated under Islamic civilization, while Islamic law provides a flexible framework for reconciling cultural practices with spiritual values. By promoting justice, compassion, and societal harmony, the principles of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah serve as a basis for assessing the oud’s role in preserving cultural identity without compromising religious obligations (Choudhury, 2021; Muhammadong et al., 2024).

Spiritually, the oud’s role must be understood in light of the ethical dimensions of fiqh (jurisprudence), where the soul and its purification remain central. The use of music, including the oud, when directed towards positive and ethical purposes, may facilitate emotional balance and spiritual well-being, which aligns with the maqṣad of protecting the intellect and soul. This perspective resonates with contemporary scholarship that emphasizes the role of spirituality in fulfilling the higher objectives of Islamic law and promoting human dignity (Norman & Ruhullah, 2024). Thus, the oud can be contextualized as a spiritually enriching practice when guided by ethical

limitations.

In conclusion, the oud in Islamic contexts illustrates the interplay between history, culture, and spirituality through the interpretive lens of Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah. Rather than being dismissed as a mere instrument of entertainment, the oud may serve as a means of cultivating spiritual reflection, cultural identity, and ethical growth. By adopting the maqāsid framework—which prioritizes public interest, prevention of harm, and preservation of essential values—Islamic jurisprudence can accommodate the oud as part of a constructive and humanistic vision of Islamic life (Mohammed, 2024; Mohd Yusob et al., 2015). This demonstrates the dynamic capacity of Islamic law to engage with cultural expressions while upholding its spiritual and ethical foundations.

### **3.1.2 The Review of relationship between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Spiritual Significance, Hajj and Rituals**

The spiritual significance of the oud in Islamic contexts can be examined through its broader association with ritual practices such as Hajj, which remains one of the most profound acts of worship in Islam. The Hajj pilgrimage encompasses a range of synchronized rituals, each bearing unique spiritual meanings that emphasize devotion, humility, and unity (Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024). Within this framework, music and sensory experiences, though not explicitly part of ritual obligations, have historically contributed to spiritual preparation, reflection, and cultural identity. The oud, as a deeply embedded instrument in Islamic heritage, symbolizes the intersection of art, spirituality, and community memory, indirectly enriching the broader ritualistic atmosphere of Islamic devotion.

The transformation of sacrificial rituals, such as al-hadyu and al-udhiyyah, illustrates how religious practices have evolved in their theological and ethical significance. Originally associated with cultural symbolism and showmanship, these rituals were reoriented in Islam toward gratitude, monotheism, and spiritual sincerity (Al-Kilani, 2023). This shift mirrors the way instruments like the oud transitioned from cultural entertainment to carriers of moral and spiritual narratives. While the oud is not prescribed within Hajj rites, its historical role in Islamic societies exemplifies how symbolic expressions can evolve to align with the objectives of worship, namely sincerity, gratitude, and closeness to God.

Historically, Hajj rituals such as the wuqūf at ‘Arafāt and the subsequent ifāda have been understood as indispensable and highly symbolic acts (Hawting, 2024). These rites not only fulfill legal requirements but also serve as moments of collective identity and submission to divine will. Similarly, the oud has historically functioned as a medium of communal identity and remembrance, with melodies that have carried cultural, poetic, and spiritual narratives across generations. This parallel highlights the interconnectedness between cultural expressions like music and the collective symbolism embedded in Islamic rituals.

Another dimension of Hajj is its role in fostering unity, humility, and thankfulness among pilgrims, who engage in shared experiences that strengthen their spiritual connection to God and the global Muslim community (Palizban, 2019; Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024). The oud, in its cultural role, has also been a unifying instrument, resonating across diverse Islamic civilizations from Andalusia to the Middle East. Its melodies often reflect themes of longing, devotion, and transcendence, complementing the spiritual ethos of rituals that seek to draw individuals closer to God and to one another in shared submission.

While the abstracts reviewed do not directly mention the oud in the context of Hajj, the instrument’s historical and cultural resonance allows it to be interpreted as part of a broader spiritual framework in Islamic life. The oud symbolizes the integration of aesthetic and ethical values that parallel the transformative functions of Hajj rituals. Both the oud and the rites of Hajj serve as vehicles for remembrance, humility, and the cultivation of spiritual depth, aligning with the ultimate goals of Islamic worship. This interpretative link underscores the importance of situating the oud within Islamic contexts not merely as a musical instrument but as a cultural artifact deeply intertwined with expressions of faith, ritual, and collective identity.

### **3.1.3 The Review of relationship Between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Cultural Significance, Integration of Arabs in Indonesia**

The cultural significance of the oud in Islamic contexts can be better understood by situating it within the broader



historical integration of Arabs in Indonesia. Arab migration to the archipelago was not only tied to trade but also to the dissemination of Islam, which brought with it religious practices, spiritual rituals, and cultural elements such as oud. This migration, however, was complex, as Arab communities were at times embraced for their contributions to religious and cultural enrichment, while at other times criticized for disrupting local traditions and socio-political balances (Qurtuby, 2017). These tensions reflect the layered negotiation of identity and cultural adaptation, where the oud serves as both a symbol of Arab-Islamic heritage and a medium for local communities to engage with Islamic culture.

The negotiation of Islamic identity in Indonesia has been marked by different adaptation strategies that reveal the blending of local traditions with Arab-Islamic influences. According to Nur et al. (2025), identity formation has occurred in three stages: the maintenance of Islamic practices in homogeneous communities, syncretistic adaptation through collaboration with local traditions, and the universal translation of Islamic identity into neutral cultural expressions. Within this context, the oud functions not only as a material object of cultural significance but also as a metaphor for integration — embodying the preservation of Arab heritage while being adapted into Indonesian cultural landscapes.

The role of Islamic education further underscores the integration process. Yamaguchi (2016) highlights how Arab reformists, such as Ahmad Sūrkatī, influenced educational institutions like al-Irshād, which became spaces where Islamic traditions were combined with modern education. This educational reform was not merely about theology but also about embedding Arab-Islamic cultural symbols into Indonesian society. Similarly, Rosyidin and Arifin (2021) argue that Islamic education in Indonesia has attempted to balance local and Islamic values by promoting both religious and national identity. Within these contexts, the oud, as a spiritual and cultural artifact, becomes emblematic of this educational negotiation, symbolizing continuity with Islamic traditions while adapting to Indonesian realities.

The identity dilemmas of Arab descendants in Indonesia further illustrate the cultural negotiation around Islamic traditions and symbols like the oud. Al Amin and Mahzumi (2022) note that Arab-Indonesian communities often struggle with dual identities — being both Arab and Indonesian — which affects their acceptance and integration into wider society. The oud, in this framework, may be seen as a cultural marker of Arabness, but its adoption and use in Indonesian rituals and practices allow it to transcend ethnic boundaries and foster a shared Islamic identity. Thus, the oud not only represents Arab heritage but also becomes part of Indonesia's multicultural Islamic identity.

In sum, the cultural significance of the oud in Islamic contexts, particularly in Indonesia, is deeply tied to the historical integration of Arabs into the archipelago. It embodies a process of negotiation between Arab-Islamic traditions and local Indonesian cultural forms, mediated through education, identity politics, and religious practices. While not always explicitly mentioned in contemporary discussions of Arab integration, the oud symbolizes the broader cultural exchange that has shaped Indonesian Islam — a fusion of spirituality, identity, and tradition that reflects both unity and diversity within the Muslim ummah.

### **3.1.4 The Review of Relationship Between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Cultural Significance, Symbolic Interactionist Perspective**

The cultural significance of Oud in Islamic contexts can be explored through the lens of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes how meaning is constructed through shared cultural symbols. In Islamic societies, symbols are not merely aesthetic but carry transcendental dimensions rooted in faith, history, and tradition. According to Dhaouadi (2008), Islamic culture relies heavily on symbols such as language, religion, and myths, all of which embody values that extend beyond material life. Oud, as a symbol of purity and spiritual refinement, can therefore be understood not only as a fragrant substance but as a cultural signifier that contributes to shaping Muslim identity within ritual and everyday practices.

From a ritualistic perspective, symbolic interactionism provides a valuable framework to interpret the role of objects like Oud in religious contexts. Musa (2013) demonstrates how rituals among Malaysian Shi'ites during pilgrimages to Iran and Iraq embody values that reinforce communal identity and spiritual devotion. In a similar way, the burning of Oud or its use in sacred ceremonies functions symbolically to mark the sacredness of time

and space, transforming ordinary acts into spiritually meaningful encounters. This indicates that Oud is not only valued for its material fragrance but also for the symbolic meanings it conveys during Islamic rituals.

The cultural context in which symbols like Oud are interpreted also plays a central role in shaping their meanings. Mhesen (2025) highlights that the interpretation of Islamic teachings, particularly Prophetic Hadith, must consider cultural context to ensure relevance while preserving authenticity. Applying this perspective, the Oud's cultural significance is constructed through its usage in various Islamic societies, where it symbolizes refinement, purity, and closeness to the divine. Thus, Oud becomes a medium through which cultural and spiritual values are communicated, negotiated, and reaffirmed across different Islamic communities.

Symbolism in Islamic art further demonstrates the importance of cultural signifiers in expressing spiritual meanings. Jansoz and Sodaee (2021) reveal that ornamental motifs in Islamic art carry layered meanings influenced by pre-Islamic traditions and adapted within Islamic thought. In the same way, Oud functions as a cultural symbol that embodies continuity between material culture and spiritual life. Its enduring presence in Islamic rituals, architecture (through scenting of mosques), and social practices signifies its role as a living cultural artifact deeply tied to collective Muslim consciousness.

In conclusion, the cultural significance of Oud in Islamic contexts can be meaningfully explained through the symbolic interactionist perspective. While Oud's physical presence as incense or perfume is evident, its deeper significance lies in the meanings attributed to it by Muslim communities. As symbols shape interaction and identity, Oud emerges as more than a fragrance—it becomes a spiritual and cultural medium that embodies Islamic values of purity, devotion, and transcendence. Although direct studies on Oud remain limited, its symbolic parallels with other Islamic cultural practices affirm its enduring role as a bridge between material experience and spiritual meaning.

### **3.1.4 The Review of Relationship between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Historical Significance, History of Music in Hijaz**

The historical significance of the Oud in Islamic contexts is closely tied to early narratives about its emergence in the Hijaz, a region central to Islamic civilization. One of the key debates in musicological scholarship concerns the identity of the first Oud player in the Hijaz. Uslu (2023) highlights that while later historical sources attributed this role to Nadr b. Harith, critical analysis reveals this claim to be inaccurate. The perpetuation of this misinformation illustrates how historical memory and cultural narratives can obscure the authentic origins of musical practices in the Islamic world. This demonstrates the need for rigorous re-examination of sources to understand the Oud's genuine place in Islamic history.

The history of music in Hijaz provides a wider cultural context for understanding the development of Oud performance. As Karakuş and Erzen (2023) argue, the musical life of the Hijaz was profoundly shaped by Iranian influence, particularly through the introduction of rich melodic traditions and a sophisticated maqam system. Figures such as Said b. Misjah and Sāib Ḥaṣir were instrumental in transferring these traditions from Persia to the Hijaz, helping to cultivate a vibrant musical culture in Medina and Mecca. The Oud, as a central instrument in Arabic music, became a medium through which these cross-cultural exchanges were expressed and localized.

Within Islamic contexts, however, the Oud and music more broadly were subject to theological debate. The permissibility of music, whether instrumental or vocal, has long been contested among Muslim jurists and theologians. Erol (2016) notes that while music has held an enduring presence in Islamic societies, its acceptance has varied depending on cultural, legal, and spiritual interpretations. This tension created a space where instruments like the Oud were both celebrated for their artistic and cultural contributions yet questioned in terms of their compatibility with Islamic ethics and spirituality. Such debates shaped the reception and practice of Oud performance within Islamic history.

The interplay of historical narratives, cultural exchanges, and religious debates illustrates the multifaceted significance of the Oud in the Hijaz. On one hand, the Oud was embedded in the rich cultural life of Medina and Mecca, reflecting influences from Persian, Arab, and local traditions. On the other hand, the contested role of music in Islamic thought created a duality in which the Oud symbolized both refinement and controversy. This



dual position highlights how the Oud was not only a musical instrument but also a cultural artifact through which broader questions of identity, piety, and artistic expression were negotiated.

In conclusion, the historical and cultural significance of the Oud in the Islamic context of the Hijaz cannot be separated from its symbolic and contested role in society. The misattribution of its earliest performers, the infusion of Persian musical traditions, and the ongoing theological debates together shaped the Oud's place in Islamic civilization. Ultimately, the Oud stands as both a testimony to cross-cultural artistic exchange and a reflection of the complex negotiations between spirituality and culture in the Islamic world.

### **3.2 The Review of Relationship Between Oud in Islamic Contexts, Historical Significance and Early Sources of Islamic History**

The historical significance of the Oud in Islamic contexts can only be fully appreciated when considered within the broader framework of early Islamic history. Music and instruments such as the Oud were part of the cultural environment of the Arabian Peninsula during the formative centuries of Islam, yet their place in the tradition is often mediated through contested historical narratives. Donner (2010) highlights how modern approaches to early Islamic history, including the study of social life and cultural exchanges, shed light on how artistic practices like music became entangled with questions of identity, community, and religious authority. Thus, the Oud represents more than an instrument; it functions as a cultural artifact reflecting both continuity with pre-Islamic traditions and the transformations introduced under Islamic rule.

Early Islamic sources, particularly hadith literature, play a central role in shaping how music and the Oud are perceived within Islamic contexts. Brown (2019) emphasizes that hadith, alongside the Qur'an, constitutes one of the most influential bodies of Islamic scripture, not only guiding religious practice but also shaping historical memory. References to music, singing, and entertainment in hadith collections often frame them within debates about morality and piety, which indirectly influenced the reception of instruments such as the Oud. These sources suggest that the Oud was part of the lived reality of early Muslim societies, but its cultural legitimacy was constantly negotiated through scriptural interpretation.

The study of early sources of Islamic history reveals both Islamic and non-Islamic perspectives that help situate the Oud in its broader historical context. Shoemaker (2021) demonstrates that Christian and Jewish sources from the early centuries of Islam also commented on aspects of Arabian culture, offering parallel insights into how Muslims were perceived by their contemporaries. While these texts do not explicitly mention the Oud, they contribute to reconstructing the cultural atmosphere of the time, in which music and artistic expression were significant components of daily life. Such sources reinforce the idea that the Oud was part of the cultural fabric that connected Islamic society with its surrounding civilizations.

Beyond textual sources, material culture also provides evidence for reconstructing the place of music and instruments like the Oud in Islamic history. Simonsohn (2013) notes the increasing use of non-literary sources—such as coins, inscriptions, and legal documents—as valuable historical evidence. These artifacts allow scholars to better understand the social and cultural settings in which music operated, even when direct references to instruments are sparse. The proliferation of new methodologies in Islamic historiography underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to situating the Oud within the broader historical and cultural landscape of the early Islamic world.

In conclusion, the Oud's historical, cultural, and spiritual significance in Islamic contexts emerges not only from its role as a musical instrument but also from the way early Islamic sources mediated its perception. While hadith literature and Qur'anic interpretation often placed music under scrutiny, other early sources—both Islamic and non-Islamic—attest to the central role of music in Arabian and Islamic societies. Combined with modern historiographical methods, these sources reveal the Oud as a marker of cultural identity, social interaction, and religious negotiation in the early centuries of Islam. Its enduring presence highlights the complex relationship between art, spirituality, and historical memory in Islamic civilization.

### **3.3 Topic Expert**

The insights from topic experts provide a valuable perspective on the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the

Oud within Islamic contexts. Ruhi R. Ersoy, for example, has contributed significantly to understanding the cultural and political dimensions of ceremonies such as the Şeb-i Arûs (commemorating the death of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī), which are deeply rooted in Islamic spiritual traditions. Ersoy's work highlights how these cultural practices are not merely artistic expressions but also serve broader societal and religious functions (Ersoy, n.d.). This expertise indicates that the Oud, often integrated into similar ceremonial and cultural settings, carries a symbolic role that transcends music, embodying a medium through which spirituality and cultural identity are expressed.

Complementing this perspective, Büşra B. Baysal examines the political and cultural functions of Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies, emphasizing their role in shaping collective memory and cultural identity. Although Baysal's academic career is still in its early stages, her work underscores the ways in which musical traditions, including the Oud, can function as cultural signifiers embedded within ritual and spiritual practices (Baysal, n.d.). This approach suggests that the Oud's role extends beyond performance, contributing to the reinforcement of communal identity and continuity within Islamic societies. Her emphasis on the cultural functions of music helps to situate the Oud as an instrument that bridges spirituality, culture, and politics.

Further, Yalçın Y. Çetinkaya contributes a philosophical and metaphysical dimension by exploring the relationship between music and cosmology within the thought of the İhvan-ı Safâ (Brethren of Purity). His research illustrates how music was conceived not only as entertainment but as a reflection of cosmic harmony and a vehicle for spiritual contemplation (Çetinkaya, n.d.). From this perspective, the Oud assumes profound spiritual significance as part of an intellectual tradition that perceives musical instruments as embodying metaphysical truths. This approach illuminates how the Oud is interwoven with Islamic philosophy and mystical thought, highlighting its role in shaping spiritual experiences.

Taken together, these perspectives from topic experts demonstrate the multifaceted role of the Oud in Islamic contexts, encompassing cultural, political, and spiritual significance. Ersoy's focus on cultural-political dimensions, Baysal's emphasis on cultural functionality, and Çetinkaya's engagement with cosmological thought all converge on the idea that the Oud is more than a musical instrument. Instead, it is a cultural artifact that reflects the values, beliefs, and spiritual aspirations of Islamic societies. The convergence of these scholarly perspectives suggests that the Oud occupies a unique position within Islamic cultural history, simultaneously embodying artistic, ritualistic, and metaphysical meanings.

In conclusion, the contributions of these topic experts enrich the understanding of the Oud by situating it within ritual, cultural, and philosophical frameworks. While Ersoy and Baysal shed light on the socio-political and cultural dimensions of ceremonies where the Oud finds relevance, Çetinkaya situates the instrument within a broader metaphysical discourse. Together, their insights affirm that the Oud serves as a bridge between the tangible and the transcendent, making it central to the study of Islamic cultural and spiritual traditions. This synthesis highlights the importance of integrating cultural anthropology, political analysis, and philosophy of music in order to fully appreciate the Oud's historical and spiritual significance in Islamic contexts.

### 3.4 Themes

The analysis of emerging themes reveals a multi-layered engagement with Islamic cultural and intellectual traditions, particularly in the areas of visual culture and art, cultural transmission, and intellectual revival in relation to modernity. These themes reflect both continuity and innovation, underscoring the ways Islamic societies preserve their heritage while simultaneously responding to contemporary challenges.

A consistent theme identified in the literature is the sustained focus on Islamic visual culture and art. This field of study has long been recognized as an essential dimension of Islamic civilization, encompassing architectural achievements, calligraphy, geometric ornamentation, and other art forms that embody religious and cultural values (Necipoğlu 1995). Scholars have highlighted how visual expressions serve as both aesthetic and spiritual symbols, linking art with devotion and identity across Islamic societies (Blair & Bloom, 2003). Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies into the preservation of Islamic art has expanded opportunities for documentation, analysis, and accessibility (Gruber, 2018). This reflects not only a steady scholarly interest but also a practical response to safeguarding cultural heritage in an increasingly digital age.

In addition to this continuity, a rising theme emerges around the evolving influence of Islamic art and architecture on contemporary artistic practices in the Middle East and beyond. Recent studies emphasize how modern artists engage with traditional Islamic motifs, reinterpreting them to address current socio-political and cultural issues (Shabout, 2015). This trend demonstrates a dynamic dialogue between past and present, where classical forms of Islamic visual culture inspire innovation in contemporary contexts. Such re-engagement with heritage underscores the adaptability of Islamic art, as its aesthetic principles remain relevant in expressing modern identities and cultural transformations. The rising prominence of this theme suggests an ongoing shift toward viewing Islamic art not only as a historical subject but also as a living, evolving practice.

A particularly significant novel theme is the exploration of Islamic intellectual revival in the context of modernity. This cluster of research examines how Islamic thought interacts with modern challenges, including issues of governance, identity, and socio-political reform. Scholars have argued that the revival of classical intellectual traditions, such as Islamic philosophy and jurisprudence, may provide new frameworks for addressing contemporary social and political problems (Rahman, 1982; Aydin, 2017). Moreover, modernity has spurred reinterpretations of Islamic laws and practices, leading to debates over gender roles, democracy, and human rights within Muslim societies (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004). The novelty of this theme lies in its emphasis on the intellectual agency of Muslim scholars and thinkers in reimagining the role of Islam in modern public life, a discourse that bridges tradition and reform in creative ways.

Together, these themes illustrate how Islamic culture and thought are engaged with on multiple levels: the consistent preservation of visual heritage, the rising reinterpretation of artistic forms in contemporary society, and the novel revival of intellectual traditions in response to modernity. These interrelated discussions highlight the dynamic nature of Islamic studies, where continuity and innovation coexist. By situating the Oud and other cultural expressions within these broader themes, one can better appreciate the layered ways in which Islamic traditions retain their relevance across time.

Ultimately, the identification of consistent, rising, and novel themes underscores the importance of approaching Islamic cultural studies through both historical depth and contemporary relevance. While the consistent theme of Islamic art establishes a foundation of continuity, the rising theme of contemporary engagement with heritage reveals evolving practices, and the novel theme of intellectual revival demonstrates innovative pathways for reinterpreting tradition in light of modern challenges. Collectively, these insights highlight the resilience and adaptability of Islamic cultural and intellectual heritage in shaping Muslim identities in both past and present contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the multifaceted significance of the Oud within Islamic contexts by situating it against broader themes of historical continuity, cultural expression, and intellectual revival. The key findings indicate that the Oud is not merely a musical instrument but also a cultural and spiritual symbol, deeply embedded in the artistic, intellectual, and religious traditions of the Islamic world. Its historical role in courtly, devotional, and communal settings reflects how music has functioned as both an aesthetic and spiritual practice. By linking the Oud to consistent themes of Islamic visual culture, rising engagements with contemporary reinterpretations, and novel intellectual revivals, the study underscores the enduring and adaptable role of cultural artifacts in shaping Islamic identity across time.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to ongoing debates in Islamic studies, particularly the relationship between material culture and intangible heritage. The Oud, when examined alongside Islamic art and intellectual traditions, illustrates the ways in which cultural objects act as vehicles of memory, identity, and religious meaning. This perspective enriches theories of cultural continuity and transformation, demonstrating that Islamic traditions evolve not only through texts and theology but also through aesthetic and sensory practices such as music. On a practical level, the study suggests that the preservation and revitalization of instruments like the Oud can serve as a bridge between past and present, fostering cultural resilience and offering tools for intercultural dialogue in pluralistic societies. Moreover, the integration of digital preservation and performance-based pedagogy could enhance the accessibility and appreciation of the Oud for both scholarly and community-based audiences.

Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. Much of the available literature on the historical and cultural significance of the Oud remains scattered across broader discussions of Islamic art, philosophy, and ritual, rather than focused directly on the instrument itself. Additionally, the lack of extensive early Islamic textual references to music limits the ability to reconstruct a fully comprehensive history of the Oud in Islamic contexts. The reliance on secondary sources, including cultural histories and thematic analyses, also constrains the depth of engagement with primary evidence such as manuscripts, inscriptions, or ethnographic studies.

These limitations point toward valuable directions for future research. Further studies could engage in comparative analysis of musical traditions across different Islamic regions, tracing variations in the Oud's role in religious and cultural practices. Archival and manuscript research may uncover overlooked references that illuminate the Oud's place in early Islamic history, while ethnographic fieldwork could capture its contemporary significance in rituals, performances, and educational settings. Moreover, interdisciplinary approaches—linking musicology, theology, art history, and digital humanities—would provide a richer framework for understanding how the Oud functions as both a historical artifact and a living tradition.

In sum, the Oud represents a unique entry point for exploring the intersections of history, spirituality, and cultural identity within Islam. By recognizing its historical roots, cultural adaptability, and intellectual resonance, future scholarship can continue to advance both theoretical insights and practical strategies for preserving and revitalizing this significant dimension of Islamic heritage.

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