

The Rodat Ensemble in Modern Malaysia: Ethnomusicological Insights into its Manifest Functions and Cultural Significance

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ABSTRACT

The Rodat ensemble, a traditional art form rooted in the Malay-Muslim communities of Terengganu, reflects deep Islamic values and a strong sense of communal celebration. However, it faces increasing threats from globalization, modernization, and declining interest among younger generations. This ethnomusicological study explores the diverse roles of Rodat across social, spiritual, aesthetic, and educational domains. Drawing on ethnographic methods including field observations, interviews, and performance documentation the research applies Cultural Identity Theory, Social Function Theory, and Ritual Theory to examine its significance. The findings highlight that Rodat is more than just a musical performance; it serves as a cultural archive, a ritual practice, and a powerful symbol of community identity underscoring the urgent need for its preservation. The paper also calls for the adoption of contemporary strategies, such as the DAKEN 2021 cultural policy and digital media initiatives, to help revitalize Rodat for future generations. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on cultural sustainability, offering a practical framework for safeguarding traditional art forms in the face of changing socio-cultural landscapes.

Keywords: Rodat Ensemble, Ethnomusicology, Cultural Identity, Ritual Music, Heritage Preservation

BACKGROUND

The Rodat ensemble is a vital part of Malaysia's cultural heritage, especially within the Malay-Muslim communities of Kampung Surau Panjang and Telemong in Terengganu. This traditional art form combines music, dance, ritual, and oral literature, reflecting both Islamic values and local cultural expressions (Mohd Azam, 2014; Umi Abdullah, 2003). The roots of the Rodat can be traced back to the syncretic blending of Middle Eastern practices such as the berzanji and qasidah traditions, which were adapted over time to fit the cultural context of the Malay Peninsula (Mohamed Shahrudin, 2016). Historically, Rodat has played dual roles as both a religious instructional tool and a means of social bonding. The performance elements, including spiritual chants (selawat), rhythmic drumming (kompang or tar), and synchronized movements, are integral to various cultural and religious events such as weddings, Maulidur Rasul, and royal celebrations (Muhammad Irfan, 2013). In this way, Rodat has served as a medium for cultural transmission, connecting participants to their Islamic roots and reinforcing community solidarity (Zami Ismail, 2002; Mohd Hassan, 2015).

In recent years, however, the Rodat ensemble faces significant threats to its survival. As globalization, urbanization, and digital media continue to dominate, traditional cultural forms like Rodat are increasingly marginalized (Yampolsky, 2021). Youth disengagement and the preference for globalized entertainment have contributed to the decline in Rodat performances. Research indicates that only a few active groups remain in Kampung Surau Panjang, with most of their performances now limited to state-sponsored or ceremonial events (Wong & Tan, 2023). This reflects broader trends in Southeast Asia, where traditional arts are struggling to retain relevance in an era characterized by rapid modernization and cultural homogenization (Zami Ismail,

2002). Additionally, the erosion of Rodat is compounded by insufficient formal education in traditional arts and a lack of comprehensive documentation, which have further weakened the intergenerational transmission of knowledge (Yampolsky, 2021; Mohd Hassan, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Rodat continues to hold cultural significance as a symbol of Malay-Muslim identity, with its potential for revitalization through targeted efforts in education, digital preservation, and policy reform. Previous scholarship has primarily focused on describing the history and cultural role of Rodat without providing detailed theoretical analysis (Mohamed Shaharuddin, 2016). This study aims to fill that gap by adopting an ethnomusicological approach, exploring the manifest functions of the Rodat ensemble in contemporary Malaysian society. Drawing on Cultural Identity Theory (Hall, 1990), Social Function Theory (Durkheim, 1912), and Ritual Theory (Turner, 1969), the research seeks to demonstrate that Rodat is not just a musical performance but a living cultural tradition that plays an important role in shaping collective identity. Moreover, this paper advocates for the preservation of Rodat through contemporary avenues, including digital documentation and support from cultural policies that promote sustainability in a rapidly evolving socio-cultural environment (Mohd Hassan, 2018).

Problem Statement

The Rodat ensemble, a traditional Islamic musical and dance form rooted in the Malay-Muslim communities of Terengganu, represents a rich expression of communal identity, spiritual devotion, and cultural continuity (Mohd Azam, 2014; Umi Abdullah, 2003). Historically, Rodat functioned as both a religious and social ritual, integrating elements such as selawat (praise chants), synchronized movements, and symbolic costumes into performances for weddings, Maulidur Rasul, and state ceremonies (Muhammad Irfan, 2013; Zami Ismail, 2002). However, this vibrant heritage is now facing existential threats due to a confluence of socio-cultural shifts, including globalization, urbanization, declining youth participation, and the increasing dominance of globalized entertainment media (Yampolsky, 2021; Wong & Tan, 2023).

While there is a growing body of ethnographic and historical studies on Rodat (e.g., Mohamed Shaharuddin, 2016; Mohd Hassan, 2015), these works often remain descriptive and localized, lacking deeper theoretical interrogation into the ensemble's multifunctional roles and contemporary transformations. Most notably, current scholarship has yet to offer a robust analytical framework that integrates Cultural Identity Theory (Hall, 1990), Social Function Theory (Merriam, 1964), and Ritual Theory (Turner, 1969) to examine how Rodat functions as a dynamic vehicle for identity negotiation, ritual performance, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. This gap limits our understanding of Rodat's adaptability and resilience amid cultural erosion.

Moreover, although Malaysian cultural policies especially DAKEN 2021 (Dasar Kebudayaan Negara) emphasize the revitalization of traditional arts as part of a national strategy for cultural sustainability, there remains a disconnect between top-down policy aspirations and the on-the-ground realities of Rodat practitioners (DAKEN, 2021; Mohd Hassan, 2018). The lack of critical assessment of such policies' implementation, especially in rural and community-based settings, further contributes to the marginalization of Rodat in both academic discourse and cultural planning.

Additionally, the role of youth disengagement remains under-theorized. While youth are often cited as passive or disinterested in traditional forms, few studies delve into the barriers they face whether due to inadequate music education, absence of digital engagement platforms, or perceived irrelevance of Rodat in modern life (Rice, 2010; Seeger, 2004; Girod, 2020). Furthermore, gender dynamics and intra-community generational tensions critical to understanding the internal cultural shifts are insufficiently addressed in current literature, despite women's essential roles in costume design and youth learning structures.

In light of these concerns, this study addresses the following interrelated gaps:

1. The absence of a comprehensive, theory-informed analysis of Rodat's manifest functions in today's socio-cultural context.

2. The lack of empirical research on youth perspectives, intergenerational learning models, and community-led revitalization efforts.
3. A limited critical engagement with national policy frameworks (e.g., DAKEN 2021) and their effectiveness in sustaining living traditions at the grassroots level.
4. The need for digital strategies that support documentation, education, and wider engagement with Rodat in an era of cultural commodification and media-driven consumption.

Therefore, this study undertakes an interdisciplinary, ethnomusicological inquiry into Rodat's functional roles, cultural relevance, and transmission mechanisms, drawing upon immersive fieldwork, musical analysis, and community narratives. By doing so, it contributes not only to the academic fields of ethnomusicology and cultural studies but also to applied cultural policy, intangible heritage preservation (UNESCO, 2003), and community-based arts revitalization.

The *Rodat* ensemble, a traditional Islamic music and dance form of the Malay-Muslim communities in Terengganu, Malaysia, embodies layers of spiritual, social, aesthetic, and educational significance. Historically used in religious celebrations, community bonding, and cultural instruction, *Rodat* has long served as a vital medium for expressing and preserving local identity (Mohd Azam, 2014; Umi Abdullah, 2003). However, in the context of globalization, urbanization, and digital disruption, this living tradition is now increasingly endangered. A combination of youth disengagement, lack of formal transmission systems, and the dominance of global pop-cultural forms has led to a sharp decline in both participation and appreciation of *Rodat* (Wong & Tan, 2023; Yampolsky, 2021).

Although existing literature provides historical and descriptive accounts of *Rodat*, it often lacks a **rigorous theoretical framework** to interpret its evolving functions and meanings in contemporary society. Specifically, the application of **Cultural Identity Theory** (Hall, 1990), **Social Function Theory** (Merriam, 1964), and **Ritual Theory** (Turner, 1969) remains underdeveloped in current research. Furthermore, despite the cultural policy emphasis seen in *Dasar Kebudayaan Negara* (DAKEN 2021), there is limited analysis on how such policies are experienced or interpreted at the community level. The role of youth, generational dynamics, and digital media in the transmission or transformation of *Rodat* practices also remains underexplored.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to address three interrelated concerns: the lack of theoretical analysis of *Rodat*'s multifaceted functions; the absence of detailed ethnographic documentation capturing contemporary performance practices; and the need to contextualize *Rodat*'s preservation within national and global heritage frameworks. The study is especially timely as Malaysia's cultural institutions seek sustainable models to revitalize traditional practices in the face of rapid socio-cultural change

Objectives of The Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To analyze the manifest functions of the Rodat ensemble in relation to the cultural identity of the Malay community in Kampung Surau Panjang and Telemong.
- ii. To explore the Rodat's role in sustaining cultural continuity, promoting social interaction, and supporting ritual expression within the framework of ethnomusicological theory.
- iii. To assess the potential for Rodat revitalization, aligning with both national (DAKEN 2021) and international (UNESCO) heritage preservation policies.
- iv. To produce systematic documentation including transcription, recording, and theoretical analysis of Rodat's repertoire, musical structure, and performative elements.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Philosophical Foundation

This study employs a qualitative ethnomusicological methodology, underpinned by immersive fieldwork and contextual analysis, to investigate the manifest functions of the Rodat ensemble within the Malay-Muslim communities of Kampung Surau Panjang, Atas Tol, and Telemong in Terengganu, Malaysia. Ethnomusicology, as both a scholarly discipline and a research practice, places emphasis on the study of music as a cultural system embedded within specific social, religious, historical, and political contexts (Titon, 2015; Reyes, 2018).

Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, this research acknowledges that cultural meanings are socially constructed and best understood through close interaction with community members. The methodology draws from symbolic interactionism and constructivist ethnography, where the researcher takes on dual roles as both observer and participant. This allows for the interpretation of symbols, practices, and performances within the Rodat ensemble as dynamic expressions of lived experience (Flick, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

Research Design

The research was carried out in two interconnected phases:

1. Fieldwork and Data Collection – Focused on ethnographic engagement, observation, and documentation within performance contexts.
2. Laboratory Analysis and Interpretation – Focused on transcription, theoretical analysis, and thematic coding of the collected data.

Phase 1: Fieldwork and Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted between 2023 and 2024 in Kampung Surau Panjang and Telemong, Kuala Berang, located in the state of Terengganu, where the Rodat traditions remain active. Four primary qualitative data collection methods were employed:

1. Participant Observation and Bi-Musical Engagement

Building on Mantle Hood's (1960) concept of bi-musicality, the researcher engaged in Rodat rehearsals and live performances, not only observing but also participating in musical and dance practices. This approach allowed for the acquisition of embodied knowledge and provided insights into rhythm structures, ensemble interactions, and performance contexts. Passive observation occurred during state-led or religious public events, where the researcher observed Rodat in its natural ceremonial setting. Active participation included joining rehearsals and practicing performance roles, enriching the researcher's understanding from an insider perspective (Barz & Cooley, 2008).

2. Semi-Structured Interviews and Oral Histories

A total of 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of individuals, including Rodat performers (singers, drummers, dancers), tok dalang (cultural narrators), costume designers, youth participants, and community elders. The interviews explored themes such as changes in Rodat's form and function, its cultural and spiritual significance, informal versus formal transmission practices, and perceptions of Rodat's future in modern Malaysia. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo to facilitate thematic analysis.

3. Audio-Visual Documentation

High-quality audio and video recordings were made of both staged and natural Rodat performances. These recordings captured musical structures (melody, rhythm, tempo), choreography, ensemble organization,

audience interaction, and spatial settings of performances. The documentation served as both a preservation archive and raw data for subsequent musical and contextual analysis.

4. Document and Archival Analysis

Historical documents, traditional lyrics, berzanji manuscripts, and previous academic theses were analyzed to trace historical continuities, validate oral narratives, and provide textual sources for lyrical and structural comparison. This approach supported data triangulation, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings (Bowen, 2009).

Phase 2: Laboratory Analysis and Interpretation

Following the completion of fieldwork and data collection, the second phase of the research focused on the transcription, analysis, and interpretation of the data:

1. Musical Transcription and Structural Analysis

Audio recordings were transcribed into Western music notation using software such as MuseScore and Sibelius, following Hood's (1971) principles on musical styles. The analysis focused on key elements such as repetitive and call-and-response structures, instrumental layering and tempo patterns, and modal characteristics and vocal phrasing. This analysis allowed for comparative insights with other Malay traditional forms, such as rebana kercing, hadrah, and kompang.

2. Thematic Coding of Functional Roles

Interview transcripts, field notes, and other collected data were coded thematically to identify the manifest functions of the Rodat ensemble. The coding scheme was guided by various theoretical frameworks, including Cultural Identity Theory (Hall, 1990), Social Function Theory (Merriam, 1964), Ritual and Performance Theory (Turner, 1982; Schechner, 2003), and Transmission and Pedagogy Theory (Seeger, 2004; Rice, 2010). Emerging themes highlighted the ritual and spiritual symbolism, social bonding and cultural hierarchy, artistic expression and skill, educational transmission, youth engagement, and resistance to cultural erosion.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and cultural sensitivity was prioritized by engaging with local elders and leaders. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved in line with participant requests. The study adhered to the principles of community-based participatory research, aligning with UNESCO and SEAMEO-SPAFA ethical guidelines for intangible cultural heritage research (UNESCO, 2003; SEAMEO-SPAFA, 2021).

Justification of Methodological Framework

The multi-method design employed in this study supports a holistic, emic understanding of the Rodat ensemble. By combining participant engagement, audio-visual documentation, and theory-driven analysis, the research not only records Rodat as a performance but interprets it as a living, evolving cultural institution. Additionally, the use of both textual and experiential data situates this methodology within best practices for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. These practices emphasize community involvement, interdisciplinarity, and context-sensitive revitalization strategies (Grant, 2023; Kartomi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Rodat ensemble serves not only as a musical and performative tradition but also as a complex cultural system that weaves together ritual, identity, memory, and social structures. The study identified several manifest functions of the Rodat through field observations, interviews, and transcriptional analysis. These functions reflect the ensemble's pivotal role in sustaining the cultural life of the Malay-Muslim communities in

Terengganu. The discussion of these functions is framed within an ethnomusicological theoretical lens, offering valuable insights into how Rodat operates as a dynamic cultural practice amidst shifting social and political landscapes.

i. Cultural Identity and Symbolic Continuity

Manifest Function: The Rodat ensemble affirms and sustains the collective identity of the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu.

Discussion: The function of Rodat in maintaining and promoting cultural identity can be framed through the lens of *Cultural Identity Theory* (Hall, 1990; Frith, 1996), which posits that identity is not static but rather a dynamic and fluid construct that is continually negotiated and reaffirmed through cultural practices. Music, as a form of cultural expression, plays a critical role in this process. In the case of the Rodat ensemble, it serves as a powerful sonic emblem of Malayness reflecting both Malay-Muslim values and regional cultural attributes. The integration of Islamic lyrical content, traditional attire, and local dialects in the performance serves to embed the music in the cultural and religious fabric of the community. Rodat thus acts as a living tradition, providing a platform for performers and audiences to actively engage with and perform their collective identity.

In the words of one of the performers:

"When we perform Rodat, we feel connected to our roots. It's not just music, it is who we are." Tok Dalang, aged 63 (Interview, Jan 2024)

This statement encapsulates the essence of cultural identity in action, demonstrating that Rodat transcends mere entertainment. Instead, it functions as an ongoing affirmation of communal ties, connecting individuals with their history, religion, and cultural heritage. The act of performing Rodat is not only a celebration of Malay-Muslim identity but also a deliberate assertion of belonging and continuity.

Postcolonial Ethnomusicology and Identity Assertion: The role of Rodat in asserting cultural identity resonates strongly with postcolonial ethnomusicology. Scholars such as Stokes (2010) and Kartomi (2020) emphasize that local music traditions serve as vehicles for resisting cultural erasure and asserting autonomy in the face of historical and ongoing colonial legacies. This is particularly significant in the context of globalization, which often leads to cultural homogenization, threatening local traditions and practices. Rodat becomes a site of decolonization by resisting the dominance of foreign cultural products, including global music genres and media. Through the act of performing Rodat, the community reasserts its distinct cultural identity, often in direct opposition to external pressures.

Globalization and the ubiquity of global media have created an environment where cultural traditions are increasingly at risk of being diluted or overshadowed by dominant global narratives. For example, popular music genres like K-pop and EDM have found massive global audiences, posing challenges to traditional music forms like Rodat. Yet, as a musical practice that includes locally specific elements—such as its Islamic lyrical content, Malay dialects, and regional attire—Rodat stands as a form of cultural resistance. It resists not through confrontation, but through affirmation: affirming Malay-Muslim identity in a time of cultural uncertainty.

Rodat as a Cultural Mirror: The concept of Rodat as a "cultural mirror" reinforces the idea that it is not merely a form of entertainment but a method through which the community engages with its cultural narratives and values. This aligns with Hall's (1990) notion that identity is a *performance*, a dynamic process that is continually redefined through social interaction. Music, as a cultural product, enables individuals to experience their collective history, religiosity, and values through embodied practice. In this way, Rodat fosters a sense of belonging and continuity. For the Malay-Muslim community of Terengganu, the performance of Rodat becomes an act of memory, where shared ancestral stories and religious traditions are transmitted and reaffirmed across generations.

Recent studies have further highlighted the role of music in reinforcing and negotiating identity. For instance, music in postcolonial settings is often viewed as a tool for asserting sovereignty over cultural narratives and resisting external domination (DeNora, 2013). In the case of Rodat, it performs this function by providing a space where Malay-Muslim identity can be expressed, cherished, and protected from external cultural forces. This becomes especially significant in a globalized world where the forces of globalization are seen as eroding local cultures (Schipper, 2010).

Moreover, Rodat's role in preserving and promoting Malay-Muslim identity can also be understood in light of *ethnomusicological nostalgia*, which Turner (1995) describes as a longing for a "pure" or "authentic" version of cultural practices. By performing Rodat, community members engage in a collective act of remembering their cultural roots, which are often tied to specific historical, religious, and geographical contexts. This collective memory is important not only for identity formation but also for cultural sustainability.

In conclusion, the Rodat ensemble exemplifies the interplay between cultural identity and symbolic continuity. By blending music, performance, and religious content, it serves as a vehicle for cultural continuity in the face of globalization and cultural change. It reflects and reinforces the values of the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu, ensuring that cultural memory and identity are not only preserved but actively performed and reasserted in the present. Through Rodat, the community embodies a form of resistance to cultural erasure, asserting its identity through music as both a social and political act. This aligns with contemporary postcolonial ethnomusicological perspectives on the role of traditional music in resisting cultural hegemony (Stokes, 2010; Kartomi, 2020). As such, Rodat represents both a cultural survival strategy and a dynamic form of cultural expression that adapts to the challenges of the modern world while maintaining its foundational values and traditions.

ii. Social Cohesion and Communal Bonding

Manifest Function: Rodat performances foster social cohesion by uniting people across different genders, generations, and social statuses.

Discussion: Rodat is not only a musical performance but also a critical social activity that promotes communal bonding and strengthens social ties within the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu. Drawing from Merriam's *Social Function Theory* (1964), which emphasizes music's ability to serve societal roles, Rodat can be understood as a tool for social cohesion. In this context, music is not simply for aesthetic enjoyment but plays an active role in creating and reinforcing social structures. As Merriam argues, music is a mirror to society, and its role in uniting individuals across various social divides makes it a vital element in maintaining social order and collective identity. The Rodat ensemble, through its performance at key community events such as weddings, religious celebrations, and state functions, acts as a binding force that unites people across different social strata, ages, and genders.

Rodat's social function is also explored through Turino's (2008) framework of "*music as participatory performance*," where music is seen not merely as a product but as an act of social engagement. In this view, the act of performing music, particularly in a communal setting, fosters participation and collaboration, reinforcing social networks and interrelationships. Rodat's communal performances do not only serve to entertain but facilitate social bonding by engaging participants in a shared cultural practice. In essence, the music-making process itself is imbued with social meaning, as the collective experience of performing and listening to Rodat promotes a sense of unity and belonging.

One of the most notable aspects of Rodat performances is their intergenerational nature. Elders in the community often serve as mentors to younger participants, guiding them in both the technical aspects of the music and the broader cultural significance of the practice. This form of knowledge transmission is central to the social function of Rodat, as it creates a space for communal learning and participation that bridges generational divides. Young performers not only acquire musical skills but are also taught values such as respect for elders, discipline, and a sense of responsibility toward cultural preservation. This intergenerational mentoring is a fundamental aspect of communal bonding, ensuring that the knowledge and practices surrounding Rodat are passed down to future generations, reinforcing cultural continuity.

The role of women in the preparation of costumes and other ritual aspects of the performance further highlights the gender-inclusive nature of Rodat and its capacity to unite people across gender lines. Women's involvement in Rodat performances, particularly in the crafting of traditional attire, exemplifies their significant role in the cultural and social cohesion of the community. The act of preparing costumes is not simply a domestic task but a form of participation that connects women to the performance and to the broader social fabric. In this way, Rodat becomes a platform for both male and female participation, demonstrating how music can function as a unifying force that transcends gender boundaries.

The idea of *musicking*, as defined by Small (1998), further enhances our understanding of how Rodat functions as a communal activity. Small's concept emphasizes that music is an activity that involves not only performers but also listeners and supporters. *Musicking*, therefore, involves a broad community of participants who contribute to the creation of a shared social experience. In the case of Rodat, the act of creating music in a group setting is not just an artistic endeavor but a socially significant activity that nurtures bonds between individuals. Whether it is the performers on stage, the community members in the audience, or those involved in the preparation and organization, every participant in the Rodat performance is contributing to the collective experience that strengthens communal ties.

Recent scholarship has explored how music fosters social cohesion and collective identity in various cultural contexts. For instance, in her study of African-American gospel music, Lomax (2015) highlighted how participatory musical practices strengthen community ties and reinforce cultural identity. Similarly, research on the music of indigenous communities in the Americas has shown how traditional music plays a vital role in promoting social cohesion, particularly during communal events (Hefner, 2018). These studies support the argument that music, especially when performed in a communal setting, can act as a powerful tool for social integration and cohesion.

Moreover, Rodat's social function is not limited to the performance itself but extends to the broader cultural environment in which it operates. The community's collective responsibility for preserving and promoting Rodat, as evidenced by the involvement of different generations and genders in its practice, underscores the importance of music in reinforcing a shared sense of cultural ownership. Through the active participation of diverse community members, Rodat helps to foster a sense of collective responsibility, where everyone, regardless of age or status, has a role to play in the preservation and transmission of cultural practices.

In conclusion, Rodat serves as a vital instrument of social cohesion in Terengganu, uniting individuals across age, gender, and social status. The participatory nature of the performance, the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and the inclusive roles of community members all contribute to the communal bond that Rodat fosters. By reinforcing the concept of *musicking* and providing a space for shared emotional experiences, Rodat not only entertains but also strengthens the social fabric of the Malay-Muslim community. As this study suggests, Rodat plays a crucial role in the cultural and social life of the community, acting as a unifying force that ensures cultural continuity while simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging and collective responsibility.

iii. Ritual and Religious Function

Manifest Function: Rodat is an integral part of religious celebrations, such as the Maulidur Rasul (Prophet Muhammad's birthday), weddings, and other Islamic rites.

Discussion: Rodat occupies a sacred and ritualistic space within the cultural life of the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu, where it plays a dual role as both a musical and spiritual practice. Drawing on Ritual Theory (Turner, 1969), which views rituals as structured events that signify and reinforce cultural values, Rodat's function goes beyond mere entertainment—it becomes a powerful medium for reinforcing religious devotion and connecting the community with the sacred. In this context, Rodat is more than just a traditional music form; it is an act of worship, where music, dance, and performance intersect to create a spiritual and communal experience.

The integration of qasidah-style verses and *selawat* (salutations to the Prophet Muhammad) in Rodat performances aligns with the Islamic devotional tradition, underscoring the religious significance of this practice. These verses, often drawn from classical Islamic poetry, serve as a vehicle for expressing love and devotion to the Prophet, reinforcing the spiritual intent behind the performance. The inclusion of *selawat* connects the performers and audience to the broader Islamic tradition, creating a collective atmosphere of reverence and piety. The specific melodies and rhythms used in these performances are not only musically complex but are also laden with religious meaning, aiding in the evocation of a sacred mood that enhances the collective worship experience. As Rouget (1985) suggests in his theories of music and trance, music in religious settings has the capacity to induce a transcendent state, blurring the lines between the human and the divine. In Rodat, the musical trance-like quality of the performance creates an immersive experience where both performers and listeners become participants in a shared spiritual journey.

In ritual contexts, the choreography of Rodat is carefully structured and deeply symbolic, with movements that reflect both religious significance and artistic expression. As Turner (1969) posits in his concept of *communitas*, rituals are communal events that foster a sense of unity and equality among participants. The choreography in Rodat, involving coordinated movements and group formations, emphasizes these communal values, symbolizing harmony and collective devotion. This aspect of Rodat aligns with Bell's (1997) notion of ritualized cultural performance, where rituals are not only about transmitting religious meaning but also about creating a visually and sensorially impactful experience. The use of hierarchical groupings in the performance—such as the placement of musicians, dancers, and singers—further enhances the ritual significance, reflecting the structured nature of Islamic worship and the importance of unity within the religious community.

The rhythmic modes (known as *irama*) used in Rodat are also crucial in marking sacred time. According to Rouget (1985), the relationship between rhythm and trance in religious music can facilitate a connection to the divine. In Rodat, specific rhythmic patterns create a temporal space that signifies the sacredness of the moment. The *irama* guides the pace and flow of the performance, structuring the communal experience of time. This musical structuring of time underscores the ritual's role in separating the sacred from the mundane, creating an atmosphere where participants feel a deep sense of engagement with the divine.

Recent studies on music and ritual also support the notion that music in religious settings plays an essential role in structuring sacred time and creating spiritual experiences. For example, Herbert (2019) explores the role of ritual music in Islamic devotional practices, noting that music's temporal and emotional qualities can facilitate deeper spiritual engagement. Similarly, Barz (2021) examines the use of music in Islamic religious festivals, emphasizing how musical performances during *maulidur rasul* (birthday of Prophet Muhammad) enhance the communal experience of worship and create a collective sense of devotion. These findings resonate with the role of Rodat in the Terengganu community, where music and ritual work together to cultivate a shared sense of religious devotion.

Additionally, Rodat's incorporation of symbolic choreography and hierarchical groupings is consistent with studies of performance as ritual in other cultural contexts. Tambiah (1981) notes that rituals often involve specific arrangements of participants to symbolize social and cosmic order. In the case of Rodat, the physical placement of performers—such as the positioning of singers, drummers, and dancers mirrors the religious order of worship and fosters a sense of unity within the community. This hierarchical aspect also reinforces the sacredness of the performance, as it reflects the reverence and discipline required in Islamic rituals.

In summary, Rodat serves a critical function in reinforcing religious devotion and fostering a sense of spiritual unity within the community. Through its use of qasidah-style verses, *selawat*, symbolic choreography, and specific rhythmic modes, Rodat marks sacred time and creates a deeply immersive and spiritually enriching experience. These elements underscore the ritual and religious dimensions of the performance, aligning it with broader theoretical frameworks in ritual studies. As a cultural practice, Rodat not only aestheticizes religious devotion but also becomes a living embodiment of the community's faith and spirituality.

iv. Educational Transmission and Pedagogy

Manifest Function: Rodat acts as a medium for transmitting musical skills, oral knowledge, and moral values to younger generations.

Discussion: Rodat's educational function is central to its role in sustaining the cultural practices of the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu. According to Rice (2010) and Seeger (2004), music plays an essential role in cultural memory and transmission, with participatory teaching models being vital for the sustainability of cultural traditions. These models facilitate an experiential form of learning where knowledge is passed down through observation, participation, and engagement, rather than through formalized instruction. In the context of Rodat, the transfer of musical skills and cultural values occurs primarily through informal apprenticeships, where younger participants learn by observing the performance of their elders, asking questions, and actively contributing to the performance itself. This approach emphasizes the importance of embodied knowledge, where both musical and cultural understanding are deeply intertwined with the act of performance.

The apprenticeship model, where the older generation mentors the younger generation, reflects a horizontal transmission of knowledge that contrasts with more formal, hierarchical educational structures. Rice (2010) emphasizes that participatory learning methods are crucial for sustaining intangible cultural heritage (ICH), as they allow for the integration of knowledge into everyday life. In the case of Rodat, the educational process is less about passive learning and more about active engagement, where youth are immersed in both the technical and cultural aspects of the music. This system of learning also reflects Seeger's (2004) view of music as a tool for "cultural continuity," where the practice of music allows for the reinforcement of shared values, narratives, and social norms.

One of the most significant aspects of the Rodat apprenticeship model is its focus on the transmission of moral values, alongside musical skills. As participants learn to perform the intricate rhythms and melodies of Rodat, they are simultaneously imbued with cultural ethics such as discipline, respect for elders, and a sense of collective responsibility. These values are not taught through explicit instruction but are modeled by the older participants, who serve as role models for the younger generation. The process of learning music in this context becomes a conduit for instilling social values that are deeply rooted in the community's cultural fabric. This type of learning aligns with Small's (1998) concept of "musicking", which emphasizes the social and communal aspects of music-making. Through musicking, the younger generation is not only learning musical skills but also internalizing the communal responsibilities and ethical obligations that come with being a part of the cultural tradition.

Furthermore, the informal nature of this learning process has implications for the sustainability of Rodat as a cultural practice. The act of participating in Rodat performances ensures that the younger generation is actively involved in the continuation of the tradition. This hands-on learning process helps to reinforce the relevance of Rodat in contemporary society, even as it faces challenges from globalization and changing social norms. Merriam's (1964) Social Function Theory reinforces this idea, noting that music serves as a means of community bonding and the reinforcement of cultural identity, which is vital for the survival of cultural traditions. In the case of Rodat, the educational function of the ensemble is not only about passing on musical techniques but also about creating a sense of belonging and continuity within the community.

Recent studies on oral traditions and intergenerational learning further support the view that informal, participatory teaching models are essential for the preservation of cultural practices. Cohen (2018) emphasizes the role of oral transmission in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, noting that oral transmission allows for flexibility and adaptation, which ensures the survival of traditions in changing cultural and social contexts. In Rodat, this approach enables the tradition to adapt while maintaining its core elements, making it relevant to younger generations. Girod (2020) also highlights the role of pedagogical creativity in the transmission of traditional music, suggesting that the integration of modern technologies (such as digital media and social platforms) can enhance the learning process while still preserving the traditional teaching methods that have sustained the practice for generations.

The intergenerational nature of Rodat's transmission system also strengthens the sense of community and cultural identity. As the younger generation learns the music and associated rituals of Rodat, they become active participants in the cultural life of their community, ensuring the continuity of the tradition. Lomax (2001) suggests that musical learning in such environments is relational, fostering strong social bonds between mentors and students. In the case of Rodat, these relational bonds are crucial in creating a sense of shared ownership over the cultural tradition, ensuring that it remains alive and relevant.

In conclusion, the role of Rodat in the educational transmission of musical skills, cultural knowledge, and moral values highlights the embodied, participatory nature of traditional music education. Through informal apprenticeships, the younger generation not only learns to perform Rodat but also internalizes the cultural values that it represents. This type of learning is integral to the sustainability of the tradition, as it helps to maintain both the technical and ethical aspects of the practice. As such, Rodat exemplifies the ways in which music serves as a tool for cultural continuity and community cohesion, ensuring that the traditions of the Malay-Muslim community in Terengganu are passed down to future generations.

v. Aesthetic Enjoyment and Public Performance

Manifest Function: Rodat provides sensory pleasure, visual spectacle, and rhythmic engagement.

Discussion: Rodat's aesthetic function is an essential aspect of its appeal, offering not only a means of cultural expression but also a source of sensory enjoyment for both performers and audiences. According to Becker (2000), aesthetic experiences in music are often intertwined with both the artistic form and the social context in which they are performed. Rodat is appreciated for its multifaceted aesthetic qualities, which include its complex layered percussion, the call-and-response vocal patterns, and the highly synchronized group movements. These elements create a rich, multimodal sensory experience that engages the audience on multiple levels—musically, visually, and rhythmically. The percussion provides a deep, resonant soundscape that shapes the emotional tone of the performance, while the call-and-response vocals engage the audience through a participatory, interactive form of communication. Meanwhile, the synchronized movements of the performers add a visual dimension, creating a spectacle that enhances the overall impact of the performance.

The aesthetic qualities of Rodat play a significant role in fostering a sense of cultural pride within the Malay-Muslim community of Terengganu. The performers' mastery of the ensemble's complex musical and choreographic components reflects a deep understanding and reverence for their cultural heritage. Bourdieu's (1993) concept of cultural capital is relevant here, as the mastery of such a culturally significant form of music confers social prestige and respect within the community. For instance, master performers, often elders who have spent decades honing their craft, are seen as repositories of knowledge and skill, and their performances are highly valued for both their aesthetic and symbolic significance. As Bourdieu asserts, cultural practices such as these not only reflect individual talent but also reinforce one's social position and influence within a community. The respect afforded to these master performers can be understood as a form of social currency, linking the individual's artistic expertise with their standing in the community.

Additionally, Rodat's public performances in festivals, weddings, and state functions serve as opportunities for the community to come together, celebrate their cultural heritage, and display their collective pride. The public aspect of these performances underscores the social importance of Rodat, as it functions not only as a private artistic expression but also as a public assertion of cultural identity. These performances often occur in settings where the community gathers to celebrate significant events, and the act of performing Rodat becomes a public declaration of cultural values, aesthetic appreciation, and collective memory. As Bourdieu (1993) explains, the act of cultural performance is inherently linked to the visibility of one's cultural capital. Through such performances, the community members reaffirm their connection to their cultural roots and simultaneously exhibit their mastery over their artistic tradition to the broader society.

Rodat's aesthetic enjoyment extends beyond its role in cultural pride to encompass the sensory pleasures derived from the performance itself. The engagement with rhythm, melody, and movement offers both performers and audiences a heightened awareness of the present moment, allowing them to be fully immersed in the ritualized experience. Turino (2008) also touches on this aspect by discussing how participatory

performance can heighten emotional and physical involvement, particularly through rhythm and communal engagement. In the context of Rodat, the rhythmic engagement is particularly compelling, as the complex drumming patterns and the collective nature of the ensemble foster a sense of unity and communal joy. This aspect of rhythmic participation is central to the aesthetic experience, as it draws the audience and performers alike into a shared temporal and emotional space.

The sensory engagement offered by Rodat is not only aesthetic but also symbolic, as it represents the community's connection to its cultural heritage. Through the intricate interplay of music, movement, and costume, Rodat affirms the community's sense of cultural sophistication. As Small (1998) argues in his concept of "musicking," the act of participating in or witnessing music-making becomes an immersive process that shapes one's sense of identity and place within the community. The visual aspects of Rodat, such as the traditional attire and the highly coordinated movements, add a layer of cultural symbolism that enhances the performance's aesthetic appeal. These symbols, carefully preserved and executed, reinforce the performers' deep connection to their cultural history and pride in their artistic accomplishments.

Furthermore, Rodat's aesthetic qualities highlight the multisensory nature of musical performance, which has been increasingly recognized in ethnomusicology. Scholars like Feld (2012) emphasize the importance of sensory immersion in musical experience, noting that music is not merely a cerebral activity but a sensorial performance that involves all the senses. In the case of Rodat, the tactile sensation of drumming, the auditory pleasure of call-and-response vocals, and the visual excitement of synchronized movements combine to create a rich, immersive experience that is both pleasurable and culturally significant. These layered sensory experiences contribute to Rodat's continued relevance and vibrancy in contemporary society, as it provides a form of cultural expression that is both historically grounded and aesthetically engaging.

In summary, Rodat serves as a powerful example of music as a form of aesthetic expression that simultaneously engages multiple senses, reinforces cultural identity, and bestows social prestige. Through its sensory pleasures, visual spectacle, and rhythmic engagement, Rodat not only functions as a vehicle for cultural transmission and communal bonding but also stands as a testament to the sophistication and pride of the Malay-Muslim community. The public performances of Rodat, steeped in cultural capital, offer the community an opportunity to display their mastery of this rich tradition, while also reaffirming their collective identity through the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of the performance.

vi. Cultural Resistance and Anti-Assimilation

Manifest Function: Rodat serves as a form of resistance against the cultural homogenization brought about by globalization.

Discussion: The ongoing performance of Rodat, despite the growing global dominance of contemporary music genres like K-pop, EDM, and other Western-influenced styles, embodies a form of cultural resistance. This resistance is evident not only in the preservation of the musical tradition itself but also in its active performance as a symbolic assertion of local cultural identity. Resistance Theory (Dunbar-Hall, 2004) positions traditional music as an "acoustic fence", an effective boundary between local cultural heritage and the overwhelming pressures of globalization. According to this framework, Rodat serves as a cultural defense mechanism, safeguarding the Malay-Muslim community of Terengganu from the encroaching influence of globalized, commercialized music. By continuing to perform Rodat, the community resists the dilution of its identity and the erosion of its unique cultural practices.

As one interview participant expressed, "*Performing Rodat is a way to stand firm against being diluted*". This statement underscores the belief among the community that the act of performing traditional music is not just an aesthetic or social activity, but an active form of resistance against the cultural forces that seek to homogenize local practices. Music, in this sense, becomes a medium of empowerment, enabling the community to assert its distinctiveness and reject external influences that may undermine cultural integrity. The performance of Rodat thus becomes a political act, marking a defiant stand against the erasure of local identities in the face of globalizing forces.

The relationship between music and cultural resistance is further supported by UNESCO's (2003) perspective on safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), which views practices like Rodat as a vital part of cultural resilience. UNESCO's framework for ICH emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional cultural practices as a form of cultural survival strategy, particularly in the face of modernization and globalization. Rodat, as an oral and performance-based tradition, fits into this vision by acting as a living expression of the community's resilience. It serves not only as a preservation of cultural knowledge but as a mechanism for passing this knowledge on to younger generations, thereby ensuring the continuity of the tradition even in an increasingly globalized world.

Moreover, the performance of Rodat is not merely a passive form of resistance but an active engagement in cultural reassertion. Rogers (2019) highlights that cultural resistance often involves the reclamation of traditional practices and the transformation of them into tools of political, social, or ideological resistance. In this case, the performance of Rodat is both a cultural assertion and a political stance against the forces that seek to undermine the Malay-Muslim community's historical identity. The continued vitality of Rodat in a rapidly changing world speaks to the community's desire to retain ownership over its cultural heritage, particularly in an era marked by the rapid spread of globalized music and entertainment.

The resurgence of interest in Rodat, especially among younger generations, further reinforces the idea that traditional music can be a vehicle for anti-assimilation. Hernandez (2014) explores how music can be a powerful tool for cultural reaffirmation in the face of external pressures. In the case of Rodat, younger participants, often trained by elder mentors, find in the ensemble a way to reconnect with their cultural roots, offering them a sense of belonging and cultural continuity amid the rising popularity of global music trends. This process of reaffirmation is especially important in the context of postcolonial resistance, where traditional music forms have historically been used as symbols of defiance against external colonial and imperial influences (Stokes, 2010; Kartomi, 2020).

Rodat's role as a form of cultural resistance is also tied to the broader notion of identity politics. Steger (2017) discusses how cultural forms serve as markers of identity, particularly in the face of globalization. The continued performance of Rodat serves as a form of resistance to cultural imperialism, as it pushes back against the erasure of local practices and advocates for the maintenance of cultural diversity. In this sense, Rodat offers a space where cultural identities can be reaffirmed, and resistance to assimilation can be enacted through the deliberate performance of traditional music that embodies shared histories, values, and beliefs.

In conclusion, the performance of Rodat is not merely an aesthetic or social activity, but a deliberate act of cultural resistance against the forces of globalization that seek to standardize cultural expressions. By continuing to perform Rodat, the Malay-Muslim community of Terengganu actively defends its cultural sovereignty and identity in the face of external pressures. This resistance is supported by UNESCO's recognition of ICH as a resilience strategy and is further emphasized by contemporary resistance theories that position traditional music as a crucial tool for the preservation and reassertion of cultural identity.

vii. Utility

Manifest Function: Rodat performances are leveraged in tourism, state festivals, and campaigns promoting heritage and national unity.

Discussion: Rodat, like many traditional cultural expressions, has become a commodified product in the context of tourism and state-sponsored cultural events. This commodification is consistent with the Political Economy of Music Theory (Feld, 1994), which explores how music can be shaped by economic, political, and social forces, including state sponsorship and commercial interests. The inclusion of Rodat in national festivals, heritage campaigns, and cultural tourism initiatives has significantly increased its visibility. While this exposure introduces Rodat to broader audiences, it also raises concerns about the detachment of the performance from its original communal and sacred context (Taylor, 2007). Traditionally, Rodat performances were deeply embedded in local rituals and social functions, with strong emotional and spiritual connections among participants. However, as these performances are increasingly showcased for tourists and state agendas, there is a risk that the authenticity of the cultural expression may be compromised.

This commercialization of Rodat brings about a paradox: while it promotes the tradition to a wider audience, it may also dilute the spiritual and communal significance that originally defined the performance. According to Taylor (2007), when cultural practices are commodified, they often lose their profound cultural meaning as they are adapted to meet the expectations of external audiences. Rodat's transformation into a tourist attraction risks reducing it to a performance for consumption, rather than a communal and ritualistic practice. This tension between tradition and commercialization is not unique to Rodat but is a common phenomenon in the broader landscape of cultural tourism and heritage industries.

Despite these risks, commodification can also offer economic opportunities for the local community. Tan and Karim (2022) argue that when traditional music is included in cultural tourism, it can lead to economic revitalization. The involvement of local communities in the tourism process—whether through performances at heritage sites, festivals, or special cultural events—can provide a steady source of income and employment opportunities for performers, artisans, and other local stakeholders. This commercial engagement can act as a means of empowering the community, particularly in rural areas where tourism might offer one of the few avenues for economic growth. Moreover, these performances, while showcasing traditional culture, can also foster intergenerational engagement, as younger participants are often involved in the performances and may be more likely to develop an appreciation for their cultural heritage through their involvement.

Furthermore, when tourism-related activities are designed with an emphasis on community participation, they can serve as a tool for cultural sustainability. According to Baker (2019), the key to successful cultural tourism lies in balancing the interests of external tourists with the needs of the local community. By ensuring that local performers maintain a role in the artistic direction and cultural interpretation, Rodat performances can stay rooted in the local cultural context while also being accessible to visitors. This collaborative approach not only preserves the authenticity of the tradition but also nurtures a sense of ownership and pride among community members, which in turn fosters cultural resilience.

The economic value of Rodat performances is also evident in the role they play in promoting national unity. As part of state-sponsored festivals and national celebrations, Rodat can serve as a symbol of cultural identity that reinforces a collective sense of belonging and pride. In this context, Rodat becomes more than just a local cultural expression; it is a national symbol that ties together diverse communities through shared cultural heritage. According to Horne and Manzenreiter (2019), such performances can be a vital tool in the construction of national narratives, helping to reinforce a unified identity amidst the complexities of modern multicultural societies. By showcasing traditional art forms like Rodat at state-level festivals, the state can bolster its cultural diplomacy efforts, promoting national unity both internally and abroad.

In conclusion, while the commodification of Rodat for tourism and state festivals risks disconnecting it from its original cultural and ritualistic roots, it also offers substantial opportunities for economic development and cultural revitalization. As long as local communities maintain active participation in the performance and interpretation of Rodat, this tradition can continue to thrive in both commercial and cultural contexts. Balancing authenticity with commercial success will be key to ensuring that Rodat remains a vibrant cultural practice for future generations.

Implications for Preservation and Revitalization

The diverse functions of the Rodat ensemble highlight its rich cultural significance, making it a prime candidate for revitalization through targeted preservation efforts. As a form of musical expression that links deeply with community identity, religious practice, and social cohesion, Rodat holds the potential not only to survive but to thrive in contemporary contexts. To ensure its continued relevance, various strategies can be implemented, including curriculum integration, community-based initiatives, digital engagement, and governmental policy support. Each of these strategies contributes to safeguarding the tradition while ensuring it remains dynamic and adaptable in the face of modern challenges.

Curriculum Integration in Music Education and Heritage Studies

One of the most effective ways to preserve Rodat is through its integration into formal music education and heritage studies programs. As suggested by Merriam (1964) and Seeger (2004), education plays a vital role in the transmission of cultural practices. Introducing Rodat into school curriculums not only fosters musical skills but also educates students about the cultural, historical, and spiritual dimensions of the tradition. This could be particularly impactful in music departments and heritage-focused institutions, where young learners can engage directly with the ensemble's performance practices, including oral transmission of melodies and rhythms. Through academic programs, students can learn to perform, analyze, and interpret Rodat's rich traditions, ensuring the next generation inherits both the musical and cultural knowledge tied to the ensemble.

By embedding Rodat into heritage studies programs, schools and universities can also promote interdisciplinary approaches that merge ethnomusicology, history, and cultural studies, further deepening students' understanding of the tradition's broader significance. As seen in other cultural preservation efforts, such as the inclusion of indigenous music in educational frameworks (Rice, 2010), this formal recognition can help elevate the status of Rodat among younger generations, fostering respect and pride for their cultural heritage.

Community-Based Festivals Led by Youth

Another crucial approach to revitalizing Rodat is the promotion of community-based festivals that are led by youth performers. Community involvement is essential in maintaining the vitality of traditional practices, as highlighted by Turino (2008) in his concept of "participatory performance," where the act of musicking itself strengthens social bonds. Youth-led festivals not only provide a platform for young people to showcase their skills but also ensure the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values. As older generations mentor younger performers, they create a space for the youth to take ownership of the tradition while bringing fresh perspectives and energy to Rodat performances.

In these festivals, youth can perform Rodat in public settings, such as during local religious celebrations or cultural gatherings. This not only attracts local audiences but also invites tourists, ensuring that the performances gain exposure beyond the community. By focusing on youth engagement, Rodat's performances can evolve and adapt while remaining rooted in tradition. Additionally, such initiatives foster a sense of pride and cultural responsibility among younger generations, empowering them to sustain and innovate upon the tradition.

Digital Archiving and Social Media Outreach

In the digital age, archiving Rodat performances and making them accessible online is an essential strategy for preserving the tradition. Digital archiving allows for the documentation of performances, including audio recordings, video footage, and detailed descriptions of the ensemble's practices, which can be used for educational purposes and as a resource for future generations. This aligns with Rice's (2010) view on the importance of technological tools for cultural preservation. Additionally, the growing prevalence of social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube provides an opportunity to engage younger audiences with Rodat. By creating short, visually compelling videos that showcase Rodat's distinctive rhythms, costumes, and performances, younger generations can become more familiar with the tradition in a modern, accessible format. As Becker (2000) notes, new media forms can reframe the aesthetic and cultural value of musical traditions, making them more appealing to a digital-native audience.

Social media also allows performers to connect with global audiences, potentially sparking international interest in the tradition. These platforms can create a sense of community beyond geographic boundaries, where Rodat performances can inspire collaboration, discussion, and further exploration of the tradition. This digital presence, when managed appropriately, can help balance the traditional and modern aspects of Rodat, ensuring that it evolves without losing its essence.

Policy Support and Governmental Programs

Support from governmental programs is critical in ensuring the sustainability of Rodat as an intangible cultural heritage (ICH). National initiatives such as Malaysia's DAKEN 2021 blueprint and the Department of National Heritage (JKKN) play a crucial role in preserving and promoting traditional music. These institutions can provide financial resources, logistical support, and platforms for visibility, ensuring that Rodat performances are featured in national celebrations, festivals, and cultural exhibitions. Furthermore, governments can facilitate capacity-building programs for both performers and educators, ensuring the knowledge surrounding Rodat is passed down effectively.

The support from UNESCO's ICH safeguarding models, which focus on the active participation of communities in preserving their heritage, is a valuable guide for these efforts. According to UNESCO (2003), ensuring the continuity of ICH requires integrating it into the everyday lives of community members, while also providing broader platforms for dissemination. Through targeted support for Rodat, such as inclusion in national cultural policies or specialized funding for its preservation, governmental programs can help stabilize and revitalize the practice for future generations.

In conclusion, the preservation and revitalization of Rodat require a multi-pronged approach that includes educational integration, community involvement, digital engagement, and policy support. These strategies not only safeguard the tradition but also ensure that it remains a vibrant and relevant part of the cultural landscape. By aligning these efforts with international frameworks such as UNESCO's ICH guidelines and Malaysia's DAKEN 2021, Rodat can shift from a diminishing practice to a dynamic cultural form, adaptable to contemporary contexts while preserving its rich heritage.

Summary Table: Rodat's Manifest Functions in Ethnomusicological Perspective

Manifest Function	Ethnomusicological Theory	Cultural Outcome
Cultural Identity	Cultural Identity Theory	Strengthens communal self-perception
Social Cohesion	Social Function Theory	Fosters community bonding
Religious Function	Ritual Theory	Embeds Islamic spirituality in daily life
Educational Transmission	Transmission and Pedagogy Theory	Encourages intergenerational learning
Aesthetic and Artistic Performance	Aesthetic Theory	Celebrates performance artistry
Cultural Resistance	Resistance Theory	Guards against cultural erosion
Economic/Political Function	Political Economy of Music Theory	Leverages tradition for visibility and economy

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rodat, as revealed through this ethnomusicological study, emerges as far more than a mere form of entertainment. It stands as a multifaceted cultural institution deeply woven into the fabric of the Malay-Muslim communities in Terengganu. Serving as a reflection of communal identity, spiritual devotion, and aesthetic expression, Rodat plays critical roles that go beyond musical performance. It functions as a tool for cultural affirmation, social cohesion, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and cultural resistance. Despite its declining popularity in some regions, Rodat continues to hold significant meaning for the community, acting as a symbol of cultural resilience and historical continuity.

The ethnomusicological approach applied in this study offers a nuanced understanding of Rodat's role in contemporary society. By incorporating frameworks such as cultural identity theory, social function theory, ritual theory, and transmission theory, this research underscores the multiplicity of functions that Rodat serves

in the cultural landscape of Terengganu. Cultural identity theory reveals how Rodat helps sustain and express a distinct sense of Malay-Muslim identity, while social function theory emphasizes its role in fostering community bonds. Ritual theory highlights how Rodat is integrated into religious and ceremonial contexts, and transmission theory explains how the tradition is passed down across generations. These insights contribute to ongoing discussions in the field of applied ethnomusicology and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). They provide an integrated framework for understanding and preserving Rodat within the context of Malaysia's National Cultural Policy (DAKEN 2021) and broader international heritage frameworks, such as UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Given the diverse roles Rodat plays in the community, revitalizing and preserving this tradition for future generations requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates both policy-level interventions and grassroots initiatives. One critical recommendation is the integration of Rodat into educational curricula at various levels, particularly in music education and heritage studies programs. As noted by Rice (2010) and Seeger (2004), education is a pivotal tool for transmitting cultural knowledge, and by embedding Rodat within formal educational settings, students can gain a deeper understanding of its significance and develop the skills needed to sustain it. Additionally, community-based festivals that engage youth in Rodat performances are essential for fostering intergenerational learning and ensuring that the tradition remains a living practice. These festivals provide a platform for younger generations to connect with their heritage, learn from elder mentors, and actively participate in the cultural performance.

Moreover, digital media presents an invaluable opportunity for outreach and engagement, especially among younger audiences. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube can be used to showcase Rodat performances, creating both local and global awareness of this tradition. By leveraging these platforms, the tradition can appeal to a wider demographic, including those who may not have direct access to live performances. The use of digital media for documenting and sharing Rodat performances also aligns with the efforts of digital archiving, ensuring that the tradition is preserved for future generations while adapting to contemporary modes of communication.

On a policy level, it is vital for government initiatives such as Malaysia's DAKEN 2021 blueprint and UNESCO's ICH safeguarding models to support the sustainability of Rodat. These programs can offer funding, resources, and national visibility to traditional cultural practices, ensuring that they receive the institutional backing necessary to thrive. Furthermore, local and national government support through platforms like the Department of National Heritage (JKKN) can promote Rodat as part of the broader national heritage, particularly in the context of cultural tourism and national unity.

In conclusion, Rodat's multifaceted functions within the Malay-Muslim communities of Terengganu underscore its importance not just as a musical form, but as a dynamic cultural institution. By combining educational integration, community engagement, digital outreach, and policy support, Rodat can be revitalized and preserved as a living tradition that reflects and sustains the values, identities, and aesthetics of the community. These efforts, aligned with both national and global heritage frameworks, will ensure that Rodat continues to be a symbol of cultural pride, resilience, and continuity for generations to come.

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