

Oikonomia of the sacred leaf: Arat Sabulungan and the theological foundations of learning media management in Christian education

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Abstract: Arat Sabulungan is a local religion originating from the Mentawai Islands in North Sumatra. It serves as a guiding framework for the Mentawai people, influencing their policies, values, and social behavior. The teachings of Arat Sabulungan emphasize the importance of maintaining balance between God, humans, and nature. As a result, nature becomes a central aspect of the Mentawai people's efforts to preserve environmental integrity. This research, conducted through an ethnographic study, explores Arat Sabulungan as a form of learning media management. It views the local religion as a source of spiritual values that can be integrated into education. The findings support the argument that Arat Sabulungan serves as a source of spiritual inspiration for learning media management through religious education, shaping attitudes and behaviors grounded in spiritual principles. In conclusion, the study highlights how religious values, local belief systems, and education reinforce one another to meet the evolving needs of modern education.

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Introduction

Arat Sabulungan is the local religion of the Mentawai people, especially on Siberut Island. This religion emphasizes the balance in human life among three elements: the teachings, dogmas, and guidance of Arat Sabulungan, namely God, humans, and nature. This point of equilibrium determines the journey of human life. The followers of Arat Sabulungan are the Sakkudei, an indigenous tribe of the Mentawai people.¹ In accordance with their beliefs, the Mentawai people refer to their God, Ulau Manua, as the Ultimate Being and the beginning of life in society. Therefore, the presence of this religion becomes an ethical bond in viewing the relationship between God, humans, and nature as a unity of attitudes and behavior of society.² The development of this religion has been disrupted by two factors: technology and modern-

¹ Christian S. Hammons, "Indigenous Religion, Christianity and the State: Mobility and Nomadic Metaphysics in Siberut, Western Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 5 (October 19, 2016): 399–418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2016.1208676>.

² Halim Wiryadinata, "Aluk Todolo: The Journey of Puang Matua's Wisdom from Dormancy to Revival," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 15, no. 2 (2024): 263–77, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v15i02/263-277>.

ization. The influence of technology has led religion to evolve, gaining a place in human existence as a controller of attitudes and behavior.³ For instance, the introduction of modern communication tools has changed the way religious teachings are disseminated and interpreted. The influence of this technology also reinforces the narrative of modernization, encouraging rationality in social change by promoting critical thinking and evaluating traditional practices.⁴ Rationality plays a role in both technology and modernization as a guide for modern humans today. These two factors, technology and modernization, have disrupted religion in the public sphere.

According to Martono⁵, technology changes the role of humans in the social realm. Technology changes humans to think algorithmically, enabling them to obtain information as quickly as possible. The power of technology promises to give humans greater convenience, speed, accuracy, productivity, and precision. These promises make humans dependent on technology and change the human paradigm regarding the existence of religion.⁶ Technology re-engineers the human paradigm of life and what lies beyond. This understanding shapes the ideology of technology as the definitive answer to questions and pushes human rationality into logic. Therefore, technology views religion as a social institution based on belief. The growth and development of technology erode the role of 'local religion,' which refers to indigenous or traditional belief systems, in the public sphere, relegating it to its own walls.⁷ The loss of religion's role disrupts local religions' ability to foster ethical attitudes and behaviors that technology cannot teach. Arat Sabulungan's role in society becomes vulnerable because technology prompts people to think algorithmically. The value of belief in Arat Sabulungan becomes an ancient artifact that is unable to provide answers as quickly as technology does. This condition makes Arat Sabulungan vulnerable in the social realm. Andika⁸ clearly emphasizes that technological developments reposition religion's teachings, guidance, and dogma. This technological development cannot be separated from the role of modernization narratives.

The narrative of modernization shapes religious institutions in social life. Modernization is a progressive transition from traditional to modern society, with technology as one of its defining features.⁹ This societal shift affects the development of religion, maintaining the essence of its teachings amid modernization. This shift places religion in a state of withdrawal from the public sphere and creates the terminology of secularization.¹⁰ The concept of secular-

³ Hans Kung, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15–17.

⁴ Ikechukwu O Onuoha and Francis C Odeke, "Globalization and Religion: Analysing the Impact," *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion* 2, no. 1 (September 18, 2020): 48–59, <https://doi.org/10.37284/EAJTCR.2.1.213>.

⁵ N Martono, *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial., Perubahan Sosial Budaya*, 4th ed. (Jakarta: PT Rajagrafindo Persada, 2016), 22–23.

⁶ Paško Bilić, "A Critique of the Political Economy of Algorithms: A Brief History of Google's Technological Rationality," *TripleC* 16, no. 1 (2018): 315–31, <https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v16i1.914>.

⁷ Dimas Agung Trisliatanto et al., "The Comparison Factors between Science and Religion Based on Philosophy Science: An Exploratory Literature Study," *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 16, no. Feb (February 10, 2021): 610–17, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v16i1.2602>.

⁸ Andika Andika, "Agama Dan Perkembangan Teknologi Di Era Modern [Religion and Technological Development in the Modern Era]," *Abrahamic Religions: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 2, no. 2 (September 20, 2022): 129–39, <https://doi.org/10.22373/arj.v2i2.12556>.

⁹ Simone Datzberger, "Lost in Transition? Modernization, Formal Education and Violence in Karamoja," *World Development* 158 (October 1, 2022): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106013>.

¹⁰ Dušan Lužný, "Religious Memory in a Changing Society: The Case of India and Papua New Guinea," *Changing Societies and Personalities* 5, no. 1 (April 19, 2021): 36–62, <https://doi.org/10.15826/CSP.2021.5.1.121>.

ization is the process by which religion withdraws from the public sphere to protect itself from contamination by secular values. Therefore, the narrative of modernization erects a wall for religion to maintain the sanctity of religious educational values.¹¹ This modernization makes humans rely on rationality. The mechanism of rationality sharpens the definition of secularization as a social order resulting from modernization.¹² Martono¹³ firmly explains that modernization leads to a decline in religious belief and abandonment of norms as rational humans. The effects of modernization and secularization led the local religion, Arat Sabulungan, to form its own community, grounded in cosmological beliefs. This understanding makes Arat Sabulungan alienated in social and digital spaces, so Arat Sabulungan builds resilience by forming attitudes and behaviors in educational concepts from generation to generation. Simone Datzberger¹⁴ writes that the effects of modernization disrupt religion and education, resulting in social change in these realms. This change brings together how local religion (Arat Sabulungan) continues to exist and seeks to gain influence in shaping human ethics in the era of technology and modernization.

The two factors mentioned above (technology and modernization) have marginalized religion in shaping society's attitudes and behavior. Previous research conducted by Hanani¹⁵ explains that the concept of Arat Sabulungan teachings shapes the preservation of the global environment. In support, research by Marwan et al.¹⁶ presents environmental preservation as an expression of the Arat Sabulungan religion. Additionally, Amini Naser et al.¹⁷ describe body tattoos among the Mentawai people as an expression of Arat Sabulungan's identity, while Ismanto et al.¹⁸ show that the Mentawai forest is a biosphere for human life. Similarly, research by Nurjana et al.¹⁹ confirms that the Arat Sabulungan culture is an art form that shapes the identity of the Mentawai people. However, these studies have not yet addressed whether Arat Sabulungan serves as a media space for learning ethics (attitudes and behavior) in Christian religious education in the public sphere. Therefore, our argument proposes that Arat Sabulungan is *oikonomia*—a concept of preserving the teaching of Mentawaian regarding the sacred leaf—a meeting space for the formation of human attitudes and behavior in the social realm as a value of religious education. Thus, the formation of attitudes and behavior

¹¹ Onuoha and Odeke, "Globalization and Religion: Analysing the Impact."

¹² Halim Wiryadinata and Charstar Arstilo Rumbay, "The Subject of Education: Disruptive Dilemma in Abraham Kuyper and Ellen White Thought," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 5, no. 1 (2020): 176–94, <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v5i1.309>.

¹³ Martono, *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial.*, 266–67.

¹⁴ Datzberger, "Lost in Transition? Modernization, Formal Education and Violence in Karamoja."

¹⁵ Silfia Hanani and Nelmaya, "Ecological Ethics in the Theological Teaching of Arat Sabulungan in Mentawai Island Indonesia," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 102–7, <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2022.43.1.14>.

¹⁶ N. F. Marwan and D. R. Anwar, "Landscape Design for Coastal Ecotourism of Jati Beach, North Sipora Island, Mentawai West Sumatera," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 501 (Institute of Physics Publishing, 2020), 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/501/1/012049>.

¹⁷ Putri Amini Naser et al., "Tato Tubuh Sebagai Ekspresi Kepercayaan Di Mentawai," *Jurnal Ilmiah Languae and Parole* 7, no. 1 (December 3, 2023): 57–63, <https://doi.org/10.36057/jilp.v7i1.618>.

¹⁸ Sahadi Didi Ismanto et al., "Management Policy Analysis Of Siberut Biosphere Reserve Mentawai Archipelago Distric West Sumatera Province," *Andalasian International Journal of Agricultural and Natural Sciences (AIJANS)* 2, no. 2 (September 24, 2021): 21–36, <https://doi.org/10.25077/aijans.v2.i02.21-36.2021>.

¹⁹ Keukeu Nurjanah, Ferina Meliasanti, and Sutri Sutri, "Warna Lokal Mentawai Dalam Novel Burung Kayu Karya Niduparas Erlang Dan Pemanfaatannya Sebagai Materi Ajar," *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA* 8, no. 1 (February 13, 2022): 164–73, <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v8i1.1833>.

becomes a theological praxis that prioritizes the balance between vertical and horizontal relationships (God, humans, and nature) as a universal value.²⁰

The local religion, Arat Sabulungan, is a powerful force in shaping human attitudes and behavior, instilling universal values and fostering self-respect for the teachings of religious education. These universal values form a dialectic between culture, education, and religion, creating a learning media management space in the public sphere that is a testament to human spirituality. The decline of religious values due to technology and modernization presents an opportunity for humans to rediscover the value of ethical formation through education and local culture. This understanding positions the purpose of this study to prove our argument that Arat Sabulungan is a learning media management space that shapes human attitudes and behavior in the social realm. The dialectic between religion, education, and the sociology of religion becomes a scalpel for formulating how local religion can serve as a practical learning medium for managing human attitudes and behavior as a point of balance in life between God, humans, and nature.

This study uses a qualitative approach to broaden the understanding and interpretation of Arat Sabulungan. The qualitative approach is the answer to this study because it provides an exploration of the meaning and practice of Arat Sabulungan in society, using interviews, coding, and analysis to determine its value.²¹ This study conducted interviews with five credible informants and coded the results using NVivo, employing thematic, domain, and component analysis.²² The NVivo visualization provides a clear, neat relationship between the coding results and the themes of Arat Sabulungan. All informant sources are not identified by their real names to respect ethical consent in this study.²³ This qualitative approach was carried out from October 2025 to January 2026, including in-depth interviews, note-taking, and analysis using the NVivo application (domain, taxonomy, and components) to identify local cultural and religious themes in Arat Sabulungan. Next, triangulation was conducted by sharing the data findings with the local community to validate the accuracy of the data interpretation. The results of the triangulation are shown in Table 1 below.

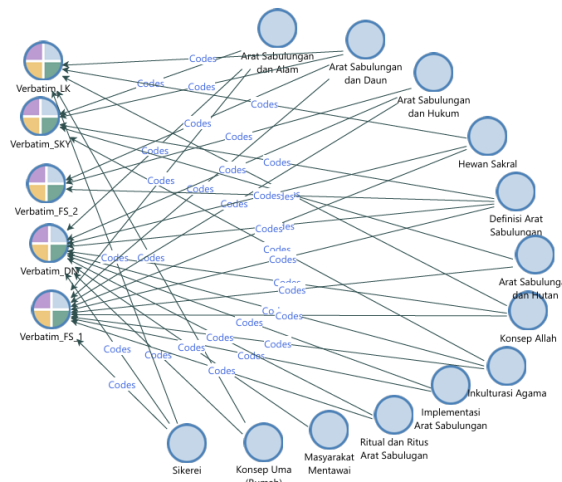


Table 1: Triangulations

²⁰ Halim Wiryadinata and Fanny Natalia Joseph, “Sus Oef as the Theology of Indonesian Ethnic Marriage Dowry,” *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 7, no. 1 (January 26, 2023): 72–79, <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v7i1.598>.

²¹ James P. Spradley, *Etnografi* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2007), 17–18.

²² P Bazeley, *Nvivo for Qualitative Data Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 55–57.

²³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 78–79.

A Construction of Arat Sabulungan in Mentawai Society

Arat Sabulungan is understood as a norm that shapes the attitudes and behavior of Mentawai people in their relationships with nature and others in the social realm, highlighting its role in guiding societal conduct. "Arat" means "custom," "Sa" means "bundle," and "Bulungan" means "leaf." The unity of these words makes Arat Sabulungan a code of conduct for Mentawai people to respect nature, humans, and God.²⁴ That definition is supported by the interview of FS, who said the following:

Arat sabulungan consists of two phrases. The first is 'arat,' which refers to a belief or culture, while 'sabulungan' refers to leaves or plants. So, if we combine these two meanings, arat sabulungan is a belief or culture that holds that leaves have spirits and powers capable of healing human sickness.²⁵

The concept of understanding Arat Sabulungan emphasizes that nature has the power of life, so humans have a mandate to maintain balance in the cosmological order. Therefore, the Mentawai people respect nature as life.²⁶ Nature has breath given by God as the source of life. For the Mentawai people, the concept of God as the creator of forests/mountains, seas, and skies is placed in their belief system. Tai Kalelu is the God of forests/mountains, Tai Leubagut is the God of the sea, and Tai Kamuna is the God of the sky.²⁷ This understanding places Arat Sabulungan's respect for nature as a life value in shaping norms for Mentawai society.

The Arat Sabulungan community believes in leaves as symbols of the soul and as a means of conveying prayers to God in rituals. For instance, they may use specific types of leaves during cleansing ceremonies to symbolize spiritual renewal.²⁸ The belief in leaves symbolizes the Arat Sabulungan community's desire to cleanse itself of all wrongdoing. This leaf concept positions the Arat Sabulungan community as a local religion that focuses on the integrity of the forest. For the Arat Sabulungan community, leaves and forests represent the soul of human life.²⁹ Leaves represent the soul of every life, making them a sacred medium for Arat Sabulungan followers in their religious rites. SKY, through her interview, says:

Our ancestors still believe leaves and trees have spirits. That is how it works today, and Mentawai people highly value and respect the forest because it has a spirit, a soul.³⁰

Therefore, the presence of leaves and forests is a fundamental element in the rituals and rites of Arat Sabulungan followers in cleansing themselves from all calamities. The Arat Sabulungan community believes that the souls of leaves and forests guide humans to seek balance in the natural world.³¹ This balance of life teaches societal norms about the sacred and

²⁴ Maria Sonniati Satoko and Intansakti Pius X, "Katekese Inkulturasi Tentang Makna Budaya 'Arat Sabulungan' Dalam Masyarakat Suku Mentawai," *Jurnal Pelayanan Pastoral* 4, no. 2 (October 28, 2023): 79–87, <https://doi.org/10.53544/jpp.v4i2.367>.

²⁵ FS, "Interview FS," 2025.

²⁶ Syafwan Rozi and Zulfan Taufik, "Adaptation of Religion and Local Wisdom in Global Environmental Issues in Indonesia," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 4, no. 3 (October 30, 2020): 191–203, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v4i3.9593>.

²⁷ Hanani and Nelmaya, "Ecological Ethics in the Theological Teaching."

²⁸ Samantha M. Lee et al., "The Indigenous Uses of Plants from Siberut, Mentawai, Indonesia," *Ethnobotany Research and Applications* 22, no. 18 (July 11, 2021): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.32859/ERA.22.18.1-33>.

²⁹ Hanani and Nelmaya, "Ecological Ethics in the Theological Teaching."

³⁰ SKY, "Interview SKY," 2025.

³¹ Hammons, "Indigenous Religion, Christianity and the State."

the profane in religious life. Durkheim explains that religious symbolism provides a deeper understanding of the sacred in the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation.³²

According to DN, the social norms of the Mentawai people do not recognize social stratification but uphold egalitarianism, viewing human beings as equal within the Arat Sabulungan religion.³³ The social norms of this society and all religious activities of Arat Sabulungan are focused on the concept of Uma. For the Mentawai people, Uma is the traditional house at the center of religious, legal, and social activities in Mentawai society.³⁴ Therefore, followers of Arat Sabulungan solve problems in society without differentiating social status. This thinking positions Uma as a social representation of justice and equality for followers of Arat Sabulungan. This social norm becomes the law for the Mentawai people to teach, direct, and guide in maintaining cosmological balance. We agree with the thinking of Derung et al., who observed that social norms serve as guidelines, directions, and dogmas for the Mentawai people in their interactions with humans, nature, and God.³⁵ This understanding treats social norms as law, with implications for society and consequences. Egalitarianism makes society focus not on social status but on obedience to the guidelines and teachings of Arat Sabulungan.

Emile Durkheim's theory of solidarity helps Arat Sabulungan build a commitment to solidarity in interactions across the realms of humans, nature, and God.³⁶ Arat Sabulungan builds solidarity in its rituals and religious rites through a leaf-symbolism approach. The leaves selected by Arat Sabulungan for rituals and religious rites build trust among the Mentawai people in maintaining the sacredness of those leaves. The trust built within Mentawai society grounds the concept of solidarity in the understanding of the sacred and the profane.³⁷ Therefore, this solidarity provides a place for the law to exercise social control over the Mentawai society. This understanding explains that solidarity shapes social reality in Arat Sabulungan through social norms. The construction of Arat Sabulungan in Mentawai society becomes an educational space in socio-religious evolution.³⁸ As a result, when we use Bourdieu's habitus theory, we can see that the solidarity of every follower of Arat Sabulungan shapes habitus, or human attitudes and behavior, through character education.³⁹ This point means that Bourdieu's theory of habitus posits an interaction between solidarity and human habits that shapes learning experiences and enables survival amid modernization and technological change. In line with this, the Arat Sabulungan community is built on solidarity that forms learning habits through educational media, specifically using leaves.

³² Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, ed. Karen E. Fields (Detroit: Free Press, 1995), 15–17.

³³ DN, "Interview DN," 2025.

³⁴ Maskota Delfi, "Sipuisilam Dalam Selimut Arat Sabulungan Penganut Islam Mentawai Di Siberut," *Al-Ulum* 12, no. 1 (2012): 1–34.

³⁵ Teresia Noiman Derung et al., "Totemisme Mentawai: Menggali Makna Arat Sabulungan Dalam Pembangunan Uma Bagi Orang Mentawai [Mentawai Totemism: A Digging Out of Arat Sabulungan Meaning in Uma Building for Mentawai]," *In Theos : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Theologi* 2, no. 8 (January 20, 2023): 264–73, <https://doi.org/10.56393/intheos.v2i8.1276>.

³⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, ed. Steven Lukes, 1st ed. (New York: Free Press, 2014), 23–25.

³⁷ Satoko and X, "Katekese Inkulturasi Tentang Makna Budaya."

³⁸ Nurjanah, Meliasanti, and Sutri, "Warna Lokal Mentawai Dalam Novel Burung Kayu."

³⁹ Pierre. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 52–55.

Implementation of Arat Sabulungan in Socio-Religious Affairs

The Arat Sabulungan is the basis and binding rules for the Mentawai people in socioreligious matters. Satoko et al. clearly explain that the Mentawai people firmly adhere to Arat Sabulungan in regulating human, animal, and natural phenomena, as well as time.⁴⁰ Satoko's thinking aligns with Irwandi et al.'s opinion, which holds that the life of the Mentawai people makes nature a value of balance in society.⁴¹ Thus, the Mentawai people view Arat Sabulungan as a rule that creates a balance between humans and nature in cosmology. This belief places the Mentawai people in the position of tying themselves to Arat Sabulungan to avoid disaster. Therefore, the implementation of Arat Sabulungan serves as a guide for the Mentawai people as a philosophy of life, emphasizing a life in harmony with nature and the sacredness of life.⁴² Arat Sabulungan, as a guide to life, becomes a sacred heritage passed down from generation to generation, serving as a measure for maintaining balance between humans and nature. Tatubeket et al. noted that balance and harmony in cosmology are important elements in Arat Sabulungan.⁴³

Arat Sabulungan is a system of knowledge, values, norms, and rules governing birth, marriage, death, and healing ceremonies. Amini Naser et al. explain that Arat Sabulungan emphasizes the media space of leaves as a tool in religious ceremonies.⁴⁴ Leaves for Arat Sabulungan is a sacred space for healing, birth, marriage, and death. SKY explains that this Arat Sabulungan places the *Sikerei* (healer) in charge of determining the leaves used in each rite.⁴⁵ The *Sikerei*'s role in determining which leaves are used serves as a guide for the Mentawai people in performing rituals and rites. Therefore, understanding leaves as a media space becomes a learning experience for the Mentawai people, helping them understand the meaning of spirituality. The consequence of this understanding is that Arat Sabulungan values nature as the realm of life for the Mentawai people. Lee et al. correctly explain that, for the Mentawai people, Arat Sabulungan is a system of knowledge, values, and guidance for interpreting life through the media of nature.⁴⁶

The role of *Sikerei* places Arat Sabulungan at the center of religious significance in rituals, rites, and life behavior. The figure of *Sikerei* symbolizes the Almighty's presence and provides guidance for the Mentawai people.⁴⁷ FS, in his interview, says that *Sikerei* uses the media space of leaves as a religious meaning in rituals and rites, saying:

Sikerei's knowledge of leaves and his vision of leaves are the same. So there is no difference. The knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Satoko and X, "Katekese Inkulturasi Tentang Makna Budaya."

⁴¹ Ade Irwandi, Maskota Delfi, and Yevita Nurti, "Ute' Sainak: Relasi Babi Dengan Orang Mentawai Di Rereiket, Siberut Selatan [Ute' Sainak: Pig Relation with Mentawai in Rereiket, South Siberut]," *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi* 22, no. 3 (October 31, 2022): 1961–71, <https://doi.org/10.33087/jiubj.v22i3.2843>.

⁴² Shoca Indra Mulia, "Eksistensi Tato Mentawai Sebagai Bentuk Resistensi Kebudayaan Sosial Di Kepulauan Sumatera Barat," *Kusa Lawa* 1, no. 1 (May 25, 2021): 62–68, <https://doi.org/10.21776/UB.KUSALAWA.2021.001.01.08>.

⁴³ Ruth Meliani Tatubeket, Agustina Agustina, and Agusti Efi, "Peran Musik Tuddukat Dalam Ritual Arat Sabulungan Di Kabupaten Mentawai," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 13, no. 1 (December 4, 2019): 75–105, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2019.131-03>.

⁴⁴ Amini Naser et al., "Tato Tubuh Sebagai Ekspresi Kepercayaan Di Mentawai."

⁴⁵ SKY, "Interview SKY."

⁴⁶ Lee et al., "The Indigenous Uses of Plants from Siberut, Mentawai, Indonesia."

⁴⁷ Dwi Wahyuni et al., "Beyond Coexistence: Intersecting Realms of Faith and Policy in Mentawai, Indonesia," *Khazanah Sosial* 6, no. 2 (June 30, 2024): 294–306, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v6i2.34830>.

⁴⁸ FS, "Interview FS."

Every ritual and rite requires the media space of leaves to build meaning, such as peace and safety for the Mentawai people. Birth rituals among Sikerei use aileleppet and katcaila leaves to ward off disaster and build prosperity throughout one's life.⁴⁹ Therefore, Sikerei plays a dominant role in shaping the attitudes and behavior of the Mentawai people. These attitudes and behaviors become social norms that form a value of respect for Sikerei as a representation of God in resolving problems in Mentawai society.

The forest is a sacred space for the Mentawai people, a manifestation of attitudes and behaviors shaped by Arat Sabulungan. According to Derung et al., the attitudes and behaviors of the Mentawai people are a source of spiritual inspiration in life.⁵⁰ This belief places the forest as a learning medium for life, a source of food, healing, and spiritual reflection. In line with Derung's concept, Hammon added that the forest is a spiritual manifestation of the Mentawai people's belief that it is the abode of spirits that provide healing through forest resources.⁵¹ Therefore, this understanding makes the forest a living spirit, providing healing and food. This green ecology concept explains that the embodiment of the Mentawai people's attitudes and behavior is to respect the forest as the spirit of life. This action is explained by Tatubeket et al., who state that the Mentawai people draw on the forest at Sikerei's request without disrupting the balance of cosmological space.⁵² This action reflects the forest as a sacred space that maintains the balance between macrocosm (the natural world) and microcosm (the human world).

Arat Sabulungan as Learning Media Management in Public Space

The sedimentation of attitudes and behavior in the Arat Sabulungan community towards leaf media highlights its role as a spiritual connector, fostering reverence for the connection between God and humans. Bourdieu, who promotes the theory of habitus, explains that the field and cultural capital shape habitus as an accumulation of cultural capital actions in the social realm, expressed as human attitudes and behavior.⁵³ The implementation of Arat Sabulungan beliefs through leaf media is an accumulation of the Mentawai community's habitus towards teachings passed down from generation to generation. Learning about leaves in Arat Sabulungan forms a sedimentation of habitus towards the understanding of the media between God and humans.⁵⁴ Bourdieu emphasizes that habitus is a long-lasting system of dispositions that shapes structured practices in society. Bourdieu's understanding situates the role of leaves in Arat Sabulungan as a structured practice in Mentawai society across all aspects of life. Therefore, belief in leaf elements is a learning media management space for the Mentawai community regarding the presence of God in their lives.⁵⁵ The role of leaves is to form the Arat Sabulungan habitus in public space and to support learning media management as cultural history through community care and education in a broad sense.

⁴⁹ Andreas Rino Sitanggang, "Siagai Laggek: Pengetahuan Tumbuhan Obat Oleh Penyembuh Sebagai Obat Tradisional Di Kepulauan Mentawai," *Balale' : Jurnal Antropologi* 3, no. 2 (November 30, 2022): 91–114, <https://doi.org/10.26418/balale.v3i2.56059>.

⁵⁰ Derung et al., "Totemisme Mentawai."

⁵¹ Hammons, "Indigenous Religion, Christianity and the State."

⁵² Tatubeket, Agustina, and Efi, "Peran Musik Tuddukat..."

⁵³ Pierre Bourdieu, "System of Education and System of Thought," in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions in Sociology of Education*, ed. M. F. D. Young (London: Callier-Macmillan, 1971), 68–70.

⁵⁴ Hammons, "Indigenous Religion, Christianity and the State."

⁵⁵ Hasahatan Hutahaean et al., "Mempertahankan Uma: Rumah Pemersatu dan Kebangkitan Spiritual Suku Mentawai," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 13, no. 3 (December 30, 2024): 686–94, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jish.v13i3.85049>.

For Bourdieu, education is a reproductive cultural practice rather than a mechanical system.⁵⁶ Instead, it is irreducible, because education is historical. Educational practices cannot be reduced to circumstances, because habitus is a dialectical and historical process of reformulation.⁵⁷ Bourdieu's theory posits that education is a habitus that organizes itself within its imperative framework as a cultural basis, in dialectical relation with strategy and reflexivity, and with the material world. Therefore, the Arat Sabulungan culture, which prioritizes leaves, becomes an understanding of habitus education in dialectical relation to the spiritual world. Habitus education, for Arat Sabulungan, creates a framework of religious practice through capital (leaves) and realm (forest) as a management space for educational media.⁵⁸ The elements of capital (leaves) and realm (forest) serve as learning media for the Mentawai people in shaping attitudes and behavior, as Arat Sabulungan interprets God. This learning media management space serves as the governance of Arat Sabulungan learning, grounded in the reality of leaf and forest media as sacred elements. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory clearly explains that cultural practices are historical reproductions in education in public spaces.

Durkheim insists that the concept of human development from the stage of simple mechanical solidarity to complex organic solidarity becomes a tool for analyzing the role of leaves as a learning media management space.⁵⁹ Durkheim explains that a unified understanding of structural and moral roles forms solidarity in society. Durkheim's understanding is that a unified understanding of leaf media for Sikerei leads to mechanical solidarity, which in turn gives way to organic solidarity. Sikerei's role in the use of leaves forms the governance (management) of rituals and rites as an educational medium for the Mentawai people.⁶⁰ Therefore, leaflet-based media education management for the Mentawai people emphasizes the value of religious education as a social reality in the public space, shaping attitudes and behavior. Attitudes and behaviors that adhere to the teachings, instructions, and dogmas of Arat Sabulungan constitute a unity of identity through collective conscience in Mentawai society. Leaf media education management emphasizes the development of the Mentawai people through collective consciousness, grounded in the reality of Arat Sabulungan's belief values.

Arat Sabulungan is a culture and belief system that teaches the balance among God, humans, and nature, centered on the management of educational media using leaves. The balance of life is the goal of the Arat Sabulungan culture and belief, which emphasizes ethical conduct as an expression of gratitude to nature.⁶¹ The balance of life through the medium of leaves, for the Mentawai people, is an attitude and behavior formed in respect for nature. According to LK⁶², Arat Sabulungan is an education when he says:

⁵⁶ Bourdieu, "System of Education and System of Thought," 101–3.

⁵⁷ Jeffery Everett, "Organizational Research and the Praxeology of Pierre Bourdieu," *Organizational Research Methods* 5, no. 1 (2002): 56–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428102051005>.

⁵⁸ Deni Yusup Permana et al., "Integrating Indigenous Wisdom in Environmental Protection: Exploring Village Authority within the Framework of State Responsibility in Indonesia," *Jambura Law Review* 7, no. 2 (May 22, 2025): 359–89, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v7i2.29582>.

⁵⁹ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 24–26.

⁶⁰ Refni Yulia, Zulfa Zulfa, and Kaksim Kaksim, "Education Values of Arat Sabulungan Tradition in Matotonan Mentawai," in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (Atlantis Press, 2018), 178–81, <https://doi.org/10.2991/icoie-18.2019.41>.

⁶¹ Rozi and Taufik, "Adaptation of Religion."

⁶² LK, "Interview LK" (Siberut, Mentawai, 2025).

For the Mentawai people, Arat Sabulungan offers a spiritual meaning as profound as that of major religions, but with key differences. For example, unlike other religions, Arat Sabulungan addresses illness through the practical use of leaves. This enables Arat Sabulungan to translate spiritual concepts into everyday life, serving as an educational tool for future generations.

Therefore, the Mentawai people's ethical conduct towards forests and leaves serves as a concrete example of Christian religious education. The reality of leaves makes learning media arranged through the management of teaching from generation to generation in Arat Sabulungan, as a management of educational media for character formation. Respect and appreciation for the integrity of the forest are the meanings of the educational media management taught by leaves, as the giver of life, in wedding ceremonies, death, home building, and illness. Arat Sabulungan, as a culture and belief, is a dialectical relationship between habitus and collective conscience in interpreting the balance among God, humans, and nature.

Conclusion

The implementation of Arat Sabulungan's understanding of respecting the integrity of forests and the environment shows how technology and modernization can support spiritual values, fostering a sense of hope and empowerment among the Mentawai community as an open learning space for media management in the dialectic between religion, culture, and education. Indigenous religious practices are not obsolete in modern times; instead, they have been transformed into values, references, and informal educational guidelines that help the community shape ethical attitudes and behaviors to preserve nature. Moreover, technology and modernization place humans in a rational mindset and shift religious values in life but open space for humans to return to the spiritual values of local culture. Therefore, Arat Sabulungan is a local religion and culture that instills spiritual values for global action in the management of learning media in public spaces.

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