

## Aesthetic Reception and Interpretation of the *Mamaca* Oral Tradition in Pamekasan, Madura

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### Abstract

The *mamaca* tradition, a vibrant form of Islamic oral literature, endures as a living cultural and spiritual expression in Bandaran Village, Pamekasan Regency. This study explores its reception and sustainability using qualitative methods grounded in the aesthetics of literary reception. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed through an interpretive reception framework to uncover how audiences derive meaning from *mamaca* performances within social and religious contexts. The findings indicate that *mamaca* is not merely a literary expression but also a medium for moral education, religious contemplation, and the reinforcement of cultural identity. The interactive role of the *tokang maca* (reciter) and *tokang tegghes* (interpreter) fosters dialogic engagement between sacred texts and the audience. Through various *tembang* (verse songs) such as *Artate*, *Kasmaran*, *Durma*, *Salangit*, *Pangkur*, and *Sinom*, audiences reflect on themes of divine love, struggle, spiritual yearning, youthful vigor, and moral virtues rooted in Islamic values. The presence of Arabic loanwords in *mamaca* exemplifies linguistic Islamization and connects the tradition to the broader Malay-Islamic literary heritage. Functioning as a historical agent of Islamization and a cultural archive, *mamaca* preserves communal memory and moral instruction akin to *syair* and *hikayat*. The study identifies six distinct reception patterns shaped by audiences' expectations, revealing both passive appreciation and active reinterpretation. This reception-focused lens offers new insights into Islamic oral traditions, highlighting their adaptability, intergenerational transmission, and potential for integration into educational and digital platforms to ensure their relevance in contemporary Muslim societies.

**Keywords:** *Mamaca* tradition; Literary reception aesthetics; Oral literature; Interpreter

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## INTRODUCTION

The tradition of oral literature has long been an integral part of Madurese culture, expressed through various forms such as poetry, songs, and aphorisms. One enduring oral literature tradition is *mamaca*. Etymologically, *mamaca* derives from the Madurese language, meaning "to read." However, *mamaca* is far more than a mere act of reading texts. It combines the recitation of poetry or narrative texts with specific melodies (*tembang/kejhung*), followed by interpretation (*tegghes*) in the Madurese language (Bouvier, 2002). The texts recited are often written in *Jawi* or *Pegon* script, utilizing Kromo Javanese, reflecting the deep influence of Madurese, Javanese, and Arab cultures.

The use of Arabic-derived vocabulary (loanwords) in the *mamaca* texts, particularly those written in *Jawi* and *Pegon* scripts, demonstrates the linguistic influence of Islam on the Madurese language. This phenomenon parallels the widespread adoption of Arabic vocabulary in classical Malay texts and traditional performances across Malaysia and the broader Malay world (Mulyani & Noor, 2018).

The uniqueness of *mamaca* lies in its integration of local cultural elements with Islamic traditions. The use of *Jawi* and *Pegon* scripts, combined with the singing of texts in distinctive melodies, adds to the complexity of *mamaca* as a cultural heritage. This tradition is considered genealogically related to *macapat* in Javanese culture, yet it carries distinctive nuances shaped by the regional influences of Madura (Sujarwadi, 1980; Tjiptoatmodjo, 1983).

Historically, *mamaca* is not merely a cultural product but also a result of Islamization processes led by early ulama who utilized literary and performative arts to disseminate Islamic teachings across Java and Madura. Similar methods of Islamization through oral literature, such as the *Hikayat* and *syair* traditions, are also evident in the Malay Peninsula and are seen as part of a shared Islamo-Malay cultural history (Braginsky, 2004). The distinctive feature of *mamaca* is its integration of diverse cultural elements that reflect pluralism and interculturality. As an art form rooted in Islamic traditions, *mamaca* often conveys moral and didactic values, making it a tool for reinforcing Islamic character in Madura. Beyond its religious and aesthetic functions, *mamaca* serves as a form of collective memory and cultural record-keeping, preserving community values, genealogies, and spiritual narratives that have been orally transmitted across generations. As in Malay pantun or *syair* traditions, such performative texts often acted as mnemonic devices and community archives in the absence of widespread literacy (Milner, 1995; Irawan et al., 2024).

However, like other traditions, *mamaca* faces significant challenges in maintaining its existence in the modern era. Madurese youth are increasingly alienated from this tradition, influenced by the allure of popular culture. In this context, Bandaran Village in Tlanakan Subdistrict, Pamekasan Regency, presents a compelling example. The local community has successfully preserved *mamaca* through the regeneration of artists and the strengthening of local cultural communities. This prompted the author to conduct research to delve deeper into the existence of the *mamaca* tradition in this village.

This study aims to explore the existence of the *mamaca* tradition in Bandaran Village through a literary reception approach. This methodology was chosen because *mamaca* is not merely an artistic product but also a social phenomenon involving processes of acceptance, interpretation, and meaning-making by the local community. By employing literary reception analysis, this study investigates how the local community perceives *mamaca* as an art form rooted in Islamic values and local culture.

To date, studies on *mamaca* have predominantly focused on sociological (Purnamasari et al., 2019), intrinsic (Rifa'i, 2017), or performative aspects (Hidayatullah, 2020). Additionally, Chair (2020) and Rifqi (2018) discussed ritual aspects, such as *rokat pandhaba*, using symbolic and cultural acculturation approaches. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, no studies have specifically utilized a literary reception perspective to understand how this tradition is received and interpreted by the community.

This study seeks to address the gaps in previous research by offering a new perspective on *mamaca* as an oral literary tradition that is received, preserved, and interpreted by the Madurese community. The findings of this research are expected to enrich the literature on oral traditions while contributing significantly to the preservation of Madura's cultural heritage, deeply imbued with Islamic values.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how the *mamaca* oral tradition is received, interpreted, and sustained within the community of Bandaran Village, Pamekasan. By

employing a literary reception aesthetic approach, the research focuses on the ways in which the audience—especially through the roles of *tokang maca* and *tokang tegghes*—engages with the *tembang*'s Islamic, moral, and cultural values. This study seeks to answer the following research question: *How is the mamaca tradition aesthetically received and interpreted by the local community (RQ1)*, and *what cultural mechanisms contribute to its preservation as a living oral tradition (RQ2)?*

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collection techniques including participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The research subjects consist of *mamaca* practitioners, such as the *tokang maca* (reciter) and *tokang tegghes* (interpreter), as well as the community members who enjoy this tradition. The informants were selected purposively from the *mamaca* group in Bandaran Village, specifically those affiliated with the *Paguyuban Kolom Ngejung*.

### Research Object

The research objects include 1 *tokang maca*, 1 *tokang tegghes*, 3 adult villagers (including a religious leader and community figure), and 3 teenagers who are actively involved as the younger audience. To clarify participant diversity, Table 1 below summarizes the demographic profile of the research subjects.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

No	Code	Age	Role in Tradition	Category
1	TM1	58	<i>Tokang Maca</i>	Practitioner
2	TT1	52	<i>Tokang Tegghes</i>	Interpreter
3	W1	45	Community Leader	Adult Villager
4	W2	39	Community Member	Adult Villager
5	W3	50	Religious Figure	Adult Villager
6	Y1	17	Youth Audience Member	Teenager
7	Y2	16	Youth Audience Member	Teenager
8	Y3	18	Youth Audience Member	Teenager

This research has obtained official approval from the Head of Bandaran Village and the leadership of *Paguyuban Kolom Ngejung*. All participants gave their verbal consent for interviews and documentation. All personal data and cultural sensitivities were handled with strict confidentiality and respect, following ethical research principles in studies involving religious and traditional practices.

### Data Analysis

The data gathered are analyzed using thematic analysis, adopting a literary reception approach to identify patterns of acceptance and interpretation of *mamaca* within the community. Thematic analysis was conducted through a step-by-step process: (1) transcribing interview and field notes, (2) performing open coding of key expressions and motifs, (3) grouping codes into broader interpretive themes based on frequency and significance, and (4) mapping each theme to its form of community response.

To make this analytical structure clearer for readers, Table 2 below shows how certain *tembang* are thematically received and interpreted within the community:

Table 2. *Tembang* (Verse Song), Themes, and Community Reception Patterns

No	Tembang (Verse Song)	Theme/Value	Type of Reception	Community Response
1	<i>Pangkur</i>	Islamic Morality	Active	Reflection and public discussion
2	<i>Artate</i>	Social Ethics	Passive	Emotional appreciation of melody
3	<i>Kasmaran</i>	Religious Romance	Active	<i>Tokang tegghes</i> links to Islamic love
4	<i>Salangit</i>	Spiritual Devotion	Passive	Internal contemplation
5	<i>Sinom</i>	Youth and Hope	Active	Engagement by younger audiences

The literary reception approach used in this study is rooted in the theory of reception aesthetics, which emphasizes the role of the audience or reader in attributing meaning to texts (Jauss, 1982; Sangidu, 2007). This approach is particularly relevant in highlighting how the people of Bandaran Village not only preserve *mamaca* but also interpret it as part of their cultural identity and religious expression.

The reception approach can simultaneously encompass both passive and active dimensions. Passive reception pertains to the production of oral traditions, while active reception relates to the production of written traditions within the community. This approach falls under the pragmatic category, focusing on the role of readers as recipients and interpreters of literary works, including aspects of aesthetic reception, interpretation, and evaluation by the audience.

Through the lens of reception aesthetics, a literary work is regarded as an aesthetic object carrying diverse values in the perspectives of its readers (Suroso et al., 2009). From this perspective, literary works are created to fulfill the needs of readers as appreciators, while readers play a decisive role in determining the meaning and value of a work (Teeuw, 1988; Sulaeman, 2015). However, due to variations in the readers' horizons of expectation, responses to literary works may differ, influenced by differences in educational background, experiences, and ideologies (Pradopo, 2007).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *mamaca* tradition is a form of oral art rich in cultural and religious values with a long-standing history in Bandaran Village, Tlanakan District, Pamekasan Regency, Madura. It has become part of the collective identity that strengthens bonds among villagers. Whenever a *mamaca* event is held, whether during traditional ceremonies or daily activities, people of all ages gather as listeners or active participants. This facilitates generational transmission, ensuring that the values embedded in *mamaca* are internalized by the younger generation, enabling the tradition to endure amidst modern developments.

In general, the continuity of *mamaca* in Bandaran Village results from the complex interplay of various factors. These include favorable geographic conditions fostering close community ties, supportive local governance structures, demographic dynamics that allow tradition regeneration, and complementary formal and non-formal education systems. Additionally, a modest economy and strong socio-religious values amplify *mamaca*'s significance as an integral part of daily life.

Religious leaders and alumni of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) also support *mamaca*, viewing it as an effective medium for instilling religious teachings. Thus, the

robust socio-religious environment in Bandaran Village plays a critical role in preserving and sustaining *mamaca*, ensuring its relevance and acceptance as a form of worship.

*Mamaca* events in Bandaran Village typically take place in a sacred atmosphere, often coinciding with specific occasions such as *rokat* or warding-off rituals, family celebrations, and Islamic religious commemorations. The tradition involves several stages, starting with preparation and culminating in the performance, with specific roles assigned to the *tokang maca* (reciter) and *tokang tegghes* (interpreter).

The preparation begins with selecting an appropriate venue, usually a living room or a spacious courtyard to accommodate attendees. The location is simply yet solemnly decorated. Various items such as *mamaca* manuscripts, chairs or mats, and traditional musical instruments are prepared to enhance the ambiance. The text to be recited is chosen based on the event's needs, often comprising religious stories or tales with moral messages.

The *mamaca* procession starts with an opening led by the *tokang maca*. The reciter chants verses in a distinctive tone following the melodic patterns of Madurese songs. After several stanzas, the *tokang tegghes* assumes the role of explaining the meaning of the chanted verses. This explanation, delivered in the Madurese language for accessibility, usually includes interpretations of religious or philosophical values embedded in the text. The *tokang tegghes* serves as a translator of literary values into locally relevant understanding for the community.

Each session follows a clear structure: the *tokang maca* chants verses, and the *tokang tegghes* provides meaning. This harmonious process unfolds with a gentle and contemplative rhythm. Both roles go beyond mere performance, acting as cultural ambassadors conveying Islamic values and moral teachings.

In this study, the role of the *tokang maca* was performed by P. Suliman and P. Ismail, while P. Salamet served as the *tokang tegghes*. A unique feature of this tradition is the creative process involved in delivering and interpreting the songs. The reciters are not required to memorize the entire text; they rely on reference manuscripts but often incorporate creativity during the recitation. For instance, if a reciter encounters difficulties in reading or pronouncing certain parts of the text, improvisation is allowed. This may include adding, omitting, or inserting Madurese words into the sung verses.

Similarly, the *tokang tegghes* is not obligated to understand every detail of the text being recited. Instead, they capture the essence or keywords from the songs and use their imagination and memory to convey the meaning in Madurese. During this process, the *tokang tegghes* often adds words or sentences to clarify or emphasize the meaning, ensuring the message is easily understood by listeners. These additions aim to maintain the clarity and relevance of the conveyed message.

The interpretative additions by the *tokang tegghes* also adapt the delivery to the Madurese cultural and linguistic context, ensuring the tradition remains engaging and communicative. For instance, they may include explanatory sentences absent from the original text to provide deeper insights to the audience. This flexibility and adaptability have allowed *mamaca* to persist as a medium for transmitting cultural and religious values within the community.

*Mamaca* performances can be divided into two primary models. The first involves public presentations with stages, costumes, and musical instruments as supporting elements, focusing on entertainment and aesthetics. The second model comprises more private and sacred performances without a direct audience. In Bandaran Village, *mamaca*

follows the first model, presented directly before an audience. Traditionally held at night, *mamaca* typically starts after the *Isya* prayer around 7:00 PM and continues until dawn. The nighttime setting is chosen for its quiet and serene atmosphere, which facilitates deeper contemplation. Moreover, it offers flexibility for the community, whether attending in person or listening from a distance. The stillness of the night enhances the spiritual impact of the tradition.

Interviews with the *tokang maca* reveal that nighttime is considered the most conducive period for absorbing knowledge and profound reflection. Even those not physically present can enjoy the recital through the sound carried in the calm of the night. The *mamaca* tradition begins with a religious and gratitude-filled opening. Initial prayers express thanks to the Almighty for enabling the event. Gratitude extends to the successful preparation of offerings or *sesanding* in line with tradition. This process reflects the community's high regard for customs and acknowledgment of the divine at the heart of all activities.

Beyond gratitude, the *tokang maca* and organizers also recite *selawat* and prayers for ancestors. The *selawat* signifies Muslim devotion to the Prophet Muhammad, remembered as the bearer of truth. Each song chanted in *mamaca* narrates the life and mission of the Prophet Muhammad in spreading Islamic teachings, imbuing the tradition with deeper meaning. The *mamaca* tradition in Bandaran Village represents a spiritual procession rich in significance. Its solemn and sacred execution reflects reverence for Islamic values and local cultural heritage. By being held at night, with offerings and verses rooted in Islamic history, this tradition serves not only as a religious celebration but also as a medium for historical learning and spiritual reflection for the community.

### Themes of *Tembang* in the *Mamaca* Tradition

Themes in the *mamaca* tradition reflect the core ideas embedded in the songs performed by the *tokang tembang* (singers). These themes serve as the essence of the messages conveyed through the melodies, making it the responsibility of the *tokang tembang* to narrate the stories effectively. Storytelling skills are essential to ensure that the author's intended message is clearly understood by the audience. In this context, the *tokang tembang* acts as the primary medium between the poet and the listeners. As a conduit of ideas, the *tokang tembang* must bring the poet's thoughts to life through creativity and expression, ensuring that the message resonates not only in sound but also in sentiment.

According to Lord (1976, p. 94), themes are not rigid or static artistic outputs but rather dynamic creations that can evolve depending on the context of the situation and conditions. Themes are more than just a collection of structured words; they represent a grouping of interconnected ideas. This grouping can give rise to major and minor themes. The major theme refers to the main idea that forms the core of a work, while the minor theme pertains to sub-ideas that support the major theme. These two types of themes complement each other, creating a holistic and profound work.

Themes serve as the main guide for authors in composing a work. During the creative process, the themes formulated by the author often develop further due to the flexible nature of formulas or story structures used. Additionally, variations in the use of formulas allow authors to create different nuances in each work while remaining rooted in the same theme. In the *mamaca* tradition, the themes in *macapat* songs generally remain unchanged, as they always refer to the original text that serves as the basis. Theme

development is carried out not to replace the existing themes but to reinforce, deepen, and clarify the messages the author wishes to convey.

*Macapat* songs are crafted with themes aligned to the characteristics of each *macapat* meter. For instance, the *Asmaradana* song is used to depict feelings of concern, longing, or sadness. This traditional framework becomes the foundation for poets in determining themes appropriate to each type of song. The following outlines the themes in the *mamaca* tradition of Bandaran Village, based on these frameworks:

#### *Theme of Tembang Artate*

*Tembang Artate* is the first song sung in the *mamaca* tradition in Bandaran Village. In Javanese tradition, this song is known as *Dhandhanggula*. In Bandaran Village, *Artate* is performed at the beginning and middle of the *mamaca* procession. *Artate*, or *Dhandhanggula*, conveys the hope for goodness and portrays optimism for a bright and hopeful future (Haidar, 2018). The song reflects life's order through the phrase *lumampah anut wirama*, which means "walking according to rules." This message emphasizes the importance of living with a clear and structured plan.

#### *Theme of Tembang Kasmaran*

*Tembang Kasmaran*, known as *Asmaradana* in Javanese tradition, portrays adolescence's initial encounters with love (Haidar, 2018). Love is depicted as abstract and beyond human control. This song carries a melancholic tone, reflecting deep feelings of sadness, concern, and longing. In the *mamaca* tradition, the love described in *Kasmaran* is universal love, particularly the love of believers for Prophet Muhammad.

#### *Theme of Tembang Durma*

*Durma* evokes a tense atmosphere filled with challenges. This song portrays struggles against life's obstacles and trials that come one after another (Haidar, 2018). Its message is that humans must not give up in the face of adversity, as despair contradicts the spirit of perseverance. In the *mamaca* tradition of Bandaran Village, *Durma* often carries themes of miracles amidst dire circumstances, reminding listeners of the importance of steadfastness in overcoming difficulties.

#### *Theme of Tembang Salangit*

*Salangit*, known as *Kinanti* in the Javanese *macapat* tradition, expresses deep longing and hope (Haidar, 2018). The song conveys the importance of faith and knowledge as provisions for life, ultimately leading one to paradise in the hereafter. In the *mamaca* tradition, *Salangit* emphasizes the importance of perseverance in pursuing truth as a guide in life.

#### *Theme of Tembang Pangkur*

*Pangkur* carries a symbolic meaning as a reminder not to be trapped by worldly luxuries (Haidar, 2018). This song depicts the transient nature of the material world as a snare to be avoided. In the *mamaca* tradition, *Pangkur* teaches that life should focus on spiritual values while resisting material temptations.

#### *Theme of Tembang Sinom*

*Sinom* symbolizes youth, brimming with enthusiasm and optimism (Haidar, 2018). This song underscores the importance of utilizing youth to learn and prepare for

life. In the *mamaca* tradition of Bandaran Village, *Sinom* narrates the youth of Prophet Muhammad, especially during his marriage to Dewi Khadijah. The song conveys a message about the spirit of youth in achieving aspirations while adhering to moral and religious values. Through these various themes, the *mamaca* tradition serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying profound moral values and life lessons.

To provide a clearer overview of the thematic findings and to enhance the digestibility of the song-by-song analysis, the following table summarizes the key messages of each *tembang*, their performance context, the type of audience reception, and representative community responses. This table serves as a thematic synthesis bridging textual content with communal interpretation, aligning with the reception aesthetics framework.

Table 3. Thematic Summary of *Mamaca* Songs and Community Reception Patterns

Tembang (Verse Song)	Theme	Performance Context	Reception Type	Audience Response
<i>Artate</i>	Optimism and Hope	Opening ceremonies, community gatherings	Active	Reflection on divine guidance and collective motivation for a better future
<i>Kasmaran</i>	Universal Love	Cultural events, religious celebrations	Active	Reinterpretation of love as God's compassion and universal brotherhood
<i>Durma</i>	Perseverance in Facing Challenges	Personal rituals, elder storytelling	Passive & Active	Admiration for heroic perseverance; interpreted as moral resilience
<i>Salangit</i>	Longing for Heaven	Funeral rites, Islamic holidays	Passive	Contemplative listening; evokes spiritual aspiration for the afterlife
<i>Pangkur</i>	Shunning Worldliness	Moral teachings, Friday gatherings	Active	<i>Tokang tegghes'</i> moral reflections trigger audience introspection and behavior change
<i>Sinom</i>	Youthful Spirit	Youth meetings, educational forums	Active	Encourages youth to stay virtuous and enthusiastic in seeking knowledge

### The Reception Patterns of the Bandaran Village Community Toward the *Mamaca* Tradition

#### *Optimism and Hope*

The reception patterns of the Bandaran Village community toward the theme of optimism and hope are reflected in the *Artate* song. In the *mamaca* tradition, this song symbolizes the close connection between art, spirituality, and daily life. Commonly sung at the beginning of the *mamaca* procession, the *Artate* song creates a hopeful atmosphere, serving as a symbolic and auspicious opening for the event. The community embraces the song as an introduction conveying an essential message about order in life and the

anticipation of a bright future. Its lyrics, rich with positive values, guide the audience to reflect on the importance of living according to moral and religious principles.

In passive reception, the community absorbs these messages through the melody and verses performed by the *tokang maca* (reader). The gentle, distinctive Madurese tone and rhythmic melody foster a calming ambiance, facilitating the audience's deep engagement with the song's meaning. The message of *lumampah anut wirama* ("walking in accordance with order") serves as a reminder to follow a well-structured and spiritually aligned path in life. This illustrates the community's appreciation of the song as a medium for initiating personal reflection.

Meanwhile, in active reception, the *tokang tegghes* (interpreter) plays a vital role in explaining the lyrics to the audience. The interpretations delivered in the Madurese language make the song's messages more relatable and comprehensible to listeners. The community often responds to these explanations through discussions or personal reflections, linking the optimism conveyed in *Artate* to their everyday experiences. This connection is evident in how they associate the song's messages with their hopes for blessings and smooth journeys in life, both individually and communally.

The optimism and hope conveyed through *Artate* also possess a profound spiritual dimension. In the religious context of Bandaran Village, the song is seen not merely as entertainment but also as a prayer to bless and ease the event's proceedings. This reception highlights that *Artate* is embraced not only as part of an oral literary tradition but also as a spiritual reinforcement providing peace and confidence to its listeners.

Thus, the Bandaran community's reception of the theme of optimism and hope in the *Artate* song reflects the *mamac* tradition's ability to touch emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of its audience. This tradition is not just a cultural ritual but also a tool for strengthening meaningful life values, making it relevant and appreciated in the community's religious and communal context.

This finding aligns with the reception aesthetics framework, which emphasizes the active role of audiences in interpreting and assigning meaning to texts (Jauss, 1982). In the context of the *Artate* song, both passive and active receptions illustrate how audience interpretation evolves based on lived experiences and communal understanding. The thematic focus on optimism and hope addresses research question, which explores the themes perceived and internalized by *mamac* audiences, which investigates how these themes are interpreted within the social and religious context of the community. The interpretive actions of the *tokang tegghes* reflect the reader-response dynamics proposed by Iser (1978), highlighting how meaning is co-produced between the text and its audience.

Recent studies support the adaptation of reception theory within local cultural contexts, emphasizing how community-based interpretation contributes to the resilience of oral traditions. For example, Al Abza et al. (2024) found that the Lilinta community in Raja Ampat engages in cultural negotiation when receiving Hadiths, where textual understanding is not only cognitive but also practical, embodying indigenous values and spiritual engagement. This finding affirms the relevance of reception aesthetics beyond Western literary traditions, particularly in Southeast Asian oral performances that integrate spirituality, education, and identity formation.

#### *Universal Love*

The Bandaran Village community's reception of the theme of universal love is embodied in the *Kasmaran* song. This song, part of the *mamac* tradition, demonstrates how emotional and spiritual values can be intertwined in meaningful oral art. Known as

Asmaradana in Javanese tradition, the *Kasmaran* song conveys a melancholic tone of love that transcends interpersonal relationships. In the context of Bandaran Village, this song is perceived as an expression of universal love, encompassing the devotion of the community to Prophet Muhammad. The love articulated in its verses is understood not merely as affection but also as a profound reminder of the bond between humans and the Divine.

When performed by the *tokang maca*, the community enjoys the melodic and deeply expressive delivery of the verses. Passive reception emerges as the listeners absorb the melody and lyrics imbued with deep longing, creating an emotionally touching atmosphere. The lyrics, often portraying love and concern, resonate with the community's spiritual layer, which accepts the song's message as a means of connecting to religious values. The beauty of the melody combined with the depth of the lyrics provides an aesthetic and emotional experience that enhances love and reverence for religious figures, particularly Prophet Muhammad.

In active reception, the role of the *tokang tegghes* is pivotal in clarifying the song's messages to the audience. Explanations in the Madurese language make the universal love theme in *Kasmaran* more accessible to listeners across different ages and educational backgrounds. Listeners perceive the love message not only as an abstract concept but also as a manifestation of a deeper spiritual longing. Through these interpretations, the community connects the song's message to their devotion to the Prophet, who serves as their primary role model.

The universal love depicted in the *Kasmaran* song is also embraced by the community as a reflection of the harmonious relationships they strive to build in their social lives. The song teaches that love encompasses not just personal connections but also values of solidarity, care, and respect for others. In the *mamaca* tradition, the *Kasmaran* song becomes a medium for conveying the importance of compassion as the foundation for living a peaceful and understanding life.

This finding aligns with the reception aesthetics framework, particularly Jauss's (1982) concept of the horizon of expectations, which posits that a community's cultural and spiritual background shapes their interpretation of texts. In this context, the *Kasmaran* song's themes resonate with the Bandaran community's religious sentiments, facilitating a deeper connection to the messages conveyed. Furthermore, Iser's (1978) theory of the reader's role in actualizing meaning underscores the active engagement of the *tokang tegghes* and the audience in interpreting the song's spiritual nuances. These interactions address research questions by illustrating how the community perceives and internalizes themes of universal love within their socio-religious context.

Recent studies support the role of poetic traditions in conveying religious and moral values. For instance, Werdiningsih et al. (2023) highlight how the Acehnese poem *Rateb Meutuwah* embodies Islamic educational values, fostering spiritual growth among listeners. Similarly, Arifa and Mazaya (2023) discuss the *Syair Perahu* by Hamzah Fansuri as a medium for instilling Sufi spiritual values in students. These examples demonstrate the efficacy of poetic forms in transmitting profound religious messages, reinforcing the significance of the *Kasmaran* song in the *mamaca* tradition.

#### *Perseverance in Facing Challenges*

The Bandaran Village community's reception of the theme of perseverance in facing challenges is found in the *Durma* song. This song illustrates how oral art can serve as a source of inspiration and moral strength. Marked by its firm tone and rhythm, *Durma*

carries a message of courage and perseverance in overcoming life's obstacles. For the religious and communal society of Bandaran Village, this theme is a crucial reminder that life is inseparable from trials, but steadfast faith and effort lead to success.

When the *Durma* song is performed, the audience absorbs its energetic rhythm, distinct from the softer tones of other songs. This energy creates a collective spirit, encouraging listeners not to give up in the face of difficulties. In passive reception, the community interprets the song as motivation to remain resilient through various challenges, both in personal life and as part of a community. The lyrics convey profound moral messages, urging the audience to rely on prayer and hard work in every aspect of their lives.

Through active reception, the *tokang tegghes* provides interpretations of the *Durma* song's meaning in accessible language. These explanations often connect the song's messages to relevant everyday examples, such as fishermen battling storms at sea or farmers patiently awaiting harvest. The audience reflects on the song not just as entertainment but also as a real-life mirror of their own experiences. These interpretations help the Bandaran community understand that perseverance is not only an individual virtue but also a fundamental pillar of social solidarity in the dynamics of village life.

This theme is further reinforced by the religious context inherent in the *mamaca* tradition. Perseverance in facing challenges is frequently linked to the stories of prophets narrated in the song's texts. The community perceives these messages as reminders of the importance of patience and trust in God when confronted with trials, as taught in Islam. The *Durma* song's spiritual values are deeply internalized, making it a medium to strengthen faith and inspire life.

The *Durma* song provides not only aesthetic entertainment but also serves as a unifying force for the communal identity of the Bandaran Village community. By presenting a theme of struggle that resonates with their lives, the song brings listeners together in a shared experience of facing challenges. The reception of this song demonstrates how the community appreciates *mamaca* not merely as an art form but as a moral guide that remains relevant in navigating the complexities of life.

The reception of the *Durma* song aligns with the reception aesthetics framework, particularly Jauss's (1982) concept of the horizon of expectations, which posits that a community's cultural and spiritual background shapes their interpretation of texts. In this context, the Bandaran community's experiences and religious beliefs inform their understanding of the song's messages, allowing them to internalize the theme of perseverance deeply. Furthermore, Iser's (1978) theory of the reader's role in actualizing meaning underscores the active engagement of the *tokang tegghes* and the audience in interpreting the song's spiritual nuances.

Recent studies support the role of poetic traditions in conveying religious and moral values. For instance, Gayatri et al. (2023) discuss the use of traditional stories in teaching Islamic values, demonstrating the efficacy of oral traditions in transmitting profound religious messages. These examples reinforce the significance of the *Durma* song in the *mamaca* tradition as a medium for instilling perseverance and moral strength.

### *Longing for Heaven*

The reception patterns of the Bandaran Village community toward the theme of longing for heaven are reflected in the *Salangit* song. This song illustrates how oral art can serve as a profound medium for spiritual reflection. With its soft tones and touching melodies, *Salangit* conveys the message of the importance of faith and knowledge as

provisions in life's journey toward the ultimate goal of heaven. In the deeply religious society of Bandaran Village, this song is embraced as a reminder of the transient nature of earthly life and the necessity of preparing oneself for eternal life in the afterlife.

When the *Salangit* song is performed, the audience is enveloped in an atmosphere of solemnity and deep contemplation. In passive reception, listeners enjoy the soothing melody and lyrics, which often evoke feelings of awe and introspection. Through verses expressing profound hope for a better life in the hereafter, the song guides the audience to reflect on the quality of their faith and their efforts to live according to religious teachings. This message is received as encouragement to maintain a good relationship with God and strive for self-improvement in every aspect of life.

Active reception of the *Salangit* song is evident in the role of the *tokang tegghes*, who interprets the lyrics into local language and context. The explanations provided often connect the song's message to the importance of religious practices, such as increasing prayers, maintaining honesty, and expressing gratitude. The audience responds enthusiastically, relating the song's message to their daily lives, such as attending religious gatherings, helping others, and fostering harmony within the family. These accessible interpretations make the theme of longing for heaven more relevant and grounded for the Bandaran community.

This theme also resonates emotionally, addressing humanity's spiritual need to feel close to the Creator. In a society often faced with life's challenges, *Salangit* serves as a reminder that every good effort in the world has a higher purpose—heaven. The audience perceives the song as both a prayer and a motivation to continue doing good, even amidst trials. The conveyed message not only strengthens faith but also creates inner peace, which becomes a source of strength in navigating life.

Through *Salangit*, the *mamaca* tradition demonstrates how oral art functions not merely as entertainment but also as an effective medium for spiritual education. The messages embedded in the song invite the community to continually improve themselves and emphasize the importance of preparation for life after death. This reception pattern underscores that the *mamaca* tradition is not only understood as cultural heritage but also as a profound means of moral and spiritual development. In the context of the Bandaran community, the *Salangit* song revives awareness of religious values while strengthening the bond between individuals, their community, and their God.

The reception of *Salangit* aligns with Jauss's theory of reception aesthetics, particularly the concept of the horizon of expectations (Jauss, 1982). The community's religious orientation and cultural background shape their interpretive frameworks, allowing them to internalize metaphysical themes such as the longing for heaven in deeply personal and collective ways. Iser's concept of the reader as co-creator of meaning (Iser, 1978) also plays a crucial role in understanding the reception process here. The *tokang tegghes* acts as a mediator, bridging textual meaning and communal experience.

Furthermore, contemporary studies support the role of oral traditions in spiritual education. For instance, Ngarifah et al. (2023) highlight how the revitalization of *Syingiran* strengthens the spirituality of rural communities, emphasizing its role in conveying religious values and fostering communal bonds. Similarly, Jamil (2021) discusses how *Kidung Wahyu Kalaseba* serves as a medium for Javanese spiritualism, promoting psycho-cultural resilience and spiritual awareness. These studies underscore the significance of oral literature in nurturing spiritual values and guiding communities toward moral and religious development.

### *Shunning Worldliness*

The Bandaran Village community's reception of the theme of shunning worldliness is found in the *Pangkur* song. This song illustrates how oral art serves as a reminder of the importance of spiritual life over material pursuits. Known for its symbolic nuances, *Pangkur* conveys a message about the dangers of being trapped in the fleeting pleasures of the material world. In the religious society of Bandaran Village, this theme is embraced as a call to live simply and focus more on spiritual values, with the understanding that worldly life is merely a temporary stop on the journey to the afterlife.

When the *Pangkur* song is performed, it evokes a serious and meaningful atmosphere. Listeners absorb the message through rhythmic lyrics that subtly warn against greed and excessive ambition for wealth and power. In passive reception, the community interprets the song as advice, reminding them to avoid excessive lifestyles. This message resonates with their daily lives, which are characterized by traditions of simplicity and modesty, where solidarity and mutual cooperation are prioritized over material possessions.

Active reception of *Pangkur* is observed in the role of the *tokang tegghes*, who interprets the lyrics into practical guidance for the audience. Through these explanations, the *tokang tegghes* often links the song's message to religious warnings, such as prohibitions against greed and the importance of sharing with others. The audience responds with deep reflection, frequently relating the song's message to their own life experiences. In discussions that arise after the *mamaca* procession, *Pangkur* often becomes a topic that fosters collective awareness of balancing worldly needs with spiritual obligations.

The theme of shunning worldliness also has strong emotional resonance in the lives of the Bandaran community, who largely depend on fishing and farming for their livelihoods. Amid daily struggles to earn a living, the *Pangkur* song's message is received as a reminder to avoid excessive pursuit of material gain. The community regards this theme as an invitation to be grateful for the sustenance provided by God while maintaining moral integrity amidst modern challenges.

Sundari (2021) has emphasized that *macapat* songs, including *Pangkur*, contain high moral values relevant for countering contemporary moral crises such as radicalism and corruption. Additionally, Isnaini (2025) found that the *mamaca* tradition in Madura reinforces communal solidarity through religious values, demonstrating that oral traditions like *mamaca* function as effective media for transmitting Islamic and ethical values in rural communities.

### *Youthful Spirit*

The Bandaran Village community's reception of the theme of youthful spirit is reflected in the *Sinom* song. This song portrays how values of optimism, energy, and hope aimed at the younger generation are embraced and internalized in daily life. With its cheerful and spirited melody, *Sinom* conveys the importance of utilizing youth to learn, work hard, and prepare for life's challenges. In the context of Bandaran Village, this theme is received as a relevant collective motivation, especially for the younger generation, who are seen as the torchbearers of traditions and ancestral values.

When the *Sinom* song is performed by the *tokang maca*, the atmosphere becomes refreshingly optimistic. Listeners of all ages absorb the light yet meaningful melody. In passive reception, the community enjoys this song both as entertainment and as a

reminder of the great energy and potential of youth. The lyrics, which often depict the youthful life of Prophet Muhammad, such as his marriage to Khadijah, provide a tangible example of the importance of courage and perseverance in facing life.

Active reception of *Sinom* is realized through interactions between the *tokang tegghes* and the audience. The *tokang tegghes* often emphasizes how the younger generation can draw inspiration from the values embedded in the song, such as the spirit of learning, hard work, and maintaining morality. This message is enthusiastically received, particularly by parents, who view *Sinom* as a reminder to encourage their children to use their youth wisely. The younger generation, although still learning to recognize traditional values, begins to understand the importance of enthusiasm and diligence as tools for the future.

This theme also connects the younger generation to their responsibility in preserving the *mamaca* tradition. The Bandaran community perceives *Sinom* as an important tool to build collective awareness of the younger generation's role in safeguarding cultural heritage and religious values. The song's message is often linked to the importance of both formal and informal education, teaching that learning occurs not only in schools but also through experiences and the appreciation of traditions like *mamaca*.

The youthful spirit embodied in *Sinom* is also received as an invitation to bridge traditional values with modern life. In the religious and communal environment characteristic of Bandaran Village, this song motivates young people to move forward without forgetting their cultural roots and identity. The community understands that youth is an ideal time to instill religious values and life wisdom, enabling future generations to lead better lives while preserving ancestral heritage.

Empirical support for the role of *macapat* in youth moral development is found in the study by Pranowo and Susanto (2024), which demonstrates that group counseling using *Macapat Sinom* enhances students' cultural pride and moral understanding. Additionally, Tania et al. (2024) explore how *macapat* reflects stages of moral development, resonating with the community's use of *Sinom* to instill values in the younger generation.

The six thematic findings demonstrate how the *mamaca* tradition in Bandaran Village is not merely a cultural performance but serves as a dynamic site of value transmission, spiritual reflection, and generational continuity. This reception pattern is not unique to *mamaca*; similar dynamics are evident in other Islamic oral traditions across Southeast Asia, such as *barzanji*, *qasidah burdah*, and *dziba'an*, which are widely practiced in pesantren and local religious gatherings. These traditions are often received passively as spiritual entertainment and actively as sources of moral exemplars—especially when narrating the Prophet Muhammad's youthful years, courage, and noble character. For example, as Kaptein (1993) and Azra (2004) have shown, these poetic narratives in the Malay-Indonesian world have long functioned as tools for spiritual pedagogy, enabling communities to access religious knowledge and ethical ideals through emotionally resonant forms.

Beyond these thematic interpretations, this study also highlights how the *mamaca* tradition reflects linguistic and historical dimensions of Islamization in the region. Linguistically, *mamaca* texts incorporate numerous Arabic loanwords (e.g., *mahrib*, *makam*, *makhlok*, *ma'mom*, *malaekat*, *mayyit*, *molod*, *aseyam*, *almarhum*, *dan asalat*), often embedded in religious narratives and moral reflections. This mirrors a similar pattern

found in classical Malay literature—such as syair and hikayat—where Arabic-derived vocabulary signifies religious authority and cultural depth (Mulyani & Noor, 2018).

Historically, mamaca serves as a vernacular trace of the Islamization process carried out by early ulama across Java and Madura. These oral performances functioned not only as entertainment but as educational instruments, conveying Islamic teachings through poetic forms. Comparable patterns are found in the Malay world, where the spread of Islam was facilitated by the adaptation of hikayat and syair into local pedagogical and devotional traditions (Mabruroh & Khoiriyah, 2019).

In addition to its didactic function, mamaca also plays a significant role as a ‘cultural record’—a living archive that preserves communal memory, genealogies, and spiritual values. As observed in traditions such as *Hikayat Nabi Bercukur* or *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, Malay oral literature has long served this role of mnemonic and historical documentation, especially in societies where formal literacy was limited (Irawan et al., 2024). *Mamaca* thus constitutes both a religious performance and a mechanism of memory, embedding historical consciousness within the flow of artistic expression.

The reflection on mamaca also reveals significant implications for cultural education and intergenerational transmission. Its rich values and poetic language offer strong potential for inclusion in local school curricula, especially through character education and traditional arts programs. In informal contexts, mamaca can be revitalized through digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, or short-form videos on TikTok—mediums increasingly embraced by youth as sources of cultural identity. The growing digitalization of tradition invites innovative models of transmission, blending oral performance with visual storytelling.

More profoundly, the mamaca tradition illustrates how art functions not only as a cognitive or aesthetic experience but as a bridge to inner transformation. Within the framework of ruhiology—the study of the soul and spiritual consciousness in Islam—mamaca enables the community to engage with Islamic values on an affective and transcendent level. Through its melodies, symbols, and poetic expressions, mamaca becomes a medium for ruhani (spiritual) awakening, aligning the listener's inner self with virtues such as tawakkul (trust), sabr (patience), and mahabbah (divine love). This deeper dimension of reception echoes the shift in Islamic thought from intellectual and emotional intelligence toward a more holistic spiritual intelligence grounded in divine orientation (Ushuluddin et al., 2021).

From a theoretical standpoint, this case suggests that reception aesthetics, when adapted to Southeast Asian Islamic contexts, must expand beyond textual interpretation to account for performative, communal, and ritual elements. This broader model embraces not just how audiences interpret a work, but also how they embody, reproduce, and transmit it as part of lived religious and cultural practice (Lindsey & Pausacker, 2016). As seen in Bandaran Village, traditions like mamaca continue to thrive not only through preservation, but through creative reinterpretation and contextual adaptation, ensuring that spiritual and cultural wisdom remains relevant for future generations.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the mamaca tradition in Bandaran Village can be concluded as a dynamic oral art form that not only carries aesthetic value but also functions as a medium of meaning-making between text, performer, and audience. Practiced in religious and cultural events—such as *Maulid*, *ruwatan*, and family gatherings—*mamaca* involves the *tokang maca* (reciter) and *tokang tegghes* (interpreter) in an

interactive process that bridges poetic text with lived community values. The performance of *tembang* such as *Artate*, *Kasmaran*, *Durma*, *Salangit*, *Pangkur*, and *Sinom* reflects the community's engagement with moral, spiritual, and cultural narratives. The six reception themes—Optimism and Hope, Universal Love, Perseverance, Longing for Heaven, Shunning Worldliness, and Youthful Spirit—demonstrate how *mamaca* operates as a vehicle for religious education and identity formation. Passive and active reception patterns reveal a layered aesthetic experience rooted in Islamic values.

Furthermore, the presence of Arabic loanwords—such as *malaekat*, *molod*, and *asalat*,—indicates the deep linguistic impact of Islamization on the Madurese language, echoing similar patterns in Malay oral literature traditions. *Mamaca* also reflects the broader historical process of Islamization in Java and Madura, paralleling the pedagogical role of *hikayat* and *syair* in Malaysia and the Malay world. Beyond performance, *mamaca* functions as a cultural record, preserving communal memory, moral values, and local Islamic heritage in a manner similar to Malay literary texts like *Syair Siti Zubaidah* or *Hikayat Nabi Bercukur*. Practically, this study supports the integration of *mamaca* into educational settings and the use of digital media to ensure intergenerational transmission. Its comparison with other Islamic oral traditions in Southeast Asia affirms *mamaca*'s significance not only as cultural heritage but also as part of a shared regional legacy.

For future research, scholars might explore the reception of *mamaca* in digital diaspora communities, analyze gendered dimensions of audience interaction, or investigate its connections with other Southeast Asian oral traditions. Documentation and archiving efforts—especially involving local youth—should also be prioritized to digitally preserve this heritage in collaboration with cultural institutions. By situating *mamaca* within the reception framework and linking it to the contemporary cultural ecosystem, this study reaffirms the relevance of oral Islamic literature as a site of ongoing meaning-making, capable of bridging traditional values and modern identities in Muslim Southeast Asia.

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