



**NEGOTIATING THE CONTINUITY OF *BLANGIKHAN*:
AN AGIL ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL, CUSTOMARY, RELIGIOUS, AND
COMMUNITY ROLES IN NEGERI OLOK GADING**

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Abstract

The continuity of local religious traditions depends on relationships among community authorities, public institutions, and residents, yet previous studies have often examined these actors separately. This study analyzes how social functions are distributed among the actors involved in *Blangikhan*, a pre-Ramadan purification tradition in Negeri Olok Gading, Bandar Lampung, and how they negotiate public promotion, religious interpretation, youth participation, and value transmission. A qualitative approach with a sociological orientation was employed. Data were collected in 2026 through nonparticipant observation, document review, and in-depth interviews with six purposively selected informants: one Tourism Office representative, one customary leader, one religious leader, and three community members. The data were coded using Parsons's AGIL framework and compared through source triangulation. The findings indicate that the Tourism Office primarily supported adaptation through facilitation and promotion, religious leadership contributed to the formulation of legitimate purposes, community participation supported integration, and customary leadership maintained inherited patterns. These functions nevertheless overlapped and were produced through coordination rather than a fixed division of responsibilities. The actors negotiated continuity by retaining customary control over ritual procedures, evaluating practices through Islamic principles, involving residents in collective preparation, and explaining ritual meanings to younger participants. Public promotion through festivals and digital media was intended to extend visibility but also introduced concerns about cultural display and commercialization, while education and employment mobility complicated regular youth participation. The study shows that AGIL is useful for mapping interdependence when it is applied without assuming complete consensus or stable equilibrium.

Keywords: *Blangikhan; Cultural Preservation; Structural Functionalism; Religious Authority; Lampung*

A. Introduction

Local traditions are not merely inherited ceremonial practices; they are social settings through which communities reproduce collective identity, moral commitments, and relationships of authority. In Indonesia, the continuity of these traditions is increasingly negotiated amid population mobility, digital communication, cultural tourism, and changing religious interpretations. Such developments do not necessarily lead to the disappearance of local traditions, but they may alter patterns of participation,

modes of transmission, and the meanings publicly associated with a ritual. Studies of globalization and local identity have noted these pressures, although their consequences vary across communities and therefore require context-specific investigation (Hasan et al., 2024). In Lampung, local wisdom can also provide a cultural medium through which Islamic values are interpreted and communicated within community life (Khoiruddin, 2023).

This article examines *Blangikhan*, a pre-Ramadan purification tradition practiced in Negeri Olok Gading, Bandar Lampung. The tradition brings residents, customary leaders, religious leaders, and government representatives into a shared sequence of preparation, collective prayer, and symbolic bathing at the Kali Akar River. Participants associate purification with both bodily cleanliness and moral preparation for Ramadan, a meaning locally connected to Islamic teachings on purification, including Qur'an 2:222. At the same time, the ritual carries cultural meanings through which Lampung identity and intergenerational relationships are expressed. A previous study of a Bandar Lampung tradition published under the name *Belangiran* documented the contribution of *Muli Mekhanai*—young women and men within Lampung customary society—through their direct involvement in cultural preservation (Perdana et al., 2022). Recent research conducted in Negeri Olok Gading also indicates that customary institutions may serve as channels for Islamic values and social integration rather than operating separately from religious life (Mahali et al., 2026).

The continuity of *Blangikhan*, however, cannot be taken for granted. Three tensions are especially relevant to its preservation: uneven participation among younger residents whose education and employment increasingly take them outside the community; negotiation between inherited customary practices and more restrictive interpretations of Islamic observance; and the possibility that public promotion may emphasize cultural spectacle or tourism value at the expense of ritual meaning. Comparable research on *Balimau*, a Minangkabau pre-Ramadan bathing tradition, demonstrates that purification rituals can retain both spiritual and social significance while facing pressures for contemporary adaptation (Vadisa et al., 2024). Other Indonesian pre-Ramadan traditions likewise combine religious observance, social solidarity, and the transmission of inherited meanings, although their ritual forms differ across local settings (Yuliyani, 2022). Research on cultural-tourism programs similarly shows that institutional support may expand public recognition while requiring careful coordination among government agencies and local stakeholders (Maharani et al., 2025). These comparative studies do not establish what occurs in Negeri Olok Gading, but they identify tensions that warrant investigation in the local setting.

Talcott Parsons's structural functionalism provides the analytical framework for examining how the actors involved respond to these tensions. Parsons conceptualizes a social system as a set of interdependent relationships sustained through shared norms, differentiated roles, and mechanisms of coordination (Parsons, 2013; Parsons & Shils, 2001). A contemporary relational reconstruction of Parsons's theory further emphasizes that social systems are continuously sustained through interactions among actors rather

than operating as self-maintaining structures (Herranen, 2022). The AGIL framework identifies four functional requirements: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance (Chriss, 2025). In this study, the framework is not used to assign a fixed function to each actor in advance. Instead, it guides the examination of how these functions are distributed, negotiated, and sometimes shared among the Bandar Lampung Tourism Office, customary leaders, religious leaders, and community members. This approach is important because cultural preservation may involve overlapping authority, competing priorities, and adjustments that cannot be explained by examining one actor in isolation.

Existing scholarship has clarified several components of this problem but has not yet integrated them within a single analysis of *Blangikhan*. Vadisa et al. (2024) examined the spiritual and social meaning of a pre-Ramadan purification ritual in Minangkabau. Perdana et al. (2022) focused on youth participation in preserving a related Lampung tradition. Maharani et al. (2025) analyzed institutional strategies for developing cultural tourism, while Hasan et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of customary leaders in maintaining cultural practices and unwritten rules in an Indonesian customary community. These studies illuminate ritual meaning, youth participation, institutional intervention, and customary authority, respectively. Less attention has been given to how government agencies, customary authorities, religious leaders, and residents interact within one local ritual while negotiating public promotion, religious legitimacy, intergenerational participation, and cultural continuity.

Against this background, the study addresses two questions: (1) How are the AGIL functions distributed among the actors involved in preserving *Blangikhan*? and (2) How do these actors negotiate contemporary pressures, including uneven youth participation, religious interpretations, public promotion, and the transmission of cultural values? The study therefore examines the interdependent roles of government representatives, customary leaders, religious leaders, and community members in sustaining the religious and cultural meanings of *Blangikhan*. Empirically, it contributes a context-specific account of cultural preservation in Negeri Olok Gading. Analytically, it evaluates the usefulness and limitations of the AGIL framework for understanding collaboration and negotiation among actors whose responsibilities may overlap. The findings are expected to inform locally grounded preservation initiatives without treating cultural continuity as either automatic or entirely dependent on government intervention.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a sociological orientation to examine the relationships among the Bandar Lampung Tourism Office, customary leaders, religious leaders, and community members in maintaining the religious and cultural meanings of *Blangikhan*. The unit of analysis was the distribution and negotiation of roles among these actors in Negeri Olok Gading, Teluk Betung Barat District, Bandar Lampung. The study focused on two interconnected settings: the Tourism Office as the

government institution involved in cultural promotion and Negeri Olok Gading as the community in which the tradition is practiced.

Six informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in the tradition and their knowledge of its organization, religious interpretation, and community participation. This selection strategy was appropriate because purposive sampling allows qualitative researchers to identify information-rich participants whose experience is directly relevant to the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). They comprised one Tourism Office representative, one customary leader, one religious leader, and three community members representing younger and older residents. The sample was intended to provide coverage of the actor categories identified in the research questions rather than statistical representation of the wider population.

Table 1
Participant Composition and Relevance to the Study

Participant category	Number	Relevance to the study
Tourism Office representative	1	Institutional facilitation, promotion, and coordination
Customary leader	1	Customary authority, ritual protocol, and value transmission
Religious leader	1	Religious interpretation, collective prayer, and normative guidance
Community members	3	Participation, intergenerational transmission, and residents' experiences
Total	6	

Source: Authors' field data, 2026.

Data were collected in 2026 through nonparticipant observation, in-depth interviews, and document review. Observations were conducted during the preparation and enactment of the tradition at the Kali Akar River to record forms of participation and interaction among the actors. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with permission, and was transcribed verbatim. Documentary materials included activity records, institutional documents, archives, and relevant scholarly publications. The interview excerpts presented in this article were translated from Indonesian into English while retaining their original meaning.

Data analysis followed the procedures of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification described by Miles et al. (2014). Interview transcripts and observation records were coded according to the four AGIL categories—adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance—and then compared across participant groups. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the Tourism Office representative's account with those of the customary leader, religious leader, and community members. This comparison was used to identify convergence and variation across accounts and to strengthen the credibility of the qualitative interpretation (Tracy, 2010). All participants provided oral and written informed consent, including

permission to identify them and reproduce their statements in this article. The findings are therefore interpreted as a context-specific account of one community and are not intended to represent all Lampung communities or all participants in similar traditions.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The data revealed four connected patterns: institutional facilitation and public promotion; the division of authority between customary and religious leaders; community participation; and the transmission of religious and cultural values. These patterns show that the roles were differentiated but not entirely separate. Several actors participated in more than one aspect of preservation.

1) Institutional Facilitation and Public Promotion

The Tourism Office representative described the government's involvement in *Blangikhan* through facilitation, promotion, coordination, and cultural-tourism development. The representative explained:

“We provide support by facilitating cultural activities, coordinating with the local government, and helping with promotion so that the tradition remains known to the public” (Interview, May 18, 2026).

Interview and observational data indicated that government assistance supported event organization and public communication about the tradition. Its scope was nevertheless limited by the absence of a dedicated budget for every recurring customary activity. This required the office to set priorities when allocating institutional support.

Promotion was conducted through cultural festivals, social media, official websites, and regional cultural programs. The Tourism Office representative stated:

“We promote it through cultural festivals, social media, websites, and regional cultural activities so that the public, especially younger people, know that *Blangikhan* is part of Lampung's cultural heritage and needs to be preserved” (Interview, May 18, 2026).

Public promotion presented both an opportunity and a concern. It was intended to broaden public awareness, but presenting the tradition as a cultural-tourism attraction could shift public attention toward its performative aspects. Observation records indicated that customary leaders continued to determine the ritual sequence. Government promotion had therefore not replaced customary authority in the organization of the ceremony.

Coordination with customary and religious leaders was another component of government involvement. The representative explained:

“We coordinate with and provide guidance to customary leaders, religious leaders, and the community through cultural activities and cultural-preservation programs” (Interview, May 18, 2026).

Table 2
Forms of Tourism Office Involvement

Role	Activities identified in the data
Facilitator	Supporting the organization of cultural activities
Promoter	Publicizing the tradition through festivals and digital media
Coordinator	Communicating with customary leaders, religious leaders, and residents
Developer	Presenting the tradition as part of local cultural tourism

Source: Field data, 2026.

These findings indicate that the Tourism Office provided an institutional connection between the local tradition and public cultural programs. Its contribution was primarily facilitative and promotional, whereas control over ritual procedures remained with local customary and religious authorities.

2) Customary and Religious Authority

The customary leader's role centered on the preservation of ritual procedures and inherited meanings. M. Yusuf Erdiansyah Putra explained:

“My responsibility is to lead and ensure that the entire sequence of *Blangikhan* follows the customary provisions inherited from our ancestors. Custom is part of Lampung identity. If its rules change, the original meaning of the tradition may also change” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

His account associated customary authority with both ritual leadership and the protection of cultural identity. At the same time, preservation did not consist solely of enforcing inherited rules. The customary leader also described an explanatory approach to younger participants:

“I always invite younger people to participate while explaining the history, meaning, and purpose of *Blangikhan*” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

This account suggests that value transmission combined participation with verbal explanation. The approach was intended to encourage understanding rather than require participation without discussion.

The religious leader provided normative guidance concerning the relationship between custom and Islam. Abdul Syukur stated:

“*Blangikhan* is part of the cultural heritage of Lampung society. It may continue to be preserved as long as it does not conflict with Islamic principles” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

The religious leader also led collective prayers and interpreted purification as preparation for Ramadan. His role did not establish that every element of the tradition was inherently religious. Instead, it provided a locally accepted framework through which participants assessed the compatibility of customary practice with Islamic principles.

Table 3
Roles of Customary and Religious Leaders

Actor	Role	Manifestation in the field data
Customary leader	Ritual custodian	Directing the ritual sequence and maintaining inherited procedures
Customary leader	Cultural educator	Explaining the history and meaning of the tradition to younger participants
Religious leader	Normative interpreter	Assessing the compatibility of customary practices with Islamic principles
Religious leader	Prayer leader	Leading collective prayer and providing moral guidance

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings show a division of authority rather than a complete merger of customary and religious roles. Customary leaders regulated ritual procedures, whereas the religious leader addressed their normative interpretation. Their coordination allowed the tradition to be presented as culturally inherited while remaining open to religious evaluation.

3) Community Participation

Community participation was visible in collective preparation, ritual attendance, and the transmission of knowledge within families. Residents engaged in *gotong royong*—mutual cooperation—by cleaning the river area, preparing equipment, and assisting with other practical arrangements. Yesi explained:

“I take part in mutual cooperation, clean the location, help prepare the equipment, and participate in the entire procession” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

This participation supplied the labor needed for the event and created opportunities for interaction among residents. It also positioned community members as participants in the tradition rather than merely as spectators.

Parents and customary leaders introduced younger residents to the ritual through direct involvement and explanation. Akbar stated:

“Young people are usually invited to participate directly, and their parents or customary leaders explain the meaning of the tradition so that they continue to respect customary practices” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

The data also associated participation with social interaction. Cia explained:

“I am happy because I can gather with other community members and participate in a tradition inherited from our ancestors” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

Table 4
Forms of Community Participation

Dimension	Form identified in the data
Practical participation	Cleaning the location and preparing ritual equipment
Ritual participation	Attending collective prayer and the ritual sequence

Intergenerational transmission	Parents and customary leaders involving younger residents
Social interaction	Gathering and cooperating across age groups
Cultural identification	Expressing respect for inherited Lampung practices

Source: Field data, 2026.

The interviews also indicated that participation was not uniform. Education and employment outside the area could limit the availability of some younger residents. The data do not establish that younger people generally rejected the tradition; rather, they show that mobility and changing schedules complicated regular participation.

4) Strategies and Constraints in Value Transmission

Participants described religious meaning as being communicated through prayer, explanation, and the interpretation of purification as preparation for Ramadan. Abdul Syukur stated:

“This tradition is intended as a form of physical and inner purification before entering the holy month of Ramadan and as an encouragement to increase devotion to Allah” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

Cultural values were transmitted through participation in collective work and interaction with senior community members. Yesi identified the values she associated with the practice:

“Mutual cooperation, togetherness, respect for custom, and appreciation of ancestral heritage continue to be maintained” (Interview, May 20, 2026).

The customary leader regarded explanation as necessary because participation alone did not ensure an understanding of ritual meaning:

“If they understand its meaning, a sense of belonging to the custom will develop” (Interview with M. Yusuf Erdiansyah Putra, May 20, 2026).

Table 5
Strategies for Maintaining Religious and Cultural Values

Dimension	Strategy identified in the data
Religious meaning	Collective prayer and interpretation of purification as preparation for Ramadan
Cultural values	Mutual cooperation and participation in ritual preparation
Intergenerational transmission	Direct involvement accompanied by explanation from parents and customary leaders
Public visibility	Festivals, official promotion, websites, and social media
Customary continuity	Retention of customary authority over ritual procedures

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings identify three continuing constraints. First, education and employment mobility can reduce the availability of younger residents. Second, participation may become routine when its meanings are not explained. Third, public promotion may place the cultural-display dimension of the tradition alongside, or potentially above, its religious and customary meanings. The actors responded through

coordination, religious interpretation, direct participation, and explanatory dialogue, but the data do not establish that these strategies have fully resolved the constraints.

2. Discussion

The findings indicate that *Blangikhan* is maintained through a differentiated distribution of responsibilities rather than through the actions of a single cultural custodian. The Tourism Office supplies institutional access and public visibility; the customary leader regulates ritual procedures; the religious leader interprets their compatibility with Islamic principles; and residents provide participation, labor, and intergenerational transmission. These responsibilities overlap, however, and should not be treated as fixed or mutually exclusive. Government representatives also coordinate with community actors, customary leaders educate younger residents, and community members participate in maintaining both religious and cultural meanings.

The AGIL framework helps explain this interdependence. Institutional facilitation and public communication correspond primarily to adaptation, while the religious interpretation of the ritual contributes to the formulation of legitimate collective purposes. Community cooperation supports integration, and customary teaching contributes to latent pattern maintenance (Chriss, 2025; Parsons, 2013). The findings nevertheless refine a rigid one-actor–one-function reading of AGIL. Each function was produced through interaction among actors, and the distribution of responsibilities was negotiated rather than mechanically predetermined. This nonmechanical reading is also consistent with Merton’s functional analysis, which distinguishes intended functions from possible dysfunctions rather than assuming that every institutional arrangement necessarily produces integration (Merton, 1968). The AGIL framework is therefore more useful for identifying functional relationships than for placing each actor in an exclusive analytical category.

Government involvement illustrates the ambivalent character of institutional adaptation. Festivals, official websites, and social media may extend knowledge of the tradition beyond those present at the ritual. Yet public promotion also introduces tourism, branding, and institutional priorities into the presentation of a religiously interpreted customary practice. Research on cultural events in Indonesia shows that government-supported tourism can reproduce or alter relationships of cultural authority, even when the events remain community based (Purwani et al., 2022). Related research on *Grebeg Sudiwo* demonstrates that tradition, place identity, and tourist consumption may become closely intertwined in a community-based cultural event (Rahmatulloh et al., 2020). Commodification does not automatically eliminate cultural meaning; it may instead add, rearrange, or recontextualize meanings depending on who controls representation and how authenticity is negotiated (Cohen, 1988; Hidayati & Siregar, 2024). Studies of *Seblang* and *Sekaten* nevertheless warn that repeated presentation as public spectacle can redirect attention toward tourism and economic value, potentially affecting ritual and religious meanings (Isnaini, 2025; Karim & Raya, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2025). In the present case, customary leaders retained authority over the ritual sequence, but the

available data are insufficient to determine whether public promotion has produced commercialization or changed participants' interpretations. The findings identify customary control as an institutional safeguard while also indicating a potential risk that requires continued attention.

The relationship between customary and religious leaders is better understood as negotiated legitimacy than as the complete fusion of custom and religion. The customary leader defended inherited procedures, whereas the religious leader made their continuation conditional on compatibility with Islamic principles. This distinction matters because it leaves room for evaluation and disagreement rather than assuming that every inherited element is religiously legitimate. Research in Negeri Olok Gading similarly finds that customary institutions can transmit Islamic values while maintaining distinctive forms of local authority (Mahali et al., 2026). Nasution (2022) argues that religious meaning can orient social action by connecting ritual practices with shared moral commitments. In *Blangikhan*, this connection was constructed through prayer and explanation; the available evidence does not justify describing the ritual itself as obligatory worship or claiming that religious guidance has eliminated doctrinal disagreement.

Community participation performed an integrative function by supplying collective labor and creating a setting for interaction across age groups. This finding is consistent with research showing that *Muli Mekhanai* participate directly in preserving a related pre-Ramadan Lampung tradition (Perdana et al., 2022). Studies of customary leadership in other Indonesian communities also show that inherited practices are sustained through relationships among leaders and residents rather than by leaders acting alone (Hasan et al., 2023; Nilyati et al., 2023). Participation should not, however, be equated automatically with consensus. Heritage scholarship cautions that the term "community" can conceal differences in authority, interests, and recognition among residents (Waterton & Smith, 2010). Participatory heritage governance therefore requires attention to whether local custodians retain meaningful decision-making authority rather than being included only symbolically in institutionally directed programs (Grey & Kuokkanen, 2020). The three community accounts in this study show cooperation and positive attachment, but they cannot establish that every resident assigns the same meaning to the ritual.

Intergenerational transmission operated through participation accompanied by explanation. The customary leader's statements suggest that direct involvement is considered more effective when younger residents also understand the history and purpose of the practice. Although their study concerns cultural heritage tourism rather than community-based ritual transmission, Wu et al. (2023) found that generativity, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were positively associated with college students' intentions to participate in cultural heritage tourism. In the Lampung context, this pattern resembles the contribution of youth participation documented by Perdana et al. (2022) and the role of customary structures in maintaining Lampung identity described by Sari and Karsiwan (2025). The present data add an

important qualification: the principal difficulty was not demonstrated ideological rejection by an entire generation, but uneven availability and a possible gap between participation and understanding. Education and employment mobility can interrupt annual involvement, while participation without explanation may become procedural. Dialogue therefore functions as an adjustment in the mode of transmission, not as evidence that the underlying tradition has been substantively changed.

These findings also reveal a limitation of an exclusively functionalist explanation. Structural functionalism is effective for mapping coordination and interdependence, but its emphasis on order may understate conflict, unequal control of resources, and competing definitions of legitimate heritage. This concern has long been raised in critiques of consensus-oriented theory (Dahrendorf, 1958). In Negeri Olok Gading, the Tourism Office manages institutional support and promotion, customary leaders regulate ritual protocol, religious leaders exercise interpretive authority, and residents sustain the tradition through participation. These positions are complementary, but they are not equal or free from tension. The data document negotiation over representation and legitimacy more clearly than they demonstrate a stable equilibrium. AGIL should therefore be treated as a framework for examining functional relationships while remaining attentive to authority, constraints, and possible disagreement.

Empirically, the study shows that preserving *Blangikhan* involves at least three forms of negotiation: between public promotion and customary control, between inherited procedures and Islamic evaluation, and between established modes of transmission and the circumstances of younger residents. This extends previous work that has examined youth participation, customary authority, or tourism strategy separately. For local practice, the findings support a collaborative arrangement in which promotional materials and event formats are discussed with customary and religious authorities, while younger residents are involved not only as performers or participants but also in conversations about ritual meaning. Such arrangements cannot guarantee preservation, but they may prevent institutional promotion from becoming disconnected from community authority.

D. Conclusion

The study found that the continuity of *Blangikhan* in Negeri Olok Gading was supported by differentiated but overlapping responsibilities among government representatives, customary leaders, religious leaders, and community members. The Tourism Office primarily facilitated institutional adaptation and public promotion; the religious leader interpreted the tradition's purposes in relation to Islamic principles; residents sustained collective participation; and the customary leader maintained ritual procedures and transmitted inherited meanings. These functions did not operate as an exclusive one-actor-one-function arrangement. They were produced through coordination and negotiation concerning customary authority, religious legitimacy, public representation, and intergenerational participation. Education and employment mobility complicated the involvement of some younger residents, while tourism-oriented

promotion introduced a potential tension between public visibility and the preservation of ritual meaning.

The findings suggest that the AGIL framework is useful for identifying functional interdependence but should not be used to assume complete consensus or stable equilibrium. Cultural continuity in this case depended on differentiated authority and on the actors' ability to negotiate the boundaries between institutional promotion, customary protocol, and religious evaluation. Local preservation initiatives should therefore retain customary and religious involvement in decisions about public presentation while creating participatory spaces in which younger residents can discuss, rather than merely perform, the meanings of the tradition.

The study is limited to six purposively selected informants in one locality and one period of ritual activity in 2026. It does not measure long-term changes in participation, determine the effects of cultural promotion, or represent every interpretation held by residents of Negeri Olok Gading. Future research could follow the tradition across several annual cycles, include younger nonparticipants and residents who question the ritual, and compare *Blangikhan* with related pre-Ramadan traditions in other Lampung communities.

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