

From Symbol to Meaning: Philosophy of Bulungan Ornamental Motifs as Living Cultural Heritage in Arts Education

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: February 15, 2026 Accepted: April 8, 2026 Published: April 28, 2026 Keywords: Arts and cultural education Bulungan ornamental motifs Cultural heritage Local wisdom Symbol and meaning This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. © 2026 Vidya Karya	This research examines the philosophy embedded in Bulungan ornamental motifs as a form of living cultural heritage in North Kalimantan. These motifs function not only as decorative elements but also as representations of values such as harmony, bravery, respect for nature, and reverence for ancestors. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study collected primary data through in-depth interviews with artisans, cultural leaders, teachers, and students, supported by purposively selected visual documentation from archival sources and field observations. The data were analyzed using thematic coding and visual content analysis to uncover symbolic meanings reflected in patterns, colors, and forms. The findings indicate that certain motifs, such as the dragon, signify protection of the Kayan River, whereas floral and plant motifs symbolize fertility and the continuity of life. Beyond their aesthetic function, these symbols act as markers of cultural identity and as valuable learning resources in art education, encouraging creativity, cultural awareness, and character formation. Overall, the study highlights how traditional artistic expressions operate both as philosophical representations and as educational instruments for preserving local wisdom.
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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is renowned for its rich diversity of ornamental motifs. Emphasizes that traditional Indonesian ornaments are not merely decorative but function as symbolic systems that transmit values and philosophies across generations. Septi et al. (2024) further argue that Nusantara motifs embody cosmological beliefs and ethical principles, serving as cultural texts that preserve local wisdom. In contemporary contexts, Budi et al. (2024) demonstrate that modern batik patterns articulate visual identity and strengthen cultural expression in everyday life. Similarly, Murtopo (2024) highlights the integration of Islamic values and modern design principles in ornamental art, ensuring that traditional symbols remain relevant today. In the context of education, traditional Indonesian ornaments, not only decorative, can be taught to students to instill the values of character, leadership, tolerance, and mutual cooperation, apart from their role as a visual communication medium

in arts education, especially in the arts curriculum, where these ornaments encourage creativity, cultural appreciation, and character development. In the field of art education, particularly within Art, Culture, and Craft (SBdP), visual art plays a crucial role in fostering creativity, cultural appreciation, and character formation (Wesnina et al., 2025).

Students are encouraged to express ideas and cultural values through visual forms, making the study of traditional ornaments relevant not only for aesthetic purposes but also for educational and cultural preservation, as noted by Septi et al. (2024). Previous studies have examined Nusantara ornaments from historical and ethnographic perspectives, highlighting their role as embodiments of local wisdom and cultural identity. However, research specifically addressing the visual and symbolic analysis of Bulungan ornamental motifs remains limited.

This gap is significant because Bulungan ornaments, rooted in the heritage of the Dayak Kayan and later influenced by Islamic traditions under the Bulungan Sultanate, represent a unique synthesis of indigenous and Islamic cultural elements (Hamzah, 2020). Despite their historical and cultural importance, systematic studies that analyze their visual characteristics, symbolic meanings, and relevance to arts and cultural education are scarce. Addressing this gap is essential to document, interpret, and revitalize Bulungan ornaments as part of Indonesia's living cultural heritage.

Bulungan ornamental motifs represent a synthesis of Dayak Kayan traditions and Islamic influences under the Bulungan Sultanate, making them a distinctive cultural heritage. While scholars have emphasized the importance of traditional motifs in preserving identity, most analyses remain general and overlook Bulungan's unique visual and symbolic dimensions. Contemporary research increasingly integrates traditional motifs into modern and digital frameworks to sustain cultural identity, as highlighted by Wesnina et al. (2025), yet Bulungan ornaments have not been included in such comparative studies. This indicates that systematic research on Bulungan motifs is still scarce, leaving a significant gap in both cultural heritage studies and art education discourse.

This study explicitly aims to describe the forms, patterns, colors, and symbolic meanings of Bulungan ornamental motifs, as well as to analyze their philosophical values and cultural significance. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, supported by systematic visual documentation and in-depth interviews with relevant cultural informants to obtain comprehensive and contextual data. The research focuses on identifying forms, colors, and symbolic meanings embedded in the ornaments and interpreting their relevance to cultural heritage, arts education, and local wisdom. By addressing the guiding research question "How do Bulungan ornamental motifs represent socio-cultural values and contribute to arts and cultural education in the context of local wisdom?" this study contributes to filling the gap identified in both national and international literature. Traditional motifs have been shown to articulate identity while adapting to modern contexts, as demonstrated by Budi et al. (2024) and this research extends such perspectives by situating Bulungan motifs within educational practice. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on Indonesian ornaments and provide insights for integrating cultural heritage into art education, thereby strengthening both cultural preservation and pedagogical innovation.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm, aiming to explore the philosophical meanings embedded in Bulungan ornamental motifs. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), qualitative research is appropriate for understanding complex cultural phenomena through naturalistic inquiry and contextual interpretation. The

descriptive design was chosen because the data consist of visual symbols and cultural narratives that require thematic and symbolic analysis rather than quantification. This approach allows researchers to uncover the symbolic dimensions, cultural relevance, and educational potential of traditional ornaments.

Subject of Research or Population and Sample (Research Target)

The study was conducted in Bulungan Regency, North Kalimantan, a region historically connected to the Bulungan Sultanate and known for its rich ornamental traditions that embody local identity and cultural values. Research sites included communities along the Kayan River, cultural centers where traditional arts are practiced, and schools where Arts and Crafts (SBdP) is taught. These sites were selected because they represent both the living heritage of Bulungan ornaments and their integration into formal education settings, providing a holistic perspective on cultural continuity and pedagogical relevance.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is appropriate when researchers aim to study individuals directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Sampling was expanded through snowball techniques to reach additional informants within cultural networks. The total sample consisted of seventeen individuals comprising three traditional artisans actively producing Bulungan ornaments, five cultural elders from the lineage of Datu, eight educators and students from primary and secondary schools, and one local cultural official engaged in heritage preservation programs. Participants were eligible for inclusion if they met the following criteria: (1) actively engaged in the creation, teaching, or preservation of Bulungan ornamental motifs; (2) residing in Bulungan Regency or affiliated with cultural institutions in the region; and (3) possessing experiential knowledge of the symbolic, philosophical, or educational relevance of the motifs, as demonstrated through cultural practice, teaching portfolios, or self-reporting during initial screening.

Data collection

Data were collected through a combination of qualitative methods to ensure depth and credibility, using the researcher as the primary research instrument who was directly involved in the process of data gathering and interpretation. To support systematic data collection, several research instruments were employed, including a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions to explore philosophical meanings and cultural values, an observation checklist to record visual characteristics such as shapes, colors, patterns, and contextual usage of the motifs, and a digital camera and field note format to document and describe the ornamental forms accurately. Primary data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected informants, direct field observations of the motifs in their cultural settings, and photographic documentation of Bulungan ornamental motifs to strengthen data validity and analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with artisans, cultural elders, educators, and students to explore the symbolic, philosophical, and educational meanings of the motifs. Observations were carried out in cultural centers, schools, and community settings to document the living practices of ornament use. Photographic documentation was employed to record the visual details of the motifs as complementary evidence, consistent with common practices in qualitative research on art and culture.

Secondary data included archival images, museum records, government documents, and published literature related to Bulungan culture. These sources provided historical and contextual background and enabled triangulation with primary findings. Triangulation is widely recognized as a key strategy for enhancing validity in qualitative research by

integrating multiple sources of evidence Carter (2014). The integration of primary and secondary data thus strengthened the reliability of the study and situated the symbolic interpretations within a broader academic discourse

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study followed Creswell & Poth (2016) qualitative framework, emphasizing systematic steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. All interview transcripts, observation notes, photographs, and the researchers' sketches were prepared and organized digitally before coding. Through open coding, relevant excerpts were labeled, then axial coding connected categories, and selective coding refined them into overarching themes. Categories such as “flora motifs” and “natural colors” were merged into the theme “symbolic nature,” while “customary values” and “moral teachings” developed into the theme “cultural philosophy.” In addition, data from teachers and students highlighted the educational contribution of Bulungan ornaments, particularly their role in transmitting cultural values, fostering aesthetic appreciation, and serving as contextual material in art education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding and visual content examination, resulting in three major themes: (1) symbolic representation in ornamental motifs, (2) philosophical and cultural values, and (3) educational relevance in art learning. The findings are presented narratively, supported by participant quotations and visual documentation. The themes and interpretations of this research are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 The theme and interpretation

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Codes	Source
Theme 1: Symbolic Representation in Ornamental Motifs	1.1 Flora as symbols of life and harmony	Lotus = life; Sun = harvest, hope, fertility, balance	Traditional artisans A and C
	1.2 Fauna mitologi as symbols of protection and courage	A dragon is the guardian of the Kayan River; a winged lion represents bravery and palace protection.	Traditional artisans B, Cultural elders B,D
Theme 2: Philosophical and Cultural Values	2.1 Transmission of ancestral wisdom	Customary values; morality; ancestral reverence; harmony	Cultural elders C,E
	2.2 Heritage of Bulungan King's Leadership and Islamic Influences	Cultural synthesis; Bulungan Sultanate heritage; spirituality	Cultural elders A
Theme 3: Educational Relevance in Art Learning	3.1 Use of motifs in classroom practice	Drawing assignments, motif discussions, and cultural appreciation	Teachers A and B, Student A-E
	3.2 Character and identity formation	Creativity; bravery; local pride; cultural understanding	Teachers C,

Symbolic Representation in Ornamental Motifs

Data analysis indicates that Bulungan ornamental motifs function not merely as visual decoration but also embody symbolic meanings related to life, nature, and the values of courage. These findings emerged from interviews with traditional artisans and cultural

elders, who emphasized the role of floral and mythical fauna motifs as central symbols within the ornaments.

Flora as Symbols of Life and Harmony

The lily ornament combined with the sunflower motif was found on the windows of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum. Based on interviews with traditional artisans, the lily was interpreted as a symbol of purity and the beauty of life. Traditional artisan A explained: *“The lily is a delicate yet strong flower. It represents a clean and balanced life.”*

The ornaments on the windows of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Ornament on the window of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum

The lily symbolizes growth, life, and harmony with nature. Meanwhile, the sunflower represents the source of light from the sky that supports good growth, while also symbolizing hopes for abundant harvests in the past. Together, these two motifs reflect the community’s aspirations for prosperity and balance in everyday life. The ornaments on the windows of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Ornament on the window of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum

The sun motif in Bulungan ornamentation is understood as a symbol of light and hope, bringing life while signifying balance in nature. Artisan C added that the sun motif reflects hopes for harvest and natural balance. *“The sun represents harvest hopes and balance,”* he noted.

Mythical Fauna as Symbols of Protection and Courage

The analysis revealed that mythical fauna motifs are among the strongest symbolic elements in Bulungan ornaments. Dragons and winged lions are not merely decorative

figures; they are understood as representations of protection, bravery, and ancestral strength. Their presence in Bulungan ornamentation illustrates how the community embeds values of guardianship and courage into visual symbols passed down across generations. Traditional artisan B emphasized the protective role of the dragon motif. *“The dragon guards the river; it guards life,”* he noted. Cultural elders B and D elaborated that the winged lion symbolizes bravery and spiritual strength. These motifs were found in kingdom’s emblem, indicating their function as guardians of communal values and cultural resilience. The official symbol of the Bulungan Sultanate is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3 The official of Sultanate Bulungan’s Emblem

Cultural elder B explained:

“The crown at the top symbolizes the legitimate authority and sovereignty of the Sultan as the highest leader. It reflects the grandeur and legitimacy of the Bulungan Sultanate.”

Meanwhile, cultural elder D added, *“The two animals in the center represent strength, protection, and courage. This symbol affirms that the Bulungan Sultanate is not only culturally refined but also possesses the power to safeguard its territory and people.”*

Both elders also emphasized the meaning of rice and cotton placed on the sides of the emblem. Cultural elder B stated:

“Rice and cotton are symbols of prosperity and welfare. They embody the ideal of social justice for all the people.”

Cultural elder D reinforced this, saying, *“The values contained in these motifs reflect a government oriented toward the well-being of its community.”*

Philosophical and Cultural Values

Bulungan ornaments function not only as aesthetic symbols but also as a medium for conveying profound philosophical and cultural values. The philosophy of life balance is reflected in motifs that emphasize harmony between humans, nature, and ancestors, teaching the importance of morality and social cohesion. Furthermore, the ornaments represent the Sultan’s leadership as the legitimate supreme ruler, with the crown and human figure symbolizing authority, grandeur, and responsibility in safeguarding the people and territory. Islamic influences are clearly visible in the integration of values such as justice, prosperity, and spirituality, illustrating a cultural synthesis between local traditions and

Islamic teachings. Thus, Bulungan ornamentation serves as a vehicle for moral and spiritual education while reinforcing cultural identity across generations.

Transmission of ancestral wisdom

Beyond the symbolic meanings embedded in flora and fauna motifs, the data analysis also reveals a deeper dimension of the philosophical and cultural values inherent in Bulungan ornamentation. These values not only explain the relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors, but also reflect the worldview of the Bulungan community regarding balance, morality, and cultural identity. The findings indicate that Bulungan ornaments are understood as a medium for conveying philosophical teachings and cultural values. Cultural elders and traditional artisans emphasized that each carving is not merely an aesthetic form but a means of moral and spiritual education. Values such as harmony, respect for ancestors, and courage in safeguarding the community form the core of the philosophical meanings passed down through these ornaments. Cultural elder C explained:

“Every carving tells a story. The lily teaches us about purity, and the sun brings light to life. These motifs are not just decoration; they carry moral lessons and respect for our ancestors.”

Cultural elder E emphasized the broader cultural meaning, stating, *“Through floral and natural motifs, values of morality and harmony are preserved. The ornaments remind us that culture is not only about beauty but also about guiding principles for living together in balance.”*

The terrace walls of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum are shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Terrace wall of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum

The ornament on the terrace wall of the Bulungan Sultanate Museum displays a symmetrical motif representing balance. This ornament contains elements of creeping plants and leaves, symbolizing fertility, growth, and life. The ornament reflects a philosophy of harmonious and spiritual life, closely connected to nature within the Sultanate community of the past. It is not merely decoration, but a symbol of cultural values such as beauty, protection, and reverence for life.

King's Leadership and Islamic Influences

The philosophy of leadership in Bulungan ornamentation is reflected in symbols such as the crown and the vine motif, which signify legitimacy, grandeur, and the Sultan's responsibility as the supreme leader. The crown not only asserts political authority but also

conveys moral obligations to protect the people and territory. Islamic influences are evident in the integration of values such as justice, prosperity, and spirituality, illustrating a synthesis between local traditions and Islamic teachings. Thus, Bulungan ornaments serve as a medium that reinforces the Sultanate's identity while transmitting philosophical lessons about leadership that is just, welfare-oriented, and grounded in spirituality. Cultural elder A explained:

“The crown on the pulpit staircase ornament symbolizes the Sultan’s legitimate leadership, affirming the grandeur and responsibility of a ruler in protecting his people. Meanwhile, the vine motif reflects the philosophy of life balance and harmony, which aligns with Islamic teachings on order and the beauty of God’s creation.”

The ornaments on the steps of the pulpit of the Kasimuddin Mosque are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5 Ornament on the staircase of the Kasimuddin Mosque pulpit

Use of Motifs in Classroom Practice in SBdP Curriculum

In the SBdP (Arts and Crafts) curriculum, the use of Bulungan ornamental motifs serves as an effective teaching strategy to integrate cultural values into classroom practice. Teachers employ flora and fauna motifs in drawing assignments, classroom discussions, and value reflections. This approach enables students to develop artistic skills while fostering appreciation for local cultural heritage.

Teacher A emphasized the following:

“We use floral and animal motifs in drawing tasks so that students learn not only artistic techniques but also the cultural meanings behind them.”

Teacher B added, *“Discussions about Bulungan ornaments help students realize that art is inseparable from life. They learn that each motif carries philosophy and moral values.”*

From the students’ perspective, Student C represented his peers by stating:

“When I draw Bulungan motifs, I feel closer to my own culture. I realize the drawings are not only beautiful but also carry meanings of bravery and harmony.”

Thus, the practice of using motifs in the SBdP curriculum functions not only as an art learning medium but also as a means of character education and cultural identity

reinforcement. This shows that the use of Bulungan ornaments in art learning functions not only as a medium of artistic expression but also as a means of instilling cultural values, shaping character, and strengthening local identity among students.

Character and identity formation

Art learning based on Bulungan ornamentation plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and identity. Through drawing activities, discussions, and value reflections, students are encouraged to understand that each motif carries philosophical messages about bravery, creativity, and pride in local culture. Teachers emphasize that art is not merely a technical skill but also a medium for moral and social education. Teacher C asserted:

“When students learn Bulungan ornaments, they are not only practicing drawing but also learning about bravery, creativity, and pride in their own culture.”

Student D represented his peers by stating, *“Drawing Bulungan motifs makes me feel more confident and proud as a Bulungan person. I realize that art can teach values of bravery and cultural identity.”*

This shows that art learning based on Bulungan ornamentation successfully instills character values while strengthening students' cultural identity, making art a relevant medium for holistic education

Ornament as Symbolic Communication of Ancestral Values

The findings reveal that Bulungan ornamentation, particularly floral and fauna motifs, functions not merely as decorative art but as a symbolic medium for transmitting ancestral values. Motifs such as the lotus, sun, and dragon embody messages of fertility, protection, and bravery, reflecting the community's cosmological worldview. As Cultural Elder A explained, *“These ornaments are not just beautiful shapes; they remind us of the courage of our ancestors and the harmony between humans and nature.”*

This interpretation aligns with Haryanto et al., (2023) who argue that flora and fauna in wooden crafts represent cosmological meanings and serve as cultural communication tools. Similarly, Fauziah et al. (2026) demonstrate that floral motifs in Borobudur reliefs convey philosophical and spiritual values, reinforcing the idea that ornamentation is a vehicle for moral and spiritual transmission.

By situating Bulungan ornamentation within this broader discourse, the study challenges the assumption that traditional art is purely aesthetic. Instead, it highlights its dual role as both cultural preservation and moral education. This resonates with Kramsch (2013), who emphasizes that symbolic forms in cultural contexts create meaningful zones of identity and learning, enabling communities to sustain values across generations.

Philosophical Synthesis: Sultanate Leadership and Islamic Aesthetics

Bulungan ornamentation does not merely preserve ancestral symbols; it actively negotiates between local authority and religious universality. The crown motif, for example, is not interpreted solely as a decorative emblem of power but as a philosophical statement about justice, responsibility, and moral leadership. As Cultural Elder B observed, *“The crown reminds us that ruling is not about privilege but about duty to protect and guide the people.”*

This negotiation reflects what Fina (2018) describes as the adaptive nature of Southeast Asian Islamic art, which absorbs local traditions while maintaining universal values of justice and spirituality. Azra (2018) further explains that Indonesian Islam represents a

cultural synthesis, where indigenous symbols are infused with Islamic meanings to produce a distinctive identity. In Bulungan ornamentation, this synthesis is visible in the way floral and geometric motifs echo Islamic aesthetics of symmetry and balance, while simultaneously grounding leadership in local cosmology.

Rather than treating ornamentation as static heritage, these findings suggest that Bulungan art functions as a dynamic cultural text. It mediates between Sultanate authority and Islamic universality, embedding ethical principles into visual forms. This aligns with Schmidt (2017), which highlights how Islamic aesthetics in Southeast Asia often merge with indigenous visual languages to create hybrid traditions.

By foregrounding this synthesis, the study demonstrates that Bulungan ornamentation is not only a reflection of cultural identity but also a philosophical framework for leadership and spirituality. It confirms the research objective of uncovering the philosophical and cultural values embedded in the motifs, while showing how art becomes a site of negotiation between local heritage and broader religious discourses.

Cultural Identity Formation through Art Education

The integration of Bulungan ornamentation into the SBdP curriculum demonstrates how art education can serve as a powerful vehicle for cultural identity formation. Teachers reported that drawing and discussing local motifs not only enhanced students' artistic skills but also instilled values of bravery, creativity, and pride in their heritage. As one teacher reflected, *"When students sketch the dragon or the lotus, they are not just practicing lines but they are learning who they are."*

This pedagogical practice illustrates Gay (2018) concept of culturally responsive teaching, where instruction is grounded in students' cultural experiences to make learning more meaningful. By embedding Bulungan motifs into classroom activities, educators create learning environments that connect global knowledge with local identity, echoing Kramsch's argument that symbolic forms in education foster zones of identity and meaning.

At the same time, the use of cultural artifacts in teaching resonates with Lantolf et al., (2014) notion of culturally mediated learning, which emphasizes that cognitive development is shaped by cultural tools. In this case, ornamentation functions as both an artistic medium and a cultural scaffold, enabling students to internalize values while acquiring technical skills. Herlina & Dahalan (2024) further support this view, showing that local culture-based education strengthens character building and moral development.

However, the findings also reveal structural challenges. Teachers noted the scarcity of culturally relevant materials and the dominance of standardized resources that privilege Western aesthetics. This tension underscores the need for systemic support to sustain culturally grounded pedagogy. As Indika (2025) argues, integrating local heritage into formal education requires institutional commitment, not just individual teacher initiative.

Taken together, these insights confirm that Bulungan ornamentation in art education is more than a decorative exercise. It is a pedagogical innovation that nurtures identity, character, and cultural continuity, while simultaneously challenging the homogenizing tendencies of mainstream curricula. In doing so, it fulfills the research objective of assessing the educational relevance of Bulungan ornamentation and highlights its potential as a model for culturally responsive pedagogy in Indonesia and beyond.

Multidimensional Gaps

This study reveals multidimensional gaps that affect the integration of Bulungan ornamentation into art education. At the level of cultural preservation, Bulungan motifs

face challenges such as limited documentation, lack of artisan regeneration, and the risk of commodification. As one elder explained:

“If the younger generation no longer learns to carve, it will remain only on paper, without living meaning.” Without strong preservation policies, the philosophical meanings of the ornaments risk being reduced to mere decoration, detached from their symbolic values.

At the institutional level, moral support from schools and local government is not accompanied by sufficient material support. Teachers are forced to improvise teaching strategies with limited resources. Teacher B reflected:

“We know this is important, but we don’t have time or teaching materials. So, we create them ourselves, as best as we can.”

This situation resonates with Oliveira & Peixoto (2021), who highlight that schools and teachers are central to policy implementation but often face resource constraints that hinder sustainability.

At the educational level, teachers possess agency to innovate, yet they are frequently constrained by the lack of training, teaching materials, and systemic support. Teacher A noted:

“We are encouraged to highlight local culture, but there are no modules or training to support us. So, we improvise.”

This condition aligns with Cochran Smith et al., (2022) who emphasize that teacher agency in educational reform is often limited by structural policies and systemic constraints.

Taken together, these multidimensional gaps demonstrate that the successful integration of Bulungan ornamentation into art education depends not only on teacher commitment but also on institutional support and cultural preservation policies. Without synergy among these three aspects, efforts to position Bulungan ornamentation as a medium for character education and cultural identity will struggle to achieve sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Bulungan ornamentation is not merely decorative but a cultural text that embodies philosophical, symbolic, and social meanings. The analysis of three central themes, flora-fauna symbolism, Sultanate leadership and Islamic aesthetics, and cultural identity formation through art education, shows that local motifs serve as a medium for transmitting ancestral wisdom, linking tradition with religious values, and shaping the character and identity of younger generations. In this way, the research objective of uncovering both the symbolic meanings and educational relevance of Bulungan ornamentation has been achieved.

At the same time, the study reveals multidimensional gaps that hinder the sustainability of cultural integration. In terms of preservation, limited documentation, lack of artisan regeneration, and the threat of commodification risk reducing the ornaments’ philosophical meanings to mere decoration. At the institutional level, moral support from schools and local government is not accompanied by sufficient material support, leaving teachers to improvise with limited resources. In the educational sphere, teacher agency to innovate is frequently constrained by the absence of training, teaching materials, and systemic support.

These findings demonstrate that the successful integration of Bulungan ornamentation into art education depends not only on teacher commitment but also on the synergy of cultural preservation policies and institutional support. Without alignment among these three dimensions, efforts to position Bulungan ornamentation as a medium for character education and cultural identity will struggle to achieve sustainability. This research, therefore, contributes to both academic discourse and educational practice by emphasizing

that culturally responsive pedagogy requires tangible structural support, ensuring that local heritage is not only preserved as aesthetic symbols but also sustained as living sources of values and identity.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

In this study, M and I played a central role in conceptualizing the research idea and framework. M was responsible for designing the methodology and supervising the overall project. MAR conducted the formal analysis, curated the data, and contributed to the visualization of the findings. Field investigations were carried out by M together with Sainal A, supported by resources provided by M and I. The original draft of the manuscript was prepared by M and MAR, while I and SA contributed to the review and editing process. Each author made substantial contributions according to their expertise, and authorship is limited to those who were directly involved in the research and preparation of this work.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

In preparing this manuscript, we used Microsoft Word as the primary platform for drafting and formatting the text. Academic references were systematically searched and collected through Google Scholar to ensure the inclusion of relevant and credible sources. For citation management and bibliography organization, we employed Zotero, which allowed us to maintain consistency in referencing style and streamline the citation process throughout the manuscript. We affirm that the entire process of research, writing, and editing was carried out independently by the authors without the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in data collection, analysis, or interpretation. The combination of these tools supported efficiency, accuracy, and academic integrity in the preparation of this article.

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