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Revitalizing Hadrah Al-Banjari: Enhancing Spiritual Intelligence and Cultural Identity Among Indonesian Mosque Youth

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Abstract

The spiritual development of Indonesian youth is increasingly challenged by rapid technological advancement and social transformation, which often lead to a decline in religious engagement and cultural rootedness. Addressing this concern, this community engagement project (PKM) was initiated to strengthen spiritual intelligence and cultural identity through the revitalization of Hadrah Al-Banjari, a traditional Islamic art form. Conducted in the Sukun Subdistrict of Malang City, this study involved 25 mosque youth aged 13–21, selected based on their active participation in mosque-based activities. Positioned within the broader framework of spiritual education, Hadrah Al-Banjari promotes spiritual awareness, emotional sensitivity, and cultural pride. Using qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations, this study adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that enabled youth to actively reflect on and improve their spiritual practices. The results demonstrate that Hadrah Al-Banjari is an effective medium for deepening religious devotion and internalizing Islamic values. The project underscores the importance of preserving traditional Islamic arts to support the spiritual and emotional development of youth. Future initiatives are recommended to further integrate such cultural practices into broader community-based spiritual education programs.

Keywords: *Hadrah Al-Banjari, spiritual intelligence, Islamic arts, youth development, Participatory Action Research (PAR)*

Introduction

In recent years, rapid urbanization and cultural shifts in Indonesia have significantly affected the experiences of youth and their religious identities. Traditional Islamic practices are increasingly juxtaposed with modern lifestyles, creating tensions in how young people relate to their faith (Rachmad & Rohmah, 2022). This phenomenon is further compounded by the growing commodification of religion, which often transforms religious rituals into political tools and undermines communal participation among youth (Lubis et al., 2024). The rise of digital consumerism and the influence of evolving popular culture have also contributed to a decline in engagement with cultural expressions such as Islamic arts and mosque-based activities, revealing a growing sense of disconnection among urban youth (Subchi et al., 2022). Moreover, migration from rural to urban areas frequently disrupts family structures and weakens the intergenerational transmission of cultural values, thereby intensifying feelings of spiritual disconnection, particularly in urban centers (Khairunnisa et al., 2024). Addressing these challenges requires culturally informed initiatives such as *Hadrah Al-Banjari*, which aim not only to reinforce Islamic values but also to reconnect youth with Indonesia's rich Islamic heritage, ultimately fostering a deeper sense of community and identity among younger generations (Guntarto & Sevrina, 2019).

Adolescents are also in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. Hall (1904), in his seminal work over a century ago, noted that adolescence is a vulnerable period because individuals are not yet psychologically stable or balanced. They often struggle to make sound decisions and are frequently confused in their search for identity. Consequently, they tend to seek peer groups with shared interests as part of their effort to define themselves. This period of identity exploration is crucial for their development, not only mentally and socially but also spiritually. Al-Refai (2020) emphasized that mosque-based education plays a vital role in supporting the social, mental, and spiritual growth of Muslim adolescents, helping them integrate into wider society while maintaining their religious identity. In this context, the mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as a center for character development and education. Research has shown that educational programs organized by mosques can enhance religious understanding and even foster aspects of national identity. For instance, Nasrullah et al. (2023) reported a significant increase in participants' knowledge of religious activities and training, with a rise from 32.6 percent to 64 percent after completing mosque-based programs. Moreover, mosques contribute to sustained youth engagement through social programs that teach religious values and encourage active participation in the community, despite modern challenges that have reduced youth interest in visiting mosques (Udin et al., 2023). The implementation of educational and cultural initiatives within mosque settings helps address the social and psychological needs of adolescents, positioning mosques as integral institutions in the development of the younger Muslim generation (Isnaini et al., 2019; Darmawati and Yuningtyaswari, 2023).

The presence of youth groups in mosques or prayer houses deserves appreciation, as it plays a significant role in supporting the emotional, social, and moral development of young people. Through structured religious activities such as Quranic recitation classes (TPQ), community service, Islamic studies, and Islamic art forms like *hadrah* and *shalawatan*, youth are provided with meaningful opportunities to regulate emotions, build character, and develop a sense of belonging (Rusk et al., 2013; Karimshah et al., 2014). These activities serve not only as spiritual practices but also as platforms for community engagement and mental well-being,

helping young people cultivate moral values and form positive identities. However, the appeal of Islamic arts such as Al-Banjari has been waning among youth due to the rapid influx of technological advancements and changing cultural preferences. Participation in *hadrah* or Al-Banjari is increasingly viewed as outdated or irrelevant, discouraging youth involvement. This trend poses a challenge to the spiritual growth of younger generations, as Al-Banjari is a traditional Islamic art form rich in values of remembrance (*dzikir*), faith, and morality, which contribute meaningfully to the cultivation of spiritual awareness (Wargadinata, 2010). Addressing this decline calls for renewed strategies to reintegrate Islamic arts into youth programming in ways that resonate with contemporary sensibilities.

Art, particularly Islamic art, is a manifestation of human gratitude to the Creator and should be preserved as an essential cultural practice among today's youth. Hanefar et al. (2016) identify themes of spiritual intelligence such as the purpose of life, consciousness, and reflection, which are crucial for addressing many of life's challenges. The Islamic values embedded in Al-Banjari, including remembrance or *dzikir*, morality, and faith or *akidah*, expressed through *shalawat* and praises, have the potential to nurture the spiritual consciousness of those who engage with this art form (Thoha, 2002). Furthermore, this art contributes to the development of spiritual intelligence, fostering a generation of youth who are pious, religious, and morally upright. Participation in Al-Banjari activities plays a critical role in cultivating spiritual awareness while responding to the challenges brought about by modernization and cultural changes. Studies indicate that traditional practices such as Al-Banjari are increasingly at risk due to the influence of modern technology and changing cultural preferences that favor consumer-oriented entertainment over local traditions (Zainuddin, 2023). These broader societal transformations are often shaped by globalized media, which tend to marginalize local Islamic art forms that are essential to cultural identity and expression (Hiswara et al., 2023). At the same time, the adaptability shown by young participants illustrates an effort to engage with both inherited traditions and contemporary realities, reflecting a broader process of balancing cultural heritage and personal identity in a rapidly evolving sociocultural environment. Understanding Al-Banjari participation within this context offers valuable insight into the complexities that shape youth identity and artistic expression, and reinforces the importance of cultural preservation and education in sustaining these meaningful practices.

In many parts of the world, mosques serve not just as places of worship but also as community centers for youth engagement. Contrary to the perception that mosques foster conservatism, studies such as those by Karimshah et al. (2014) show that mosques provide spaces where Muslim youth can socialize, network, and participate in various activities that contribute to their overall development. This multifaceted role of the mosque is crucial in shaping the identity and spiritual growth of youth, and Islamic arts such as Al-Banjari are an important part of this process.

Thus, the revitalization of Al-Banjari art among youth mosque groups becomes imperative as a means of enhancing spiritual awareness and intelligence, particularly for mosque youth groups, and for the surrounding community in general. Efforts to improve the spiritual quality of youth must go hand-in-hand with endeavors to preserve Islamic arts in the archipelago. Al-Banjari, as one of the traditional Islamic art forms that is gradually being abandoned, becomes a vital tool for fostering the spiritual intelligence of youth because it contains numerous Islamic values capable of awakening both their spiritual awareness and intellect.

Based on this premise, the problem that this community engagement activity seeks to address is how efforts can be made to enhance the spirituality of mosque youth in the Sukun Subdistrict, Malang City. This community service aims to identify and implement strategic programs to elevate the spirituality of mosque youth in Sukun Subdistrict, Malang City. The program is expected to help the youth recognize and develop their potential in improving their mental and spiritual quality, increase their participation in *shalawat* activities, and align with mosque programs aimed at enhancing congregational spirituality. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang to foster partnerships and communication between the academic community and the surrounding society, while also allowing program implementers to apply their Al-Banjari artistic skills and contribute to community service activities.

Method

To develop mosque youth in Sukun Subdistrict into individuals with strong spiritual and religious intelligence, the researchers employed the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. This method aimed to raise awareness among mosque youth in Sukun Subdistrict about the weaknesses in Al-Banjari art as part of the efforts to improve their spiritual awareness and intelligence. It also addressed their desire to overcome shortcomings, develop strategies and methods to resolve their issues, and assist them in finding solutions to the challenges they faced.

This study was conducted at Fathul Huda Mosque in the Sukun Subdistrict, Malang City, and involved 25 youth participants ranging in age from 13 to 21 years. The age range was selected based on widely accepted definitions of youth in contemporary research, which recognize youth as an elastic category encompassing early adolescence through young adulthood. For instance, Galambos and Kolaric (1994), as cited in Tyyskä (2017), classify individuals aged 13 to 19 as “teens,” while those aged 20 to 24 are often categorized as “young adults.” In line with these definitions, the age group of 13 to 21 represents a relevant spectrum for studying youth engagement, covering both early and later adolescent phases. Participants were selected based on their regular involvement in mosque-based activities such as *shalawat* recitations, mosque cleaning, and Qur’anic learning sessions. Most were male and came from families with strong religious backgrounds, although some had limited prior exposure to Islamic performing arts. Their varying levels of religious and cultural engagement provided a diverse context for the study.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method was employed to position the mosque youth not as objects of study but as active agents in the research process. They were directly involved in identifying the problems they faced, formulating appropriate solutions, and taking action to address those issues. Within this framework, the researchers acted as facilitators, providing support and strategic guidance while ensuring that the youth maintained primary control over the direction and content of the activities. This process highlighted the importance of participation, allowing the youth to build their problem-solving capacity and enhance their independence without excessive reliance on external intervention. Such an approach reflects the core values of PAR, which emphasize collaborative engagement between researchers and participants (Mallory, 2024; Springett et al., 2023). It also promotes empowerment, especially among younger participants, through their direct involvement in recognizing issues, generating responses, and implementing change (Wagaman et al., 2023). In this study, the mosque youth

served not as passive recipients of knowledge but as co-researchers who gained critical thinking skills, developed confidence, and strengthened their sense of responsibility and ownership over the outcomes (Wood, 2021). The researchers, functioning as facilitators, supported the growth of these capacities by fostering dialogue and participation rather than exerting directive control (Bradley, 2015). Although challenges were encountered during the process, such as managing relational relationships and sustaining long-term engagement (Frisby et al., 2005), the reflective and cooperative nature of the PAR method contributed to outcomes that were meaningful and grounded in the real needs of the local community.

This participatory approach also proved beneficial in facilitating and motivating the youth to identify their strengths and weaknesses, explore the internal and external factors that influenced their development, and recognize what hindered or supported the improvement of their spiritual awareness and intelligence. It allowed them to take ownership not only of the problems but also of the solutions, empowering them to design methods that were contextually appropriate and personally meaningful. Furthermore, the process encouraged them to formulate a sustainable action plan, progressing through several stages of reflection and implementation to achieve outcomes aligned with their values and goals.

In conducting this action research, the researchers followed the process outlined by O'Brien (2001), which involves four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This framework aligns with the general characteristics of Action Research (AR), which emphasize collaboration, contextual problem-solving, and iterative learning involving participants as active contributors (Casey & Coghlan, 2021). The planning phase in this study involved assessing the real conditions of mosque youth in Sukun Subdistrict through a SWOT analysis, which examined strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the community. The SWOT analysis was conducted through a series of structured focus group discussions (FGDs) involving mosque youth, youth leaders, and mosque administrators. These FGDs used semi-structured guiding questions to explore participants' perspectives on the current state of Hadrah Al-Banjari in their environment. Strengths were identified in the form of youth motivation, religious enthusiasm, and prior informal involvement in *shalawat* activities. In contrast, weaknesses included limited access to formal training, declining peer interest, and inadequate musical resources. Opportunities included the potential for collaboration with more experienced Hadrah groups, strong community support, and the strategic use of social media to enhance performance visibility. Threats centered around modernization, shifting youth interests, and perceptions that Hadrah Al-Banjari is becoming outdated among younger generations. The information gathered from the FGDs was triangulated with observational data and informal interviews with mosque caretakers to ensure a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the situation (Hayes, 2014). These findings then served as a foundation for designing strategic and contextually relevant interventions in the subsequent phases of the Participatory Action Research process (Matz, 2024).

In the action phase, the mosque youth implemented the plan that had been collaboratively developed during the initial stage, with continuous assistance and facilitation from the researchers. During this stage, the researchers conducted observations to monitor the effectiveness of the implemented strategies and to identify any weaknesses or limitations that emerged in practice. These observations provided valuable input for improving the process and ensuring that the planned activities remained relevant to the participants' needs. Following this, the reflection phase involved a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes, where both the

youth and the researchers examined the extent to which the spiritual objectives had been achieved. This phase focused on identifying both the successes and the shortcomings of the methods used, along with the contributing factors behind them. The insights gathered through this evaluation were then used to inform the next planning cycle, allowing the program to progress steadily while maintaining its core purpose of fostering spiritual intelligence and religious awareness among youth through the revitalization of Hadrah Al-Banjari.

Findings & Discussion

This study investigated the role of Hadrah Al-Banjari as a medium for fostering spiritual intelligence among mosque youth in Sukun Subdistrict. The findings reveal that Hadrah Al-Banjari, with its religious content and unique musical arrangements, significantly contributes to both the spiritual and emotional development of its participants. As a traditional Islamic art form, it blends *shalawat* (praises for the Prophet Muhammad) with rhythmic percussion from the *rebana* (a traditional drum), creating an immersive experience that enhances spiritual consciousness. The youth involved in the study reported feeling a sense of calmness and spiritual awakening when participating in Hadrah Al-Banjari performances, indicating its capacity to foster introspection and spiritual connection. Moreover, the incorporation of local languages in contemporary performances has made this art form more relatable, ensuring that it resonates with both older and younger generations, and strengthens their attachment to Islamic values.



Figure 1. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) between the Community Service Team and the Mosque Administrators and Youth Leaders of Fathul Huda Mosque

The results further suggest that Hadrah Al-Banjari is not merely a form of entertainment or cultural expression; it serves as an essential tool for spiritual education. Its role in transmitting religious teachings is consistent with the views of Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who in his work *Ihya' Ulumuddin* noted that religious arts can elevate the soul and inspire a closer connection to divine beauty. Through the repetitive recitation of *shalawat* and the rhythmic accompaniment of the *rebana*, participants engage in an act of worship that enhances their

emotional sensitivity and deepens their love for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This connection to the Prophet, known as *mahabbah*, is a critical component of spiritual growth, as it fosters a sense of devotion and humility. The youth who participated in this study expressed a heightened sense of love for the Prophet and a stronger desire to embody Islamic virtues in their daily lives.

Table 1: Summary of Key Themes from Hadrah Al-Banjari Participation

Theme	Description	Supporting Evidence from Participants
Spiritual Awareness	Participants reported a heightened connection to Islamic teachings and deeper faith.	"I feel closer to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when we recite <i>shalawat</i> . It's a moment of reflection."
Emotional Sensitivity	Increased emotional sensitivity towards religious values and personal conduct.	"The music makes me feel peaceful and reminds me to live according to Islamic morals."
Cultural Pride	Reinforced cultural and religious identity through engagement with traditional Islamic arts.	"I'm proud to be part of this tradition. It connects me to my roots and my faith."
Community Unity	Strengthened bonds within the mosque community through shared participation in religious events.	"Being part of Hadrah brings us together. We work as a team and grow spiritually together."
Prophetic Spirit (Istihdar)	Feeling a spiritual connection to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during performances.	"During <i>shalawat</i> , I can imagine the presence of the Prophet guiding us, and it helps me stay mindful."
Moral and Ethical Alignment	Greater alignment with Islamic ethics and avoidance of sinful behavior as a result of spiritual practice.	"I feel more responsible in following Islamic teachings after participating in Hadrah."

This table summarizes how Hadrah Al-Banjari fosters spiritual awareness, emotional sensitivity, and community cohesion among participants. It demonstrates that the participants not only engaged in spiritual practices but also deepened their moral and ethical consciousness as a result of their involvement in this Islamic art form.

Interpreting these results from a broader perspective, the spiritual benefits derived from Hadrah Al-Banjari go beyond personal development; they extend to the community. The collective nature of the performance allows participants to share in a spiritual experience that fosters a sense of unity and belonging. This communal aspect of Hadrah Al-Banjari supports the notion of Islamic spirituality being both individual and collective, where the individual's spiritual growth is nurtured within the context of community engagement. The art form's ability to foster such unity through shared religious practices is consistent with the ideas presented by Sheikh Yusuf An-Nabhani in *Sa'adah ad-Darain*. He argued that *istihdar* (spiritual presence) during

shalawat recitation allows individuals to feel as though they are spiritually connected to the Prophet Muhammad, leading to a more disciplined and morally upright life. This connection ensures that participants remain mindful of their actions, aligning them with Islamic ethical standards.

In comparison to previous studies, the findings of this research align with those of Hanefar et al. (2016), who identified core themes of spiritual intelligence, including self-awareness, reflection, and a sense of purpose. Hadrah Al-Banjari nurtures these attributes through its focus on *shalawat*, which encourages reflection on the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The emotional and spiritual sensitivity cultivated by Hadrah Al-Banjari directly corresponds to Hanefar et al.'s framework of spiritual intelligence, particularly in its ability to enhance participants' self-awareness and moral consciousness. While previous studies primarily focused on how spiritual intelligence can be fostered through religious education and practices, this research contributes a new dimension by demonstrating how traditional Islamic arts can serve as effective mediums for spiritual growth.

Moreover, this study builds on the work of Karimshah et al. (2014), who explored the role of mosques as community centers that provide spaces for youth to develop socially and spiritually. While Karimshah et al. emphasized the mosque's role in facilitating social networks and engagement, this study highlights how artistic expressions like Hadrah Al-Banjari offer a structured way of nurturing spirituality within these spaces. The integration of art into religious practice not only enhances spiritual awareness but also makes the mosque a more dynamic and culturally rich environment. This research adds to the body of knowledge by demonstrating that spiritual intelligence can be nurtured not only through traditional educational methods but also through creative and cultural expressions embedded within Islamic practices.

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends the understanding of how Islamic arts, specifically Hadrah Al-Banjari, contribute to the cultivation of spiritual intelligence. This finding complements existing literature that emphasizes the role of religious education in youth development, while also offering a more integrated view of how cultural and religious practices intersect to shape moral and spiritual awareness (Hanefar et al., 2016; Tupan et al., 2022). The study highlights that Hadrah Al-Banjari fosters key dimensions of spiritual intelligence, such as purpose, transcendence, and ethical sensitivity, and aligns with the Positive Youth Development framework, which identifies spiritual engagement as a developmental asset that supports resilience and reduces risk behavior (Benson and King, 2006; Iannello et al., 2020). On a practical level, incorporating Hadrah Al-Banjari into educational and community-based youth programs offers a structured way to transmit religious and moral values, while also promoting a sense of belonging and cultural pride (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024; Orchard, 2023). Engagement in this form of Islamic art encourages identity formation in multicultural contexts, particularly when supported through mentorship and guided reflection (Rambe and Lubis, 2023). The study also demonstrates the effectiveness of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in involving youth with religious arts. Active participation throughout the research process enabled the youth not only to reflect on spiritual practices but also to take ownership of their development. Such involvement positioned them as contributors rather than passive recipients, reinforcing their agency in preserving and revitalizing their cultural-religious heritage.



Regular Al-Banjari Practice Session

From a practical standpoint, this study suggests that mosque communities should prioritize the inclusion of arts like Hadrah Al-Banjari in their youth programs. Such initiatives not only preserve Islamic cultural traditions but also enhance the spiritual, emotional, and social well-being of young people. Research shows that participation in structured youth arts activities can foster emotional awareness, resilience, and a sense of belonging, while also supporting mental and spiritual well-being (Ennis and Tonkin, 2018; Tshabalala and Patel, 2010). Involvement in spiritually grounded artistic practices like Hadrah offers transformative experiences that help youth internalize religious values and develop stronger moral grounding. Furthermore, Hadrah Al-Banjari contributes to the preservation of cultural identity, especially in communities where modernization and shifting preferences risk marginalizing traditional expressions (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). Specifically, mosque leaders and educators could implement regular training programs for groups such as the Walisongo Sholawat Group, offering opportunities to refine skills and explore new creative expressions within the framework of Islamic values. Collaboration with more experienced groups can facilitate growth through shared learning. Incorporating modern musical instruments alongside traditional ones may also increase youth interest, making Hadrah Al-Banjari more accessible to the younger generation without losing its spiritual essence. Emphasizing inclusive and youth-led approaches further ensures long-term sustainability and deeper engagement with both religious and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the revitalization of Hadrah Al-Banjari holds great potential for enhancing spiritual intelligence among youth, while simultaneously preserving an important cultural heritage. The findings of this study emphasize the multifaceted role of Hadrah Al-Banjari as a tool for both individual spiritual growth and community cohesion. By fostering spiritual awareness, emotional sensitivity, and cultural pride, Hadrah Al-Banjari contributes to the holistic development of youth in a manner that aligns with both Islamic values and contemporary cultural needs. The research underscores the importance of integrating religious arts into community programs, offering a model for how Islamic traditions can be preserved and adapted to meet the spiritual needs of future generations.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions and recommendations can be drawn to enhance the effectiveness of Hadrah Al-Banjari in fostering spiritual intelligence among youth and to ensure its continued relevance in a rapidly changing social and technological environment.

First, mosque communities should prioritize the revitalization of traditional Islamic arts such as Hadrah Al-Banjari by integrating them into regular youth activities. The findings clearly show that this art form has a significant impact on both personal and communal spiritual development, particularly in terms of fostering spiritual awareness, emotional sensitivity, and cultural pride. By providing regular opportunities for youth to engage in Hadrah Al-Banjari, mosque leaders can strengthen the cultural and religious identity of young people, while also promoting unity within the community. Specifically, mosque administrators should establish structured and sustainable Hadrah Al-Banjari training programs that involve both practice sessions and performances during religious events. These programs could be coupled with Islamic studies to ensure that participants not only develop musical skills but also deepen their understanding of the spiritual values embedded in the performances.

Second, encouraging collaboration with external experts and more experienced Hadrah Al-Banjari groups is crucial. Partnerships with established groups, such as the Walisongo Sholawat Group, allow younger participants to gain exposure to new techniques, repertoires, and insights that enhance their skills and deepen their engagement. These collaborations also create opportunities for benchmarking, enabling mosque youth groups to assess their progress and learn from effective practices. Furthermore, incorporating modern elements into Hadrah Al-Banjari performances, such as adding contemporary musical instruments like keyboards and bass alongside traditional instruments, can increase its appeal to younger audiences. This combination of tradition and modernity ensures the art form remains spiritually meaningful while becoming more accessible and relatable to today's youth.

Lastly, future research should expand the scope of this study to cover a wider range of demographic groups and geographic locations. While this research focused on youth in Sukun Subdistrict, additional studies could investigate how Hadrah Al-Banjari affects youth in different regions, age groups, and socio-economic backgrounds. Comparative studies that explore the impact of different Islamic arts across various contexts would provide deeper insights into how these traditions can be tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse communities. Moreover, future research could incorporate quantitative methods to validate the qualitative findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the spiritual, emotional, and communal effects of Hadrah Al-Banjari. This would allow for broader generalization and could serve as a foundation for developing structured programs that integrate religious arts into wider educational and community-building efforts.

The revitalization of Hadrah Al-Banjari offers significant potential to enhance spiritual intelligence and cultural pride among youth. Implementing structured training programs, encouraging collaboration with experienced groups, and modernizing certain aspects of the performances can help mosque communities preserve this traditional Islamic art form as a meaningful tool for spiritual growth and cultural continuity. Expanding research into its broader applications across diverse populations will yield further insights into how Hadrah Al-Banjari can support the holistic development of future generations.

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