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Spiritual Dimensions of Carok: Transpersonal Analysis of Madurese Honour Defense

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Abstract: Carok, a traditional honour-based practice of violence in Madura, Indonesia, is often misunderstood as mere physical aggression, despite its embedded spiritual dimensions, including rituals, mystical beliefs, and sacred symbolism. This study aims to elaborate on the spiritual meaning of carok behavior among Madurese people from a transpersonal psychology perspective. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants, including former perpetrators, blaters, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and family members. The phenomenological analysis used to interpret subjective experiences about the spiritual dimension in carok behavior. The findings indicate that spirituality is expressed through pre-carok rituals (prayer, fasting, blessing-seeking), mystical beliefs in the sacred sickle *(celurit),* and the conceptualisation of death as a spiritual victory rather than a defeat, demonstrating the synthesis of physical action with transcendent consciousness. This study redefines carok as a transpersonal phenomenon that merges bodily action with spiritual consciousness, contesting reductionist interpretations and enhancing indigenous psychological frameworks.

Keywords: Carok; Madura; Spirituality; Transpersonal Psychology

Abstrak: Carok, sebuah praktik kekerasan tradisional berbasis kehormatan di Madura, Indonesia, sering disalahpahami sebagai agresi fisik belaka, meskipun memiliki dimensi spiritual, termasuk ritual, kepercayaan mistis, dan simbolisme sakral. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan makna spiritual yang terkandung dalam budaya carok di kalangan masyarakat Madura melalui perspektif psikologi transpersonal. Dengan menggunakan Analisis Fenomenologi Interpretatif (IPA), data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 15 informan, termasuk mantan pelaku, korban, pemimpin agama, pemimpin tradisional, dan anggota keluarga. Analisis fenomenologis digunakan untuk menginterpretasi pengalaman subjektif tentang dimensi spiritual dalam perilaku carok. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa spiritualitas diekspresikan melalui ritual pra-carok (doa, puasa, memohon berkah), keyakinan mistis terhadap sabit suci (*celurit*), dan konseptualisasi kematian sebagai kemenangan spiritual, alih-alih kekalahan, yang menunjukkan sintesis tindakan fisik dengan kesadaran transenden. Studi ini mendefinisikan ulang carok sebagai fenomena transpersonal yang menggabungkan tindakan jasmani dengan kesadaran spiritual, menantang interpretasi reduksionis, dan memperkuat kerangka psikologis.

Kata kunci: Carok; Madura; Spiritualitas, Psikologi Transpersonal

1. Introduction

Carok is a violent tradition deeply rooted in Madurese society, defined as a form of self-defense or a defense of family honour and dignity (Haris, Al-Fatih, & Nur, 2024). Despite being legally prohibited, carok still occurs today, for example, in January 2024, a mass carok incident in Bangkalan killed four people. Historical data also shows that in Bangkalan, Sampang, and Pamekasan, more than one carok incident can occur per year, although not all incidents are reported to the authorities (Hakim & Sulistyanta, 2025). Based on honour culture theory (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996), conflicts related to self-esteem and honour, such as family disputes, harassment of women, or public humiliation, are the factors that most often trigger carok. In the context of Madurese society, the most relevant causes of carok are issues of self-esteem and harassment of women, as well as land disputes and water irrigation issues (Rokhyanto & Marsuki, 2015; Badriyanto, 2002). This violent practice is often interpreted as a radical response to harassment and violations of honour values within relationships and social order. While it may appear as a form of physical violence resulting in loss of life, the meaning of carok is far more complex and intertwined with the social structure, cultural identity, and spiritual beliefs of the Madurese people (Ratnasari, Sholihah, Masrukhin, Aminullah, & Zaeni, 2021).

Theoretically, honour is defined as a socially and culturally recognized value demand that must be maintained, even through retaliatory actions when receiving threats and insults from others. Honour culture, is explained as a cultural norm that provides justification for maintaining reputation, dignity, and honour as important values in this life (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). For Madurese people, self-respect or honour has a high value in social and cultural relations (Stets and Burke 2014; Wiyata 2002; Arroisi and Badi' 2022). In this context, carok appears not merely as individual behavior, but also as an existential gamble that represents the collective honour of the family within society (Baiti et al., 2023). Honour, or *marwah*, is the social and spiritual foundation of Madurese life. Violations of this honour are considered a serious threat to individual and group identity (Arroisi & Badi', 2022). Carok became a symbol of defense against the insult to sacred cultural values and identities (Maulana, Hasti, & Ali, 2024). Carok, as a means of defending honour, emerges from the conflict between shame, a potent social value, and local interpretations of Islamic doctrine, rendering carok as the ultimate and most appropriate method for restoring compromised dignity (Pribadi, 2024).

Carok behavior has only been viewed from a violent perspective, even though carok represents a spiritual and mystical dimension that is still largely unknown, both theoretically and practically. The spiritual dimension is a personal and transcendent inner experience that seeks life's purpose and a higher reality without formal religious affiliation. In transpersonal psychology, the spiritual dimension is interpreted as the process of searching, discovering, and exploring the meaning of life (Takdir, 2025). The mystical dimension is the sensation of "oneness" with divine reality or the Absolute, which is inexplicable. Spirituality can be contemplative, ethical, or existential, whereas mystical is intense, unitive, and non-dual (Baiti et al., 2023). Spiritual and mystical qualities are more flexible and individualized than "religious," which includes religion, theology, rituals, and institutions.

Referring to the meaning of carok in the past, carok practitioners performed various rituals before entering the battlefield, such as praying, fasting, taking a holy bath, and seeking blessings from mystical figures. This shows that carok actions are not always determined by physical strength, but also by spiritual readiness derived from supernatural support. The sickle, the weapon used in carok, is considered to have sacred and mystical powers that can shape the perpetrator (Farida & Andalas, 2019). Wiyata (2002) defines carok as an act of murder carried out by men, based on the sickle, which promotes the restoration of self-esteem. The sickle is always synonymous with the legend of Mr. Sakera, a sugar cane foreman from Pasuruan, who rarely left his sickle when he went to the plantation to supervise the workers (Abdurachman 1979; Hafida et al. 2024).

Carok is preceded by seeking family permission to restore self-esteem, and its execution relies not only on physical force but also on spiritual power. Through prayer, ritual practices, and appeals to supernatural protection, carok functions as a form of self-defense that integrates both bodily strength and spiritual dimensions (Syarif, 2014). Understanding these spiritual dimensions is crucial because it allows the phenomenon of carok to be interpreted not merely as interpersonal violence but as a culturally

embedded moral practice, thereby offering a theoretical contribution to transpersonal psychology while simultaneously challenging Western-centric frameworks that often overlook non-material motivations in acts of conflict.

To understand *carok* more comprehensively, it should not be viewed solely through the lenses of violence, criminality (Suyanto, 2021), or formal legal approaches grounded in criminal and Islamic law (Haris et al., 2024). Over time, the practice of carok has undergone significant transformations in its motives, forms, and social organisation. Historically, carok is rooted in honour-based cultural norms; however, empirical accounts from informants indicate that the contexts that trigger carok have varied over time. Traditionally especially before the 1980s carok occurred as a response to violations of family honour, particularly related to marital discord or public humiliation. However, in contemporary Madurese society, carok has increasingly taken on a more spontaneous and collective form, sometimes involving women and without the elaborate ritual preparation that characterized earlier practices. Although the meaning and practice of carok have evolved over time, this study focuses specifically on its traditional form, where spiritual preparation involves prayer, fasting, purification rituals, and requests for blessings as an integral part of the practice. While the meaning and practice of carok have evolved over time, this study focuses specifically on its traditional form, where spiritual preparation—including prayer, fasting, ritual purification, and seeking blessings is an integral part of the practice. By focusing on this traditional form, this study explores the spiritual meanings embedded in carok through the lens of transpersonal psychology. Despite changes in its contemporary practice, the spiritual dimension of traditional carok remains underexplored in existing scholarship. By addressing this gap, this study offers a more holistic interpretation of carok, not simply as an act of interpersonal violence, but as a culturally embedded practice shaped by spiritual beliefs and transcendent experiences (Rokhyanto & Marsuki, 2015; Takdir & Arif, 2022).

To demonstrate the novelty and contribution of this research to relevant previous research, the researcher explored research gaps previously unexplored by scholars interested in the cultural wisdom of the Madurese people. Initially, legal-criminal studies (Bouwsma, 1989; Jonge, 1995; Smith, 1997) characterize carok mostly as a violent act motivated by the defense of familial honour, pragmatic considerations, and economic or political influences. These works provide significant insights into the structural and normative facets of carok, however, they predominantly neglect its symbolic and experiential features. Secondly, sociocultural assessments emphasize that carok serves as a culturally transmitted manifestation of masculine hegemony and a means by which Madurese men assert their identity and status (Aminah, Koesbardiati, & Santoso, 2022). Although these studies elucidate matters of honour and gender, they fail to consider the transcendental or spiritual dimensions inherent in carok traditions. Third, studies on religion and conflict resolution (Haris, 2017; Ismail & Wardi, 2019) examine the role of pesantren and kiai in averting carok and facilitating post-war reconciliation. Nonetheless, these studies examine carok post-violence and neglect the spiritual feelings that underpin the act itself. Ultimately, psychological perspectives are limited, and no research has investigated carok from the viewpoint of transpersonal psychology.

Moreover, numerous studies have examined spirituality in relation with carok, especially within the framework of conflict resolution. Takdir, Mushthafa, and Akmaliah (2021) demonstrate how kiai use spiritual dimensions (forgiveness, *islah*, spiritual approaches) and reconciliation to promote of peacefull, while Fathollah, Sansuri and Azizah (2023) investigates spiritual methods used after carok to restore societal harmony. However, these works focus on spirituality after violence. No study has examined the phenomenological spiritual experience of carok or interpreted it through a transpersonal psychological perspective. Meanwhile, research has emphasized the central role of local elites (kyais, traditional leaders, teachers, and the government) as mediators and maintainers of social stability through the integration of local religious and cultural values in reducing violence (Daulay, Raditya, & Khafsoh, 2022; Tontowi & Mufaroha, 2021). In a legal context, Suyanto and Bakhtiar (2024) found that the carok tradition, which is highly respected by the Madurese people, is in conflict with the national legal system, and an informal, culture-based approach has proven to be more effective in resolving conflicts.

Meanwhile, transpersonal psychology is understood as experiences that transcend the individual ego, including peak experiences, identity transformations, and non-ordinary states of consciousness as essential aspects of human development. Maslow (1964) introduced the concept of peak experiences as moments of heightened meaning that provide a sense of connectedness and existential validation. Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007) summsarized the discipline as "beyond-ego, integrative, and transformative," focusing on states of consciousness, spiritual emergence, and moral-existential dimensions untouched by mainstream psychology. Meanwhile, Stanislav Grof (2017) introduced the concept of spiritual emergencies or transpersonal crises, shifts in inner states that can involve experiences of oneness, feelings of being "released" from the ego. Walsh and Vaughan (1993b), in *Paths Beyond Ego*, place transpersonal experiences within the context of therapy, ritual, meditation, and cultural practices that legitimize actions that appear to "transcend" everyday rationality. Juergensmeyer understands that actions motivated by sacred demands can acquire moral and collective legitimacy a mechanism that mediates between spirituality and violence (Juergensmeyer, 2000). This concept helps explain why carok perpetrators might interpret death or violence as the fulfillment of higher values.

Although various previous studies have examined carok behavior from legal, social, cultural, economic, and political perspectives, none have elaborated on the spiritual dimension of carok practice in Madura. Yet, spiritual dimensions such as ritual offerings, prayers, and supernatural beliefs play a strategic role in every carok act and behavior, serving as identity values inherent in Madurese life. Furthermore, the perspective employed is transpersonal psychology, a field that has not been explored by researchers in examining the spirituality of carok. This study employs transpersonal psychology, which investigates experiences transcending ordinary ego-consciousness, including spiritual states and mystical phenomena (Grof, 1985; Hartelius, 2007). Key concepts relevant to carok include: (1) spiritual emergence transformative processes involving expanded identity; (2) ritual consciousness altered states through ceremony; (3) sacred violence violence imbued with transcendent meaning (Juergensmeyer, 2000); (4) existential surrender acceptance of death as a spiritual threshold. This framework enables analysis of carok as a transpersonal act integrating physical action, cultural symbolism, and transcendent consciousness within Madurese cosmology.

This study aims to explore the meaning of spirituality in carok behavior using a transpersonal psychology approach to understand the subjective experiences of perpetrators in defending their self-esteem and family honour. This study aims to: (1) examine the phenomenological experience of spirituality among carok perpetrators and cultural actors; (2) identify spiritual practices, beliefs, and symbolic meanings embedded in carok behavior; (3) analyze these dimensions through transpersonal psychology frameworks. By doing so, this research addresses the theoretical gap in understanding violence as a transpersonal phenomenon and contributes to indigenous psychology discourse.

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate how spirituality is experienced and expressed in carok practices through the lens of transpersonal psychology. The study examined how cultural actors interpreted and experienced the subjective spiritual dimensions embedded in the practice of carok. The nature of this research is value-laden, emphasizing the thoughts, social experiences, and spirituality that are created and interpreted as behavior (Salim, 1991). This study involved 15 informants in Madura, where carok traditions are still actively maintained. The participants consisted of two former carok perpetrators, two blater, two family members of perpetrators, two religious leaders (*kiai*), and two traditional figures who understand the spiritual and mystical aspects of the practice. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in or deep knowledge of ritual preparation, spiritual beliefs, and cultural interpretations surrounding carok. Data were collected between March and September 2025, allowing for repeated engagement with participants and longitudinal observation. Interaction with participants ranged from two to three in-depth sessions, depending on their availability and willingness. These criteria ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives across age, social roles, and cultural backgrounds.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interviews were semi-structured and flexible, focusing on participants' descriptions of spiritual experiences, emotional states, ritual practices, and the meanings they attributed to honour, protection, and death in relation to *carok*.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, with follow-up interviews conducted when further clarification or deeper exploration was required. Document analysis included local manuscripts, historical accounts, ritual records, and anthropological studies relevant to Madurese spiritual culture. All interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The research utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to interpret how participants experience the spiritual dimensions of carok. Analytical techniques commenced with a meticulous examination of transcripts to discern emergent themes pertaining to spiritual awareness, altered states, ritual efficacy, and the significances of death and honour. These themes were further analyzed using the framework of transpersonal psychology, facilitating linkages between subjective experiences and overarching theoretical conceptions such as peak experiences and transformative states. To establish validity, the study employed source triangulation by contrasting narratives from perpetrators, bystanders, family members, religious leaders, and cultural experts. Member checking was performed to verify the precision of readings, particularly with delicate spiritual material.

2. Thematic Analysis: Spirituality in Carok Behavior

This section elaborates on the results of research on the meaning of spirituality in carok behavior that occurs in Madura using a transpersonal psychology perspective. The examination of interview transcripts and field observations identified five interrelated spiritual components inherent in carok practice: (1) self-ritualisation, (2) mystical symbolism of the sickle, (3) honour as a holy value, (4) death as spiritual triumph, and (5) moral responsibility.

First, self-ritualisation. Carok involves a strong religious and spiritual dimension in the dynamics of Madurese life. Informants consistently described that, before performing karok, the perpetrators carried out various spiritual preparations, including praying, fasting, ritual bathing (self-purification), and visiting holy places to seek spiritual protection. Furthermore, blessings are offered to parents or spiritual figures as moral and spiritual legitimacy to restore the family's self-respect and honour.

Informants consistently described these practices as essential spiritual preparations that distinguish carok from what they referred to as ordinary acts of violence. They stressed that carok would lose its sacred quality and become nothing more than physical violence instead of a morally and spiritually acceptable act in the absence of these rites, such as fasting, prayer, or calling upon the protection forces.

“Carok is not an ordinary crime, sir. Before entering the ring, the perpetrators usually make various preparations, including spiritual ones. Among the preparations are three days of fasting, some take a holy bath, and some visit ancestral graves. Those are the preparations. In the past, carok usually involved mantras or chants passed down through the generations. These are all rituals, asking for protection and victory” (P1, personal communication, July 9, 2025). *Blater's* views on rituals in carok also provide important information as spiritual preparation, especially the union of the soul with the sickle through prayer and mystical practices, which are understood as the main requirement before entering into battle. “The weapon used in the carok ritual is no ordinary weapon. Before being used (for carok), the sickle must be 'awakened' through prayer and certain oils. Otherwise, our souls will not be at one with the weapon" (P3, personal communication, July 12, 2025)

A different view was expressed by one of the kiai who viewed the ritual in carok as the perpetrator's belief to justify his actions. “I often remind them that using religion as an excuse for anger is wrong. But they say there are spiritual practices before carok: fasting, wirid (Islamic rituals), or asking for prayers. It's clear that they see it not as mere violence, but as a matter of sacred self-respect.” Likewise, family members who observe the carok ritual do so as an effort to calm the mind and provide protection. "I saw it myself. Before leaving, they took a special bath, wore white clothes, and then sat for a long time, muttering. They said it was to calm their hearts and ask for protection. It's as if they believe that even if they die, they will die clean."

Second, the mystical value of the sickle as a symbol of transcendentalism. Informants described the sickle (*celurit*) as possessing 'powerful spirit' and 'supernatural powers'. Carok is synonymous with

the sickle. As a mystical symbol of carok, the sickle is not a weapon used for warfare. It is considered to possess a powerful spirit and supernatural powers for its owner. In Madurese culture, the sickle is often inherited from ancestors and is believed to possess supernatural powers and is only used to restore self-esteem after all forms of harassment and insults against the family. Furthermore, the sickle, as a symbol of carok, is also treated with special respect and is sacred as a self-defense tool to ward off enemy attacks.

Based on interviews with carok practitioners, one crucial aspect of preparation is the sickle, a mystical symbol that has been associated with carok since its inception during the time of Sakera. Each carok practitioner likely has different preparations, including *ajeze'*, or "*nyekep*," for invulnerability, using the sickle imbued with mystical powers. "Normally, there are two weapons used in *carok*, namely *are'* (sickle) and *sada'* (a smaller version of the sickle). *Are'* was originally used to cut grass for cow feed or clear weeds, but because both tools are sharp, the Madurese use them to kill during *carok*" (P2, personal communication, June 18, 2025). "People who always carry *are'* or *sada'* wherever they go are considered brave and always ready to fight—these are known as *bajing* or *blater* [*bajing*: local street enforcer; *blater*: respected fighter with social influence]. Simply put, problems will be straightened out by the bend of the sickle, so you must 'work with the sickle' first to resolve the problem." (P2, personal communication, June 18, 2025).

'The *are'* and *sada'* have an inherent function for Madurese people, demonstrating courage as a masculine spirit. They can also be used as grass cutters, woodcutters, and other tools. Both tools are considered a path to victory when faced with challenges. According to cultural experts, they emerged and became famous in the 18th century AD during the reign of Pak Sakera, when he was appointed sugarcane foreman in Bungil. "For those unfamiliar with carok, they'll certainly prepare themselves by asking a *shaman* for a ritual to gain supernatural powers and defeat their opponent. Well... if you're a Bejing, that's not necessary because they're already experts, so all you need to prepare are the tools" (P3, personal communication, June 20, 2025).

According to informants, the mystical dimension of carok is closely related to the weapons used, especially the sickle, which has represented supernatural powers through rituals performed by traditional shamans. These rituals aim to provide spiritual protection, ward off danger, and strengthen the participants' self-confidence before engaging in carok. While these practices are not universally practiced, they continue to be considered by many Madurese as an essential part of the traditional spiritual worldview surrounding carok.

Third, the glory of self-esteem. Self-respect is considered a key value". All 15 informants emphasized self-respect as non-negotiable, with P6 stating:...more valuable than life. The spiritual significance of *carok* was strongly articulated by P6, a former *blater* involved in a carok incident triggered by accusations of his wife's infidelity. He explained: "For us Madurese, self-respect is more valuable than life. If someone insults my family, especially my wife or parents, it's not just a matter of shame, but a matter of dignity. Carok isn't just revenge; it's our way of restoring our stolen honour. Before a carok, we usually ask for our parents' blessing, pray, and even fast. Because we believe that if our intentions are right, God will be on our side." (P6,personal communication, June 12, 2025).

Informants consistently described carok as a necessary response to violations of honour, which they perceived not only as social insults but as wounds touching their deepest moral and spiritual identity. P6 stated that "self-respect is more valuable than life," while P3 emphasized that an insult to one's wife or parents "is not just shame, but dignity. Several participants also noted that carok is undertaken only when honour is "already stepped on" (P2) and cannot be repaired through apologies or mediation, with P5 adding that in such cases the act becomes "the last resort to clear the family name." These accounts show that participants themselves frame carok as an act tied to spiritual responsibility, courage, and the restoration of dignity, rather than merely physical violence.

Fourth, death as a symbol of spiritual victory. Several sources described carok death as a spiritual victory and a result of risking one's life. P7 remarked that carok victims "will be more noble before their ancestors because they died defending their dignity," while P3 (blater) stated that they "were ready

because they died for honour, not in vain." These statements suggest that some informants saw carok death as spiritual achievement linked to courage, sacrifice, and family dignity.

"Madurese people are non-negotiable when it comes to self-respect. If honour is insulted, especially if it involves a wife or family, then it's no longer a personal matter, but a matter of ancestral honour. Death is not a disgrace but is considered the noble path. It's better to die with one's head held high than to live in shame" (P1, personal communication, July 7, 2025).

Three family informants (P5, P7, and P9) explained that carok victims who died were often given special honours after death, such as being bathed with certain prayers and having symbolic objects placed near the body as a form of respect for having "died defending the family's dignity." In their narratives, death in carok was seen not as a failure but as a form of dignity fulfillment that was considered more honourable than living in shame. This view is in line with the cultural expression *"ango'an pote tolang, etembang pote mata."* This evidence suggests that some families interpret death in carok as a form of sacrifice worthy of respect and attached to the spiritual value of restoring dignity (P1, personal communication , July 8, 2025).

Fifth, moral responsibility. In Madurese society, the practice of carok is not only interpreted as a form of physical self-defense, but also as a moral and spiritual responsibility for individual and family honour. The spiritual value of carok behavior is that the actions are not carried out merely in the name of the individual but rather as a representation of collective values, even the community within a region. Informants claimed that family and close community moral and spiritual support was needed to engage in carok, expressing a shared commitment to restore collective dignity. P5 stated, "If one of us is humiliated, all of us are humiliated." P8 and P11 stressed that families bless, pray, and prepare rituals, establishing carok as a group act rather than an individual one. P5, a family member of a carok perpetrator who witnessed the decision-making process before the fight, explained:

"Carok isn't just about personal pride, sir. In Madura, honour belongs to all. If one family member is abused, it's the same as abusing everyone. So carok is a responsibility, not a choice. It's a moral responsibility to protect the family's good name from being trampled upon." In the past, if someone didn't defend their honour, it could be a source of shame for their grandchildren. So, when someone steps forward to carok, they carry the family name. That's why families often give their blessing and even provide spiritual support" (P5, personal communication, June 25, 2025).

Table 1 summarizes the five interrelated themes of spirituality identified in this study. The findings indicate that the spiritual meaning of carok extends beyond ritual preparation to encompass sacred conceptions of honour, the mystical symbolism of the sickle, the interpretation of death as spiritual victory, and the moral obligation to defend collective family dignity.

Table 1. of Meanings and Forms of Spirituality in Carok Culture

No	Theme	Specific practices/beliefs	Representative Quote
1	Self Ritual	Fasting, night prayers, pilgrimage to ancestral graves, asking permission from parents or spiritual figures before carok	"Before going, I fasted and visited my father's grave. If the intention is clean, God will protect us."
2	The Glory of Self-Esteem	Family members offering moral and spiritual support; conceptualizing respect as a collective attribute of the entire kinship group.	"When one member is insulted, the entire family bears the disgrace." Consequently, the family provides assistance."
3	Sacralisation of the Sickle (Clurit)	Treating the sickle as a revered, ancestral artifact; performing ceremonial purification, aromatisation, or invocation prior to utilisation.	"This clurit is from my grandfather. It has its own spirit, that's why I must prepare it with prayers."
4	Death as a Symbol of Spiritual Victory	Acceptance of death as part of defending honour; belief that dying in carok is noble	"If I die, it means I die carrying dignity. That's better than living with disgrace."
5	Moral Responsibility	The decision to execute carok is predicated on a felt obligation to restore familial honour, with certain informants articulating an internal moral conflict.	"Although I was reluctant, as the eldest son, I felt compelled to take a stand." "Otherwise, the shame remains with us."

3. Transpersonal Psychology Analysis of the Spiritual Meaning of Carok Culture

This section discusses the research findings, and the theoretical perspectives used in the analysis to explore the spiritual meaning of carok behavior in Madura. Although often understood narrowly as an act of revenge or traditional violence, in-depth research shows that carok contains a spiritual dimension that differs from other acts of violence. For some Madurese, carok is not simply a bloody duel, but a ritual rich in symbolic and religious meaning, representing the values of courage, sacrifice, and honour attached to individuals and families. Based on these research findings, it is emphasized that carok behavior is not merely a form of revenge or physical violence but also reflects the spiritual and mystical dimensions that develop within the community. In elaborating on these findings and results, the researcher uses the transpersonal psychology perspective developed by Viktor Frankl.

Transpersonal psychology as formulated by key thinkers such as Abraham Maslow, Viktor E. Frankl, Stanislav Grof, Roger Walsh & Frances Vaughan, and Glenn Hartelius views humans as beings who operate not only on the biological and psychological levels, but also on the spiritual, meaning-making, and peak experiences that transcend the ego (Hartelius et al., 2007). Maslow(1969) placed peak experiences and transpersonal actualisation as the pinnacle of human development, while Grof (1988) emphasized that spiritual, symbolic, and even death-rebirth experiences are crucial structures for

human understanding of suffering and transformation. Walsh and Vaughan (1993a) asserted that transpersonal psychology focuses on the dynamics of consciousness, spiritual values, and experiences that give meaning to extreme human actions, including those related to self-sacrifice.

From a transpersonal psychology perspective, humans are seen as multidimensional beings who have many potentials of consciousness, including spiritual potential. Frankl (1997) views the search for meaning as an existential and fundamental human need. Despite having its formal roots in existential psychology, scholars view Viktor Frankl's logotherapy as being on the transpersonal spectrum for two main reasons: (1) its emphasis on self-transcendence, or the ability of humans to transcend themselves for higher values, and (2) its focus on spiritual meaning, moral values, and a goal orientation that goes beyond personal interests. Humans derive meaning from suffering, sacrifice, and dedication to something deemed sacred or of immeasurable worth. Therefore, logotherapy as a therapy of meaning is included in the foundation of the modern transpersonal approach (Hartelius, Rothe, & Roy, 2013).

The carok phenomena in Madurese society, where violent acts are seen as significant battles to protect family honour, identity, and sacred values rather than merely emotional reactions, is explained by this paradigm. According to Frankl's theory of meaning-making, self-transcendence occurs when people put the family's reputation ahead of their own safety; tragic optimism is demonstrated by the bravery to face death, believing that dying "with dignity" is more meaningful than living in shame; and carok perpetrators interpret these acts as a moral calling. Therefore, the transpersonal approach offers a theoretical framework for comprehending that carok is a meaningful experience based on moral principles, spirituality, and group identity rather than just a physical act.

Within transpersonal psychology, the spirituality of carok is exemplified by the sickle, perceived not merely as a physical implement, but as a conduit for self-transcendence. Informants characterize the sickle as an object that "embodies a potent spirit" and "remarkable power," indicating that its primary purpose transcends its function as a weapon. Within a transpersonal paradigm, this conviction in supernatural powers illustrates how the offenders surpass the limitations of the ego, depending on entities or energies considered beyond the capabilities of regular individuals. Consequently, the sickle serves as both a weapon and a symbol of spiritual connectivity that offers protection, bravery, and ethical justification in the act of carok.

Within the Madurese culture, honour or self-respect serves not merely as an indicator of social position but also as a spiritual obligation. Informants' statements illustrate that transgressions of honour, particularly those concerning a wife, referred to by several participants as "family crown," are perceived as an affront to a sacred value rather than a mere personal affront. P6 affirmed this perspective, asserting, "Self-esteem is sacred; when trampled, life loses its significance," emphasizing that honour is regarded as spiritually inviolable. This experiential evidence elucidates the tremendous spiritual relevance of carok for practitioners and accords with Frankl's notion that individuals may seek meaning even at considerable existential expense. This is what gives carok its spiritual significance. For carok practitioners, the only way to restore cosmic and moral order in their lives is through carok. In this context, we see how the human experience of value, honour, and self-respect becomes a medium for existential and transcendental awareness.

For a carok practitioner, self-sacrifice and the peril of death are regarded not as illogical actions, but as an existential realisation of significance that transcends individual existence. This view is corroborated by informants' testimony; for instance, P1 remarked, *"better to die than live in shame,"* suggesting that death is recontextualized as a significant sacrifice rather than a futile loss. Such narratives illustrate that carok is perceived as a significant spiritual and existential odyssey in which the practitioner feels a moral obligation to preserve a value deemed superior to the self—specifically, honour and self-respect. On this basis, the act of carok is socially and culturally legitimized because it is associated with restoring self-respect as a lifelong struggle that must be fought for to the last drop of blood.

This study confirms that the *carok* tradition contains deep spiritual and mystical meanings that shape how Madurese actors interpret honour as a sacred dimension of selfhood. These findings extend transpersonal psychology by showing that violent cultural practices can function as pathways to

transcendent meaning, aligning with Viktor Frankl's notion of existential purpose. Theoretically, this research demonstrates that spiritual motives, such as purification, sacrifice, and connection with ancestral power are integral to understanding *carok*, thereby expanding transpersonal psychology beyond clinical contexts into culturally embedded acts of violence. Methodologically, the phenomenological approach reveals subjective states, ritual experiences, and metaphysical interpretations that would remain invisible in quantitative measurements. Practically, these insights urge policymakers, religious leaders, and mediators to address not only the legal and social dimensions of *carok* but also the spiritual narratives that legitimize it.

The recommendations emerging from this study emphasize the need for holistic, culturally grounded intervention. Community and religious leaders should develop counseling models rooted in local values that offer a spiritual reinterpretation of honour and provide nonviolent ritual alternatives capable of transforming the same spiritual energy that traditionally fuels *carok*. At the legal-system level, restorative justice approaches that actively involve *kiai* and respected traditional figures are essential to counteract the spiritual narratives that legitimize revenge and to strengthen community-based conflict mediation. Meanwhile, cultural preservation efforts must carefully distinguish between positive cultural values, such as loyalty, responsibility, and communal solidarity and harmful violent rituals, ensuring that the identity and heritage of the Madurese people can be maintained without perpetuating practices that threaten social safety and well-being.

This study is limited by regional scope focused on Bangkalan and Sampang, and its predominantly male participants, which restricts the gendered understanding of honour dynamics. The researcher's positionality and reliance on retrospective narratives also mean that some accounts may reflect memory reconstruction rather than real-time observation. Future studies should include comparative analyses with other honour cultures, explore women's experiences and roles in honour-related violence, examine generational changes in the meaning of *carok*, and develop quantitative scales to measure spiritual dimensions within violent cultural practices. Such research would provide a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of how honour, spirituality, and violence intersect in contemporary Madura.

4. Conclusions

This study answers its central objective by demonstrating that carok in the Madurese tradition is not solely an act of interpersonal violence, but a culturally embedded spiritual experience that shapes how practitioners understand honour, moral responsibility, and the afterlife. The findings reveal five key spiritual dimensions, namely self-ritualisation, mystical symbolism of the *celurit*, the sacrality of honour, death as spiritual victory, and moral responsibility, that together frame carok as a form of transpersonal engagement rather than a mere physical confrontation. These dimensions highlight the significance of spirituality as an interpretive lens that explains why carok continues to persist despite legal sanctions, and why its meaning cannot be fully captured by sociological or criminological approaches alone. Understanding these spiritual layers contributes to broader theoretical discussions in transpersonal psychology and offers new insights into how cultural violence can embody metaphysical and existential values.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to investigate how these spiritual meanings shift among younger Madurese generations, how modernisation and religious reform influence the symbolic elements of carok, and how transpersonal frameworks can be integrated with conflict-resolution approaches to design culturally sensitive interventions. Such studies would deepen our understanding of the evolving relationship between spirituality, honour, and violence in contemporary Madura.

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