

RELIGI

JURNAL STUDI AGAMA-AGAMA

RELIGIOUS MODERATION AT THE USHULUDDIN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN KALIANDA, SOUTH LAMPUNG: A THEOLOGICAL STUDY

Pasya Alkhairi, Ahmad Muttaqin, Nesia Mu'asyara, Idrus Ruslan

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN ISLAMIC AND CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY OF GOD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRIADIC STRUCTURE OF THE EVIL PROBLEM

Hasna Safarina Rasyidah, Robby Habiba Abror, Munawar Ahmad

HARMONY BUILDING BETWEEN MUSLIM AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN PASURUAN VILLAGE, SOUTH LAMPUNG

Muhammad Fauzi Muslim, Suhandi, Willia Novi Aryani, Muslimin

ISLAMOPHOBIA AFTER THE QUR'AN BURNING IN SCANDINAVIA: THE ROLE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Muhammad Fadhil Wathani, M. Ikram Idris

THE FAMILY'S EFFORTS AS A PLACE TO NURTURE THE SEEDS OF THE CALL TO SERVICE LIFE ACCORDING TO THE FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO DOCUMENT NO. 53 AT THE HOLY CROSS STATION OF PASAR V ST. JOHN PAUL II NAMOPECAWIR

Laita Lasmaida Tumanggor, M. Maribot Simanjuntak

NUWO JEJAMO LAMPUNG COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN PROMOTING RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN BANDAR LAMPUNG CITY

Fitri Nadila, Ahmad Muttaqin, Isti Arini

TRANSTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILY OBLIGATIONS IN THE QUR'AN AND THE BIBLE: ANALYSIS ON QS AT-TAHRIM (66:6) AND 1 TIMOTHY 5:8

Ro'is Mas'udi

MULTICULTURALISM ON CONFUCIANISM PERSPECTIVE

Liem Ciang Santoso, Fajar Arianto, Martadi

HARMONY OF CULTURE, RELIGION, AND ENVIRONMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONE SURO RITUAL IN KEMIRI HAMLET IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUDDHIST ECOTHEOLOGY

Rosalina Desi Paramita, Mujiyanto, Situ Asih

MOSES LEADERSHIP MODEL ON EXODUS 18:13-27 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP OF PARISH PRIEST AT SAINT PETER AND PAUL PARISH PARONGIL

Tiosari Manurung, M. Maribot Simanjuntak

PALEMAHAN AND BALINESE HINDU ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY: RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF VILLAGE CREDIT INSTITUTIONS AS A FACTOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

I Nyoman Bontot, Ahmad Subagyo, Martino Wibowo, Anas Iswanto Anwar

THE ACCULTURATION OF SUFISM AND JAVA CULTURE IN THE AL-KHIDMAH DZIKIR SUROAN AND BANYU MANAQIB LOCAL TRADITIONS

Farihatul Mufidah Ali Rohman, Tasmuji

THE PEOPLE OF EMBONG KALIASIN VILLAGE VIEWS ON THE CHANGE IN THE FUNCTION OF THE BEIT HASHEM SYNAGOGUE SITE IN SURABAYA

Rahmat Fajri, Achmad Fajrul Alim

GENDER JUSTICE CONSTRUCTION IN AMINA WADUD'S THOUGHT: A CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Lenni Marlina Br Purba, Ryandi

THE ZERO MIND PROCESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TAKHALLI: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF THE SOUL-PURIFICATION PROCESS IN ARY GINANJAR'S ESQ

Eka Vindana Dulasta, Gbozi

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DAFTAR ISI

RELIGIOUS MODERATION AT THE USHULUDDIN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN KALIANDA, SOUTH LAMPUNG: A THEOLOGICAL STUDY	315
---	------------

Pasya Alkhairi, Ahmad Muttaqin, Nesia Mu'asyara, Idrus Ruslan

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN ISLAMIC AND CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY OF GOD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRIADIC STRUCTURE OF THE EVIL PROBLEM	345
--	------------

Hasna Safarina Rasyidah, Robby Habiba Abror, Munawar Ahmad

HARMONY BUILDING BETWEEN MUSLIM AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN PASURUAN VILLAGE, SOUTH LAMPUNG	365
--	------------

Muhammad Fauzi Muslim, Suhandi, Willia Novi Aryani, Muslimin

ISLAMOPHOBIA AFTER THE QUR'AN BURNING IN SCANDINAVIA: THE ROLE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE	385
--	------------

Muhammad Fadhil Wathani, M. Ikram Idris

THE FAMILY'S EFFORTS AS A PLACE TO NURTURE THE SEEDS OF THE CALL TO SERVICE LIFE ACCORDING TO THE FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO DOCUMENT NO. 53 AT THE HOLY CROSS STATION OF PASAR V ST. JOHN PAUL II NAMOPECAWIR.....	407
--	------------

Laita Lasmaida Tumanggor, M. Marihot Simanjuntak

NUWO JEJAMO LAMPUNG COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN PROMOTING RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN BANDAR LAMPUNG CITY.....	421
---	------------

Fitri Nadila, Ahmad Muttaqin, Isti Arini

TRANSTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILY OBLIGATIONS IN THE QUR’AN AND THE BIBLE: ANALYSIS ON QS AT-TAHRIM (66:6) AND 1 TIMOTHY 5:8	445
<i>Ro’is Mas’udi</i>	
MULTICULTURALISM ON CONFUCIANISM PERSPECTIVE	467
<i>Liem Ciang Santoso, Fajar Arianto, Martadi</i>	
HARMONY OF CULTURE, RELIGION, AND ENVIRONMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONE SURO RITUAL IN KEMIRI HAMLET IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUDDHIST ECOTHEOLOGY.....	485
<i>Rosalina Desi Paramita, Mujiyanto, Situ Asih</i>	
MOSES LEADERSHIP MODEL ON EXODUS 18:13-27 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP OF PARISH PRIEST AT SAINT PETER AND PAUL PARISH PARONGIL	507
<i>Tiosari Manurung, M. Marihot Simanjuntak</i>	
PALEMAHAN AND BALINESE HINDU ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY: RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF VILLAGE CREDIT INSTITUTIONS AS A FACTOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.....	521
<i>I Nyoman Bontot, Ahmad Subagyo, Martino Wibowo, Anas Iswanto Anwar</i>	
THE ACCULTURATION OF SUFISM AND JAVA CULTURE IN THE AL-KHIDMAH DZIKIR SUROAN AND BANYU MANAQIB LOCAL TRADITIONS.....	543
<i>Farihatul Mufidah Ali Rohman, Tasmuji</i>	
THE PEOPLE OF EMBONG KALIASIN VILLAGE VIEWS ON THE CHANGE IN THE FUNCTION OF THE BEIT HASHEM SYNAGOGUE SITE IN SURABAYA	563
<i>Rahmat Fajri, Achmad Fajrul Alim</i>	
GENDER JUSTICE CONSTRUCTION IN AMINA WADUD’S THOUGHT: A CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	589
<i>Lenni Marlina Br Purba, Ryandi</i>	

**THE ZERO MIND PROCESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *TAKHALLI*:
A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF THE SOUL-PURIFICATION PROCESS IN
ARY GINANJAR’S ESQ.....609**
Eka Vindana Dulasta, Ghozi

**RECLAIMING BASOTHO INDIGENOUS RELIGION (BIR): TOWARDS
DECOLONISED AND TRANSFORMATIVE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
IN LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOLS.....629**
Rasebate Isaac Mokotso

HARMONY OF CULTURE, RELIGION, AND ENVIRONMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONE SURO RITUAL IN KEMIRI HAMLET IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUDDHIST ECOTHEOLOGY

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the meaning and function of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual at Watu Payung Hermitage, Kemiri Hamlet, Temanggung Regency, with a focus on Buddhist values and their relevance to ecological preservation. This research is important because previous studies have largely emphasized the historical or symbolic aspects of Javanese rituals, while the spiritual–ecological dimension has rarely been examined. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with religious leaders, ritual custodians, and local community members, as well as archival and photographic documentation of the procession. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validation ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings indicate that the ritual is rich in Buddhist symbolism, such as amisa puja and patti-patti puja, reflecting values of morality, compassion, and collective awareness. The ritual functions as both a medium of cultural preservation and a mechanism of ecological conservation, as shown by the sacralization of the Watu Payung area that safeguards local water sources. Moreover, the tradition strengthens community cohesion, serves as a channel for intergenerational transmission of values, and creates an inclusive space for interfaith encounters. This study concludes that local traditions can embody an effective form of ecotheology that sustains harmony between human beings, spirituality, and the environment. The implication is that cultural preservation should not merely be viewed as a tourism asset, but also as a strategy for ecological sustainability and the strengthening of communal identity.

Keywords: Satu Suro Ritual, Javanese Buddhism, Local tradition, Ecotheology, Cultural preservation, Social harmony, Environmental conservation, Banten; Hindu Dharma; Hierophany; Phenomenology.

Abstrak

Masalah akademik penelitian ini adalah terbatasnya penjelasan mengenai bagaimana ritual Satu Suro yang bersifat lokal secara bersamaan menata keberlanjutan budaya Jawa, spiritualitas Buddhis, relasi sosial, dan kesadaran ekologis. Penelitian ini mengkaji ritual Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro di Pertapaan Watu Payung, Dusun Kemiri, Kabupaten Temanggung. Secara metodologis, penelitian menggunakan studi kasus kualitatif berdasarkan data yang dikumpulkan selama kurang lebih enam bulan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pemuka agama, penjaga ritual, perwakilan pemerintah setempat, dan anggota masyarakat, serta dokumentasi foto, tertulis, dan arsip. Data dianalisis melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan triangulasi sumber dan metode. Secara teoretis, antropologi simbolik menjelaskan bagaimana persembahan, gerak penghormatan, prosesi, dan tempat sakral menyampaikan makna budaya, sedangkan ekoteologi Buddhis menafsirkan metta, karuna, upekkha, puja, dan kesalingbergantungan sebagai orientasi etis terhadap makhluk hidup dan lingkungan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ritual tersusun atas kegiatan berkumpul, prosesi sekitar 3 km, puja dan penghormatan leluhur di Watu Payung, persembahan hasil pertanian, serta pertunjukan budaya setelahnya. Ritual memperkuat kohesi sosial, identitas lokal, pewarisan antargenerasi, dan partisipasi yang inklusif. Kesakralan Watu Payung juga mendukung norma masyarakat untuk tidak merusak lingkungan dan oleh para partisipan dikaitkan dengan perlindungan sumber air setempat. Penanaman pohon dan pelepasan satwa dalam beberapa tahun terakhir dicatat sebagai simbol kepedulian lingkungan, tetapi dampak biofisiknya tidak diukur. Dengan demikian, ritual dapat ditafsirkan sebagai bentuk ekoteologi Buddhis lokal pada tingkat makna dan praktik masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro; Buddhisme Jawa; ekoteologi Buddhis; tempat sakral; kesadaran lingkungan.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a foundation of social life because it provides communities with shared forms through which identity, memory, moral commitments, and relationships with the natural world can be expressed and transmitted. Ritual is particularly important in this process. It does not simply repeat inherited actions; it places values into gestures, objects, routes, prayers, and relations among participants. The safeguarding of ritual therefore concerns more than the survival of a performance. The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasizes that communities continually recreate intangible heritage in relation to their environment, history, and sense of identity.¹ This perspective is relevant to local traditions in Indonesia, where religious practice, customary memory, and the use of particular landscapes frequently appear within the same cultural event.

Java contains many ritual traditions associated with the Javanese calendar, sacred places, ancestral memory, agricultural life, and communal prayer. One of these traditions is the observance of the first day of Suro, the beginning of the Javanese year. The form and meaning of the observance differ among communities. In Buddhist communities,

¹ UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), art. 2(1), <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

Satu Suro may provide a space in which Javanese cultural expressions and Buddhist ethical teachings meet. Previous research demonstrates that the Satu Suro tradition continues within the institutional and religious setting of the Surakarta Palace.² These studies indicate that Satu Suro is not a single, uniform ceremony. Its meaning needs to be examined in the social, religious, and environmental setting in which it is performed.

The academic problem addressed in this study arises from the limited explanation of how a locally specific Satu Suro ritual simultaneously organizes Buddhist spirituality, Javanese cultural continuity, social relations, and ecological concern. Studies of ritual often prioritize historical change or symbolic meaning, whereas the connection between ritual practice and the protection of a particular landscape receives less attention. This imbalance can obscure the practical role of sacred places. When a hill, spring, forest, or hermitage is treated as a spiritually meaningful place, the beliefs and actions surrounding it may affect how community members behave toward its physical environment. The ecological meaning of a ritual must nevertheless be established from empirical evidence rather than assumed from the presence of religious symbols alone.

This problem is evident in the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual at Watu Payung Hermitage in Kemiri Hamlet, Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, Central Java. The ritual is performed by a local community whose procession connects the hamlet with the Watu Payung hill area. The site is spiritually significant and is also associated with natural water sources that the community considers important to preserve. The ritual therefore offers a focused case for examining whether and how cultural and Buddhist meanings become related to ecological awareness. The concern of this article is not to claim a measurable environmental effect that was not tested. It is to explain the meanings, practices, and community accounts through which environmental care appears in the ritual.

Modernization creates an additional context for this problem. Changes in entertainment, mobility, education, and popular culture can weaken young people's familiarity with inherited ritual meanings. At the same time, cultural traditions can be revitalized as public events or tourism attractions. Such revitalization can broaden participation, but it can also shift attention from spiritual and communal meaning to spectacle and economic value. Research on cultural commodification in Indonesian tourism shows that tourism development can produce ethical transitions in how a community's culture is represented and utilized.³ The issue is therefore not whether a tradition should remain

² F. Q. A. Tamami, D. P. Faradhiba, and S. Hidayat, "The Phenomenon of One Suro Tradition in Surakarta Palace: A Comprehensive Study in Islamic Education Perspective," *EduPedia: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan dan Pedagogi Islam* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.35316/edupedia.v9i1.5262>.

³ I. Nurhadi, T. Sumarti, A. H. Dharmawan, and D. S. Damanhuri, "Cultural Commodification and Ethical Transition of Tourism Development: A Case in Osing Community, Indonesia," *Sodality: Jurnal Sosiologi Pedesaan* 10, no. 1 (2022): 24–43, <https://doi.org/10.22500/10202238564>.

unchanged. It is how adaptation can occur without separating the ritual from the values and relationships that make it meaningful to its practitioners.

In Kemiri Hamlet, adaptation is visible in the contemporary creative presentation of kuda lumping after the central puja. This element is intended to attract the interest of younger participants, while the procession to Watu Payung, communal prayer, ancestral respect, and agricultural offerings continue to form the main ritual sequence. The coexistence of inherited and adapted elements makes the case especially useful for studying cultural continuity. It also requires analytical caution: the addition of a creative performance does not by itself prove either the loss or the preservation of meaning. The meaning of the adaptation must be interpreted together with the ritual sequence, community testimony, and the continued treatment of Watu Payung as a sacred place.

Previous literature provides several points of comparison. The One Suro tradition within the Surakarta Palace illustrates how the same calendrical moment can be interpreted through a distinct religious and educational perspective.⁴ Together, these studies support the need for site-specific research. They do not, however, explain the particular procession at Watu Payung or the way the Kemiri community relates its Buddhist practice to the preservation of a hill and its water sources.

Research on local traditions indicates that Indonesian traditions can strengthen social spirituality in rural communities by connecting shared values with communal participation.⁵ This is relevant to Kemiri because the Satu Suro ritual involves Buddhists, residents from other villages and religious backgrounds, and village officials. Yet a general account of social spirituality cannot substitute for an examination of who participates, what they do, and how inclusion is organized in a specific ritual. The present study addresses this need through observation of the procession and interviews with people directly connected to it.

Literature on sacred places provides a second point of comparison. Rural Buddhist devotional places in Java can be understood through the material and aesthetic relationships among shrines, landscapes, and religious practices.⁶ Village purification and water-spring worship at the Penanggungan sites may also reinforce local ecological responsibility.⁷ Similarly, sacred natural sites have the potential to support sustainable

⁴ Tamami, Faradhiba, and Hidayat, "Phenomenon of One Suro Tradition."

⁵ M. Faturahman and I. Berakon, "Local Indonesian Traditions and the Enhancement of Social Spirituality in Rural Communities," *Penamas* 38, no. 2 (2025): 153–167, <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v38i2.997>.

⁶ R. Rizzo, "Lithic Devotionality and Other Aesthetic Strata: Buddhist Garden Shrines in Rural Java," *Asian Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2022): 283–300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478X.2022.2122686>.

⁷ R. Hudiyanto and I. Lutfi, "The Meaning of Village Purification and Worshipping Water Spring as a Ritual to Preserve the Ecological Sustainability of Penanggungan Sites, East Java, Indonesia," *Jurnal*

landscape management.⁸ Although these studies do not establish what occurs at Watu Payung, they clarify why the relationship between sacred meaning and local environmental conduct warrants further investigation.

Studies explicitly addressing religion and environmental ethics further strengthen this line of inquiry. Religions can provide worldviews, ethics, and practices that may shape human relationships with the environment.⁹ In the Indonesian context, Buddhist philosophies have been associated with environmental stewardship.¹⁰ Ecotheological ethics have also been examined in relation to the protection of water springs.¹¹ These works support an ecotheological reading of community practices, but they also indicate that such an interpretation must remain grounded in local evidence. Therefore, an analysis of Kemiri must begin with the ritual as performed and narrated by participants before considering how Buddhist concepts illuminate the findings.

The literature therefore leaves a specific gap. Research is available on Satu Suro in other settings, on Buddhist symbols and rural sacred sites, and on ecotheological environmental ethics. What remains underexplored is the relationship among these elements in the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual at Watu Payung. No verified source located for this revision provides an empirical description of the same ritual, site, actors, procession, and ecological meanings. The present article fills that gap by focusing on one bounded case and by distinguishing three levels of claim: observed ritual activities, meanings communicated by informants, and interpretations developed through theory.

The analysis combines symbolic anthropology and Buddhist ecotheology. Geertz understands religion as a cultural system in which symbols establish meaningful dispositions and conceptions of order.¹² This framework makes it possible to analyze agricultural offerings, bodily gestures, clothing, the journey to the hill, prayer, and the sacred status of Watu Payung as parts of an interconnected cultural pattern. The symbols are not treated as having universal meanings detached from the community. Their

Ilmiah Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan 5, no. 2 (2020): 376–388, <https://doi.org/10.17977/um019v5i2p376-388>.

⁸ M. Z. Dahlan, K. Fukamachi, and S. Shibata, “The Potential of Kabuyutan Sacred Natural Site towards Sustainable Landscape Management in Indonesia,” *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1027, no. 1 (2022): 012025, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1027/1/012025>.

⁹ J. Grim and M. E. Tucker, *Ecology and Religion* (Island Press, 2014).

¹⁰ A. Bayuseto, “Eco-Dhamma: Buddhist Philosophies for Environmental Stewardship in Sukabumi, Indonesia,” *Smaratungga: Jurnal of Education and Buddhist Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 117–132, <https://doi.org/10.53417/sjeb.v3i2.119>.

¹¹ A. Maksum, A. R. Sopyan, A. Indiyanto, and E. D. Wahyuni, “Ecotheology: Environmental Ethical View in Water Spring Protection,” *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics* 23 (2023): 23–33, <https://doi.org/10.3354/ese00205>.

¹² C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973).

significance is considered in relation to the sequence of the ritual and the explanations of participants.

The concept of tradition also helps explain continuity and adaptation. Shils describes tradition as something transmitted from the past and received in the present,¹³ while Hobsbawm and Ranger show that traditions can be reformulated as communities respond to changing historical conditions.¹⁴ Applied to Kemiri, these ideas direct attention to both continuity and change: the annual first-Suro observance, the procession to Watu Payung, and the puja express continuity, whereas the contemporary presentation of kuda lumping shows adaptation. The study does not assume that adaptation automatically makes a tradition inauthentic. It examines whether the adapted form remains connected to the community's ritual and social purposes.

Buddhist ecotheology is used here as an analytical perspective on the ethical relationship between spiritual practice and the environment. In this article, ecotheology does not imply a creator-centered doctrine. It refers to the way Buddhist principles and religious practices may inform responsibility toward living beings, water, land, and interdependent life. The concepts identified in the interview data include metta, or loving-kindness; karuna, or compassion; upekkha, or equanimity; and pratityasamutpada, or dependent arising and interdependence. Bayuseto connects Buddhist philosophy with environmental stewardship,¹⁵ while Grim and Tucker provide a broader framework for understanding how religious worldviews can shape ecological ethics.¹⁶

The two theoretical perspectives serve different but complementary functions. Symbolic anthropology explains how ritual meanings are organized and communicated through cultural forms. Buddhist ecotheology explains how those forms may express ethical orientations toward nature and living beings. The first prevents the study from reducing the ritual to a set of doctrinal teachings; the second prevents the study from treating environmental concern as merely an accidental feature of a cultural event. Their combination is used to interpret, not replace, the empirical record.

his research used a qualitative approach within a cultural paradigm to understand the meaning of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual at Watu Payung Hermitage. A qualitative approach was selected because the study concerns meanings, values, experiences, symbols, and relationships that cannot be adequately represented by numerical measures alone.¹⁷ The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of a bounded cultural phenomenon

¹³ E. Shils, *Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).

¹⁴ E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁵ Bayuseto, "Eco-Dhamma."

¹⁶ Grim and Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*.

¹⁷ J. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2014).

within its real-life context.¹⁸ The case is bounded by the ritual, its participants, Watu Payung Hermitage, and the community setting of Kemiri Hamlet.

The research was conducted at Watu Payung Hermitage, Kemiri Hamlet, Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency. The location has spiritual significance for the community and is associated with preserved natural water sources. Data collection took place over approximately six months. This period allowed engagement with the setting, preparation surrounding the ritual, observation of the procession, and follow-up conversations that assisted the interpretation of observed activities.

The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observation and semi-structured interviews with informants selected purposively because of their direct involvement in or knowledge of the ritual. These informants included religious leaders, ritual caretakers, local government representatives, and community members. The selection did not aim for statistical representation. It aimed to gather relevant perspectives from actors who could explain the ritual sequence, Buddhist meanings, community participation, government support, and the relationship between Watu Payung and environmental care.

Observation was conducted during the ritual procession to record the sequence of activities, the movement from the hamlet to the hermitage, the offerings, gestures, prayers, interactions, and subsequent cultural performance. Semi-structured interviews allowed informants to explain their understanding while keeping the discussion connected to the research focus. Documentation consisted of photographs, written records, archival materials, and relevant literature. Document analysis was used to contextualize and corroborate observational and interview evidence rather than to replace field data.¹⁹

Data analysis followed the interactive process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.²⁰ Field material relevant to the research focus was selected and organized into themes concerning the ritual sequence, symbolism, Buddhist values, ecological meaning, social participation, and institutional support. Interpretations were repeatedly compared with the available data. Source triangulation compared information from different categories of informants, while method triangulation compared interviews, observations, and documentation. This procedure supported credibility by requiring analytical claims to be connected to more than one type of evidence where possible.

¹⁸ R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2018).

¹⁹ G. A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

²⁰ M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2020).

The first research problem concerns the structure and meaning of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual, including its sequence, participants, offerings, gestures, sacred place, cultural adaptation, and contribution to social cohesion. The second research problem concerns the way Buddhist spiritual values within the ritual are related to ecological awareness and the community's protection of Watu Payung, especially its water sources and surrounding environment. These problems are presented as statements to clarify the scope of the analysis. The study does not assess water quality, biodiversity, or other biophysical outcomes, so its ecological conclusions are limited to documented practices, participant meanings, and the observed social mechanisms of care.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach within a cultural paradigm to understand the meaning of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual at the Watu Payung Hermitage, Kemiri Hamlet, Temanggung Regency. This approach is chosen because the study focuses on exploring meanings, values, and lived experiences of the community, particularly in relation to Buddhist spirituality and ecological awareness. The research design applied is a case study. This design allows an in-depth examination of a specific cultural phenomenon within its real-life context. The Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual is treated as a unique case that reflects the interaction between tradition, spirituality, and environmental concerns in a localized setting.

The research was conducted at the Watu Payung Hermitage, located in Kemiri Hamlet, Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, Central Java. This location is significant both spiritually and ecologically, as it is considered sacred by the local community and is closely associated with preserved natural water sources. Data collection took place over approximately six months, allowing sufficient time for observation and deeper engagement with the research setting.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants, including religious leaders, ritual caretakers, local government representatives, and community members directly involved in the ritual. Observations were also carried out during the ritual procession to capture both verbal and non-verbal aspects of the practice. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from relevant literature, documents, and archival records to support and enrich the analysis.

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted directly during the ritual process to understand the sequence of activities and the social interactions involved. Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner, allowing informants to express their perspectives more openly while still aligning with the research focus. Documentation, such as photographs and written records, was used to complement the findings and provide additional context.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who have direct involvement and a deep understanding of the ritual. This includes religious figures, caretakers, and members of the local community. This selection ensures that the data obtained are relevant and reflect the perspectives of those who are directly connected to the phenomenon.

Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The process begins with selecting and focusing relevant data, followed by organizing the information into a structured form to support interpretation. The final stage involves drawing conclusions through continuous verification to ensure consistency and validity.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, triangulation techniques are applied. This includes comparing data from different sources and using multiple methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation. Through this approach, the study aims to produce findings that are not only descriptive but also reliable and grounded in the real conditions of the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Alignment of Research Problems, Theory, and Method

The findings are organized to answer the two research problems directly. The first part describes the ritual sequence and examines how its symbols and participation sustain cultural and social meaning. The second part analyzes the Buddhist values and ecological meanings associated with Watu Payung. Observation provides evidence about visible actions and interactions; interviews provide explanations and values attributed by participants; documentation and literature help contextualize and check those accounts. Symbolic anthropology and the theory of tradition are used primarily for the first problem, while Buddhist ecotheology is used primarily for the second. The perspectives overlap where a sacred symbol also guides environmental conduct.

Table 1. Alignment of Research Problems, Empirical Evidence, Theory, and Method

Research problem and principal answer	Empirical and methodological basis	Theoretical alignment
The ritual is a structured cultural process that moves from communal gathering and a roughly 3 km procession to puja at Watu Payung, followed by a cultural performance. Its offerings, gestures, sacred route, participation, and adaptation sustain identity, solidarity, and intergenerational transmission.	Direct observation of the sequence and interactions; semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, caretakers, community members, and village representatives; photographs and written records; source and method triangulation.	Geertz's cultural-symbolic interpretation explains how actions and objects communicate meaning. Shils and Hobsbawm and Ranger explain transmission and adaptation.
Buddhist values of metta, karuna, upekkha, puja, and interdependence provide an ethical language for respecting living beings and the sacred landscape. The sanctification of Watu Payung operates as a community-based restraint against environmental damage and is associated with protecting local water sources.	Observed puja, offerings, gestures, and participation; interview accounts about Buddhist values, sacredness, water sources, tree planting, and animal release; documentation of the site and ritual. No biophysical measurement was conducted.	Buddhist ecotheology interprets the relation between spiritual values and environmental responsibility. Comparative sacred-site literature supports, but does not substitute for, the local evidence.

The table makes explicit that the conclusions do not come from theory alone. Each answer begins with field material and is then interpreted through an appropriate framework. It also identifies the evidentiary boundary of the research. For example, the preservation of water sources is reported through community accounts and the continued sacred treatment of the area, but the research did not test the chemical quality, discharge, or ecological condition of the water. This distinction is important for preventing an interpretive claim from being presented as a measured environmental result.

Implementation of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro Ritual

The Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro tradition at Watu Payung Hermitage is a cultural practice passed down across generations. It is held on the first day of Suro in the Javanese calendar, which marks the Javanese New Year. The procession begins in Kemiri Hamlet. Community members gather wearing kejawen attire and carry agricultural produce, including rice, fruits, and vegetables, as offerings. From the hamlet, the group walks approximately 3 km to the peak area of Watu Payung hill.

Observation shows that the route is a constitutive part of the ritual rather than a practical movement between two unrelated places. Participants begin together in the residential space of the hamlet and move toward a place treated as sacred. The shared walk connects households, agricultural products, community organization, and the

hill within a single sequence. Because the participants carry the offerings during the journey, material expressions of livelihood are physically brought into the sacred space. The procession thereby gives visible form to the relationship among community life, agricultural sustenance, and spiritual gratitude.

Watu Payung Hermitage is believed by the community to have been a meditation place of a descendant of the Majapahit family. This belief gives the site a historical and sacred association within local memory. The study records this as a community belief; it does not attempt to verify the genealogy archaeologically. At the site, the principal activities include communal prayer, respect for ancestors, and the presentation of agricultural produce. These activities form the ritual core and distinguish the sacred phase at Watu Payung from the cultural performance that follows in the hamlet.

After the puja procession, participants return to the hamlet and continue with traditional art, particularly kuda lumping. The performance is now presented in contemporary creative forms intended to attract younger people. This adaptation shows that the tradition is not maintained solely by reproducing every element in an unchanging form. It combines a stable calendrical and spiritual center with an adjusted public expression. Hobsbawm and Ranger are useful here because they direct attention to the ways communities formulate continuity under changing conditions.²¹ In the Kemiri case, the relevant evidence of continuity lies in the continued procession, puja, sacred destination, offerings, and communal participation.

The annual repetition of the ritual also supports the transmission described by Shils.²² Participants do not encounter the tradition only as an abstract explanation. They experience its route, timing, objects, gestures, and collective organization. Younger participants can therefore learn through involvement as well as verbal instruction. The contemporary kuda lumping performance may widen their point of entry, while the surrounding ritual provides the context in which cultural entertainment remains linked to a larger communal event.

The first research problem is answered at this descriptive level by showing that the ritual has a discernible structure. It begins with preparation and gathering, proceeds through a collective journey, reaches its spiritual center at the hermitage, and concludes with a return and public cultural activity. The structure brings different actors and meanings together without making every element identical. Kejawen attire and kuda lumping express Javanese culture; puja and the identified ethical concepts express Buddhist spirituality; agricultural produce expresses gratitude and livelihood; the route and destination connect the community with Watu Payung.

²¹ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

²² Shils, *Tradition*.

Puja, Offerings, and Ritual Symbolism

The puja at Watu Payung is the central spiritual component of the event. Within Buddhist practice, puja is an act of honoring that which is worthy of respect. The field data identify both material and practice-oriented dimensions. The agricultural produce can be interpreted within the category of amisa puja, or material offering. The prayer, reverence, and ethical conduct associated with the ritual correspond to patti-patti puja, in which honor is expressed through practice. These categories were already present in the original research account and are retained here without adding claims about objects or recitations that were not documented.

The use of rice, fruits, and vegetables links puja with the agricultural basis of community life. As symbols, the offerings do not merely represent isolated products. They place the results of human labor and natural growth within an act of gratitude. A Geertzian approach treats such objects as part of a cultural system whose meaning emerges from their ritual context.²³ In Kemiri, the same produce is associated with livelihood in everyday life and with reverence during the ritual. Its movement from hamlet to sacred hill connects those domains.

Bodily gestures also communicate respect. The ritual includes anjali, in which the palms are joined in front of the chest, and namaskara, or prostration. These gestures make reverence visible and shared. Research on Buddhist ritual performance in Indonesia indicates that skill in conducting ritual is connected to the transmission of religious practice.²⁴ The Kemiri findings add a local cultural context in which Buddhist forms of respect appear within a Javanese Suro procession.

The symbolic system is layered rather than exclusive. Kejawen clothing, Javanese calendrical time, ancestral respect, and Buddhist puja occur within one event. This does not require the analysis to label every element as originally Buddhist or originally Javanese. Instead, the field evidence shows that the community performs them together as a meaningful tradition. Geertz's framework helps explain this integration because religious symbols operate through cultural forms available to a community.²⁵ Widi's study of a Buddhist Satu Suro tradition in another Indonesian location also supports the broader observation that Buddhist communities may give local meaning to this calendrical tradition.²⁶

²³ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*.

²⁴ Budiyo and Taridi, "The Impact of Pandita Training on the Skill of Performing Buddhist Rituals," *Smaratungga: Jurnal of Education and Buddhist Studies* 1, no. 2 (2021): 50–55, <https://doi.org/10.53417/sjeb.v1i2.57>.

²⁵ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*.

²⁶ Widiyanto Widi, "Cara Pandang Umat Buddha Desa Nusa Jaya, Sumatera Selatan dalam Melaksanakan Tradisi Satu Suro," *Sabbata Yatra: Jurnal Pariwisata dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2021): 13–27, <https://doi.org/10.53565/sabbhatayatra.v2i1.264>.

Sudarto shows that Buddhist values can be communicated through Javanese symbolic forms in another cultural domain.²⁷ That comparison reinforces the importance of interpreting symbols through local usage. In the present case, the offerings, anjali, namaskara, and the journey are understood from the combination of observation and participant explanations. The study does not assign meanings solely because similar symbols appear elsewhere. This methodological grounding keeps the analysis connected to the Kemiri case.

The puja and symbolism provide the principal answer to the meaning component of the first research problem. The ritual maintains cultural identity not through a single emblem, but through an ordered relationship among place, time, objects, gestures, memory, and participation. Its symbolic coherence enables community members to express Javanese cultural belonging and Buddhist reverence without separating them into different events.

Buddhist Values and Ecological Awareness

Interviews with religious leaders and the ritual caretaker indicate that the procession is understood through Buddhist ethical values. The prayers and explanations emphasize balance in life, respect for ancestors, and gratitude for the gifts of nature. Informants also identified metta, karuna, and upekkha. Metta directs loving-kindness toward beings rather than hostility; karuna emphasizes compassion in response to suffering; and upekkha provides an orientation of equanimity and nonpartial awareness. In the ritual context, these concepts support attitudes of restraint, care, and peaceful communal participation.

The ecological significance becomes clearer through *pratityasamutpada*, or interdependence. The concept directs attention to the dependent relationships through which life occurs rather than to an isolated human subject. In the Kemiri account, the community depends on water, agricultural productivity, social cooperation, and the continued condition of the landscape. The ritual does not present these as a scientific ecological model, but it places gratitude, living beings, agricultural produce, and a sacred natural site into one ethical and symbolic field. Bayuseto similarly identifies Buddhist philosophical resources for environmental stewardship in an Indonesian setting.²⁸

The relationship between Buddhist values and ecological awareness is not inferred only from doctrine. It is supported by participant statements concerning nature, the sacred status of Watu Payung, and the need to preserve its water sources. It is also

²⁷ S. Sudarto, "Makna Simbolik dan Nilai-Nilai Buddhis pada Tradisi Pemberian Nama Orang Jawa: Suatu Tinjauan Semiotik," *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 1 (2022): 320–343, <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v16i1.860>.

²⁸ Bayuseto, "Eco-Dhamma."

expressed through reported additions to the ritual in recent years, namely tree planting and animal release as symbols of concern for natural balance. The present study reports those activities as they appear in the data. It does not claim that their ecological effectiveness has been measured, and it does not introduce recommendations about species or release procedures that were outside the research.

This evidentiary distinction strengthens the ecotheological interpretation. The data show that the community uses Buddhist language and ritual action to articulate care for life and place. Buddhist ecotheology is therefore an appropriate framework for explaining the moral connection between spirituality and the environment. At the same time, the framework does not authorize claims about ecological outcomes that the method cannot support. The finding is an ethical and socio-cultural relationship: spiritual values contribute to awareness and community conduct surrounding the sacred landscape.

Grim and Tucker emphasize that religious traditions can shape environmental worldviews, ethics, and practices.²⁹ The Kemiri case illustrates this process at a local scale. Metta and karuna broaden the moral significance of care, upekkha encourages a balanced orientation, and interdependence provides a way to understand the relationship between human life and environmental conditions. The ritual gives these ideas embodied and communal expression through prayer, offerings, the journey, and the treatment of Watu Payung.

The second research problem is therefore answered first at the level of ethical formation. Buddhist values provide concepts through which the community interprets gratitude, restraint, compassion, and dependence on nature. The ritual regularly places these concepts in a shared setting. Its contribution lies in reinforcing an environmental orientation within spiritual and cultural life, not in replacing formal environmental management or scientific assessment.

Sacredness and the Protection of Watu Payung

Watu Payung Hermitage lies in a hilly area with natural water sources that, according to community accounts, remain preserved. Informants connect this condition with the sacred status attributed to the site. The community is reluctant to undertake activities considered destructive around the hermitage because damaging the place would violate a shared moral and spiritual boundary. Sacredness thus functions as a form of informal social regulation.

²⁹ Grim and Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*.

This finding is consistent with comparative research, though the comparison must not be confused with direct evidence from Kemiri. Hudiyanto and Lutfi show that ritual respect for a water spring can contribute to ecological sustainability at the Penanggungan sites.³⁰ Dahlan et al. discuss the potential of sacred natural sites for sustainable landscape management,³¹ and Asteria et al. analyze sacred ecology in Javanese place-based environmental practices.³² These studies support the plausibility of sacredness as a conservation mechanism. The specific claim about Watu Payung, however, rests on the Kemiri interviews, observation, and documentation.

Sacredness operates through meaning and social expectation. A formal fence or written prohibition is not the only way to restrict harmful conduct. When community members recognize a place as worthy of reverence, ordinary behavior around it can be shaped by that recognition. In the ritual, the collective walk and puja renew the site's position in community memory. The place is not encountered merely as physical terrain; it is revisited as a site connected with meditation, ancestral memory, Buddhist practice, and water.

Maksum et al. demonstrate that ecotheological ethics can be relevant to the protection of water springs in an Indonesian community.³³ The Kemiri findings share the relationship between sacred meaning and spring protection but remain distinctive in their Buddhist and Satu Suro context. The ritual provides a recurring social occasion on which the relationship with Watu Payung is acknowledged. This repetition may help maintain the norm that the surrounding area should not be damaged.

The reported tree planting and animal release extend the environmental symbolism of the ceremony. Because these practices were added in recent years, they also show that the tradition can absorb contemporary environmental concerns. Their presence should be understood within the limits of the research: the study documents their symbolic role and participants' concern for natural balance, but it does not evaluate survival rates, biodiversity effects, or long-term ecological impact. This limitation prevents symbolic action from being equated with scientifically verified conservation.

The preservation mechanism identified here is consequently cultural and normative. The sacred designation of the site, reinforced through ritual, creates shared reasons for restraint. It encourages the community to treat water sources and the surrounding landscape as more than exploitable resources. Purnomo, Oktaviani, and Nugroho

³⁰ Hudiyanto and Lutfi, "Village Purification and Water Spring."

³¹ Dahlan, Fukamachi, and Shibata, "Kabuyutan Sacred Natural Site."

³² P. V. Asteria, P. Suwarno, J. Kasden, A. H. Rofi'uddin, B. Lesyarini, and A. Fauzan, "Wingit as Ecospiritual Conservation: Sacred Ecology in Javanese Place-Based Environmental Practices," *E3S Web of Conferences* 640 (2025): 02015, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202564002015>.

³³ Maksum et al., "Ecotheology."

likewise discuss conservation based on local people at a sacred site and its relationship to ecotourism.³⁴ Such comparison indicates that local sacred meanings can support environmental care, while effective long-term protection may also require community organization and appropriate institutional support.

The second research problem is answered at this level by showing how ecological awareness becomes socially operative. Buddhist ethics supplies a language of compassion and interdependence; sacredness attaches that ethic to a particular place; the annual ritual renews collective recognition; and community norms discourage destructive conduct. This sequence explains the relationship found in the qualitative data without overstating the environmental results.

Community Participation, Government Support, and Social Inclusion

The ritual involves several layers of participation. Local Buddhists in Kemiri Hamlet form its principal religious community, while people from other villages and different religious backgrounds also attend and support the event. Village officials contribute logistical assistance and security. These forms of involvement indicate that the tradition is locally rooted but not socially closed.

The participation of people from different religious backgrounds creates an inclusive encounter organized around shared respect for culture and community. The data do not show that all participants interpret Buddhist symbols in the same way. Inclusivity here means that difference does not prevent attendance, practical support, or recognition of the tradition as part of local heritage. This distinction is important because social cohesion does not require the erasure of religious identities.

From the perspective of the first research problem, broad participation helps the ritual function as a mechanism of solidarity. Preparing, walking, praying, assisting with logistics, providing security, and attending cultural performances require forms of coordination. The event brings residents into a shared temporal and spatial arrangement. Based on observations and interviews, this organization strengthens community cohesion, solidarity among residents, and pride in local identity. It also creates opportunities for younger participants to encounter inherited values directly.

Faturahman and Berakon describe how local Indonesian traditions can enhance social spirituality in rural communities.³⁵ The Kemiri findings provide a concrete configuration of that relationship: spiritual practice occurs together with collective movement, material

³⁴ P. Purnomo, A. I. Oktaviani, and I. Nugroho, "The Sacred Site: Conservation Based on Local People in the Tengger Community and Its Potential as Ecotourism Activities," *Journal of Socioeconomics and Development* 1, no. 1 (2018): 7–15, <https://doi.org/10.31328/jsed.v1i1.517>.

³⁵ Faturahman and Berakon, "Local Indonesian Traditions."

contributions, artistic expression, and cross-community attendance. The ritual's social effect is not separate from its religious and cultural form. It emerges because those elements are performed together.

Village officials regard the tradition as a cultural asset that can strengthen local identity and potentially support cultural tourism. Their support is visible in logistics and security rather than in the replacement of community ritual leadership. Interview accounts also emphasize that the spiritual and ecological essence should be maintained. This concern is analytically significant because it identifies a local condition for development: public promotion should remain subordinate to the community's meaning of the event.

The concern is consistent with the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which places communities and their participation at the center of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.³⁶ It is also relevant to Nurhadi et al., who show that tourism development can alter the ethical use and representation of culture.³⁷ The Kemiri data do not demonstrate that harmful commodification has already occurred. Rather, village officials' statements show awareness that tourism could reduce the ritual to spectacle if its spiritual and ecological purposes were displaced.

This finding supports a balanced interpretation of government involvement. Logistical and security assistance can enable safe participation and public recognition, while community authority over ritual meaning remains essential. The study does not provide evidence for a wider government conservation program at Watu Payung and therefore does not claim one. The verified empirical point is limited to village-level support during the event and officials' recognition of cultural, spiritual, ecological, and tourism considerations.

Cultural Continuity, Social Impact, and Analytical Synthesis

The findings show that cultural continuity in Kemiri is produced through practice. The annual observance brings together inherited timing, a remembered sacred place, established forms of puja, agricultural offerings, bodily gestures, and contemporary art. Each component contributes differently. The procession and puja provide ritual continuity; the offerings connect spirituality with livelihood; kuda lumping creates a public cultural space; and participation links generations and social groups.

Shils' understanding of transmission helps explain why the event remains a vehicle of identity.³⁸ What is transmitted is not limited to a verbal doctrine. Participants inherit ways of gathering, moving, honoring, offering, and relating to a place. Hobsbawm and

³⁶ UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

³⁷ Nurhadi et al., "Cultural Commodification and Ethical Transition."

³⁸ Shils, *Tradition*.

Ranger add that continuity can be actively reformulated.³⁹ The contemporary artistic presentation illustrates such reformulation, while the field data show that the sacred and Buddhist elements remain central.

Geertz's symbolic framework explains the internal relation among the elements.⁴⁰ The approximately 3 km journey symbolizes movement from ordinary communal space toward a sanctified place. Agricultural produce connects natural growth and human livelihood with gratitude. Anjali and namaskara embody respect. Communal prayer and ancestral remembrance connect the present gathering with spiritual and historical memory. Watu Payung concentrates these meanings in a place that is also environmentally significant.

Buddhist ecotheology clarifies how the symbolic system can guide environmental orientation. Metta and karuna expand the field of moral concern; upekkha supports balance; and interdependence connects human well-being with the conditions that sustain life. The sacred status of Watu Payung translates those orientations into a local norm against damage. The relationship is therefore not a simple claim that ritual automatically conserves nature. It is a chain in which values, sacred meaning, repeated practice, and social restraint support ecological awareness.

The methodological alignment of the findings is equally important. Observation establishes the visible sequence, objects, gestures, participation, and setting. Interviews establish the meanings participants attribute to those elements and their accounts of environmental care. Documentation preserves contextual evidence and supports comparison. Triangulation allows a claim observed in one form to be checked against another source or method. Theory is applied after this empirical organization to explain patterns rather than to create missing evidence.

The study also identifies limits to the social and ecological conclusions. Because it focuses on one community, the pattern should not be generalized to all Buddhist or Satu Suro traditions. The qualitative design can explain meanings and mechanisms but cannot calculate the size of social effects. Statements about cohesion and identity are based on observed participation and interview accounts, not a longitudinal social survey. Statements about water and environmental protection are based on local accounts, sacred norms, and documented activities, not biophysical measurement.

Within those limits, the study contributes a case-based answer to both research problems. The Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual is a living cultural process in which Javanese forms and Buddhist practices sustain community identity and social connection. Its Buddhist ethical values and the sacredness of Watu Payung support a community-based orientation toward environmental care. The novelty of the case lies not in claiming

³⁹ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

⁴⁰ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*.

that culture, religion, and ecology are always harmonious, but in showing the specific practices through which that harmony is constructed and maintained in Kemiri Hamlet.

CONCLUSION

The first research problem concerned the structure and meaning of the Metuk Tanggal Satu Suro ritual. The findings show that it is an ordered cultural process beginning with the gathering of participants in Kemiri Hamlet, the use of kejawen attire, and the carrying of rice, fruits, and vegetables, followed by an approximately 3 km collective journey to Watu Payung, communal prayer, ancestral respect, puja, and a return to the hamlet for kuda lumping. The offerings, anjali, namaskara, sacred route, and participation integrate Javanese cultural identity with Buddhist reverence. The ritual strengthens solidarity, local pride, inclusive participation, and intergenerational transmission, while its contemporary artistic form shows adaptation without displacing the documented spiritual center of the event.

The second research problem concerned the relationship between Buddhist spirituality and ecological awareness. Interview and observational evidence indicates that metta, karuna, upekkha, puja, and interdependence provide ethical meanings for gratitude, compassion, balance, and responsibility toward living beings and nature. The sacred status of Watu Payung reinforces a community norm against damaging the hermitage area and is associated by participants with the preservation of local water sources. Tree planting and animal release have also been included in recent years as symbols of concern for natural balance. These findings support an interpretation of the ritual as local Buddhist ecotheology at the level of meaning and community practice, while no claim is made that water quality, biodiversity, or other ecological outcomes were quantitatively measured.

Future research should compare Satu Suro practices among Buddhist communities in other regions and examine how variations in ritual organization affect cultural transmission, interfaith participation, and environmental responsibility. A mixed or interdisciplinary design could combine ethnographic observation and interviews with longitudinal participation data, water-quality assessment, vegetation surveys, or biodiversity monitoring so that symbolic and ethical findings can be evaluated alongside biophysical outcomes. For policy and community practice, safeguarding should retain the authority of ritual custodians and participants, document the meanings transmitted to younger generations, and ensure that any tourism development or institutional support protects rather than replaces the spiritual, social, and ecological purposes identified by the community.

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