



Grounding heritage, sustaining identity: the recontextualization of kupatan jasasutra in Tanah Geseng, Bantul



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ABSTRACT

The *Kupatan Jasasutra* ritual in Srimulyo Village, Bantul, Yogyakarta, represents a form of living heritage rooted in the sacred landscape of *Tanah Geseng*, the burial site of Sunan Geseng. Previous studies have primarily examined the tradition as a cultural attraction, social ritual, or repository of local values, while limited attention has been given to its contemporary recontextualization as a mechanism for cultural identity formation and environmental stewardship. This study explores the historical continuity, symbolic meanings, and adaptive functions of the ritual in contemporary society. Employing an integrated historical ethnographic approach, the research combines critical analysis of local manuscripts and chronicles with participant observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed through historical interpretation and grounded theory coding, supported by triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that *Kupatan Jasasutra* functions as a dynamic cultural system integrating collective memory, Javanese Islamic spirituality, social solidarity, and ecological ethics. Symbolic interpretations of *ketupat* reinforce values of reconciliation, generosity, and social harmony, while communal practices such as village cleaning, sacred-site maintenance, and the use of local resources embody indigenous environmental ethics. The study argues that the resilience of *Kupatan Jasasutra* lies in its capacity to continuously adapt inherited traditions to contemporary social and environmental challenges without losing its symbolic foundations.



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1. Introduction

T Across the globe, ritual traditions have increasingly become central to scholarly debates concerning living heritage, cultural sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community resilience. Contemporary heritage studies no longer regard traditions as static survivals inherited from the past; rather, they are understood as dynamic cultural processes through which communities continuously negotiate identity, memory, morality, and adaptation in response to changing social realities [1], [2], [3]. Within this perspective, rituals are not merely ceremonial performances but complex social institutions that transmit values, regulate social relations, reproduce collective identities, and articulate human relationships with the natural environment. As globalization, modernization, migration, and ecological crises reshape local societies, understanding how traditional communities reinterpret and sustain their ritual heritage has become an increasingly important academic concern [4], [5]. This discussion is particularly relevant in Indonesia, a country recognized for its extraordinary cultural diversity and rich repository of intangible cultural heritage. Throughout the archipelago, ritual

traditions continue to function as mechanisms for preserving local knowledge systems while simultaneously adapting to contemporary transformations. Increasingly, scholars have argued that local traditions should not be viewed merely as cultural remnants but as strategic cultural resources that contribute to social cohesion, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and community development [3], [6]. Such perspectives resonate strongly with Indonesia's Cultural Advancement agenda (*Pemajuan Kebudayaan*) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both of which emphasize the importance of integrating cultural heritage into broader frameworks of sustainable development.

Among the many ritual traditions found in Java, *kupatan* occupies a distinctive cultural position. Generally celebrated after Ramadan and closely associated with Islamic-Javanese traditions, *kupatan* rituals are widely practiced across different regions, each embodying local interpretations and cultural meanings. Previous studies have demonstrated that *kupatan* traditions function as important media for strengthening social harmony, reinforcing communal solidarity, transmitting ethical values, and maintaining cultural continuity across generations [7]. In several regions, *kupatan* has also evolved into a cultural tourism attraction capable of stimulating local economic development while simultaneously strengthening local identity. These studies collectively demonstrate that ritual traditions remain highly relevant in contemporary society, despite rapid processes of modernization and socio cultural change. Specific attention has also been given to the *Kupatan Jelasutra* tradition in Srimulyo Village, Piyungan District, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. Nurcahyo and Yulianto identify *Kupatan Jelasutra* as a rare and culturally significant ritual tradition that reflects the belief system, customs, and social values of the Jelasutra community [8]. Their study emphasizes the ritual's contribution to local economic sustainability through temporary employment opportunities, community participation, and tourism activities. Furthermore, they argue that the tradition contributes positively to strengthening cultural identity, social integrity, and tourism development in the region [9]. Similarly, Lestari and Sumaryati demonstrate that younger generations continue to perceive *Kupatan Jelasutra* as an important cultural asset embodying values of ancestral respect, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), solidarity, and communal harmony [6]. Meanwhile, studies of *kupatan* traditions in other parts of Java reveal their broader contributions to social cohesion, multicultural coexistence, and local sustainable development initiatives [7], [10].

Despite these important contributions, the existing literature remains fragmented and conceptually limited. First, most studies focus predominantly on describing the ritual, documenting its cultural values, or assessing its tourism and economic potential. Consequently, little attention has been devoted to understanding *Kupatan Jelasutra* as a dynamic process of cultural recontextualization through which local communities reinterpret inherited traditions in response to contemporary challenges. Existing scholarship often assumes that tradition is preserved through continuity alone, whereas recent heritage scholarship suggests that continuity is frequently achieved through adaptation, reinterpretation, and selective transformation [1], [5]. Second, although previous studies repeatedly highlight the social and economic significance of *Kupatan Jelasutra*, they rarely examine its ecological dimensions. This omission is particularly striking given that many ritual practices embedded within *Kupatan Jelasutra* involve forms of environmental stewardship and ecological knowledge. Preparations for the ritual include collective cleaning of village spaces, sacred sites, pilgrimage routes, water sources, and ancestral cemeteries. Ritual offerings rely heavily on locally sourced agricultural products, while communal activities reinforce collective responsibility toward maintaining environmental balance. Such practices suggest that ecological consciousness is not peripheral to the ritual but constitutes one of its fundamental cultural dimensions. Yet existing studies have not adequately explored how environmental ethics are embedded within ritual practices and transmitted through cultural performance. Third, previous research tends to separate discussions of religion, culture, economy, and environment into distinct analytical categories. As a result, insufficient attention has been given to the ways these dimensions interact within a single ritual system. In the case of *Kupatan Jelasutra*, ancestral commemoration, Islamic spirituality, agricultural gratitude, ecological stewardship, artistic expression, and community solidarity are not separate

domains but interconnected components of a broader cultural worldview. Understanding these interconnections is essential for explaining the resilience and continued relevance of the tradition in contemporary society.

This gap becomes even more significant when viewed within the context of living heritage studies. UNESCO emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage survives not because communities preserve it unchanged but because they continuously recreate and reinterpret it in response to their environment, history, and interactions with nature [2]. Such an approach shifts attention from the preservation of cultural forms toward the processes through which communities sustain cultural meaning. In this regard, *Kupatan J alasutra* offers an important case for examining how ritual traditions function as adaptive cultural systems capable of mediating continuity and change. The significance of *Kupatan J alasutra* extends beyond its status as a post harvest celebration or religious ritual. Rooted in the sacred landscape of *Tanah Geseng* a cultural landscape associated with the memory of Sunan Geseng the ritual integrates pilgrimage, ancestral veneration, collective labor, artistic performances, environmental maintenance, communal feasting, and agricultural thanksgiving into a coherent cultural system. The ritual simultaneously commemorates historical memory, reinforces social solidarity, transmits moral values, and cultivates environmental awareness. Activities such as village-wide communal cleaning, preparation of symbolic offerings, collective prayers, *kendhuri*, *wayang kulit* performances, and the operation of temporary community markets (*pasar tiban*) demonstrate how cultural heritage functions as a living mechanism for social reproduction and community resilience. Moreover, the symbolic philosophy of *ketupat* itself reflects a sophisticated moral framework. Derived from the Javanese phrase *ngaku lepat* (acknowledging one's mistakes), *ketupat* embodies values of humility, self-reflection, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Local interpretations further associate *ketupat* with the concept of *aku papat* or the four ethical pathways: *lebaran* (spiritual purification), *luberan* (generosity), *leburan* (forgiveness), and *laburan* (renewal and purity). These values are not merely represented symbolically but enacted collectively through ritual participation. Consequently, *Kupatan J alasutra* functions as a cultural mechanism through which moral values are continuously reproduced, negotiated, and transmitted across generations.

This article therefore argues that *Kupatan J alasutra* should be understood not merely as a ritual tradition but as a living heritage system through which cultural identity, ecological ethics, historical memory, and social cohesion are continuously produced and reproduced. Rather than focusing solely on symbolism or tourism potential, this study examines how the tradition is actively recontextualized by local communities in response to contemporary social transformations. Through this process, inherited cultural practices acquire renewed relevance while maintaining their connection to historical and spiritual foundations. The novelty of this study lies in three principal contributions. First, it moves beyond descriptive accounts of ritual symbolism by analyzing *Kupatan J alasutra* as a process of cultural recontextualization within the framework of living heritage studies. Second, it demonstrates how ecological consciousness is embedded within ritual practices and reproduced through collective cultural action. Third, it integrates historical reconstruction, ethnographic observation, and community narratives to explain how cultural identity, environmental stewardship, and heritage sustainability intersect within a single ritual system. By doing so, this study contributes theoretically to debates on living heritage, cultural sustainability, ecological heritage, and community-based heritage governance. Accordingly, this article addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) How has the *Kupatan J alasutra* tradition been historically constructed and transmitted within the cultural landscape of Srimulyo?; (2) How do ritual practices embody and reproduce ecological, social, spiritual, and cultural values within the community?; and (3) How has *Kupatan J alasutra* been recontextualized as a living heritage mechanism for strengthening cultural identity and sustaining cultural continuity amid contemporary social transformation? By answering these questions, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions concerning the role of ritual traditions in fostering cultural resilience, environmental ethics, and sustainable heritage futures in contemporary Indonesia.

2. Method

This study employs an integrated historical ethnographic research design supported by grounded theory analysis to examine the *Kupatan J alasutra* ritual as both a historical legacy and a living cultural practice. The combination of these approaches enables a diachronic investigation of the ritual's historical development alongside a synchronic analysis of its contemporary meanings, functions, and transformations within the Srimulyo community. Rather than treating history and ethnography as separate methodological domains, this study integrates them to explore how collective memory, ritual practice, and cultural values are continuously reproduced and reinterpreted across generations. The historical component follows the four stages proposed by Kuntowijoyo source collection, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography [7]. Historical sources consist of local manuscripts and chronicles, including *Babad Djalasutra*, *Babad Tjakradjaja*, *Serat Trilaksita*, *Babad Giyanti*, and *Serat Sitijenar*, supplemented by archival materials, previous scholarly studies, and oral histories preserved within the community. Source criticism was conducted to assess the authenticity, provenance, credibility, and contextual reliability of each document. Particular attention was given to distinguishing historical facts from local legends, collective memories, and symbolic narratives. The verified sources were subsequently interpreted through contextual historical analysis to reconstruct the evolution of the *Kupatan J alasutra* tradition and its relationship to broader processes of Islamization, agrarian life, and local cultural development in southern Yogyakarta.

The ethnographic component was conducted in Srimulyo Village, Piyungan District, Bantul Regency, where the ritual is performed annually. Fieldwork was undertaken between January and May 2025, encompassing ritual preparation, implementation, and post-ritual activities. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation focused on ritual performances, communal preparations, pilgrimage activities, collective feasting, environmental cleaning activities, artistic performances, and interactions among participants. Field notes were systematically recorded throughout the research process. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select informants who possessed direct knowledge and experience of the ritual. The study involved 8 key informants consisting of traditional custodians (*juru kunci*), village elders, ritual committee members, community leaders, local government representatives, cultural activists, and youth participants. Interviews explored perceptions of the ritual's meanings, historical narratives, symbolic interpretations, environmental values, and contemporary challenges. The inclusion of multiple generations enabled the examination of processes of cultural transmission and reinterpretation within changing social contexts [8], [11]. Data analysis was conducted using grounded theory procedures. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were coded through three stages: (1) open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding identified recurring concepts emerging from the data; (2) axial coding established relationships among categories; (3) and selective coding generated broader interpretive themes. This inductive procedure enabled the emergence of key analytical categories such as collective memory, cultural identity, ecological ethics, ritual continuity, and social solidarity, rather than imposing predetermined theoretical frameworks upon the data [8].

The integration of historical and ethnographic data occurred through a process of analytical triangulation. Historical sources provided evidence concerning the origins, transformations, and cultural genealogy of the ritual, while ethnographic findings revealed how those narratives are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted in contemporary practice. Rather than accepting oral traditions as historical facts, the study treats them as cultural narratives that illuminate community memory, symbolic meanings, and identity construction. This distinction is particularly important when examining narratives concerning Sunan Geseng, local myths, and ritual origins. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing data derived from manuscripts, archival materials, interviews, participant observations, and visual documentation [6], [9]. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by presenting preliminary interpretations to selected informants for verification and clarification. This

process strengthened the credibility of the analysis while ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected local understandings and lived experiences [6], [9]. Through this methodological synthesis, the study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding *Kupatan J alasutra* as a dynamic form of living heritage situated at the intersection of history, spirituality, environmental ethics, and cultural identity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Historical Memory, Sacred Landscape, and the Firmation of *Kupatan J alasutra*

The historical foundations of the *Kupatan J alasutra* tradition are deeply embedded in both the collective memory of the Srimulyo community and a corpus of local manuscripts associated with Sunan Geseng. Historical sources such as *Babad Djalasutra*, *Babad Tjakradjaja*, *Serat Trilaksita*, *Babad Giyanti*, and *Serat Sitijenar* portray *J alasutra* as an important cultural and religious landscape connected to the spread of Islamic in southern Java. Rather than treating these manuscripts as objective historical records, this study approaches them as cultural texts that reveal local perceptions of the past and the symbolic construction of communal identity [1], [7]. Such an approach allows for a distinction between historical fact, collective memory, and local belief, while acknowledging that all three dimensions contribute to the formation of living heritage. The historical depth of *J alasutra* is further reinforced by narratives preserved in *Babad Giyanti* and *Babad Djalasutra*, which identify the area as the residence of Kyai Ageng Bengkung, the spiritual mentor of Sunan Geseng. These accounts position *J alasutra* within an early network of Islamic and spiritual transmission linked to the Mataram polity. While the historical accuracy of these narratives remains difficult to verify through documentary evidence alone, their persistence within local memory demonstrates their significance in shaping communal understandings of ancestry, authority, and sacred space. In this sense, the manuscripts function not merely as chronicles of events but as repositories of cultural meaning that continue to influence contemporary ritual practices.

Historical evidence from the colonial period adds another layer to the cultural significance of *J alasutra*. During the Java War (1825–1830), the region appears in colonial records as a strategic frontier associated with military movement and resistance. In *Javaansche Brieven*, Roorda describes the broader *J alasutra* area as part of a contested landscape where political conflict intersected with local religious networks. Although these colonial sources do not explicitly mention the *Kupatan ritual*, they demonstrate that *J alasutra* occupied an important position within nineteenth-century socio-political geography. This historical context suggests that the sacred landscape of *J alasutra* was shaped not only by religious devotion but also by experiences of conflict, resilience, and communal survival [12]. Material evidence further strengthens the historical continuity of the site. Colonial newspapers reported the discovery of ancient objects in Setjang Village, located near the *J alasutra* hills, including ceramic vessels, large plates, and a complete *gamelan* ensemble consisting of approximately twenty kenong and eight large gongs. According to local officials, these objects were believed to have been deliberately buried during the Java War to protect them from destruction and looting [13]. Although the precise ownership of these artifacts remains uncertain, their presence indicates that *J alasutra* once functioned as an important center of ritual and artistic activity. The discovery of gamelan instruments is particularly significant because gamelan has long occupied a central role in Javanese ceremonial life, mediating relationships between humans, ancestors, and the spiritual realm. The significance of this archaeological evidence extends beyond its material value. de Grave notes that ritual objects, performance traditions, and sacred landscapes in Java frequently operate as interconnected systems through which cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations [14]. The rediscovery of buried gamelan instruments therefore serves as a tangible manifestation of the historical memory that continues to animate contemporary ritual life. Rather than representing isolated archaeological remnants, these artifacts function as material anchors linking present day cultural practices with deeper historical experiences embedded within the landscape.

Ethnographic evidence collected during fieldwork demonstrates how these historical narratives continue to inform contemporary understandings of *Kupatan J alasutra*. Interviews

conducted with village elders, ritual custodians (*juru kunci*), cultural activists, and community leaders consistently identified Sunan Geseng as the principal ancestral figure associated with the ritual. Informants emphasized that the celebration should not be understood solely as a post-*Eid* Islamic tradition but also as an expression of gratitude for agricultural abundance and communal prosperity. One village elder explained: "*Kupatan* is our way of remembering Sunan Geseng and thanking God for the harvest. The ritual reminds us that prosperity comes from harmony among people, nature, and divine blessing" (Interview with village elder, Srimulyo, 2025). Such testimonies illustrate how historical memory functions as a mechanism of cultural continuity. As Assmann argues, collective memory is not a passive recollection of the past but an active cultural process through which communities construct meaningful identities [15]. Within the context of *Kupatan Jelasutra*, memories of Sunan Geseng provide moral legitimacy for ritual practices while simultaneously reinforcing social cohesion and a shared sense of belonging among community members. Participant observation further revealed that the sacred geography of "*Tanah Geseng*," particularly the hilltop cemetery where Sunan Geseng is buried, occupies a central position in local cosmology. Pilgrims interviewed during the 2025 ritual described the cemetery not merely as a burial site but as a spiritual center connecting ancestors, agricultural fertility, and divine blessing. Ritual activities including pilgrimage, collective prayer, offerings, and communal feasting transform the landscape into a living arena where historical memory and religious devotion are continuously reproduced. In this regard, the cemetery functions as what Smith describes as a "living heritage space," where memory, belief, and social practice converge in everyday cultural life [1].

3.2. Potrait of the *Kupatan Jelasutra* Ritual : Core Values and Practices

Field observations reveal that *Kupatan Jelasutra* is a complex ritual system involving a sequence of communal activities extending over several weeks. Preparations begin approximately two weeks before the main ceremony through collective cleaning activities, road repairs, cemetery maintenance, and the decoration of ritual spaces. These activities reflect the Javanese concept of *bersih desa*, which symbolically links environmental cleanliness with spiritual purification. Participant observation documented the extensive involvement of villagers across generations. Women collectively prepare ritual foods such as *nasi gurih*, *ingkung*, *puthu kering*, and *ketupat*, while men construct and transport *jodhang* containing offerings and agricultural produce. Such practices demonstrate that the ritual is not an individual religious act but a community wide cultural performance. The symbolic meanings embedded in ritual offerings reveal a sophisticated moral philosophy. Ethnographic interviews indicate that villagers associate *ketupat* with the phrase *ngaku lepat* (acknowledging one's mistakes), emphasizing humility and reconciliation. Similarly, *ingkung* symbolizes human purity and surrender before God, while *nasi gurih* represents offerings dedicated to ancestors. These interpretations correspond to Geertz's argument that ritual symbols function as cultural texts through which communities articulate their worldview [12].

A particularly significant finding concerns the persistence of ritual norms and taboos. Community members continue to observe the requirement that the ritual be held exclusively on *Senin Legi*. Several informants recounted a collective memory regarding a previous attempt to alter the ritual schedule, which allegedly resulted in disruptions and misfortune. Regardless of historical verifiability, such narratives illustrate what Douglas describes as the social power of symbolic boundaries. Through adherence to ritual prescriptions, the community reproduces cultural order and reinforces collective commitment to ancestral traditions [13]. The climax of the ceremony occurs at the cemetery of Sunan Geseng, where prayers, communal offerings, and the distribution of ritual food are conducted. Observation notes indicate that participants perceive the distribution of *ambeng* and agricultural products not simply as food sharing but as the circulation of blessing (*berkah*). Consequently, the ritual becomes a medium through which religious values, social solidarity, and agricultural aspirations are simultaneously expressed.

3.3. *Kupatan Jelasutra* as Local Environmental Ethics

One of the most significant findings of this research is the close relationship between ritual practice and environmental ethics. Ethnographic observation demonstrates that ecological

stewardship is not articulated through formal conservation discourse but is embedded within ritual obligations and communal responsibilities. Preparatory activities involve the cleaning of springs, pathways, sacred sites, and public spaces. Villagers consistently described these activities as expressions of respect toward both ancestors and nature. Such practices reflect the Javanese cosmological principle of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which emphasizes maintaining harmony between human beings and the natural world. Interviews further revealed that community members perceive environmental preservation as a moral obligation rather than a technical intervention. One participant stated: "If we keep the environment clean, we honor both God and our ancestors. Nature is part of our life, not something separate from us" (Interview with ritual participant, 2025). This perspective resonates with contemporary discussions of traditional ecological knowledge, which emphasize the role of cultural values in sustaining environmental management systems [12]. Rather than separating religious and ecological concerns, *Kupatan Jalasutra* integrates them into a single ethical framework. The ritual also demonstrates sustainable resource utilization. Most ceremonial materials are derived from locally available resources, including coconut leaves, agricultural produce, bamboo, and traditional foods. Minimal waste production and reliance on renewable materials illustrate how sustainability principles are embedded within local cultural practices. Similar findings have been reported in studies examining indigenous environmental ethics, where ecological conservation emerges through cultural reproduction rather than formal environmental policies [13], [14]. *Kupatan Jalasutra* can be interpreted as a form of vernacular environmental governance. The ritual functions as a cultural mechanism through which ecological values are transmitted, practiced, and institutionalized across generations.

3.4. Functional Recontextualization: Adapting Tradition in the Modern Era

One of the most significant findings of this research is that *Kupatan Jalasutra* has not remained a static ritual inherited from the past; rather, it has undergone a process of functional recontextualization in response to changing social, economic, and political circumstances. Ethnographic observation conducted during the 2025–2026 ritual cycle indicates that while the core symbolic structure of the ceremony remains closely associated with Sunan Geseng, agrarian gratitude, and communal prayers, its social functions have expanded considerably beyond their original religious context. Community members no longer perceive *Kupatan* merely as a ritual obligation but also as a cultural platform for social integration, local development, cultural education, and economic empowerment. Historical narratives preserved in local manuscripts and oral traditions portray *Kupatan Jalasutra* primarily as an expression of thanksgiving following successful agricultural harvests. However, interviews with village elders and ritual custodians revealed that contemporary participants increasingly interpret the tradition as a medium for strengthening collective identity amid rapid modernization and rural transformation. One senior informant explained that the ritual is now regarded as "*the annual moment when all generations remember who they are and where they come from*" (Interview, ritual elder, Srimulyo, June 2025). Such narratives demonstrate how heritage practices continuously acquire new meanings while maintaining symbolic continuity with the past.

The ritual's adaptive character is particularly visible in its social functions. Preparations for *Kupatan* involve extensive communal labor, including village cleaning campaigns, maintenance of pilgrimage routes, restoration of public spaces, and preparation of ritual offerings. These activities mobilize residents across age groups and social backgrounds, reinforcing social solidarity through collective participation. Similar findings have been reported in studies of other *Kupatan* traditions in Java, where ritual activities function as mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion and strengthening communal bonds [8], [11]. The transformation of *Kupatan Jalasutra* into a cultural tourism attraction further illustrates this process of recontextualization. Field observations indicate that the ritual attracts visitors from various regions of Yogyakarta, Central Java, and beyond, particularly during the night market and cultural performances held before the main ceremony. Temporary economic activities emerge throughout the village, including food stalls, handicraft sales, parking services, and local product exhibitions. Such developments have generated additional income opportunities for residents while simultaneously increasing public recognition of *Jalasutra* as a cultural

destination. Previous research similarly identifies *Kupatan Jelasutra* as a cultural asset capable of strengthening local economies and contributing to sustainable tourism development [6], [8]. Importantly, the economic dimension does not replace the ritual's spiritual significance. Rather, local actors consciously frame tourism activities as supporting mechanisms for cultural preservation. Village leaders consistently emphasize that economic benefits should remain subordinate to the ritual's primary purpose as an expression of gratitude and communal remembrance. This reflects what heritage scholars describe as adaptive continuity, whereby traditional practices remain culturally meaningful while accommodating contemporary needs and opportunities.

Another dimension of recontextualization involves intergenerational transmission. Participation by children, youth organizations, women's groups, and community associations transforms the ritual into a living educational arena. Young people learn not only ceremonial procedures but also the ethical principles embedded within the tradition, including respect for ancestors, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), social harmony (*rukun*), and responsibility toward the environment. This process strengthens cultural resilience by ensuring that heritage knowledge is reproduced through practice rather than solely through formal instruction. Such findings correspond with broader discussions on intangible cultural heritage, which emphasize community participation and intergenerational transmission as fundamental mechanisms for safeguarding living traditions. Consequently, *Kupatan Jelasutra* demonstrates that cultural traditions survive not because they resist change but because they successfully negotiate change. The ritual illustrates how local communities actively reinterpret inherited practices to address contemporary realities while preserving their symbolic foundations. Rather than representing a relic of the past, *Kupatan Jelasutra* functions as a dynamic cultural institution that continually mediates relationships between memory and modernity, spirituality and development, heritage conservation and social transformation.

3.5. *Kupatan Jelasutra* and the Strengthening of Cultural Identity

Beyond its religious and social dimensions, ethnographic evidence suggests that *Kupatan Jelasutra* embodies a distinctive form of local environmental ethics rooted in Javanese cosmological thought. The ritual reflects the principle of *memayu hayuning bawana*, a philosophical concept emphasizing the moral responsibility of humans to maintain harmony between society, nature, and the divine. Within this worldview, environmental stewardship is not understood merely as a practical necessity but as a spiritual obligation intrinsically linked to communal well being. Field observations conducted before the ritual revealed extensive collective efforts to clean public spaces, pilgrimage routes, sacred sites, water sources, and agricultural landscapes. Community members consistently described these activities as part of the ritual itself rather than as separate environmental programs. The act of cleaning the village symbolizes both physical and spiritual purification, reflecting a belief that environmental order and moral order are inseparable. Such practices correspond with studies demonstrating that traditional cultural systems often function as effective mechanisms for community-based environmental management and biodiversity conservation [13], [14].

The sacred landscape surrounding the tomb of Sunan Geseng further reinforces ecological consciousness. Local narratives portray the site not merely as a historical monument but as a spiritually significant space requiring continuous care and protection. Interviews with custodians indicated that maintaining vegetation, preserving springs, and preventing environmental degradation around the sacred area are considered moral responsibilities inherited from previous generations. Similar patterns have been documented in sacred ecological traditions elsewhere, where cultural beliefs contribute directly to environmental sustainability. Environmental values are also embedded within ritual materials and offerings. Most ceremonial components are derived from locally available agricultural products, including rice, coconuts, palm leaves, vegetables, and traditional foods. The extensive use of biodegradable materials minimizes waste production while simultaneously reinforcing the symbolic connection between ritual life and agrarian livelihoods. Such practices illustrate how ecological sustainability has long been integrated into local cultural systems, predating contemporary environmental discourse. The symbolism of *ketupat* itself further reflects environmental and ethical principles. Community interpretations connect the concept of *kupat*

to *ngaku lepat* (acknowledging one's mistakes) and *aku papat* (the four ethical paths of *lebaran*, *luberan*, *leburan*, and *laburan*). These values encourage humility, generosity, reconciliation, and moral renewal, all of which contribute to harmonious social and ecological relationships. In this sense, environmental stewardship is inseparable from ethical self-cultivation, reflecting a holistic worldview in which personal morality and ecological responsibility are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, *Kupatan Jalasutra* should be understood not only as a ritual celebration but also as a living environmental ethic. Through collective labor, sacred landscape management, sustainable resource use, and moral teachings embedded within ritual symbolism, the tradition provides a locally grounded model of sustainability that integrates ecological conservation, cultural heritage preservation, and spiritual practice. This finding contributes to contemporary discussions on cultural sustainability by demonstrating how intangible cultural heritage can function as an effective framework for community based environmental stewardship [10], [13].

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the *Kupatan Jalasutra* ritual in Tanah Geseng, Srimulyo Village, Bantul, functions as a dynamic form of living heritage through which historical memory, spiritual values, ecological ethics, and communal identity are continuously negotiated, transmitted, and renewed. Based on the integration of historical sources, oral traditions, ethnographic observations, in depth interviews, and grounded theory analysis, the research reveals that *Kupatan Jalasutra* is far more than a post harvest thanksgiving ceremony. It serves as a cultural institution that connects local communities with their ancestral past while simultaneously responding to contemporary social, cultural, and environmental challenges. The ritual sustains collective memories surrounding Sunan Geseng, local historical narratives, and community values that continue to shape the cultural landscape of Srimulyo today. The findings answer the central research question by demonstrating that the contemporary vitality of *Kupatan Jalasutra* is rooted in its capacity for recontextualization. Rather than experiencing cultural decline, the ritual has adapted to changing circumstances while preserving its symbolic core. Historical narratives associated with Sunan Geseng, agrarian gratitude, and collective memories concerning royal encounters particularly those preserved in community oral traditions relating to Sultan Hamengku Buwana IX, continue to provide cultural legitimacy and meaning. At the same time, the ritual has acquired new functions as a medium for cultural education, intergenerational transmission, environmental stewardship, social cohesion, local economic development, and cultural tourism. This adaptive capacity explains why *Kupatan Jalasutra* remains socially relevant despite rapid modernization and changing rural lifestyles.

A significant finding of this research is the identification of *Kupatan Jalasutra* as a form of local environmental ethics embedded within ritual practice. The tradition demonstrates that ecological consciousness is not articulated through formal environmental discourse alone but is deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual practices. Collective activities such as cleaning pilgrimage routes, maintaining sacred spaces, preserving village environments, protecting water sources, and utilizing locally available ritual materials reflect a worldview grounded in the Javanese principle of *memayu hayuning bawana* the obligation to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and the divine. In this context, environmental stewardship becomes a moral and spiritual responsibility rather than merely a technical conservation effort. The findings therefore contribute to broader discussions on the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and sustainability by illustrating how local rituals can function as practical mechanisms of environmental governance and ecological awareness. This study also contributes to understanding the role of cultural rituals in strengthening identity and social resilience. *Kupatan Jalasutra* continues to reinforce collective belonging through communal labor, ritual participation, artistic performances, and shared commemorative practices. Activities such as *gotong royong*, communal food preparation, *kendhuri*, pilgrimage, and cultural performances create opportunities for social interaction across generations. Through these practices, cultural knowledge is not simply preserved but actively reproduced and reinterpreted. The ritual therefore functions as a living educational space where younger

generations learn ethical values, historical narratives, communal responsibilities, and cultural identity through direct participation rather than formal instruction.

Theoretically, this research contributes to heritage studies by proposing that living rituals should be understood not as static cultural remnants but as dynamic arenas of cultural negotiation. Previous studies of *Kupatan* traditions have generally focused on symbolism, religious meanings, social harmony, or tourism potential. In contrast, this study introduces a recontextualization perspective that explains how communities actively reinterpret inherited cultural knowledge in response to contemporary social and environmental realities. The findings suggest that cultural continuity is achieved not through rigid preservation but through adaptive transformation. From this perspective, *Kupatan Jelasutra* represents a form of cultural resilience in which tradition survives precisely because it remains capable of generating new meanings while maintaining historical continuity. The novelty of this research lies in three interconnected aspects. First, it integrates historical manuscripts, colonial records, oral traditions, and contemporary ethnographic evidence within a single analytical framework. Second, it demonstrates the interconnected relationship between cultural identity formation, environmental ethics, and heritage sustainability within one ritual system. Third, it situates *Kupatan Jelasutra* within broader debates concerning cultural advancement (*Pemajuan Kebudayaan*), sustainable development, and living heritage governance, thereby extending the discussion beyond ritual symbolism toward issues of community resilience, ecological stewardship, and cultural sustainability.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that cultural heritage policies should move beyond documentation oriented preservation toward community centered safeguarding strategies that strengthen participation, intergenerational transmission, and environmental awareness. *Kupatan Jelasutra* illustrates how living heritage can simultaneously contribute to cultural continuity, social solidarity, ecological sustainability, and local economic vitality. As such, the tradition offers an important model for integrating intangible cultural heritage into broader frameworks of sustainable cultural development at local and national levels. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. Some historical narratives remain primarily preserved through oral traditions and collective memory, making archival verification difficult in certain cases. Future research should therefore expand investigations into royal archives, colonial records, local manuscripts, and comparative studies of similar *Kupatan* traditions across Java. Comparative ethnographic research would further enrich understanding of how different communities reinterpret ritual traditions under varying social, cultural, and environmental conditions. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of how living heritage continues to function as a resource for sustainability, cultural resilience, and community empowerment in the contemporary world.

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Declarations

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