

# Exploring the Religious Values in the Stages of the Saparan Bekakak Tradition in Mount Gamping, Sleman, Yogyakarta

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## Abstract

The Saparan Bekakak Tradition in Mount Gamping, Sleman, Yogyakarta, is one of the cultural treasures that the local community continues to preserve. This tradition is held annually in the month of Sapar according to the Javanese calendar as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty and a plea for protection and prosperity for the local community. This study examines the religious values inherent in each stage of the Saparan Bekakak Tradition. The qualitative research method uses data collection techniques, including observation, in-depth interviews, and literature studies. Data analysis is conducted descriptively to identify and understand the symbolism and religious meanings in the ceremony's processions. The results show that the Saparan Bekakak Tradition embodies various religious values reflected in the ceremony's symbols, specific rituals, and the community's beliefs in spiritual power. Each stage of the procession, from preparation to execution to closure, holds profound religious significance closely related to local beliefs and wisdom. These values encompass respect for ancestors, gratitude to God, and requests for blessings and protection for the community. This study provides an essential contribution to documenting and understanding the religious values within the Saparan Bekakak Tradition, which can serve as a foundation for efforts to preserve local culture and traditions. Thus, the results of this research are expected to enrich the understanding of Indonesia's cultural wealth and support efforts to protect this valuable cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** religious values, cultural traditions, ritual stages, Saparan Bekakak, Gamping mountain.

The Saparan Bekakak tradition in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, holds immense cultural and religious significance within the local Javanese community. This annual ritual involves a series of intricate ceremonies culminating in the symbolic presentation of a Bekakak, a ritual puppet, to the spirits. The tradition is deeply

rooted in the community's beliefs, values, and spiritual heritage, showcasing a blend of cultural practices and religious devotion (Purnamawati et al., 2022). The practice of Saparan Bekakak reflects the community's commitment to preserving and sustaining their ancient legacy through religious ecotourism villages. These

villages serve as a platform where religion plays a crucial role in maintaining the cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development (Aulet & Vidal, 2019). The intertwining of religion and cultural change shapes the foundation of these villages, highlighting the importance of religious traditions in maintaining the community's identity and values.

Moreover, the role of religion in society extends beyond cultural practices to influence various aspects of life, including ethical considerations in corporate social responsibility. Studies have shown a positive relationship between religiosity and adherence to Christian values in corporate social responsibility, particularly in product responsibility, emissions reduction, and resource management (Dimic et al., 2024). This highlights how religious values impact individual beliefs, organizational practices, and societal responsibilities. The Saparan Bekakak tradition is a testament to the intricate connection between culture and religion in shaping communities' beliefs, values, and practices. It exemplifies how religious traditions are a means of spiritual expression and serve as pillars for cultural preservation, sustainable development, and ethical considerations in various spheres of life.

Understanding the religious values embedded in traditions like the Saparan Bekakak ritual in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, is crucial for comprehending the broader social and cultural fabric of the communities upholding them. Religious values are the foundation of cultural identity and continuity, influencing individuals' and communities' behaviours, practices, and worldviews. By exploring these values within the context of the Saparan Bekakak tradition, we gain profound insights into how religious beliefs intertwine with cultural expressions and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage (Fernández-Álvarez et al., 2022). The intertwining of religious beliefs and cultural practices is a common theme in various contexts, reflecting the deep-rooted connection between spirituality and cultural identity. Studies have

explored how religiosity influences consumer behavior, with prayer, religious exclusivism, divine retribution, frugality, and religious community involvement identified as antecedents that drive differences in consumer behavior (Agarwala et al., 2019).

Moreover, the role of religious values extends beyond individual behaviors to societal norms and practices. Research has shown that family religiosity can contribute to anti-consumption lifestyles, indicating how religious values within the family environment can shape broader societal trends (Casabayó et al., 2020). In cultural heritage and sustainable development, preserving ancient legacies through religious traditions plays a crucial role. Religious ecotourism villages, such as those in Bali, Indonesia, rely on preserving religious traditions to sustain cultural heritage (Mukhtar et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the interplay between religious values and ethical considerations is evident in studies linking religiosity to corporate social responsibility. Research has highlighted how adherence to Christian values can influence organizational practices related to product responsibility, emissions reduction, and resource management (Onyekuru et al., 2021). Exploring religious values within traditions like the Saparan Bekakak ritual provides a window into the intricate tapestry of beliefs, practices, and cultural heritage that define communities. By understanding the profound influence of religious values on individual behaviors, societal norms, and organizational practices, we can appreciate the multifaceted role of spirituality in shaping identities, preserving traditions, and guiding ethical considerations in diverse settings.

This study investigates the religious values inherent in the various stages of the Saparan Bekakak tradition. Specifically, it seeks to identify and analyze the expressions of reverence, communal harmony, and spiritual purification throughout the preparatory, ritual performance, community involvement, and post-

ritual stages. By doing so, this research not only documents the rich cultural tapestry of the tradition but also highlights the significance of religious values in sustaining and revitalizing cultural practices.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows: the introduction provides an overview of existing research on the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The methodology section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. The stages of the Saparan Bekakak tradition are then described in detail, followed by an analysis of the religious values identified in each stage. The discussion section interprets the findings in the context of existing literature and explores their broader implications. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the essential findings and suggests directions for future research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the religious values embedded in the stages of the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The methodology encompasses field observations, interviews, and document analysis to gather comprehensive and nuanced data. The following sections detail the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

### Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth and complexity of the religious values within the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The research method employed in this study is qualitative, aiming to generate authentic and organic understanding. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a type of inquiry that explores and comprehends the meanings of several individuals or groups related to social issues (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research, in general, can be applied to study various aspects of societal life, history, human behavior, concepts or phenomena, and

other social issues. The approach used in this research is an anthropo-literary perspective that links literature with cultural contexts. Although facts can serve as data sources, not all are considered data in literary anthropology research. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the symbolic meanings, community interactions, and personal experiences associated with the tradition. The study is structured to systematically analyze each stage of the tradition, providing a holistic understanding of its religious dimensions.

The background of this research is set in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The selection of the Special Region of Yogyakarta as the research background is due to its abundance of folktales still used by its community to harmonize with nature through a series of traditional rituals and beliefs. These tales also contain commands, prohibitions, advice, and so on. The folktales passed down serve as the basis of knowledge and attitudes for the community to navigate life. This concept is essential to in-depth research on the community's understanding of the values within folktales in Yogyakarta. The values in question are related to the relationship between folktales and natural phenomena and the depiction of past societies' responses to these events. This research was conducted for four months, from December 2023 to March 2024. In detail, the following Figure 1 outlines the schedule for the implementation of this research.



Figure 1. Research Stages

In this study, the ethnographic strategy is using an emic approach. This approach refers to analyzing functions and meanings in folktales in Yogyakarta from the community's perspective as owners and believers of these stories. To ensure the accuracy of the data and information obtained, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with practitioners with deep knowledge and local cultural experiences (Fuadi et al., 2024). This strategy is known as ethnography or participatory observation, allowing researchers to gain a deeper understanding of language and its relationship with culture by observing it in real social contexts (Hossain & Eisberg, 2020).

#### Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with extensive knowledge and involvement in the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The sample included diverse individuals to capture a wide range of perspectives. Key informants were identified based on their roles in the tradition, knowledge of local customs, and willingness to participate in the study.

#### Data Collection Methods

Field observations were conducted during the annual Saparan Bekakak festival in Yogyakarta. Observations focused on the preparatory activities, the ritual performance, community involvement, and the post-ritual ceremonies. Detailed field notes and photographic documentation were used to capture the visual and experiential aspects of the tradition. Relevant documents, including historical records, local government reports, and community publications, were analyzed to provide contextual background and support the findings from field observations and interviews. These documents offered additional perspectives on the significance and evolution of the Saparan Bekakak tradition.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including local religious leaders, community elders, participants, and organizers of the Saparan Bekakak tradition. A total of 20 interviews were conducted, each

lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview questions were designed to elicit insights into the religious values, personal experiences, and community perceptions associated with the tradition. Data for this research were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants consisting of history experts, Javanese cultural experts, and members of the general public knowledgeable about folktales in Yogyakarta. This technique was chosen to obtain the accuracy of the folklore version obtained to be combined with the written version in historical documents (Fazliev et al., 2019). Interviews were conducted using a structured technique where the researcher prepared a list of questions to obtain the expected data (Miles, Matthew B., Huberman, 1994).

Data validity was ensured through the triangulation technique of data and sources (Dama, 2019). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results among several informants. Versions of the story among informants may differ, thus requiring comparing story versions to obtain the most relevant version. Meanwhile, data triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results among several informants with historical document analysis about folktales in Yogyakarta. Versions of the story from interviews may differ from historical documents about folktales in Yogyakarta, thus requiring integration between interview results and historical records.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, allowing for identifying and interpreting critical themes related to religious values in the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The study involved several steps:

1. Transcription: All interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.
2. Coding: Transcripts, field notes, and documents were coded using qualitative data analysis software. Initial codes were generated based on the research questions and theoretical framework.

3. Thematic Analysis: Codes were grouped into themes corresponding to the religious values identified in each stage of the tradition. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance.

4. Interpretation: The themes were interpreted in the context of the existing literature and theoretical framework, providing a comprehensive understanding of the religious values in the Saparan Bekakak tradition.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

### Stages of the Saparan Bekakak Tradition

The Bekakak Ceremony in Gamping Mountain is also known as the Saparan tradition because it is held in the month of Sapar in the Javanese calendar. Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I, the first king of the Yogyakarta Mataram Palace, initiated this ceremony. Saparan is derived from the word "sapar" with the suffix "-an." In Javanese, the "-an" can signify behavior or action. Meanwhile, "sapar" is associated with the Arabic word *Safar*, which means the second month in the Arabic calendar. Thus, Saparan refers to the ceremonial activities conducted every Sapar month.

In this ceremony, "Bekakak" represents the figures of Kyai Wirasuta and Nyai Wirasuta, both loyal servants or soldiers of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I who died in a landslide on Mount Gamping. The Bekakak in this Saparan tradition is a seated bridal doll made from glutinous rice flour, as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 2. Representation of Bekakak

The Gamping Saparan ceremony honors the spirits of Kyai Wirasuta and his family. Kyai Wirasuta was a devoted servant who carried the royal umbrella for Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I and did not relocate when the court moved from the Ambarketawang palace to the new palace. Together with his family, he remained in Gamping. Kyai Wirasuta and Nyai Wirasuta are considered the pioneers of the population in Kapanewon Gamping. The timing of the Gamping Saparan ceremony has been fixed to fall on any Friday during the Sapar month between the 10th and 20th. The implementation of the Gamping Saparan ceremony is detailed in several stages, as described in Figure 3.

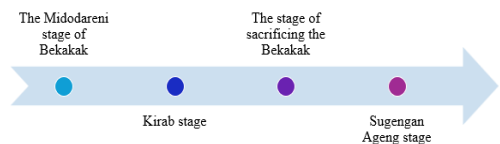


Figure 3. The stages of the traditional Saparan Bekakak ceremony

The ceremony venue is adjusted according to the ceremony's execution. The ceremony preparation is divided into two types, namely Saparan Bekakak and Sugengan Ageng. Preparation for Saparan Bekakak mainly involves making bekakak from glutinous rice flour and preparing juruh, which takes 8 hours. During flour making, it is accompanied by

gejong lesung or kothekan, which has various rhythms, including kebogiro, thong-thongs, dhengthek, wayangan, kutut manggung, and others.

Once the rice pounding is completed, the making of bekakak, genderuwo (a scary supernatural figure in Javanese belief), kembang mayang, and offerings are then carried out. The bekakak forms for males and females are created

to resemble the usual bridal forms, with two pairs of bekakak couples styled in Solo (Surakarta) fashion and another pair styled in Yogyakarta fashion. A rule that has been strictly adhered to until now is that women prepare the raw materials while men handle the making of bekakak. Table 1 details the differences between Solo and Yogyakarta styles.

Table 1. The differences between the bridal styles of Solo (Surakarta) and Yogyakarta

Gender	Solo Style	Yogyakarta Style
Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A headband adorned with <i>Chester</i></li><li>• Red shawl necklace</li><li>• <i>Sungsun</i> necklace</li><li>• <i>Bangun tulak</i></li><li>• Blue belt with <i>slepe</i></li><li>• <i>Keris</i> dagger adorned with jasmine flowers</li><li>• <i>Kelat bau</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Red-colored head covering</li><li>• Blue shawl necklace</li><li>• <i>Sungsun</i> necklace</li><li>• Blue belt with <i>slepe</i></li><li>• Lereng cloth</li><li>• <i>kelat bahu</i> and <i>sumping</i></li><li>• Green <i>kemben</i></li><li>• <i>bangun tulak</i></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wearing a blue-colored <i>kemben</i></li><li>• Red shawl necklace</li><li>• <i>Sungsun</i> necklace</li><li>• Face adorned with traditional makeup (Paes)</li><li>• Hair arranged with flowers and <i>mentul</i></li><li>• <i>kelat bahu</i></li><li>• Wearing earrings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wearing a blue-colored <i>kemben</i></li><li>• Red shawl necklace</li><li>• <i>Sungsun</i> necklace</li><li>• Face adorned with traditional makeup (Paes)</li><li>• Hair arranged with flowers and <i>mentul</i></li><li>• <i>kelat bahu</i></li><li>• Wearing earrings</li></ul>

The offerings for the bekakak ceremony are divided into three groups. The first two groups are intended for the two jalis, each placed alongside the bekakak bride and groom. The third group is placed inside the jodhang as a complementary arrangement for the ceremony offerings. The various offerings placed alongside the bekakak couple include fragrant rice (wuduk) placed in a small pengaron; coconut milk rice (nasi liwet) placed in a small kendhil along with its garnishes of dhadhap leaf, turi leaf, and kara leaf, boiled together; raw eggs and sambal gepeng; tumpeng urubing dhamar, kelak kencana, pecel pitik, jangan menir, urip-uripan lele, rindang antep, grilled chicken, thin chicken slices, bitter coffee and sweet coffee drinks,

jenever, cigarettes/cigars, rujak degan, rujak dheplok, sweetened charcoal, rice, sugarcane, pedupaan, candu (implying), jackfruit sabrang, raw gecok, ulam mripat, ulam jeroan, raw gereh.

These offerings are placed in sudhi and glasses, then placed on the jodhang including sekul wajar (rice ambeng) with various side dishes: sambal goreng waluh, sautéed green beans, rempeyek, crispy tempeh, bergedel, entho-entho, and others; sekul galang lutut, ordinary galang sekul, tempe rombyong placed in bamboo cething, tumpeng megana, sanggan (king bananas paired), complete sirih, various jenang, rasulan (fragrant rice), ingkung chicken, kolak (dessert), apem (traditional cake), randha

kemul, canned bread, grilled jadah, emping, klepon (green rice ball), tukon pasar, sekar konyoh, incense, jlupak baru, live chicken, coconut, and the offerings above are placed in sudhi then everything is placed in five ancak, two ancak are included in jali distributed to those who create flower arrangements, bekakak, and those who make flour, while pigeons in cages are also prepared as in the figure 4.



Figure 4. Sesaji

#### Midodareni Bekakak

Although this bekakak ritual takes the form of a simulated wedding, according to tradition, it also requires a midodareni ceremony. The word midodareni comes from the Javanese language, widodari, which means angels. It signifies that on the midodareni night, angels descend from heaven to bless the bekakak couple. This ceremony occurs at night (Thursday night) starting at 8 PM. Two joli containing the bekakak couple and a jodhang with offerings,

accompanied by a pair of husband and wife genderuwo and wewe (two frightening supernatural beings in Javanese belief), are paraded to the village hall of Ambarketawang.

The procession order from the preparation site to the village hall of Ambarketawang is as follows:

- a. Line of flag bearers
- b. Escort troop from Gamping tengah
- c. Joli with the bekakak couple and jodhang
- d. Reyog from Gamping kidul
- e. Other escorts

Subsequently, all joli and others are handed over to the village chief of Ambarketawang. On the midodareni night, a ritual night is like a real wedding, held in the pavilion or accompanied by shadow puppetry, uyon-uyon, and reyog performances. Tahlilan prayers are conducted at the house of Ki Juru Permono by the elders of Kemusuk, followed by a ritual night attended by the surrounding residents. Meanwhile, the ritual night is held at the Ambarketawang reception hall.

The procession of the bekakak bride and groom

The procession of the bekakak bride and groom is a parade or procession that carries the bekakak couple's joli to the slaughter place. The grand offering ceremony, Sugengan Ageng brought from Patran to the reception hall, is also paraded first to the village hall. The sequence of the traditional Saparan Bekakak ceremony procession is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The sequence of the procession for the Saparan Bekakak ceremony

Number	Show	Additional Information
1	<i>Reyog &amp; jathilan</i>	Traditional performances from Patran.
2	<i>Sesaji</i>	Sugengan Ageng
3	<i>Barisan prajurit dari Gamping Tengah</i>	The troop of warriors from Gamping Tengah, dressed in black kagok pants, colorful cloth, lurk shirt, and destalan, resemble Daeng warriors. They carry flutes, drums, and mung-mung.
4	<i>Prajurit putri</i>	Female warriors carrying shields and swords, wearing colorful attire, <i>cinde</i> long pants, and <i>loreng</i> cloth.
5	<i>Demang &amp; friends</i>	Demang officials were wearing kain, black <i>beskap</i> shirts with yellow sashes.
6	<i>Jagabaya</i>	The attire includes a black <i>beskap</i> and a red sash.

Number	Show	Additional Information
7	<i>Kaum or rois</i>	Wearing surjan cloth with a white sash.
8	<i>Pembawa tombak berbungkus cindhe beruntaikan bunga melati</i>	Wearing black kagok pants, lurik shirt, wulung tie, and cindhe sash. Three maidens wear purple-like cloth green shirts with red sashes, each carrying replicas of hedgehogs, gemak, and doves.
9	<i>Barisan pembawa tombak</i>	Wearing red pants, red lurik shirts, and red-orange ties.
10	<i>Peserta Pria</i>	Men are in red uniform, surjan, and colorful sampur.
11	<i>Prajurit anak-anak</i>	Boys and girls were carrying <i>jemparing</i> (arrows).
12	<i>Joli sesaji (jodhang)</i>	Officials carried them in black kagok uniforms red shirts with blue ties.
13	<i>Barisan selawatan</i>	Religious singing group.
14	<i>Joli bekakak Gunung Kliling</i>	<i>Bekakak</i> couple from Gunung Kliling.
15	<i>Barisan peserta</i>	Carrying kembang mayang, cengkir, bendhe, tombak, and luwuk all shaded.
16	<i>Barisan berkuda</i>	A line of horses.
17	<i>Barisan pembawa panji-panji berwarna-warni</i>	Wearing cloth, light blue surjan and black tie.
18	<i>Tiga pemudi</i>	Carrying many dhalang, ardawalika sawung galing

The traditional ceremony departed from the village hall towards the former Gung Ambarketawang site, where the first sacrificial ritual occurred. Then, it proceeded to the second sacrificial site at Gunung Killing.

The stage of sacrificing the Bekakak

When the procession arrived at Gunung Ambarketawang, the first palanquin carrying the bridal couple was carried towards the cave entrance. Then, the religious leaders (ulama) instructed them to stop and lead a prayer. After the prayer, the rice cake effigy representing the bridal couple was sacrificed, cut into pieces, and distributed among the visitors and other offerings. The procession continued to Gunung Kliling for the second bridal couple sacrifice ceremony, where another effigy was distributed to the attendees. Offerings in the form of ceremonial food were distributed to the officials at the final sacrificial site.

Sugengan Ageng

Ki Juru Permana led the Sugengan Ageng ceremony held at Pesanggrahan Ambarketawang that day. The venue was adorned with young coconut leaves (janur) and decorated with green and yellow cloth. The offerings for Sugengan Ageng brought from Patran included jodhang, jali kembang mayang, ivory coconut (cengkir), amerta water, ceremonial vessels (bokor tempat

sibar-sibar), heirlooms, and a ceremonial umbrella, all neatly arranged in their respective places.

The ceremony took place at Mount Kliling until its completion. It commenced with incense burning, followed by Ki Juru Permana proclaiming the commencement of the Sugengan Ageng ceremony and reciting prayers in Arabic. Upon conclusion, Ki Juru Permana released a pair of white doves. The release of these doves was accompanied by applause from the attendees who witnessed it. Subsequently, the offerings of Sugengan Ageng placed within the jali were distributed to all present, particularly the favored traditional foods of Sultan Hamengku Buwana I.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study offer a comprehensive understanding of the religious values embedded in the Saparan Bekakak tradition. These values are integral to the tradition and are crucial in reinforcing communal identity, spiritual beliefs, and cultural continuity. This discussion section interprets the findings in the context of existing literature, explores the broader implications, and addresses the contributions and limitations of the study.

The Saparan Bekakak tradition, as revealed through this study, embodies a rich tapestry of religious values that intricately weave through



each phase of the ritual. The preparatory stage of the tradition serves as a platform to showcase values of reverence and communal harmony (Sari, 2023). This phase underscores the significance of collective effort within the community and the deep-rooted respect for spiritual elements integral to the ritual. As the community comes together to prepare for the ritual, a sense of unity and shared purpose is palpable, emphasizing the communal bond and the importance of working together in harmony. Transitioning to the ritual performance stage, the essence of spiritual purification and ancestral connection permeates the air, as highlighted in the study (Yanuartuti & Winarko, 2019). This pivotal moment is when the community cleans and honors their spiritual lineage. The participants immerse themselves in the ritual, seeking purification and a profound connection with their ancestors, reinforcing their cultural and religious heritage. The spiritual undertones of this stage are palpable, emphasizing the community's deep-rooted beliefs and practices.

Moving on to the community involvement stage, the values of collective identity and reciprocity take center stage, as supported by the research (Pajarianto et al., 2022). This phase accentuates the importance of social cohesion and mutual respect among community members. Through active participation and engagement in the ritual, individuals strengthen their bonds with one another, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity. The reciprocity embedded in this stage nurtures a culture of giving and receiving within the community, further solidifying social ties. Finally, as the ritual culminates, the post-ritual stage emerges as a time for reflection, gratitude, and the continuity of tradition, as indicated in the study (Suharyanto et al., 2023). This phase is crucial for transmitting cultural and religious values to future generations. Participants engage in introspection, expressing gratitude for the experience and reflecting on the significance of upholding tradition. By passing down these values to the next generation, the community ensures the preservation of its rich cultural

heritage and religious practices for years to come. The Saparan Bekakak tradition embodies a holistic journey that encompasses reverence, spiritual purification, community cohesion, and the continuity of cultural and religious values. Each stage of the ritual intricately weaves together these elements, creating a tapestry of tradition that binds the community together and reinforces their shared beliefs and practices.

The Saparan Bekakak tradition, as explored in this study, aligns with Geertz's interpretive anthropology, emphasizing the symbolic and meaning-making aspects of cultural practices (Suddaby, 2019; Suddaby et al., 2023). This tradition is a significant symbolic representation of the community's spiritual beliefs and values, reinforcing their collective identity and cultural continuity. Additionally, Turner's theory of ritual process offers insight into the transformative and unifying functions of the tradition (McLaughlin et al., 2019). The Saparan Bekakak ritual unites the community, fostering a sense of solidarity and togetherness while reinforcing their shared values and beliefs.

The initial phase of the Saparan Bekakak tradition, characterized by reverence and communal harmony, resonates with Geertz's focus on the symbolic nature of cultural practices (Khairil et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2023; Yoesoef & Nur Sari Dewi, 2023). This phase demonstrates the community's collective reverence and respect for spiritual elements, embodying the symbolic expression of their beliefs. As the community prepares for the ritual, they engage in activities with deep symbolic significance, strengthening their cultural identity and spiritual values. Moving to the ritual performance phase, where spiritual purification and ancestral connections are highlighted, the symbolic essence of the tradition becomes more pronounced (Himawan, 2020; Japutra et al., 2022; Martínez-Jurado, 2023; Qomaruddin & Indawati, 2019; Suprina et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2021). Participants immerse themselves in cleansing and honoring their spiritual lineage, participating in symbolic practices that link them to their ancestors and

cultural heritage. This phase illustrates the transformative impact of rituals in reinforcing communal bonds and spiritual beliefs, as emphasized by Turner's theory.

The community engagement phase of the Saparan Bekakak tradition, emphasizing collective identity and reciprocity, further underscores the symbolic nature of the ritual (Avdukic et al., 2023; Carney et al., 2024; Demmallino et al., 2021; Mavhura & Mushure, 2019; Vinciguerra, 2023). Community members enhance their bonds and reinforce their shared values through active involvement and mutual respect. This phase symbolizes social cohesion and unity, reflecting the community's dedication to upholding their cultural and religious values. Lastly, the post-ritual phase, focusing on reflection, gratitude, and the perpetuation of tradition, symbolically transmits cultural and religious values to future generations (Leung, 2021; Lipnicka & Peciakowski, 2021; Lo, 2018; Murtza & Murtaza, 2023; Ulfa et al., 2019). By reflecting on the ritual's significance, expressing gratitude, and ensuring the tradition's continuity, the community symbolically passes down its heritage to the next generation, perpetuating the symbolic importance of the Saparan Bekakak tradition. In essence, the Saparan Bekakak tradition embodies a symbolic journey intertwining spiritual beliefs, cultural values, and communal identity, echoing Geertz's interpretive anthropology and Turner's theory of ritual process.

#### Broader Implications

The implications of these findings extend beyond the specific context of the Saparan Bekakak tradition. The study highlights the crucial role of religious values in sustaining cultural traditions and fostering communal cohesion. By emphasizing values such as reverence, communal harmony, spiritual purification, and reciprocity, the tradition not only preserves cultural heritage but also strengthens the community's social fabric. These insights can be applied to similar cultural practices in other contexts, offering a

comparative perspective on the role of religious values in cultural traditions. Understanding how religious values are expressed and reinforced in different cultural practices can provide valuable lessons for preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage in diverse settings.

#### Contributions to the Field

This study makes several important contributions to religious studies and cultural anthropology. Firstly, it provides a detailed and systematic analysis of the religious values in the Saparan Bekakak tradition, filling a gap in the existing literature. Secondly, it employs a robust theoretical framework integrating interpretive anthropology and ritual process theory, offering a comprehensive understanding of the tradition's religious dimensions. Lastly, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of religion and cultural practices, highlighting the significance of religious values in sustaining cultural traditions and fostering communal cohesion.

#### Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The qualitative nature of the research means that the findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other cultural settings. Additionally, the study relies on the perspectives of a limited number of participants, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences and interpretations within the community. Future research could address these limitations by employing a mixed-methods approach and expanding the participant pool to include a wider range of voices and perspectives.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should explore the dynamic interactions between religious values and cultural practices in different contexts, examining how these values evolve and adapt over time. Comparative studies of similar traditions in other cultures could provide valuable insights into the universal and context-specific aspects of religious values in cultural practices. Additionally, research could

investigate the impact of modernization and globalization on preserving and transforming cultural traditions, exploring how communities navigate these changes while maintaining their cultural and religious heritage.

## CONCLUSIONS

The religious values in the Saparan Bekakak tradition are also reflected in various symbols used. Bekakak is a symbol of sacrifice, mountains are a symbol of majesty, and various other attributes have profound meanings associated with the beliefs and spiritual values of the community. These symbols serve as a medium to convey religious messages to the community. The tradition also demonstrates that the religious values in Javanese society are rich and complex. Through the Saparan Bekakak tradition, values such as piety, gratitude, and respect for ancestors continue to be preserved and taught to each generation. The richness of these religious values is an important part of the cultural identity of Javanese society. The Saparan Bekakak tradition can be seen as a form of dedication and homage to the Almighty. These values are reflected in prayers and hopes offered during the procession. Each stage of this ritual carries profound meanings that depict the relationship between humans, God, and the universe. The Saparan Bekakak tradition in Mount Gamping Sleman Yogyakarta reflects deep religious values and local wisdom that must be preserved. Through this tradition, the community maintains a harmonious relationship with nature and ancestors and instills noble values in the younger generation. The

sustainability of this tradition depends heavily on the collective awareness of the community in preserving their cultural heritage.

This study has explored the religious values embedded in the stages of the Saparan Bekakak tradition in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Through a detailed analysis of the preparatory, ritual performance, community involvement, and post-ritual stages, the research has identified key religious values such as reverence, communal harmony, spiritual purification, connection to ancestry, collective identity, reciprocity, reflection, and gratitude. These values are integral to the tradition and are crucial in reinforcing communal identity, spiritual beliefs, and cultural continuity. The findings highlight the importance of religious values in sustaining cultural practices and fostering social cohesion. By expressing and reinforcing these values, the Saparan Bekakak tradition not only preserves cultural heritage but also strengthens the community's social fabric. The study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of religion and cultural practices, providing valuable insights into how religious values are interwoven with cultural expressions and contribute to preserving cultural traditions.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the specific context of the Saparan Bekakak tradition, offering lessons for preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage in diverse settings. By understanding how religious values are expressed and reinforced in different cultural practices, communities can develop strategies to maintain and strengthen their cultural and spiritual heritage in the face of modernization and globalization.

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