

THE REWANDA OFFERING TRADITION: AN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study examines the symbolic meanings and environmental ethical dimensions embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition practiced at Kreo Cave. Previous studies on the Sesaji Rewanda tradition have mainly focused on symbolic meanings and cultural tourism, with limited attention to local communities' experiences and perspectives. However, the tradition represents a cultural ritual associated with respect for the monkeys inhabiting the area and forms part of the historical memory preserved by the local community. This research employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to understand the cultural practices and meanings constructed by the community in performing the ritual. Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders, local vendors, and tourism managers, as well as documentation of symbolic practices throughout the Sesaji Rewanda procession. The data were analyzed interpretatively through data reduction, thematic categorization, and meaning interpretation by integrating perspectives from cultural anthropology and Islamic environmental ethics. The findings reveal that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition reflects a symbolic relationship between humans, nature, and religious values that fosters ecological awareness within the community. In addition, the tradition strengthens social solidarity while supporting local economic activities surrounding the Kreo Cave tourism area. These findings indicate that local cultural practices can serve as cultural mechanisms linking environmental conservation, cultural identity, and community social life. Therefore, stakeholders

should promote sustainable ecotourism at Kreo Cave through environmental conservation, regulated tourism management, community participation, Islamic ecological ethics, and equitable economic benefits. Collaborative efforts among governments, communities, religious leaders, academics, and tourism managers are essential to preserving cultural and ecological sustainability.

Penelitian ini mengkaji makna simbolik dan dimensi etika lingkungan yang terkandung dalam tradisi Sesaji Rewanda yang dipraktikkan di Goa Kreo. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya mengenai tradisi Sesaji Rewanda umumnya berfokus pada makna simbolik dan pariwisata budaya, dengan perhatian yang masih terbatas terhadap pengalaman dan perspektif masyarakat lokal. Namun demikian, tradisi ini merupakan ritual budaya yang berkaitan dengan penghormatan terhadap monyet-monyet yang mendiami kawasan tersebut serta menjadi bagian dari memori historis yang dijaga oleh masyarakat setempat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografi kualitatif untuk memahami praktik budaya dan makna yang dibangun masyarakat dalam pelaksanaan ritual tersebut. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi nonpartisipan, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat, pedagang lokal, dan pengelola wisata, serta dokumentasi praktik-praktik simbolik selama prosesi Sesaji Rewanda berlangsung. Data dianalisis secara interpretatif melalui reduksi data, kategorisasi tematik, dan interpretasi makna dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif antropologi budaya dan etika lingkungan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Sesaji Rewanda merefleksikan hubungan simbolik antara manusia, alam, dan nilai-nilai keagamaan yang menumbuhkan kesadaran ekologis dalam masyarakat. Selain itu, tradisi ini memperkuat solidaritas sosial sekaligus mendukung aktivitas ekonomi masyarakat di sekitar kawasan wisata Goa Kreo. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik budaya lokal dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme budaya yang menghubungkan konservasi lingkungan, identitas budaya, dan kehidupan sosial masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, para pemangku kepentingan perlu mendorong pengembangan ekowisata berkelanjutan di Goa Kreo melalui konservasi lingkungan, pengelolaan wisata yang teratur, partisipasi masyarakat, penerapan etika ekologi Islam, dan distribusi manfaat ekonomi yang adil. Upaya kolaboratif antara pemerintah, masyarakat, tokoh agama, akademisi, dan pengelola wisata sangat penting untuk menjaga keberlanjutan budaya dan ekologi.

Keywords: ecological awareness, ethnography; Islamic environmental ethics, local wisdom, Sesaji Rewanda

Introduction

Traditional rituals constitute an important part of intangible cultural heritage that represents the values, beliefs, and social practices of a community. In anthropological and cultural studies, rituals are understood as social practices closely related to collective identity and value systems transmitted

across generations. Rituals also function as spaces of social interaction that reveal the relationship between communities and the cultural environments in which these practices take place. Studies on cultural rituals indicate that ritual practices are closely connected to the social dynamics of communities as well as the economic activities that develop around them (Ariwibowo et al., 2025).

In contemporary developments, ritual traditions are no longer perceived solely as cultural practices but are also embedded within broader social, economic, and cultural tourism dynamics. Recent studies suggest that traditional rituals often undergo transformation when interacting with tourism interests, local economic activities, and regional cultural promotion (Suharti & Sari, 2023). Such transformations can be observed in various cultural festivals that were originally sacred in nature but have gradually evolved into cultural attractions involving broader community participation and tourism audiences (Li et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, many ritual traditions continue to be preserved as forms of local wisdom that represent the relationship between humans, nature, and belief systems. One of these traditions is the *Sesaji Rewanda* ritual practiced by the local community in the area of Goa Kreo, located in Kandri, Gunungpati District, Semarang. This tradition involves the offering of ritual food to the monkeys inhabiting the Goa Kreo area as a form of respect linked to the historical narrative of Sunan Kalijaga in relation to the construction of the Great Mosque of Demak. The ritual is performed annually during the Islamic month of Shawwal and has become an important component of the cultural identity of the local community (Fauzia et al., 2022).

Previous research on the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition has primarily focused on linguistic aspects and the symbolic meanings embedded in ritual terminology through an ethnolinguistic approach. These studies demonstrate that the terminology used in the ritual reflects the cultural values of the community as well as the way people perceive life and their surrounding social environment (Fauzia et al., 2022). Meanwhile, studies examining cultural rituals within the framework of cultural tourism highlight that ritual practices can evolve into elements of local social and economic activities (Aini, 2023; Chen et al., 2024). Cultural rituals frequently interact with economic activities in surrounding areas, including trade, services, and other forms of local economic engagement that emerge alongside cultural events (Baswarani & Novianto, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on cultural rituals and intangible

cultural heritage, studies specifically addressing how local communities interpret the Sesaji Rewanda tradition within their social lives, its connection to local economic activities, and its ecological meanings remain limited in the academic literature. Previous studies have tended to emphasize linguistic symbolism or broader cultural tourism development, thereby providing limited empirical explanations regarding the experiences and perspectives of local communities who directly engage with the ritual practice. This limitation reveals an important research gap in understanding the Sesaji Rewanda tradition not merely as a symbolic practice or linguistic phenomenon, but as a living social practice embedded in community life and closely related to local economic dynamics. Without examining the experiences and perspectives of local communities, analyses of the tradition remain confined to symbolic dimensions and fail to fully explain how the ritual is interpreted and practiced in everyday social life.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the significance of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition for the community in the Goa Kreo area, to identify its relationship with the social and economic activities of the surrounding community, and to examine its ecological meanings from the perspective of Islamic environmental ethics. This research contributes to the development of cultural and local anthropological studies by providing an empirical analysis of traditional ritual practices within community life. Furthermore, the study also contributes to discussions on intangible cultural heritage by demonstrating how local traditions are preserved and interpreted by the communities who live around the ritual site.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the social, religious, and ecological meanings embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition practiced within the local community. The approach is intended to explain the relationship between community cultural practices, religious space, and the natural environment from the perspective of Islamic environmental ethics. The research analysis integrates ethnographic, theological, and thematic approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meanings contained in this traditional practice. The ethnographic approach in this study refers to the analytical framework developed by Spradley (2007), which positions field research as an effort to understand cultural meaning systems from the perspective of the community that practices them. Through this

approach, the study seeks to explain cultural practices, ritual symbols, and social meanings that develop within the Sesaji Rewanda tradition among communities surrounding Goa Kreo.

A theological approach is employed to interpret environmental ethical values in Islamic teachings related to the relationship between humans and nature. The analysis focuses on several Qur'anic verses that discuss human responsibility toward the environment, including QS. Al-Baqarah (2:30) concerning the concept of *khalifah* (human stewardship), QS. Ar-Rahman (55:7-9) regarding the principle of ecological balance (*mizan*), and QS. Ar-Rum (30:41) which explains environmental degradation (*fasad*) caused by human behavior. These verses provide a normative framework for understanding the ethical responsibility of humans in maintaining environmental sustainability.

This theological framework is further interpreted through the perspectives of several scholars of Islamic environmental ethics, including Mawil Izzi Dien, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Richard C. Foltz. Their works emphasize that Islamic teachings contain a strong ethical foundation regarding the harmony between humans, nature, and divine responsibility. Within this perspective, humans are understood not as absolute owners of nature but as moral trustees responsible for maintaining ecological balance. This theological perspective is used in this study to interpret the relationship between community cultural practices and environmental ethical values within the context of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition.

This research was conducted in the area of Goa Kreo, which is closely associated with the Sesaji Rewanda tradition. The ritual activities are centered around Masjid Al-Mabrur Goa Kreo, located on Jalan Raya Goa Kreo, Kandri, Gunungpati District, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The area is associated with local historical narratives related to Sunan Kalijaga and is also known as a habitat for a population of monkeys that forms part of the cultural context of the tradition. In addition, the Goa Kreo area has developed into a tourism destination that creates interactions between community cultural practices, the natural environment, and local economic activities.

The study involved three informants selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge and involvement in the social life of the community in the Goa Kreo area. In academic publication, the identities of informants are presented using pseudonyms as part of research ethics. The first informant, "Mr. K." (62 years old), is recognized as a local traditional figure who possesses knowledge regarding the history and practices of the

Sesaji Rewanda tradition. The second informant, “Mrs. R.” (45 years old), works as a food vendor at a stall near the Goa Kreo area and is a resident of Kandri Village. The third informant, “Mrs. S.” (55 years old), is also a food vendor operating near the Goa Kreo area and resides in the surrounding community of Kandri Village.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted through the researcher’s presence in the Goa Kreo area to understand the social and environmental context of the surrounding community without directly participating in or observing the Sesaji Rewanda ritual performance. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the three informants to obtain information regarding the history of the tradition, the symbolic meanings of the ritual, and the dynamics of social life and economic activities among local residents. Documentation in the form of field notes and related records was also used as supporting data.

Data analysis followed the ethnographic model developed by Spradley (2007) through the stages of domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme identification in order to reveal the structure of cultural meanings embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition. In addition, thematic analysis was used to classify data based on themes related to cultural practices, religious values, human–environment relations, and community economic activities. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation. The study also applied research ethics principles by maintaining the confidentiality of informants through the use of pseudonyms and by obtaining informed consent from participants prior to the interview process.

Finding and Discussion

History and Meaning of the Rewanda Sesaji Tradition

The Sesaji Rewanda tradition is a cultural practice embedded in the social life of the community of Kandri Village in the area of Goa Kreo, located in Gunungpati District, Semarang. This tradition is expressed through symbols, ritual performances, and customary taboos that regulate community interaction with the surrounding environment. Within the framework of Javanese cosmology, nature is perceived as an integral component of the community’s social and spiritual life. In this cosmological system, the relationship between humans and

nature is not understood as exploitative but as a reciprocal relationship that requires balance and respect. Ritual practices therefore function as symbolic media that reaffirm this relationship through collective actions performed periodically by the community. From the perspective of symbolic anthropology, ritual can be understood as a system of meaning that shapes how societies interpret social, moral, and ecological realities (Geertz, 1973).

The term *Sesaji Rewanda* is derived from two words: *sesaji* and *rewanda*. The word *sesaji* refers to the practice of presenting food offerings such as fruits, rice, and agricultural products as an expression of gratitude for nature as the source of life. Meanwhile, the term *rewanda* refers to the monkeys inhabiting the area of Goa Kreo and its surroundings. Thus, *Sesaji Rewanda* can be interpreted as a symbolic ritual representing the reciprocal relationship between humans and other living beings within the same ecosystem. The *Sesaji Rewanda* ceremony is celebrated festively and serves not only as an expression of gratitude but also as a cultural event that attracts community participation. The celebration includes various activities such as carnivals, cultural processions (*kirab*, a traditional ceremonial parade), communal prayers (*tahlilan*, a collective Islamic prayer gathering), and a traditional dance known as *Wanoro Tarisuko*, which symbolically depicts joyful monkey movements. During the procession, participants are required to carry *gunungan*, cone-shaped ceremonial structures made from agricultural produce and food offerings, consisting of fruits, rice, *ketupat* (rice cakes wrapped in woven coconut leaves, locally known as *klepat-klepet*), and other agricultural products prepared by local residents. The fruit offerings include fifteen types of fruit, among which pineapple, starfruit, and *pisang raja* (a traditional Indonesian banana variety commonly used in ritual and ceremonial contexts) are considered mandatory components. Pineapples are arranged symbolically, with one placed at the top of the cone and four positioned at the corners of the structure. In addition, a rice offering known as *nasi ulamsari*, locally referred to as *sego kethek* (monkey rice), is prepared and carried collectively, with each *gunungan* supported by four participants during the procession.

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, rituals such as *Sesaji Rewanda* can be understood as symbolic systems that shape the collective meaning of a community toward its environment. According to Geertz (1973), cultural practices do not merely function as social activities but also operate as symbolic texts that contain moral and cosmological meanings for the communities that perform them. Within this framework, the ritual offering (*sesaji*) represents a

symbolic expression of human awareness of interconnectedness with nature. It also reflects the recognition that the continuity of human life depends on maintaining the balance of the surrounding ecosystem.

Over time, this tradition underwent a process of transformation as Islam spread across the island of Java. During the period of Islamization, religious scholars did not eliminate cultural practices that had long existed within society; instead, they reinterpreted their meanings to align with the principles of Islamic monotheism. Prayers that were previously animistic in nature were gradually replaced with Islamic prayers, while the ritual offering (*sesaji*) came to be understood as a form of charity and an expression of gratitude to God for the abundance of nature. This transformation reflects a dynamic process of cultural acculturation between local traditions and Islamic teachings, resulting in a new form of tradition that preserves local identity while simultaneously gaining religious legitimacy (Fauzia et al., 2022).

In practice, the *Sesaji Rewanda* ritual is performed annually during the month of Shawwal through a series of cultural activities such as the *gunungan* procession, *tahlilan* (communal prayers), and traditional art performances. The *gunungan* carried in the procession consists of various agricultural products, including fruits, rice, and crops, arranged in a cone-shaped structure. This structure not only functions as a symbol of the agrarian prosperity of the community but also represents the relationship between humans and nature as the source of life. The symbols used in the ritual, such as fruits, agricultural products, and traditional foods, illustrate the connection between cultural practices and the agrarian economic system of the community. These symbols represent the sources of life derived from nature and reflect the community's dependence on the local ecosystem. In ecological anthropology, ritual symbols often function as mechanisms for transmitting ecological values that are passed down to subsequent generations through cultural practices (Descola, 2013). Thus, the symbols embedded in the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition not only carry spiritual meanings but also serve as a medium for ecological education within the community.

The transformation of ritual meaning can also be observed in the process of integration between local traditions and Islamic values that developed within Javanese society. This integration did not eliminate the symbolic structure of the ritual; rather, it provided a religious reinterpretation of pre-existing cultural practices. In studies of Islamic history in the Indonesian archipelago, the process of Islamization often occurred through cultural approaches that

allowed local traditions to be maintained within a framework of religious values (Azra, 2004). Therefore, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition reflects a form of dialectical interaction between local culture and religious values within the community.

Spradley (2007) provides an analytical framework for examining ritual practices through domain, taxonomic, and componential analysis. Componential analysis shows that each ritual symbol possesses a clear meaning and is consistently applied by the community. Through this framework, ritual practices can be systematically understood, including the rules, sequences, and taboos that regulate their implementation. From an ethnographic perspective, cultural practices such as the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be analyzed using the cultural domain approach developed by Spradley. He explains that every cultural practice consists of domains of meaning that structure the community's knowledge system. In the context of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition, several cultural domains can be identified, including the domain of ritual thanksgiving, the domain of human-nature relations, and the domain of social solidarity. These domains collectively form a value system that regulates how the community interacts with its surrounding environment (Multazam et al., 2025).

The domain of ritual thanksgiving is reflected in the presentation of *gunungan* containing various agricultural products such as fruits, rice, and *palawija* (secondary crops). The *gunungan* symbolizes the abundance of nature that serves as the primary source of livelihood for agrarian communities. The domain of human-nature relations is reflected in the practice of providing food to the monkeys and the customary prohibition against damaging the forest area surrounding Goa Kreo. Meanwhile, the domain of social solidarity is manifested in the community's collective cooperation (*gotong royong*) in preparing and organizing the ritual activities. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood as a cultural system that integrates symbolic, ecological, and social dimensions within community life. Through this ritual, the community not only expresses gratitude for the abundance of nature but also strengthens collective awareness of the importance of maintaining environmental balance, a perspective consistent with the cultural ecology framework (Steward, 1955).

Rituals create a liminal phase in which the boundaries of everyday social structures dissolve, producing intense collective interaction. Turner (1969) emphasized that liminality enhances social cohesion and solidarity among community members. Interviews with Pak K., Bu R., and Bu S.

indicate that interactions during the ritual involve symbolic exchanges, social assistance, and a shared understanding of cultural values. These practices demonstrate the emergence of social order through the collective experience of participating in the ritual. The findings of this study show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial activity but also as a cultural mechanism that regulates human relationships with the ecological space surrounding the Goa Kreo area (Adam et al., 2025). The ritual affirms the forest area and wildlife habitat as spaces that hold moral and social value for the community. In the anthropology of ritual, such practices create social structures that strengthen community solidarity through shared participation in ritual activities (Turner et al., 1969). Thus, Sesaji Rewanda operates as a social mechanism that connects the cultural identity of the community with the environment in which they live.

Qur'anic values are also reflected in the ritual practices of Sesaji Rewanda. The principle of *khalifah* (Qur'an 2:30) regulates the human role as stewards of the earth, *mizan* (Qur'an 55:7-9) emphasizes the balance of nature, and the prohibition of *fasad* (Qur'an 30:41) highlights the consequences of environmental destruction. The prohibition against indiscriminate tree cutting and the protection of the monkeys' habitat represent concrete implementations of these values in cultural practice. These symbols and customary rules illustrate a direct relationship between cultural traditions and Islamic environmental ethics (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Ecological Dimension in the Sesaji Rewanda Tradition

Interviews with Bu R. and Bu S. indicate that the implementation of the Sesaji Rewanda ritual influences the economic activities of traders around the Goa Kreo area. Traders make specific preparations, such as providing additional food supplies and preparing goods for visitors attending the ritual. Spradley (2007) structures this type of activity within the domain of "ritual economic activity" and the subdomain of "social interaction and redistribution." Field data demonstrate a clear relationship between the performance of the ritual and the economic practices of the local community. The findings also show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition is directly related to environmental management in the Goa Kreo area, particularly through the protection of wildlife habitats and forest vegetation. The presence of customary rules and taboos regulating certain activities in the area creates a social mechanism that limits excessive environmental exploitation (Fauzia et al., 2022). Within the

perspective of cultural ecology, local belief systems often function as a form of traditional ecological knowledge that regulates human interaction with the environment in a sustainable manner (Berkes, 2008). This ecological knowledge is embedded within cultural practices and transmitted through the collective experiences of the community.

During the ritual, traders support one another through the exchange of food supplies and assistance in distributing goods. Spradley (2007) categorizes this practice within the domain of “socio-economic redistribution,” while Geertz (1973) interprets it as an expression of social responsibility embedded in cultural practice. Meanwhile, Turner (1969) explains that the liminal phase of ritual strengthens collective interaction and solidarity among community members. These findings demonstrate a direct relationship between ritual practices, social interaction, and the application of cultural norms within the community (Dewi, 2025)

The relationship between humans and animals within this ritual also illustrates an ecological relational structure that does not position humans as the dominant center over nature. The act of providing food to the monkeys in this tradition reflects an acknowledgment of the presence of other living beings within the same environmental system. In studies of social-ecological systems, environmental sustainability depends on maintaining a balance between human activities and ecosystem stability (Folke et al., 2010). Cultural rituals therefore function as social mechanisms that reinforce collective awareness of this relationship.

In addition, the forest area surrounding Goa Kreo plays an important ecological role in maintaining environmental balance. The prohibition against cutting trees and engaging in activities that damage the forest area indicates the presence of social regulations that limit the exploitation of natural resources. In environmental anthropology, sacred spaces often function as a form of traditional conservation that protects ecosystems through cultural legitimacy (Sponsel, 2012). This mechanism demonstrates that cultural practices can operate as effective environmental management systems within local communities.

Culturally based conservation practices within the Sesaji Rewanda tradition also reflect the integration of social values and community ecological responsibility. Community involvement in protecting the Goa Kreo area shows that environmental management does not rely solely on formal regulations but also on cultural norms that develop within society. In studies of environmental sustainability, the participation of local communities is

considered a crucial factor in maintaining ecosystem stability (Ostrom, 2009). Therefore, cultural traditions can function as social institutions that support sustainable environmental governance.

The practices of food distribution and cooperation among traders reflect the Islamic principles of *'adl* (justice) and *amanah* (trust). Spradley (2007) categorizes these practices within the domain of “socio-economic ethical principles,” while Geertz (1973) interprets them as expressions of social symbolism, and Victor Turner highlights the role of collective experience in ritual practices. These activities demonstrate the application of Islamic values within the socio-economic interactions of the community. Overall, these findings emphasize that ritual practices are empirically connected to social norms, ecological awareness, and religious principles, rather than being merely symbolic cultural activities.

Human–Environment Interaction

Interview results with Pak K. indicate the existence of a prohibition against indiscriminate tree cutting during the ritual. The community also maintains the habitat of the monkeys living around the Goa Kreo area. Spradley (2007) categorizes this practice within the domain of “ecological taboos” and the subdomain of “conservation practices.” The cultural ecology approach emphasizes the relationship between humans and the environment, in which social rules regulate interactions with local ecosystems (Rappaport, 1999). Ritual symbols and the arrangement of offerings also convey ecological values to the community, such as the importance of maintaining environmental balance and respecting natural habitats. Geertz (1973) interprets ritual symbols as a medium through which communities develop a collective understanding of ecological responsibility. Spradley (2007) structures these practices into clearly defined domains and subdomains, making patterns of conservation visible. These findings demonstrate a systematic relationship between ritual practices and the ecological behavior of the community (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Field observations also show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition pays close attention to ecological balance in the Goa Kreo area. The community consciously protects trees, flora, and the monkey population as part of a ritual that connects humans with nature. From Geertz’s perspective (1973), these actions carry symbolic meaning that reflects spiritual harmony and ecological responsibility. The principle of *mizan* in the Qur’an emphasizes the importance of maintaining the balance of nature in order to prevent environmental

destruction (*fasad*) caused by human actions (Qur'an 55:7-9; 30:41).



Figure 1. Well-preserved tree ecology along Goa Kreo road

Figure 1 illustrates that residents around Kandri Village and the Goa Kreo area maintain ecosystem balance by avoiding indiscriminate tree cutting. The road to Goa Kreo remains lined with trees that supports local monkey habitats. The Sesaji Rewanda ritual functions as a form of environmental conservation through active community participation. According to Mrs. R. and Mrs. S., during the ritual, residents ensure cleanliness and avoid disturbing wildlife. Geertz (1973) highlights the symbolic meaning of this practice, Turner emphasizes social interactions during the ritual, and cultural ecology explains patterns of human adaptation to the environment. Islamic principles reinforce these actions, emphasizing human responsibility as *khalifah* (stewardship) to maintain environmental balance (QS. Al-Baqarah 2:30).

Islamic teachings not only guide religious rituals but also instill strong environmental ethics through the concepts of *khalifah* (stewardship) and *mizan* (balance), forming a moral foundation for sustainable environmental management. Qur'anic verses stress that humans must preserve ecological balance and avoid corruption (*fasad*) on earth, framing ecosystem protection as a moral obligation. In the Sesaji Rewanda tradition, prohibitions on tree cutting and care for monkey habitats reflect Qur'anic environmental ethics, embodying the *amanah* (trust) associated with the role of *khalifah*. From this perspective, maintaining ecological balance and preventing environmental harm become integral aspects of Islamic moral responsibility.

Within the framework of Islamic environmental ethics, the Sesaji

Rewanda tradition is better understood as a practice that actively embodies the principle of *mizan* (balance) rather than opposing it, as long as the practice does not cause wastefulness or environmental damage. First, the presentation of the *gunungan*, which contains various agricultural products such as fruits, symbolizes recognition of the balance between humans and nature. Fruits are the result of ecological processes that depend on soil fertility, water, and natural cycles, so their use in rituals reflects an awareness that human life relies on the order of natural systems. From the perspective of symbolic anthropology, ritual symbols such as agricultural products serve to express the relationship between humans and the cosmological and environmental order in which they live (Geertz, 1973). This representation aligns with the Qur'anic concept of *mizan*, which emphasizes that nature was created in a state of balance that humans are responsible for maintaining.

Second, the practice of distributing fruits to the community after the ritual procession reflects a collective sharing of natural resources. This action demonstrates the proportional use of resources rather than concentrating them in the hands of specific individuals. In Islamic environmental ethics, the fair and moderate utilization of natural products is part of maintaining social and ecological balance (Nasr, 1996). Therefore, this practice of distribution reinforces the dimension of balance inherent in the concept of *mizan*.

Third, the presence of the ritual in the Goa Kreo area is also associated with respect for the monkey habitats that form part of the local ecological landscape. The community's awareness of preserving this area demonstrates a connection between cultural practices and environmental stewardship. In cultural ecology studies, local traditions often serve as social mechanisms that regulate human interactions with ecosystems (Berkes, 2008). Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood as a cultural practice that affirms a balanced relationship among humans, nature, and social values.

Considering this, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition does not conflict with the principle of *mizan*. On the contrary, the practice reflects cultural awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and nature through the use of agricultural symbols, social distribution, and respect for the environment. This interpretation suggests that local traditions can serve as a medium for expressing ecological balance values, which are also emphasized in Islamic environmental ethics. Human-environment interactions in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrate a synergy between religious values, social practices, and ecological consciousness. Ritual symbols and traditional rules guide

the community to behave harmoniously toward nature and fellow humans. Turner emphasizes the liminal dimension that strengthens social cohesion, while Geertz highlights the cultural meaning embedded in each ritual element. Overall, this practice reflects Islamic principles that integrate *khalifah*, *mizan*, and the avoidance of *fasad*, making the tradition both a vehicle for cultural education and a mechanism for ecological conservation.

Social and Economic Dimensions in the Sesaji Rewanda Tradition

Interviews with Mrs. R. and Mrs. S. indicate that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition is closely linked to the economic dynamics of the communities surrounding the Goa Kreo tourist area. Mrs. R., who has been running a stall since 2011, explained that in the early stages of the tourist area's development, nearly all kiosks around the site were operational and received a substantial number of visitors. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, visitor numbers have declined, directly impacting the income of vendors and resulting in only a small number of kiosks remaining operational. This situation demonstrates that the local community's economic activities are strongly influenced by the intensity of tourist visits as well as the timing of cultural events held in the area.

The interview findings also show that trade activities increase significantly during the Sesaji Rewanda ritual on the 7th of Syawal. During this period, vendors not only sell food to visitors but also receive deposits of food ingredients used in the ritual activities. This phenomenon indicates that cultural ritual practices can create spaces for economic interaction between local communities and visitors. In studies of cultural tourism, ritual activities often function as cultural attractions that can stimulate local economic activity by increasing tourist visits (Richards, 2018).

Nevertheless, field data also indicate that the economic benefits of these cultural activities are temporary and dependent on the occurrence of specific events. When there are no cultural events or festivals, the economic activity of vendors around the tourist area tends to decline. This suggests that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions as a catalyst for local economic activity but does not yet provide sustainable economic stability for the community. Therefore, managing cultural traditions as part of tourism development requires a more integrated strategy to ensure that economic benefits are distributed more consistently among the local population.

The implications of this study indicate that the preservation of local

traditions such as Sesaji Rewanda is not only related to safeguarding cultural heritage but also has the potential to support community-based tourism development. Cultural traditions can serve as tourist attractions that strengthen local identity while creating economic opportunities for surrounding communities. However, managing traditions as tourist attractions must be done carefully to avoid undermining the symbolic meaning and cultural values they embody.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of integrating cultural preservation and environmental management in tourism development. Cultural values, such as prohibitions against environmental destruction, can serve as a foundation for building sustainable tourism management models. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood not only as a local cultural practice but also as a source of ecological knowledge with the potential to support sustainable tourism development strategies around Goa Kreo area.

Islamic Environmental Ethics

The Sesaji Rewanda tradition in the Goa Kreo area involves the presentation of agricultural products and the offering of food to the monkeys living in the surrounding area as part of the community's annual ritual. This practice can be understood through the lens of Islamic environmental ethics, which emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature as part of God's created order. Nasr (1996) explains that within the Islamic tradition, nature is viewed as part of a cosmic order with a spiritual dimension, and therefore, cannot be treated merely as an object of human exploitation. Consequently, the ritual practices associated with the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be interpreted as a form of cultural awareness in which nature is regarded as an essential aspect of life that must be preserved.

Within the social practices of the communities around Goa Kreo, there are also various unwritten rules, such as prohibitions against indiscriminate tree cutting and efforts to protect the habitats of monkeys in the area. This phenomenon can be analyzed through the concept of *khalifah* in Islamic environmental ethics, which positions humans as stewards of the earth with moral responsibility for ecological preservation. Dien (2000) explains that the *khalifah* concept not only grants humans the right to utilize natural resources but also demands moral responsibility to maintain ecosystem balance. Therefore, the social practices embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrate that local cultural values can function as social mechanisms that guide community behavior in environmental stewardship.

Moreover, the continuity of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition indicates that cultural practices can foster ecological awareness through ritual symbols passed down through generations. Symbols such as the gunungan of agricultural products and the distribution of food to the community illustrate the connection between ritual practices and the social and ecological values embedded within society. Foltz et al. (2003) argue that religious values often serve as important sources for forming environmental ethics, as religion provides a moral framework for regulating human interaction with nature. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as a medium that strengthens collective awareness of the importance of maintaining balance among humans, nature, and religious values.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition at Kreo Cave is not merely a cultural ritual but also an ecological practice that embodies important conservation values grounded in local wisdom, as reflected in customary taboos, the management of sacred areas, and the protection of monkey habitats. These values are consistent with Islamic environmental ethics, particularly the concepts of *khalifah*, *mizan*, and *fasad*, which position humans as stewards of the Earth who are responsible for maintaining ecological balance and avoiding environmental degradation. Socio-economically, the tradition contributes positively to local livelihoods through the development of micro-enterprises and tourism services, although it also presents challenges related to excessive commercialization, ecological pressure, and unequal benefit distribution. Therefore, the management of the Kreo Cave area requires a sustainable ecotourism model that integrates cultural values, Islamic ethical principles, and active community participation, allowing Sesaji Rewanda to function as a model demonstrating the synergy among local tradition, religious ethics, and environmental conservation.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates its relevance to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through the preservation of cultural heritage and community-based tourism, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) through the promotion of sustainable tourism practices and environmental responsibility, SDG 15 (Life on Land) through the protection of biodiversity and monkey habitats around Kreo Cave, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by encouraging environmental awareness and conservation-oriented local practices. In addition,

the community empowerment generated through local economic activities also supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrates how local wisdom and religious ethics can contribute to sustainable development by balancing ecological preservation, cultural continuity, and socio-economic well-being.

Based on these findings, several practical implications and recommendations can be proposed for related stakeholders. For local governments and tourism authorities, it is recommended to formulate sustainable ecotourism policies that prioritize environmental conservation, regulate visitor activities, and prevent excessive commercialization in the Kreo Cave area. Community participation should be strengthened through inclusive decision-making processes, capacity-building programs, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits to ensure long-term socio-economic sustainability. Religious and cultural leaders are encouraged to continue promoting environmental awareness by integrating Islamic ecological ethics and local wisdom into cultural education and public discourse. In addition, tourism managers should implement conservation-based tourism practices, including proper waste management, habitat protection, visitor education, and limitations on activities that may disturb wildlife or damage the ecosystem. Educational institutions and researchers are also encouraged to further explore the integration of indigenous traditions, religious values, and environmental sustainability as a model for culturally rooted conservation practices in other regions. Through collaborative efforts among government institutions, local communities, religious leaders, academics, and tourism stakeholders, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be preserved not only as a cultural heritage but also as a sustainable ecological and socio-economic asset for future generations.

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