



## **PREVENTING WATER CRISIS THROUGH LOCAL WISDOM *LARUNG SESAJI* IN SESAJI IN SIMAN, KEDIRI**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research aims to analyze how the local practice of the Siman community in Kediri, called *Larung sesaji* becomes an instrument for maintaining and conserving the existence of water sources in Siman reservoir. *Larung sesaji* or *Larungan* is a series of rituals performed by the community every month of *suro*' and Hindu *melasti* celebrations. The locals believe that these activities represent a form of sacrifice to the ancestral spirit so that, the ancestors will preserve nature and water availability in Siman. The research uses qualitative methods including interviews, documentation, data processing, and conclusions. Local community conservation theory of anthropologists Thomas Reuter and E.B. Tylor became an analytical point in the scope of environmental anthropology. The results showed that; [1], the tradition of the local community (Simanes) strongly relates to conservation issues. [2], *Larungan* became a conservation method to maintain the water crisis in Siman, and this local wisdom continues to this day.

**Keywords:** Environmental Anthropology, Kediri, Larungan, Siman, Water Crisis

### **INTRODUCTION**

Water scarcity (Laalobang, S., & Mudita and Mau, 2021) has emerged as a pressing global issue, particularly in regions where agricultural livelihoods are heavily dependent on consistent and reliable water sources. In the village of Siman, Kediri, located in East Java, the community faces significant challenges related to water availability. Deforestation, unsustainable land use, and climate change have exacerbated the situation, leading to frequent water shortages (Erdös, 2023) that threaten both agricultural productivity and local ecosystems.

Despite these challenges, the community of Siman has sustained the practice of *Larung Sesaji*, a traditional Javanese ritual that reflects a deep cultural understanding of environmental stewardship. The ritual involves the symbolic offering of food, flowers, and other items to rivers and springs, which are believed to be inhabited by spiritual entities (Chaachouay & Zidane, 2022). This practice is not merely a religious or cultural

expression; it also embodies a sophisticated ecological ethic that emphasizes the need for balance between human activities and natural processes. In this context, Larung Sesaji serves as a mechanism for promoting water conservation and ensuring the sustainable use of local water resources.

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of the *Larung Sesaji* ritual as an indigenous strategy (Geertz, 1960) for addressing the issue of water scarcity in Siman, Kediri. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how this traditional practice contributes to water management, both in terms of its cultural significance and its practical implications for environmental sustainability. By investigating the underlying beliefs and practices associated with Larung Sesaji, the study seeks to demonstrate how local wisdom can be effectively integrated into contemporary water management strategies.

This exploration is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing debates about the role of indigenous knowledge systems in modern environmental management. While much of the discourse around water management has focused on technological solutions, there is growing recognition of the value of traditional ecological knowledge, which often embodies sustainable practices honed over centuries (Laalobang S., & Mudita dan Mau, 2021). This study seeks to contribute to this emerging field by offering a detailed case study of Larung Sesaji, highlighting its potential to complement and enhance modern approaches to water conservation.

The persistent water crisis in Siman underscores the limitations of conventional water management strategies, which often overlook the socio-cultural dimensions of resource use. While technologically advanced, modern interventions frequently fail to engage with the local context, leading to either unsustainable or culturally inappropriate solutions. This research seeks to address the following question: To what extent can the traditional practice of Larung Sesaji be utilized as a culturally relevant and sustainable approach to preventing water crises in Siman, Kediri?

This study will examine the ritual's role in promoting environmental awareness and fostering a communal sense of responsibility towards water resources. It will explore how the principles of Larung Sesaji can be aligned with contemporary water management practices. This approach acknowledges the cultural significance of the ritual and positions it as a viable component of a broader strategy to address water scarcity.

Literature reviews from recent and relevant research discuss traditional practices' role in environmental issues such as Bohensky, E. L., & Maru, Y. T. (2021) who talked about Indigenous knowledge systems to communities' adaptive capacity and resilience. Interestingly, Bohensky & Maru mentioned how traditional practices can manage environmental challenges and emphasizes the integration of indigenous knowledge into climate adaptation strategies.

Meanwhile Díaz, S., Settele, J., Brondizio, E. S., & Ngo, H. T. (2019) have same concern in this term, Diaz et al. examine that local knowledge plays a role in maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services. Local practices have historically contributed to the sustainable management of natural resources. These studies support the integration of

traditional knowledge systems like *larung sesaji* into traditional environmental management practices, conservation, and resource sustainability. Fernández-Llamazares, Á., & Cabeza, M. (2021) also claimed that cultural expressions; rituals and folklore like *larung sesaji*, have a power in shaping environmental stewardship and can be integrated into broader conservation movements.

Garnett, S. T. et al. (2019) explore the same case as this paper, how to conserve ecological balance and addressing environmental crises, especially in managing water resources and preventing degradation. Conservation strategies are needed to respect the local wisdom system. Sometimes these areas are often highly biodiverse and critical to ecosystem health. Research conducted by Lynn, K., & Lancia (2020) is relevant to *Larung sesaji*, which enhances community resilience to environmental crisis. This method can be applied to water management in Siman, Kediri. Therefore, all these literature reviews concluded that the value of integrating local wisdom (Indigenous knowledge system) can be used as long as it is well handled, even in the traditional way.

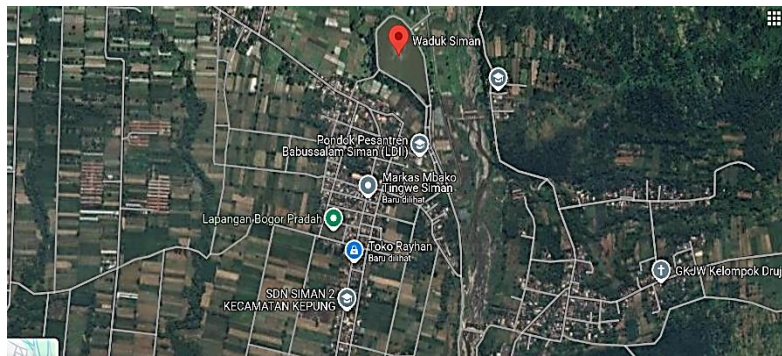
## METHOD

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology, grounded in ethnographic research and participatory observation, to explore the role of *Larung Sesaji* in water conservation within the Siman community. Ethnography, with its focus on understanding cultural practices in their natural context, is particularly well-suited to this study, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of the ritual's significance and impact (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The research will involve a combination of in-depth interviews with key informants such as village elders, spiritual leaders, and ritual participants and focus group discussions with broader community members. These interviews will seek to uncover the layers of meaning associated with Larung Sesaji and its perceived effectiveness in water conservation (Geertz, 1960). The study will also include participatory observation, enabling the researcher to document the ritual in real-time and engage with the community in a meaningful way. This method provides rich, contextual data that captures the ritual's practice and its role in the community's environmental management efforts.

In addition to primary data collection, the study will review relevant literature, historical records, and previous research on similar rituals in the region. This document analysis will offer insights into the historical evolution of Larung Sesaji and its enduring relevance in contemporary environmental practices. Through this comprehensive approach, the research aims to construct a detailed narrative of Larung Sesaji as a cultural and ecological practice, evaluating its potential for integration into modern water management (Adrian & Laura et al., 2020) strategies.

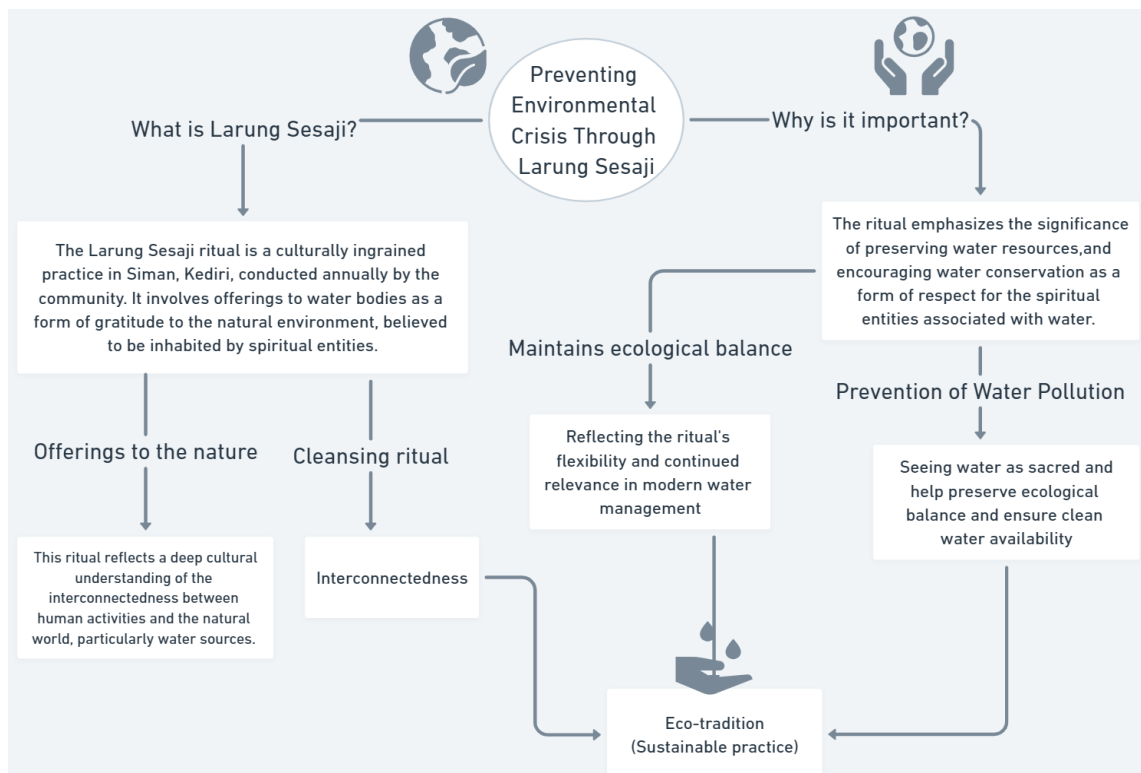
## RESULT



The study focused on the Larung Sesaji ritual in Siman, Kediri, and its impact on water management within the community. The findings indicate that this traditional practice significantly fosters sustainable water usage and prevents water crises. The *Larung Sesaji* ritual has adapted to environmental changes.

**Figure 1. Map of the Siman Village**

The community has modified certain ritual aspects to address emerging challenges, such as reduced water flow or increased pollution. These adaptations demonstrate the flexibility of traditional practices in responding to environmental pressures, ensuring their continued relevance in water management. The results can be summarized as follows:



**Figure 2. Concept of the Maps**

## DISCUSSION

## **Cultural Ecology and Water Management: The Role of *Larung Sesaji***

Cultural ecology provides a valuable framework for understanding how cultural practices intersect with environmental management strategies. Clifford Geertz (1960) defines rituals as formalized actions performed in a specific sequence that symbolize fundamental cultural values and reinforce societal norms. In this context, the Larung Sesaji ritual which is practiced in Kediri east Java is an example of how cultural rituals can shape and influence water management practices.

This ritual involves ceremonial offerings to natural water bodies such as rivers acknowledging the spirits believed to inhabit these sites. Based on Javanese cosmology, Larung Sesaji portrays water as sacred and essential, guiding community interactions with this vital resource. Analyzing Larung Sesaji provides insights into its role in water management, community involvement, and the integration of traditional practices with Allen & Fryern (2023) strategies for addressing hydrological challenges. Larung Sesaji plays a critical role in water management by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging communal responsibility. Geertz's conceptualization of rituals highlights their role in instilling and perpetuating cultural values (Geertz, 1960). In the case of Larung Sesaji, the ritual embodies the belief that water is a living entity deserving respect and protection. This cultural stance fosters a normative framework for environmental stewardship, where ritualistic offerings symbolize a reciprocal relationship with nature. Community members reinforce their commitment to preserving water resources by participating in these ceremonies, aligning cultural values with sustainable environmental practices.

The communal nature of Larung Sesaji is pivotal in its effectiveness as a water management instrument. The ritual involves collective participation, which enhances a sense of shared duty and ownership over water resources. Ostrom's (1990) research on common-pool resources underscores the importance of community engagement for effective resource management. In this regard, Larung Sesaji mobilizes collective action, which is crucial for managing and sustaining local water systems. In many Indonesian rural areas, where modern water infrastructure is limited (Setiyani & Nurhairunnisa, 2024), traditional practices like Larung Sesaji support communal irrigation and maintenance of water sources (RY, Personal Meeting, 2024). The solidarity fostered through the ritual strengthens the community's capacity to manage these resources effectively.

Contemporary research supports the integration of traditional knowledge with modern water management techniques. Aldunce and O'Brien (1990) illustrate how traditional ecological knowledge from Indigenous communities can enhance climate adaptation strategies, including water management. Their findings suggest blending traditional wisdom with scientific approaches can bolster resilience against climate-related impacts. Lopes and Pinheiro (2021) emphasize that cultural ecosystem services, such as those provided by rituals Larung Sesaji, can complement and enhance modern water management practices, promoting sustainable use.

The impact of Larung Sesaji encompasses flood and drought management. During flooding events, the focus of this ritual on appeasing natural forces often encourages proactive measures from the community, such as reinforcing the walls and channels of reservoirs, annual dredging, cleaning the entire reservoir area, and managing water flow (ID, Personal Meeting, 2024). This approach aligns with traditional practices that emphasize preparedness and mitigation. Conversely, during the dry season, Larung Sesaji reinforces the importance of water conservation. The ritual encourages traditional methods of saving water. Interestingly, the Siman community has never experienced a water crisis, as WD conveyed that:

“Alhamdulillah, Siman has never experienced a clean water crisis up to this point. The reservoir still serves to meet the community’s daily needs, such as bathing, water storage in ponds, washing, and agricultural irrigation. Fortunately, the water from the Siman reservoir is always available throughout the year. It not only meets the needs of the Siman community but also serves surrounding villages in the Kepung district of Kediri.” (WD, Personal meeting, 2024).



**Figure 3. Siman Reservoir**

In influencing water availability, Larung Sesaji also enhances water quality by promoting practices that minimize pollution. It restrains the community’s inclination to rely on machines and modern equipment for water drilling, which introduces new challenges to the environmental crisis, and instead advocates for traditional irrigation methods to supply water to households. This is particularly relevant given that drilling machines stem from the exploitation of nature (PI, Personal meeting, 2024), threatening the land and forests of Indigenous communities. Moreover, deep groundwater drilling exacerbates existing issues (Prakash et al., 2024), compromising the availability of groundwater.

The water crisis becomes increasingly concerning with contemporary methods. The spiritual significance of water in this ritual fosters a cultural norm against contaminating water sources (Ogwu & Kosoe, 2024) with waste or pollutants. This cultural perspective aligns with modern environmental management practices aimed at protecting water quality through pollution control and sustainable land use (Prakash et al., 2024). Integrating Larung Sesaji (Tradition) with modern water management techniques offers a holistic approach to addressing hydrological challenges. While strategies for tackling contemporary environmental crises often rely on technological solutions (Garnett, S. T. et al., 2019), combining traditional knowledge can provide valuable cultural insights and

foster community engagement. The cultural values embodied in Larung Sesaji can enhance community support and cooperation. The ritual's emphasis on respect for ancestors and nature, referred to as "Javanese Ecology," (Setiyani & Nurhairunnisa, 2024) complements technological approaches by reinforcing sustainable practices.

However, integrating Larung Sesaji with modern water management faces challenges. Rapid urbanization and industrialization threaten traditional practices, potentially eroding cultural knowledge. The challenges underscore the need for a balanced approach. While traditional practices provide valuable insights and promote community involvement (Lynn, K., & Lancia, 2020), they must be complemented by scientific advancements to address the full spectrum of hydrological challenges. This integration requires collaborative efforts that respect and preserve cultural practices while incorporating technological and policy innovations (Fernández-Llamazares, Á., & Cabeza, M., 2021) designed to address contemporary water management issues. The integration of cultural values (ID, Personal Meeting, 2024) with modern approaches offers a model for addressing hydrological challenges in a manner that honors both traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific advancements (Erdős, L., 2023).

### **Symbolic Interactions Between Ritual and Resource**

*Larung sesaji's* symbolic and practical elements are deeply intertwined with the community's spiritual beliefs (PI, Personal Meeting, 2024). The reservoir is treated as a sacred, living entity, and the ritual of offering is a way to maintain a harmonious and sustainable relationship with the water source (Setiyani & Tasrif N., 2023). The local belief of Simanes can extend beyond natural phenomena to encompass any object or entity that becomes central to a community's survival. The shift in the object of the ritual illustrates how animistic worldviews can evolve while maintaining their core principles of respect, reciprocity, and stewardship (Johnston, 2024). Siman reservoir becomes a spiritual as well as a material life source.

Understanding water conservation through the *Larung Sesaji* is essential for comprehending the dynamics of the Siman Reservoir. The ritual influences their cultural identity and attitudes toward water conservation. One of the elders, SR (69-year-old) argued that:

“The siman reservoir is our mother. She gives us water to fulfill our daily needs, for irrigation, for rituals, for our crops, and keeps our community alive. Larung Sesaji is our way of giving back, of showing gratitude for everything the sea provides. We offer food and flowers because we know we cannot take from nature without also giving back” (SR, Personal meeting, 2024)

For him, Larung Sesaji is not just about spiritual offerings but also a reminder of the need to protect the reservoir and its resources. His statement reflects a worldview where reciprocity with nature is central.

Another local, IB (a 57-year-old) who sells offerings for the ritual explained how they handle the event:

“In executing our rituals, we use agricultural products (harvests) as offerings. We employ natural materials—fruits, side dishes, rice, and certain animals that are acceptable to our ancestors. This is how our forebears conducted their ceremonies, and we continue their traditions. Respecting the reservoir is our obligation. After all, we live close to the reservoir, utilize it, and witness when it becomes polluted or when the water is no longer clean. What will happen to us if we do not take care of it?” (IB, Personal Meeting, 2024)

According to E.B. Tylor’s theory of animism, reflects a cultural belief in the spiritual essence of natural elements such as water. Tylor, in his work *Primitive Culture* (1871), posits that natural objects like rivers, forests, and mountains possess spirits. In this context, the Siman reservoir is regarded as a living entity that requires offerings, forming a belief system that ensures the well-being of the community.

A statement from a local elder above, “The reservoir is our life source” underscores the community's perception of water as a sacred entity. According to Tylor, animistic beliefs promote a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature; neglecting the spiritual care of water can lead to material consequences, such as environmental degradation (Setiyani & Nurhairunnisa, 2024). Concerns expressed by community members about maintaining the cleanliness of the reservoir reflect a sense of spiritual responsibility, it aligning with Tylor’s view that animism guides sustainable resource use (Praet, 2013).

The nature of the Larung Sesaji ritual supports Tylor's idea of animism as a belief system that is passed down through generations. This underscores the importance of young people continuing to offer spiritual respect to the Siman reservoir (IB, Personal Meeting, 2024) as part of sustainable practices. Larung Sesaji has adapted to modernity and integrated with Islamic beliefs (WD, Personal meeting, 2024), endowing the Siman reservoir with the same spiritual significance. This demonstrates how animistic beliefs can evolve while maintaining core principles of respect and stewardship. Through this ritual, the community blends spiritual reverence with practical water conservation (SR, Personal meeting, 2024) rooted in animistic traditions of reciprocity (Bohensky, E. L., & Maru, Y. T., 2021).

Although the Siman reservoir is constructed by human beings it is regarded as possessing a sacred status equivalent to that of natural bodies of water. Interestingly, the offerings made during the ritual consist of natural materials such as fruits, flowers, and rice (MG, Personal Meeting, 2024). These items are not merely symbolic; they are integral to an animistic belief system that mandates respect (Von Stuckrad, 2023). and care for the Siman reservoir. Thus, this ritual serves as a means for the community to engage in a reciprocal exchange with the spirits of their ancestors (RY, Personal Meeting, 2024). The Sesaji ritual also functions as a medium of communication between the Siman community and their revered ancestors, commonly known as “*Mbah Sarinjing*” (YO, Personal Meeting, 2024).

In the context of animism, *Larangan* reflects the fundamental principle of maintaining harmony between humans and the spiritual beings that inhabit the natural

world. If the Siman reservoir is not properly cared for, the beliefs expressed by the elders suggest that it will cease to provide benefits to the community (DW, Personal Meeting, 2024). This notion is closely related to the animistic idea that spiritual neglect can lead to material loss or environmental degradation (Díaz, et al., 2019).

The Siman community believes that the rituals they perform aim to protect both humanity and their needs, as well as the well-being of the universe. When discussing *Javanese ecology*, environmental care is seen not only as a practical necessity but also as a spiritual obligation. Tylor's framework suggests that in cultures where animism is the prevailing belief, there is often a direct correlation between spiritual practices and the sustainable use of natural resources (Wilkinson, D., 2023). In this context, the ritual serves as a mechanism through which the community ensures that they do not exploit the Siman reservoir without offering something in return.

The informan (IB) statement reflects the community's understanding that environmental care is not just a practical necessity but a spiritual obligation (IB, Personal Meeting, 2024). Tylor's framework suggests that in cultures where animism is a prevailing belief, there is often a direct correlation between spiritual practices and the sustainable use of natural resources. In this case, the ritual acts as a mechanism (Wilkinson, D., 2023) through which the community ensures that they do not exploit the reservoir without offering something in return, thus maintaining a sustainable relationship with their environment. The emphasis placed by the elders on teaching younger generations to continue these practices stems from the belief that the relationship between humans and nature must be preserved over time (PI, Personal Meeting, 2024). Consequently, this ritual serves as a form of traditional environmental education (Lynn, K., & Lancia, 2020), ensuring that future generations inherit not only the belief in the spiritual nature of the reservoir but also the sustainable practices associated with it.

### **Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Modern Environmental Strategies**

Larung Sesaji is practiced annually with the Melasti ritual conducted by Hindus in Kediri. While Larung Sesaji is directed toward ancestors and Mbah Sarinjing, it is intended for the deities (YT, Personal Meeting, 2024). The Melasti ceremony aims to welcome the Day of Silence (*Nyepi*) and takes place a week before the celebration. Its purpose is to enhance *sraddha bhakti*—devotional faith—towards the deities and the manifestation of God, to alleviate suffering. The chairman of the Hindu community in Kediri stated:

“Hindus believe that water sources such as lakes, reservoirs, rivers, and all springs are sources of life, or *tirta amerta*, for us. The Melasti ceremony is primarily intended to prepare for Nyepi and is performed a week before the celebration. This ceremony seeks to deepen *sraddha bhakti* towards the deities and *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* to relieve suffering. Essentially, through Melasti, we hope that the universe, humanity, and all beings will be granted prosperity, free from suffering and hardship. We aspire to preserve the universe we inhabit.” (WG, Personal Meeting, 2024).



**Figure 3. Ritual of the Larung Sesaji and Melasti**

During the Melasti ceremony, Simanes typically flock to the water source at the Siman reservoir, donning white garments and carrying offerings. Generally, they carry *pratima*, sacred objects, or statues that are ritually cleansed in both tangible and intangible ways. At the culmination of the Melasti event, all offerings are released into the reservoir and flow toward the Brantas River (WG, Personal Meeting, 2024).

Both Larung Sesaji and Melasti involve offerings to express gratitude to the Almighty and to maintain the vitality of water. These rituals integrate spiritual aspects and engage various community members, including religious leaders, cultural experts, and elders (YT, Personal Meeting, 2024). Referring to Thomas Reuter's concept of local knowledge, these systems are embedded within the social and cultural structures of the community. The Siman reservoir serves as a fundamental element in these rituals (Reuter, 2015). Both Larung Sesaji and Melasti reflect the dynamic nature of local knowledge, illustrating how traditional practices can preserve their core principles (Díaz, 2019) while adapting to contemporary contexts.

From interviews with local elders, it was articulated that: “the reservoir is not merely a place for storing water for us; it is a source of life, akin to air, fire, the sun, and plants.” (FT, Personal Meeting, 2024). This statement clarifies the integration and mapping of Reuter's concept of local knowledge into environmental practices. Local knowledge encompasses a complex understanding of natural resources and their significance within the community (Allen & Fryern, 2023). The ritual practice of making offerings serves not only as a spiritual act but also as a means to reinforce the community's commitment to the sustainable management of the reservoir.

Another informant we encountered contributed the following perspective:

“I believe the younger generation has the same responsibility to manage the reservoir. If we do not respect the reservoir, it will not provide what we need. I think it is not just about our myths and what we believe here; it is about the cycles and laws of nature.” (AS, Personal Meeting, 2024).

The statement illustrates how indigenous practices can offer valuable insights for addressing environmental challenges such as pollution and resource depletion (Lynn, K., & Lancia, 2020)). Local knowledge systems also encompass observations and responses

(Laalobang S., & Mudita dan Mau, 2021) to environmental changes. Therefore, it is compelling to consider how these systems are implemented in the rituals of Larung Sesaji and Melasti.

The involvement of various community members—religious leaders, cultural experts, and elders—demonstrates how Indigenous knowledge is integrated into community practices and governance (TI, Personal Meeting, 2024). This collective involvement ensures that the rituals not only preserve cultural traditions but also serve as mechanisms for communal environmental management. This integration is crucial for developing effective environmental strategies that are culturally appropriate for the Javanese community in general (Setiyani, Tasrif N., 2023). The strength of Larung Sesaji and Melasti allows these practices to remain relevant amid contemporary environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource management (Reuter, 2020).

Furthermore, government, cultural scholars, and elders are pivotal in disseminating knowledge and nurturing a sense of stewardship among youth (Mittal, 2024). This highlights the critical importance of preserving indigenous wisdom and safeguarding the Siman reservoir from environmental threats. The traditions of Larung Sesaji and Melasti regard the reservoir as sacred (WG, Personal Meeting, 2024), with cultural values and ethical principles directing practical actions (Fernández-Llamazares Á., & Cabeza M., 2021). These rituals resonate with environmental ethics, enhancing the effectiveness of water conservation initiatives and fostering environmental stewardship through traditional frameworks (Reuter, 2020). Local knowledge systems provide adaptable and context-specific solutions to environmental uncertainties. The sanctity of the Siman reservoir exemplifies how Indigenous practices can effectively address the complexities of contemporary environmental crises, fostering resilience and responsiveness (Reuter, 2021).

### **Ritual as Environmental Stewardship: The Socio-Religious Dimensions of Water Preservation in Larung Sesaji**

The Larung Sesaji ritual, steeped in mysticism and containing socio-religious dimensions (ID, Personal Meeting, 2024), has evolved into a local practice that functions as an environmental management tool. When considering the meaning of this ritual—where offerings are cast into the water—it remains a lasting local belief to this day (Cox & Philpott, 2003). Larung Sesaji, as a means of managing the Siman reservoir, represents a formal and symbolic tradition that carries moral significance.

This practice highlights the interaction between social customs and religious beliefs, underscoring its importance not only spiritually but also in maintaining social cohesion and community values. The multiple layers of meaning—cultural, religious, environmental, and social—illustrate how the ritual serves both as a religious expression (Mittal, 2024) and as a way for the community to engage (Lopes and Pinheiro, 2021), particularly in the context of water conservation.

The Kediri Tourism Office has recognized the local wisdom embedded in the village of Siman, positioning it as a candidate for becoming a tourist village. However, one major

challenge is the region's slow pace of infrastructure development. The head of Kediri's Tourism Office emphasized:

“Siman village meets all the criteria to be designated as a tourism village. However, infrastructure development requires special attention from both local and central governments, especially since the Siman Reservoir has officially opened as a water tourism center and a hub for religious rituals.” (TF, Personal Meeting, 2024).

It is undeniable that the government's involvement, as a policymaker, is central to the development of Siman village. This development is crucial for the community's sustainability, not only in economic terms (Kaur, 2023) but also in socio-cultural aspects (Hoyer, et al., 2023). Regular performance of the ritual is essential to maintaining the reservoir's water system, which in turn ensures the community's water needs are met. The availability of reservoir water depends heavily on the continued practice of the Larung Sesaji ritual (AS, Personal Meeting, 2024). A key challenge, however, is that if future generations lose interest in this tradition, the survival of the local community could be at risk. In Javanese cosmology (Setiyani & Nurhairunnisa, 2024) and Frazer's theory of mysticism (Frazer & Frazer, 1922), Larung Sesaji not only expresses gratitude to the deities and nature but also serves to educate both current and future generations on the importance of maintaining ecological balance. Imparting knowledge about “ecological living and sustainability” is a social responsibility, which involves fostering a sense of duty toward environmental (Reuter, 2020) care to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, such as the reservoir's water. Ultimately, this analysis shows that Larung Sesaji is not merely a religious act but also a way for the community to protect and respect the environment, particularly water resources.

To address the larger question—how the water supply of the Siman Reservoir can be sustained through the Larung Sesaji ritual, or whether local wisdom can ensure sustainable living—one must consider whether prayers for blessings, safety, and environmental harmony can genuinely create an ecological and sustainable ecosystem?

It is crucial to emphasize that *Larung Sesaji* is a form of local knowledge. Simanes deeply understands how to address environmental challenges (IB, Personal Meeting, 2024), even if they do not fully grasp formal ecological concepts. Their inherited traditions teach them a way of life—traditional, mystical, and seemingly primitive that (Reuter, 2021) serves as an innovative method for maintaining water availability in Siman.

In conclusion, *Larung Sesaji* is no longer viewed solely as a socio-religious ritual an expression of human gratitude to the divine, nature, and supernatural forces but as a traditional method adapted for the modern era, where science dominates. This ritual has a broader function (SR, Personal Meeting, 2024) than simply establishing reciprocal relationships between humans, God, ancestors, and nature (Praet, 2013; Mittal, 2024); it is a critical step in water conservation. The ritual reflects a profound and exclusive connection between the Siman community and the reservoir, demonstrating the significance of water in daily life (IP, Personal Meeting, 2024) and indicating that the community knows how to honor and preserve natural resources.

According to Tylor, the ritual highlights how water is perceived as a sentient being, prompting a profound respect for natural elements. The act of offering to the Siman reservoir is not merely ceremonial; it signifies an acknowledgment of nature's spirit (Segal, 2014) and the community's commitment to maintaining water purity.

It goes beyond traditional practices, as Thomas Reuter notes, *Larung Sesaji* emerges as a crucial conduit for disseminating local ecological wisdom and transforming spiritual beliefs into actionable strategies for sustainability. By engaging the community in water conservation efforts, the ritual fosters a strong sense of identity and unity (Stocking & Tylor, 1992), illustrating how ancient practices can inform modern environmental stewardship. These two concepts of Tylor and Reuter interact and influence each other, providing insights into their significance in understanding human experience.

## CONCLUSION

By highlighting the practical and symbolic dimensions of *Larung Sesaji*, this research offers valuable lessons for policymakers, environmentalists, and communities seeking to develop more culturally sensitive and ecologically sound approaches to water management. This ritual reflects a deep cultural understanding of the interconnectedness between human activities and the natural world, particularly water sources. *Larung Sesaji* implicitly encourages the community to engage in water conservation, as neglecting these practices would be seen as disrespectful to the spiritual guardians of the water.

The *Larung Sesaji* serves both as an environmental conservation strategy and a religious expression. This ritual underscores the community's vital role in preserving water resources through a socio-religious practice that intricately combines spiritual devotion with effective environmental stewardship. At the end, The *Larung Sesaji* brings together the entire community, creating a strong sense of unity and shared responsibility. This collective action strengthens community bonds and promotes a culture of environmental stewardship. The communal aspect of the ritual ensures that water conservation values are passed down through generations, maintaining the continuity of sustainable practices.

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