

Sociocultural Analysis on Water Conservation Practices in the Selat Klungkung Village Community

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the existence of water from a socio-cultural perspective to support water glorification in the Selat Klungkung Village community. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The results of this study reveal that the community socio-culturally has a very comprehensive cultural value system of the meaning of water for life, both related to religious, socio-cultural, economic, and political values. This is revealed in Hindu teachings, local wisdom, and oral traditions of the local community. The local community has an awareness of conservation. Awareness of water conservation is related to the meaning of water as a determinant of life. Awareness of water conservation is revealed from myths, institutions, and technologies used to manage and utilize water in people's lives.

Keywords: *Sociocultural, Glorification, Water Conservation*

1 Introduction

The impetus for this research stems from the critical role of Selat Village, situated in Klungkung Regency, Bali, where the geographical landscape is characterized by its fertile geographic conditions. The abundant water sources in this village significantly support agricultural activities, providing a vital resource for the residents, both for daily needs and for irrigating their farmland. As a part of the Hindu Balinese community, the residents draw upon various sacred texts that emphasize the sanctification reverence of water as a divine element. However, the existence of these water sources is currently under threat due to shifts in societal norms and the encroachment of land-use changes. Despite the profound ecological, economic, sociocultural, and spiritual significance of water for the Balinese people, the threats to these water sources underscore the urgency of comprehensive conservation strategies that align with the broader water sanctification initiatives.

The centrality of water in Balinese culture has garnered significant scholarly attention, with various studies examining its utilization and symbolic meanings as articulated in the Vedic scriptures. These studies underscore water's roles in purification, healing, fertility, and environmental stewardship [1]. Given this cultural context, it becomes imperative for the Balinese to venerate water, a practice that necessitates the development of institutional frameworks, regulatory mechanisms, and cultural systems, such as the Subak irrigation system, which is rooted in the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana* [2]. Water, beyond its physical utility, is also revered for its purifying capacities, a notion thoroughly explored in works such as the "Ecological Discourse on Rajapurana Pura Ulun Danu Batur as a Foundation for Lake Batur Conservation Initiatives." [3]. The importance of water to Balinese society cannot be overstated;

it is considered an elemental force that sustains the cosmos and all its inhabitants, as frequently expressed in *Toya Uriping Bhuwana Usadhaning Sangaskara*. [4]. Similar research can also be observed from the study *Local Wisdom in the Conservation of Water Sources at Archaeological Sites in Dompu Regency* [5]. These studies reveal that, from a sociocultural perspective, the community both preserves and venerates water. This forms a sociocultural capital that can be invested and simultaneously distributed in efforts to conserve and sanctify water. However, in reality, there are several instances within society where water pollution, destruction of water sources, and damage to the environment have occurred. These conditions are of urgent concern. The urgency of this research is also contextualized by the fact that water availability in Indonesia, particularly in most parts of Java and Bali, has become scarce to the point of criticality—a deeply alarming situation. This has inspired critical sociocultural research on the legacy of water sources to support the sanctification of water in Selat Village, Klungkung.

This research becomes even more significant in the *post-truth* era. The concept of *post-truth* was popularized in 1992 by Steve Tesich. Tesich argued that as free individuals, humans have the freedom to shape life in a post-truth world. In 2004, Ralph Keyes, alongside comedian Stephen Colbert, further developed a similar concept called *truthiness*, which refers to something that appears to be true but is, in fact, false. The Oxford Dictionary defines *post-truth* as a condition where facts are less influential in shaping public opinion compared to emotions and personal beliefs. Simply put, *post-truth* refers to an era in which lies can masquerade as truth, exploiting the emotions and feelings of netizens. The *post-truth* phenomenon can manipulate societal emotions, disrupt social and cultural life, and exacerbate social unrest and anxiety. Moreover, it can also lead to environmental vulnerability as a consequence of the degradation of environmental wisdom values. The rise of the *post-truth* phenomenon necessitates a heightened awareness and the development of personal capacities, particularly in terms of literacy—primarily digital literacy, cultural literacy, and environmental literacy.

Several studies have been conducted on traditional water source conservation, most of which discuss how the traditions of indigenous or local communities, including the rituals they perform, contribute to environmental conservation. One notable example is the recognition that several sacred forests in India have been preserved by local Hindu communities, where their spiritual beliefs play a crucial role in the conservation of both water and land. This suggests that the archaeological remains along the Pakerisan watershed, including cliff temples and hermitage caves, have contributed to environmental conservation efforts that date back to ancient Bali. Additionally, conservation efforts are also informed by religious values. Moral, religious, and ethical principles often provide invaluable guidance for the protection and preservation of the environment. Environmental issues are not only solved through technology and scientific methods but must also be supported by other forces such as religion, belief systems, and ethics that influence human attitudes towards nature [6]. In Hindu teachings, these principles can be observed in the three frameworks of Hinduism: *tatwa* (philosophy), *etika* (ethics), and *upacara* (rituals), or in local wisdom such as *Tri Hita Karana*, *Sad Kertih*, *nyegara gunung*, and others [7]. In the context of environmental and water source preservation, as well as the sanctification of water, a living heritage approach is essential. This approach is community-based, with local

residents playing a central role in the conservation process. Local communities are not only participants in the process but are also empowered. They are entitled to schedule, make decisions, and control the entire conservation process [8].

2 Methods

This research was conducted with qualitative research steps consisting of location determination, data collection, data validity testing, and data analysis. The location of this research is in Selat Village, Klungkung Bali. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document studies related to the research object. The collected data were then subjected to a validity process with triangulation. Data triangulation was carried out in two ways, namely method triangulation and source triangulation. After the data was validated, the next step was to conduct data analysis. The data were analyzed using the Mile and Huberman interactive analysis model with the help of socio-cultural theory. From the entire process, the research results were obtained in accordance with the objectives of this study.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Water in a Sociocultural Perspective

The availability and location of water sources are essential considerations in determining settlement areas. Water is part of the natural environment and must be preserved. A lack of water would disturb all life forms, including humans. Water holds a central position in almost every aspect of life for humans and other living beings. One of the current issues gaining significant attention in Indonesia is the water crisis, highlighting the urgent need for soil and water conservation. Water is the primary and indispensable resource for life. Civilization cannot exist without water, making the preservation of water quality a priority to maintain balance in both the macrocosmos (*Bhuana Agung*) and the microcosmos (*Bhuana Alit*).

The vital role of water is underscored in Law No. 17 of 2019 concerning Water Resources. Article 1, Clause 14, emphasizes that water conservation efforts aim to maintain the availability, sustainability, properties, and functions of water resources to ensure adequate water supply, both in terms of quality and quantity, for humans and all living creatures, now and in the future. The sacred concept (*keramat*) is a part of the hydrological aspect, providing an imaginary space that protects water sources from being disturbed or exploited for physical development. If this sacred space is damaged, it is believed to cause health problems, misfortunes, and even death. These sacred areas are typically planted with trees to act as conservation zones around water sources [8]. Such thinking has existed since prehistoric times, demonstrating the recognition of the importance of water within the community. In this context, various local wisdoms and beliefs regarding water have evolved.

Local wisdom, or "local genius," refers to the cultural traits shared by a community, resulting from its historical experiences. Local wisdom is a form of environmental knowledge held by a community in a specific region. In other words, it is localized to particular communities and regions. Other perspectives describe local wisdom as a worldview and knowledge system, encompassing strategies of life that manifest in the activities undertaken by

local communities to address the challenges of fulfilling their needs [10]. Local wisdom is a form of knowledge and life strategy, encompassing various worldviews manifested in the activities carried out by local communities in addressing a wide range of challenges related to fulfilling their needs [11]. Local wisdom is the collective knowledge possessed by a community, used to solve the various problems of life within a particular environment. This wisdom is integrated into systems of norms, culture, beliefs, and is expressed through long-standing traditions and myths. Local wisdom can be conveyed in the form of wise sayings (philosophies), such as advice, proverbs, poems, folklore (oral stories), and other literary forms. It also manifests in rules, principles, social norms, and moral codes, which form the basis of social systems. Additionally, it is evident in rituals, ceremonies, traditional practices, and daily behaviors observed in social interactions .

The importance of local wisdom in water conservation can be seen in the study titled *The Miracle of Water* . In the case of the Indigenous Manggarai community in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, water is considered a crucial element of the natural environment that must be preserved. The scarcity of water would disrupt the entire ecosystem, including human life . Therefore, the development of local wisdom in the management of water resources is essential for all communities.

In a sociocultural context, water is linked with various values, such as religious, social, economic, and political dimensions. Religious values emphasize water as a source of life (*tirta amertha*), a cleanser of impurities (*tirta pelukatan* and *tirta prasista*), and an important element in offerings. Socially, water symbolizes community sharing (*mekidihang yeh*), while economically, water is tied to its purchase (*numas toya* or *numas tirta*). Politically, water can be controlled by certain political or social units, as evidenced in the organization of *subak* institutions responsible for water management. In addition, physical structures, such as dams (*tembuku*), irrigation channels, and water containers, have been developed as part of the culture surrounding water usage. These institutional systems, cultural frameworks, and technological developments in water management reflect the community's deep-rooted culture of honoring water.

3.2 Water Conservation

Water conservation is an absolute requirement for humanity because human beings cannot survive without balanced water quality, both in the *Bhuana Agung* (macrocosmos) and *Bhuana Alit* (microcosmos). Humans need water, not the other way around; thus, maintaining the purity of water sources is a fundamental responsibility. If water is mistreated, it may wreak havoc on human life. According to animistic beliefs (such as the *Ncuhi* group), springs (*mada oi*), river branches (*ncanga kai sori*), and river mouths (*dam diwu*) are considered sacred places inhabited by ancestral spirits (*parafu*). Rituals, such as *toho ra dore* (worship rituals) and offerings, are conducted at these sites to honor the spirits and, indirectly, to conserve water sources [6, 11,12]. Similar beliefs are present in the community of Selat Village, as evident from the myths surrounding sacred baths like Pesiraman Yeh Taman, Pesiraman Yeh Sanur, Pesiraman Yeh Kawuh, Pesiraman Yeh Kunit, Pesiraman Yeh Sempol, and Pesiraman Yeh

Song Landak. These water sources are regarded as sacred and are believed to aid in purification and healing. Several of these water sources are still actively used in religious activities, especially for the *panca yadnya* rituals in Selat Village. For instance, the Yeh Kauh and Yeh Sanur water sources continue to be used for *melukat* (purification rites) and *nyiramang layon* (corpse washing) in the *manusa yadnya* and *pitra yadnya* ceremonies. Additionally, these water sources are used for *dewa yadnya* rituals, functioning as *Tirtha* (holy water). More recently, Pesiraman Yeh Sanur has also been used for *mekiis*, a purification ceremony for sacred statues (*pretima*) and ceremonial tools before *dewa yadnya* or *piodalan* ceremonies at Merajan Agung.

The local community's belief in and use of these sacred water sources is one of the key methods they employ in water conservation. These practices are in alignment with traditional water management systems, where conservation efforts are tailored to the local wisdom and customs of the community. Local wisdom represents a long-standing cultural practice that has been passed down through generations and is a reflection of the community's adaptation to its environment. This wisdom is a valuable tool for conserving water resources and preserving the surrounding natural environment [14].

The preservation of local wisdom and the natural environment must be supported by efforts to foster awareness and responsibility towards the conservation of water sources, as both sociocultural capital and a life-sustaining resource for the present and future generations. The government must oversee this by implementing policies that require households to engage in reforestation as part of environmental conservation efforts, including imposing legal sanctions for those who violate these regulations. At the level of indigenous communities, conservation efforts are conducted through the development of policies aimed at preserving local wisdom and maintaining water sources as part of broader water resource conservation strategies [15]. Various initiatives undertaken by the government and environmental advocates to implement soil and water conservation programs can be observed through the numerous existing laws and regulations. Various efforts by the government and environmental organizations to promote soil and water conservation can be seen through legislation, such as Law No. 37 of 2014 on Soil and Water Conservation. Article 2 of the law outlines the principles of conservation, including participation, integration, balance, fairness, utility, local wisdom, and sustainability. Furthermore, Article 46 stipulates that communities have equal opportunities to participate in soil and water conservation efforts, alongside central and regional governments, in accordance with their respective authorities. The law also emphasizes the need to incorporate local wisdom into the planning and execution of conservation efforts [16].

Based on the points outlined above, it can be stated that both the community and the government share a unified commitment to water conservation. Furthermore, all ideas regarding water conservation and sanctification must be continually developed with the involvement of various institutions [17]. This collaborative effort ensures that the sustainability and functionality of water are maintained for future generations.

4 Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that the community possesses a comprehensive sociocultural value system that encompasses religious, sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions, as reflected in religious teachings, local wisdom, and oral traditions. The community is acutely aware of the need for water conservation, recognizing the indispensable role of water as the foundation of life. This awareness manifests through the preservation of myths, institutional structures, and technological innovations in water management within the community.

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