

Cultural Constructions of the Life Cycle: An Ethnographic Study of Life Stages in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

Understanding the life cycle is an important aspect of cultural studies, as it contains the values, norms, and collective identity of the community that are passed down from generation to generation. This research examines the human life cycle in the cultural perspective of the people of Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta through an ethnographic approach. The life cycle starts from birth, childhood and adolescence, adulthood and marriage, to old age and death. This cycle is understood as a series of rites that are full of symbolic, spiritual and social meanings. Various traditions such as *mitoni*, *puputan*, *nyanggar*, circumcision, and death *slametan* reflect the way people celebrate and interpret life culturally. The approach used in this research is qualitative with ethnographic methods. The data collection technique in this research is triangulated through three main methods that complement each other, namely participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. This research found that tradition not only functions as a celebration of biological transition, but also as a mechanism for value inheritance, identity formation, and strengthening social solidarity. Despite the pressures of globalisation and modernisation, the people of Gunungkidul show efforts to preserve traditions through cultural adaptation and revitalisation, including in local education. By placing nature and community as cultural learning spaces, the cycle of life becomes a mirror of the dynamic interaction between humans, traditions and local values. This study confirms that ethnography shows that culture in the human life cycle in the Gunung Kidul region is the main instrument in shaping human character and maintaining the continuity of the community's collective identity.

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INTRODUCTION

The selection of Gunungkidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, as the research location was based on strong scientific and contextual considerations. Socioculturally, Gunungkidul is known as an area that still maintains Javanese traditions, where rites of passage in the life cycle are still actively implemented and passed down across generations (Suryadarma, 2019). This makes Gunungkidul an ideal *living laboratory* to study cultural dynamics in the frame of an intact locality. Geographically and demographically, the characteristics of a karst-dominated region with typical agrarian socio-economic conditions create a unique cultural ecosystem that is relatively preserved from the penetration of mass modernisation, allowing researchers to observe the interaction between humans, nature, and tradition in an authentic setting. In addition, the high participation of the community in traditional rituals such as *mitoni*, *puputan*, *nyanggar*, and *slametan* shows that the cycle of life in this region is not only seen as a biological event, but also as a meaningful cultural event. This research also considers the academic aspect of the limited number of in-depth ethnographic studies that address all phases of the life cycle in a single study in the region. Thus, the study in Gunungkidul is not only relevant for the documentation of local wisdom, but also methodologically significant in understanding the mechanism of cultural adaptation in the midst of globalisation (Sumarmi et al., 2024).

Understanding the life cycle is an important aspect of cultural studies, as it embodies the values, norms, and collective identity of a community that are passed down from generation to generation. In the Gunungkidul region of Yogyakarta, the life cycle not only reflects the biological phases of human life from birth to death but also implies the way local communities interpret the meaning of life, build social solidarity, and maintain the continuity of traditions. In general, Javanese people commemorate the phases of life by performing traditional ceremonies. Traditional ceremonies are a form of culture related to the meaning, values, and symbols in the human life cycle (Jayadi & Kamarudin, 2021). Javanese society is known as a population that still upholds traditions from ancestors or ancestors (Permadi & Yantari, 2023). The importance of understanding the life cycle in cultural studies is very significant, considering that the human life cycle includes various phases including birth, growth, marriage, and death. Each phase of the life cycle has rituals and traditions rooted in the culture of the community, reflecting its values and beliefs.

A study of the birth phase, for example, shows how strong the role of customs and rituals is in welcoming new life, whether through *mitoni* ceremonies, *brokohan*, or symbolic naming traditions. Entering childhood and adolescence, the process of cultural socialisation begins to play an active role (Niman, 2025). The values of obedience, togetherness, and manners are instilled through interactions within the family and community. In the phase of adulthood and marriage, Gunungkidul culture reveals the customary rules that govern relationships between individuals and more complex social structures. Marriage is not just a union of two individuals, but a social event involving extended families and communities, *laden* with symbols, procedures and values of togetherness. Then, in the phase of old age and death, the community shows a form of deep respect for ancestors and deceased people, reflected in the traditions of *nyadran*, *kenduri*, and *tahlilan* which function to maintain spiritual ties between the living and the dead (Daliman, 2012).

However, with the times and the introduction of modernization, these practices have undergone various forms of preservation and change. Younger generations have begun to reinterpret old traditions, some preserved as cultural heritage, while others have shifted in meaning or even been abandoned. Culture provides a framework for understanding and celebrating each phase in the life cycle (Gufon et al., 2025). Through rituals and traditions, people can express hope, gratitude and respect for life. Understanding the life cycle in a cultural context helps individuals to better appreciate their identity and strengthen social bonds within the community. This is where an in-depth study of the life cycle is important with the aim of understanding the cultural dynamics that live, move and are continuously negotiated within the Gunungkidul community. It is undeniable that humans are cultured beings. With the power of creation, taste, and creativity, humans produce their culture (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). He was born and lives in a plurality of cultural spaces that he produces in order to know each other, respect each other's existence (Ridho, 2019).

Research on life cycle and life circle rituals in Javanese society has been widely conducted, forming a solid academic foundation. Previous studies have generally focused on the symbolic description and social function of these rituals. For example, (Geertz, 1960) in his classic work analyses *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* as Javanese cultural variants, where life cycle rituals become identity markers for each group. Research of Ekowati (2008) documents in detail the procedures and ceremonies surrounding the life cycle of Javanese society based on the manuscript *Serat Tatacara*, providing a strong philological footing. Meanwhile, Rahmadani & Pulungan (2021) explores the function and meaning of semiotics in the *tingkeban* tradition, revealing how material symbols operate in cultural communication. A similar study by Aswiyati (2015) focuses on the meaning and course of the *puputan* and *selapanan* ceremonies, emphasising aspects of spiritual protection in the early phases of life.

At the national level, research of Jayadi & Kamarudin (2021) examines Lombok's Berege Sasak culture as an effort to preserve religious values, which provides a comparative perspective on how other communities in Indonesia interpret life rites. Permadi & Yantari, (2023) examines the axiological value of *Jilu* marriage in Javanese society, highlighting the philosophical and ethical

dimensions of marriage transition. International research also provides deep insights; Throsby (2001) in the context of Sumba, analyses how fabrics and rituals shape identity and social cycles, demonstrating similar complexities beyond Java. Further, Smith-Hefner (2019) examines the shifting meanings of Javanese Muslim marriage in the modern era, highlighting the tensions between tradition, religion and modernity. The study from Mulder (2005) on Javanese Mysticism and Everyday Life offers a deep understanding of the inner world and spiritual concepts underlying many of life's rituals. Finally, Beatty (1999) in his ethnography of variations in Javanese beliefs, shows how life cycle ritual practices can vary widely even within a single island, challenging generalizations about "Javanese culture".

Although previous studies have extensively discussed Javanese life cycle rituals, this research offers explicit novelty through an ethnographic approach that focuses specifically on agrarian communities in the karst topography of Gunungkidul. The first novelty lies in the analytical emphasis on the triadic interaction between body, nature, and community in shaping the meaning of each rite (Al-Aliyah et al., 2020). In contrast to studies that only focus on symbols or social functions, this study reveals how karst landscapes with their underground rivers, sacred springs, and sacred caves are not just settings, but non-human actors that actively shape ritual practices and cosmologies. The second novelty is in highlighting the cultural adaptation and revitalization strategies of the Gunungkidul people in responding to the pressures of globalization, an aspect that often receives less analysis in similar studies. This research not only documents the traditions that have survived, but further analyses the mechanisms of value negotiation, local innovation, and their potential integration into culture-based education, thus providing a dynamic and futuristic perspective on the survival of traditions (Lin & Ang, 2025).

Based on the identification of knowledge gaps and novelty, this research specifically aims to achieve three fundamental things. Firstly, this research aims to describe and analyze in depth the practices of rites in the human life cycle in Gunungkidul, starting from birth, childhood and adolescence, adulthood and marriage, to death, with an emphasis on the symbolic, spiritual and social meanings attached to each rite (Allo et al., 2024). Secondly, this research examines and analyses the dynamics of interaction between the community and its natural environment and social community in the context of the implementation of these rites, and how this interaction shapes the character, values and collective identity of individuals in the community. Third, it identifies and analyses the forms of preservation, adaptation and challenges faced by life cycle traditions amidst globalization and modernization, and explores potential revitalization strategies, particularly through integration into local education frameworks, to ensure the survival of this cultural heritage for future generations. By exploring each phase of life in the local context of Gunungkidul, we not only examine how culture works in everyday life, but also how it is maintained, transformed and passed on. This understanding is crucial for building cultural awareness, nurturing local identity, and contributing to the preservation of Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural treasures (Sumarmi et al., 2024).

METHODS

This research is based on the interpretive paradigm within the framework of cultural anthropology which views social reality as a subjective construction formed through the meanings created by individuals in their interactions (Geertz, 1973). This paradigm emphasizes that cultural reality is not singular and objective, but multiple and depends on the perspectives and interpretations of the cultural actors themselves. In the context of life cycle research in Gunungkidul, this worldview directs researchers to understand (*verstehen*) symbolic meanings, values, and cultural practices from the perspective of the Bejiharjo community as subjects who actively interpret their life experiences. This philosophical orientation has methodological implications where the researcher must be deeply involved with the research subject to be able to reveal meanings that are not visible to the naked eye, so that the purpose of research is not to find

general laws or generalizations, but to produce a deep contextual understanding of the cultural phenomena under study (Johannes & Rasyid, 2018).

The approach used in this research is qualitative with ethnographic method, which was chosen because of its ability to describe and interpret a cultural group in depth through the immersion of researchers in the environment and activities of research subjects for a certain period of time (Spradley, 1980). Ethnography allows researchers to capture the nuances and complexities of cultural meanings that are not captured through quantitative approaches, especially in understanding life rites that are full of hidden symbols and values. This type of research is an ethnographic case study that allows in-depth exploration of life cycle phenomena in their natural context in Bejiharjo Village, with descriptive-analytical characteristics that aim to provide a rich and deep *description* (*thick description*) while analyzing the cultural dynamics that occur. This combination of approaches and types of research is considered the most appropriate to answer research questions about the meaning, function, and transformation of life cycle traditions in the complex and dynamic Gunungkidul society (Mulyana, 2017).

Data collection techniques in this study were triangulated through three main methods that complement each other, namely participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participatory observation was implemented by means of researchers not only observing but also being actively involved in customary and daily activities of the community, such as helping to prepare offerings, following the *kenduri*, and attending the entire ritual procession to experience first-hand the emotional and social dimensions of the tradition (Lisdiati et al., 2014). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a flexible interview guide to explore informants' lived experiences, local knowledge and interpretations of cultural symbols, allowing informants to freely develop their stories and meanings. Documentation studies included the collection and analysis of photographs, videos of traditional processions, village historical records, *primbon*, and other relevant documents to complement and confirm data from observations and interviews, thus forming an accountable audit trail (Kahmad, 2000).

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis technique, which was conducted through an interactive and iterative process in six systematic stages. The initial stage was familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts and field notes until the researcher fully mastered the material, followed by Initial Coding by identifying and labelling interesting statements, phrases or scenes from the data. The third stage is Theme Searching by grouping codes that have conceptual similarities to form initial themes such as "Spirituality in Birth Rites" and "Identity Negotiation in the Modern Era", then Theme Review and Refinement is conducted to check the consistency of themes with the overall data. The fifth stage is Defining and Naming Themes by formulating the essence of each theme that has been solidified, and ends with the Preparation of Reports in the form of analytical narratives supported by direct quotes from informants and in-depth ethnographic descriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, several rigorous and comprehensive validation strategies were applied through four main approaches. Triangulation was conducted using multiple data sources (informants from different roles and generations), data collection methods (observation, interviews, documents), and researchers to check the consistency of interpretations and reduce subjectivity bias. Adequate field involvement of six months enabled a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the cultural context, building trust with informants, and observing the development of traditions in relevant time cycles (Ahmed, 2024). Member checking was done by returning the researcher's provisional findings and interpretations to some key informants for confirmation of their veracity and meaningfulness, thus ensuring that the voices of the research subjects remained authentic. Finally, thick description is presented in the final report by describing the context, process and participants in detail so that readers can assess the transferability of the findings to other similar cultural contexts, while building trust in the depth and authenticity of this research. This research involved 12 key informants who were purposively

selected based on their in-depth knowledge, roles and experiences related to life cycle traditions in Bejiharjo Village (Nurhayati et al., 2024).

Table 1. Research Informants

Name (Initials)	Role/Profession	Age	Specific Knowledge & Contribution
Mr. Karto (Traditional Leader)	Customary Leader & Caretaker	72	Expert in philosophy & procedures of all life rites; leader of <i>nyadran</i> and <i>clean hamlet</i> rituals.
Mrs. Siti (Baby Shaman)	Baby shaman (<i>Paraji</i>)	65	Companion to <i>mitoni</i> , childbirth, <i>puputan</i> , and postpartum care; expert in traditional concoctions (<i>jamu</i>).
Mr. Sutrisno	Village elder	68	Source of oral history and cultural changes in Bejiharjo over the past 50 years.
Mrs. Waginem	Housewife	58	Resource person for <i>nyanggar</i> and <i>tingkeban</i> rituals; <i>Offering-making</i> practitioner.
Mr. Heru	Youth leader of Karang Taruna	35	Young generation's perspective on tradition; initiator of cultural revitalisation through digital media.
Mrs. Darmi	Housewife	45	Experience of performing traditional <i>circumcisions</i> and weddings for her children.
Mr. Samin	Farmer & Ritual Performer	70	Expertise in the symbolism of <i>offerings</i> and prayers (<i>mantras</i>) in the rites of agriculture & life.
Mrs. Retno	Primary School Teacher	42	Perspectives on the integration of local cultural values into education.
Young couple (Ari & Dian)	Husband and wife	25	First-hand experience of the proposal procession up to the wedding <i>ceremony</i> (2024).
Mr. Joko	Modin (Islamic religious officer)	52	A source of <i>Islamic-Javanese</i> syncretism in death <i>slam</i> (3,7,40,100 days).
Mrs. Sri	Manten Sepuh (bridal make-up artist)	60	Expert on the symbolism of <i>paes</i> , clothing, and bridal make-up of Yogyakarta.
Mr. Agung	Head of the family	48	Experience in organising <i>brobosan slametan</i> for his parents.

This field research was conducted over six months with a specific time span from 15 January 2025 to 15 June 2025, which was divided into three operational phases. The first phase was Initial Observation and Familiarity Building which took place from 15 January to 28 February 2025. The second phase was Intensive Data Collection conducted from 1 March to 31 May 2025, which focused on participatory observation in various traditional ceremonies including 2 *mitoni* ceremonies, 1 *puputan* ceremony, 1 circumcision procession, 1 *nyanggar* tradition, 1 traditional wedding series, and 3 death *slametan*, as well as conducting in-depth interviews with all informants. The third phase was Data Validation and Elaboration which took place from 1 June to 15 June 2025, which was used to confirm interim findings through member checking, conducting additional interviews if needed, and completing documentation studies in the *kelurahan* archives.

This research was conducted in the village of Bejiharjo in Gunungkidul Regency which is still actively preserving life cycle traditions. The choice of location was based on the existence of a community that still carries out traditional ceremonies regularly, as well as the existence of traditional leaders and cultural actors who are still active. Administratively, Gunungkidul Regency has an area of 1,485.36 km², covering 18 sub-districts and 144 villages. Of the 144 villages, 16 are classified as self-sufficient and 128 as independent. Land and forest areas are generally state-owned land. Much of this land is bare, barren, dry and steep. The deforestation of the state forest area is caused by various things, both logging and unsuccessful replanting (Anggraeni, 2017). Semanu sub-

district is the largest sub-district with an area of 108.39 Km², while Paliyan sub-district is the smallest with an area of 58.07 Km². The number of villages and hamlets varies between sub-districts. Although it has a small area compared to the other sub-districts, Wonosari sub-district, which is an urban area, has the largest number of villages at 14 villages. In addition, the population of Gunungkidul Regency based on the results of the population census in 2017 was 722,479 people. The female population is greater than the male population, and the largest population is in Wonosari Sub-district. Ngeposari village and Candirejo village, Semanu sub-district, Gunung Kidul regency are the locations of KTH Sedyo Makmur. Administratively, its members come from 4 hamlets and 2 villages, namely, Jragum, Wediutah, Gemulung hamlets in the Ngeposari village area and Plebengan hamlet in the Candirejo village area. The total population of Ngeposari is 9,468 people and Candirejo is 8,840 people (Gunungkidul, 2017)



Figure 1. Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta Map
Source: BPS DIY. Gunungkidul Year 2017

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Studies in the Human Life Cycle in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta

Based on six months of ethnographic research (15 January to 15 June 2025) in Bejiharjo Village, Gunungkidul Regency, involving twelve purposively selected key informants, this study reveals the complexity of the meaning, function, and transformation of rites in the life circle (Spradley, 1980). Through participatory observation in various traditional ceremonies and semi-structured interviews, data analysis using Thematic Analysis techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994) succeeded in identifying core themes that represent cultural dynamics from birth to death.

In the early phase of life, rites such as the *Mitoni* or *Tingkeban* Ceremony are interpreted as a form of gratitude and a request for safety (Herawati, 2007), which also serves as an early social support mechanism for expectant mothers (Tuti and Rosmilan, 2025). The symbolism in this ritual shows syncretism where Islamic values combine with ancestral heritage (Geertz, 1960). *The Puputan* and naming traditions mark the end of the postpartum period, functioning as a rite of separation within the framework of rites of passage (Aswiyati, 2015), which is complemented by symbolic protection efforts. The central role of the *shaman* or *paraji* as a mediator between the physical and spiritual realms, along with their esoteric knowledge, strengthens the cultural structure and local knowledge.

In childhood and adolescence, the haircut is a prelaminar stage for infant purification and social acceptance. Circumcision for boys represents a liminal stage and becomes a mechanism for social reproduction of the values of obedience, courage and honor (Meinarno et al., 2011). In contrast, the *Nyanggar* tradition for girls reflects a feminine rite that emphasises purification, social protection and social control of the female body, while managing the ambivalence of menstrual blood which is seen as sacred but needs to be purified (Beatty, 1999).

The adult phase and marriage are transformative rites. The *Lamaran* tradition with its symbolism of offerings is a preliminal stage that strengthens social cohesion. *Ijab Kabul*, although an Islamic ritual, is imbued with Javanese cultural values and functions as a liminal moment that transforms social status. *Panggih* and the traditional reception mark the integration or postliminal stage, where symbols such as *wijikan*, *kacar-kucur*, and *dhahar klimah* are loaded with educational and philosophical values about domestic life, and show the power of symbolic values in framing life transitions (Rahmadani & Pulungan, 2021).

The phase of old age and death is understood as a transition to eternal life. The *Brobosan* ritual is a symbol of final honour and the release of worldly ties. *Slametan* on certain days functions not only as a religious ritual, but also as a social medium that strengthens community solidarity and rebuilds social structures (Giddens, 1991). End-of-life meanings are characterised by respect for ancestors through grave pilgrimages and *nyadran*. The most prominent feature is syncretism, where Islamic teachings coexist with animist elements and *Kejawen* values, reflecting the adaptive ability of local culture (Mulder, 2005).

Based on six months of field research in Bejiharjo Village, Gunungkidul, these ethnographic findings reveal the complexity of life cycle traditions that survive, adapt and continue to live amidst changing times. While many previous studies have documented Javanese life circle rites, these findings present a unique nuance by placing nature as an active non-human actor in ritual cosmology. For example, in the *Puput Rambut* ritual, water from a particular spring in the local karst landscape is chosen not at random, but is believed to have special sacred properties and spiritual powers for the purification of babies. This belief reflects a local knowledge system that considers the natural environment not just a passive setting, but an entity that plays an active role in creating meaning and maintaining spiritual balance. This confirms and deepens the cultural ecology approach that emphasises the dialectical relationship between humans and their environment, but in the specific context of karst landscapes that give Gunungkidul its distinctive identity (Nurzaman, 2020).

Traditions in the Birth Phase of Humans in Bejiharjo, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta

Based on ethnographic research conducted in Bejiharjo Village, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region, the birth phase in the human life cycle is understood not merely as a biological event, but as a complex and meaningful cultural process. This research used a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, in which researchers immersed for six months (15 January to 15 June 2025) to be directly involved in community life. Data collection techniques were triangulated through participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 key informants, and documentation studies. The data collected was analysed using the Thematic Analysis model (Victoria, 2006) to generate an in-depth understanding of the symbolic, spiritual and social meanings of each rite.

One of the central rites in the birth phase is the *Mitoni* or *Tingkeban* ceremony, which is held in the seventh month of pregnancy. This ritual is interpreted as a form of gratitude for the presence of prospective family successors as well as a request for safety for the mother and baby (Isni Herawati, 2007). In practice, this ceremony is inseparable from symbols that are passed down from generation to generation. Based on an interview with Mrs Waginem, one of the informants who is an expert in making offerings, *Tingkeban* is seen as a form of gratitude to Allah that does not conflict with the value of faith in Islam, as long as the community does not believe in the symbols contained in it. He stated, "*Tingkeban may be practiced as a cultural tradition rather than as a belief in its symbolic meanings because it is a form of gratitude to God expressed through almsgiving to others*". Field observations also show that participation in this ritual creates a feeling of peace and hope for safety, as expressed by Mrs. Siwang, "*After the ceremony was carried out, there was a sense of inner peace and hope for protection*" (Tuti and Rosmilan, 2025). This shows that *mitoni* functions as a cultural mechanism to manage expectations and anxiety in the face of the birth process.

The next rite is the *Puputan* Tradition, which is performed when the baby's umbilical cord has been severed. This moment marks the end of the postpartum period and is considered a sign that the baby has passed the vulnerable early stages of life. According to the researcher's participatory observation, *puputan* is often accompanied by a domestic ceremony involving the nuclear family, traditional elders, and the baby's shaman. In some cases, these rituals are still accompanied by offerings and mantras for spiritual protection, reflecting local beliefs in the presence of negative energies that can disturb the baby. Aswiyati (2015) documents in detail the various symbolic elements in *puputan*, such as the installation of threads (*lawu wenang*) around the house, the placement of *sawuran* in the corner of the room, and the use of *gandhik* dolls equipped with sharp objects. This ritual not only marks the biological transition, but also serves to strengthen social relations between the baby's family and the community.

In line with *puputan*, naming has also become an integral part of the symbolic structure of Gunungkidul society. Naming a baby is not seen as a mere administrative identity, but rather as a process involving spiritual, genealogical considerations and hopes for the child's future. Based on interviews with Mr. Karto, a local traditional leader, names are often chosen with *weton* (Javanese market day) or natural phenomena at the time of birth in mind, demonstrating the close link between local knowledge systems and cultural practices. This process also reflects cultural hybridity, where names with classical Javanese elements coexist with Islamic ones, illustrating the negotiation between local values and religious influences (Pals, 2001).

The entire rite of passage in this phase of birth is inseparable from the central role of the traditional birth attendant (*paraji*). An in-depth interview with Mrs. Siti, a 65-year-old traditional birth attendant, revealed that her role goes beyond the medical aspect. She not only accompanies the labour process and postpartum care, but also functions as a mediator between the real world and the spiritual dimension. Shamans are believed to possess esoteric knowledge that has been passed down through generations, including traditional medicine techniques, the use of herbs, and protective mantras (Listyani, 2017). They lead rituals such as *mitoni*, *brokohan*, and *puputan*, which are considered important for maintaining the spiritual balance between mother, baby, and their social environment. These practices are rooted in local belief systems that recognise the existence of supernatural forces and ancestral spirits, where the body is seen not only as a biological entity, but also as a container of spiritual energy that needs to be kept in balance. In the context of social change, despite the growing influence of modernisation and medicalisation, the cultural role of traditional birth attendants has not been completely replaced, especially in the ritual and belief dimensions of the community, so they remain a symbol of the continuity of local traditions and identity.

Childhood and Adolescent Traditions in Bejiharjo, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta

The childhood and adolescent phases of the human life cycle are critical periods for character building and internalisation of cultural values. This research, which took place over six months (15 January to 15 June 2025), used a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Data collection techniques were triangulated through participatory observation in various ceremonies, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 key informants, and documentation studies. Data analysis used Braun and Clarke's thematic model to reveal the deep meaning behind each rite. In this phase, the three main traditions of *Puput Rambut*, *Sunatan*, and *Nyanggar* become rites of passage that transform the social, spiritual, and gender status of individuals, while reflecting the dynamic interaction between humans, nature, and community (Sulistiyo et al., 2023).

The Haircut serves as a rite of purification and social acceptance of the baby. This tradition of cutting the first hair, which usually takes place at 40 days or 3 months of age, is not simply an act of hygiene. Based on participatory observation and interviews with Mrs. Darmi, the baby's first hair is considered to have ties to the spiritual world as it is formed in the womb, so its cutting marks the separation from the magical realm into the human social world. In terms of van Gennep's theory, this is the preliminal stage. This procession, as observed in one ceremony in Mr. Agung's family, is

often accompanied by a *kenduri* and the use of holy water from a particular spring and flowers as a symbolic medium for purification and invocation of ancestral protection. This practice not only demonstrates the community's cosmological connection with nature, but also instils the value of respect for natural resources from an early age (Gufron et al., 2025).

The tradition of circumcision for boys in Bejiharjo has undergone an interesting localisation process, where Islamic teachings combine with Javanese customs, making it a festive social and religious initiation. As expressed by Mr Heru, the head of Karang Taruna, a circumcision is a major social event involving processions, folk entertainment and family celebrations, thus strengthening community solidarity. Through observation of one circumcision procession, it is clear how this tradition represents a liminal phase in the rites of passage; the boy is in the threshold status of no longer a child but not yet fully an adult. Symbolically, circumcision is a marker of physical and moral readiness to undergo religious and social norms (Kristanto & Martasudjita, 2022). The circumcised child is seen as ready to accept new responsibilities as a man in the community, where values of obedience, courage and honour are passed on collectively through this mechanism of social reproduction.

In contrast to the public nature of circumcision, the *Nyanggar* Tradition is performed in private and domestically, marking a girl's first menstruation. This ritual reflects a feminine rite that serves as social protection and a marker of gender status transition. Based on interviews with Mrs. Waginem and Mrs. Retno, while undergoing *Nyanggar*, girls will be secluded, given traditional herbs, and guided spiritually and morally by their mothers or female elders regarding self-preservation responsibilities, modesty ethics, and social norms. Cultural analysis shows that *Nyanggar* is a form of reinforcement of gender norms in an agrarian social structure. Although this tradition reflects social control over women's bodies, it also provides a space to honour women's roles as guardians of purity and household balance (Alviyah et al., 2020). Within the framework of Javanese society, menstrual blood has an ambivalence of meaning: it is sacred yet needs to be purified, and *Nyanggar* becomes a symbolic container to manage this ambiguity.

These three traditions do not stand alone, but are part of a broader cultural system, where interaction with nature and community is a key foundation in character building. The people of Gunungkidul, who live in a karst landscape with hidden springs and dry farmland, view nature not as an object, but as a spiritual and moral partner. In rituals such as *Puput Rambut* or village clean-up, water from certain springs is considered holy and used for purification. This procession, as explained by Mr. Samin, a farmer and ritual artisan, is not only symbolic but also contains educative values that instill ecological awareness, humility, and living in harmony with nature from an early age (Pangestu et al., 2021).

While nature forms spiritual awareness, the social community acts as a platform for learning values and roles. In Gunungkidul's collective society, every stage of life is accompanied by community support and recognition. Circumcision celebrations and *Nyanggar* rituals, although different in nature, are both arenas where values of courage, responsibility, decency and honour are taught and reinforced. Through participation in collective rites such as clean village and *nyadran*, children and young people are exposed to local narratives that bring together the real and spiritual worlds (Arafah et al., 2023).

In the perspective of cultural anthropology, this process is called enculturation, which is the inheritance of cultural values to the younger generation through symbols, rites, and social practices in daily life (Spradley, 1980). The result of this enculturation process, which is integrated between nature and society, is the formation of the typical character of the Gunungkidul people: hardworking, unpretentious, respectful of ancestors, and living in harmony with nature. Thus, life cycle traditions in the childhood and adolescence phases are not mere ceremonies, but rather a concrete and powerful vehicle of value education that shapes social identity and individual character through interactions that touch the body, space, and time.

Traditions in the Adult and Marriage Phases in Bejiharjo, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta

The adult and marriage phases of the human life cycle are represented as complex and transformative rites of passage. This research, which took place from 15 January to 15 June 2025, used a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Data collection techniques were triangulated, including the researcher's participatory observation of a full traditional wedding ceremony, semi-structured in-depth interviews with key actors including a young couple (Ari & Dian) who had just undergone the procession in 2024, Mrs. Sri (*Manten Sepuh*), and Mr. Joko (*Modin*), and a documentation study of photos and videos of the procession. The data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model to reveal the symbolic, spiritual and social meanings embedded in each stage. The marriage process in Gunungkidul not only unites two individuals, but is a cultural mechanism that regulates inter-family relations and strengthens community structures through three main stages: proposal (*panjatan*), consent, and traditional reception (*panggih*).

The *Lamaran (Panjatan)* tradition functions as a preliminal or separation stage in the rite of passage, which creates a space for social and symbolic negotiation between the two families. Based on participatory observation and interviews, this procession is carried out with manners and etiquette. The groom's family comes with offerings that are not just material gifts, but symbols of goodwill, readiness and sincerity. According to Mrs. Sri, a bridal make-up and fashion expert, the offerings usually consist of *setaman* flowers (a symbol of the fragrance of domestic life), plantains (a symbol of the groom's maturity), betel nut (a symbol of a strong bond), *tumpeng* (hope for abundance of fortune), and water jugs (a symbol of tranquillity and purity) (Suyadi & Sabiq, 2021). The success of this proposal stage, as Ari & Dian's experience reveals, is crucial to the smooth running of the rest of the process, as it serves to unify the visions and values of both extended families, while strengthening social cohesion in a community that places great value on *gotong royong* and family honour.



Figure 2. Photo of Offerings at the Marriage Proposal Procession
Source: Researcher Documentation

The *Ijab Kabul* tradition is the sacred core of the marriage process, representing a liminal or threshold phase. Although it is an Islamic religious ritual, *ijab kabul* in Gunungkidul has been culturally integrated with Javanese values. As observed in the procession and confirmed through interviews with Mr. Joko as Modin, the atmosphere of this ritual is still imbued with traditional nuances, reflected in the use of *beskap* and *kebaya* clothing, the use of Javanese subtle language (*krama*), and the ethical order of events. Within the cultural framework, *ijab kabul* is not only a

legal- spiritual agreement between two individuals before God and the headman, but also a form of social legitimisation from the whole community. The presence of community leaders, elders and extended family, as noted in the field notes, confirms that marriage is understood as a collective event. This moment symbolically moves the social status of individuals from virgin and maiden to the threshold status of future husband and wife, awaiting full recognition in the next stage (Pals, 2001).

The *Panggih tradition* and traditional reception mark the postliminal or integration phase, where the couple is fully recognised by the community as a new social unit. The *panggih* procession observed by the researcher is full of a series of symbols that have deep educational and philosophical values. The *wijikan* ritual (the washing of the bride's feet by the groom) reflects the wife's humility and devotion. *Tukar kalpika* (exchange of rings) symbolises an eternal bond. *Kacar-kucur* (the scattering of grains and small change by the groom to the bride) symbolises the husband's economic responsibility. Finally, *dhahar klimah* (eating together) signifies co-operation and sharing in navigating household life. According to Mrs. Sri, every detail in the *panggih*, including the clothes worn, has a special meaning. The bride wears *paes ageng* (black painting on the forehead) which symbolises nobility and maturity, while the bride and groom wear truntum-patterned batik cloth as a hope that their love will continue to grow. Through this *panggih* procession, noble values about harmony, responsibility, and the sanctity of the household are symbolically passed on from the older generation to the new generation (Prabowo & Patria, 2022).

As a whole, the Gunungkidul wedding tradition consisting of proposal, consent, and *pelih* (a post-wedding thanksgiving ritual), along with all the symbolism in the offerings and traditional clothing, forms an integral cultural system. This system not only functions to transform the status of individuals, but also plays a central role in reproducing the social structure, moral values, and collective identity of the community. Through the lens of cultural anthropology, marriage in Gunungkidul is a powerful transformative rite, proving that character and social relations are not formed individually, but through symbolic and systematic interactions within a living and dynamic cultural structure, making culture a space for learning and identity formation that is deeply rooted in local values (Matondang et al., 2017)

Traditions in the old and death phases in Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta

The phase of old age and death in the human life cycle is understood not as a final end, but as a sacred transition that connects the realm of the world with the realm of the spirit, and towards eternal life. This research, which was conducted over six months (15 January to 15 June 2025), used a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Data collection techniques were triangulated through researcher participatory observation in various death rites, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 key informants-including traditional leaders, *modin*, and bereaved families-and documentation studies of related records and archives. The data collected was then analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis technique to reveal the layers of symbolic, spiritual and social meaning underlying each practice. In the context of Gunungkidul's agrarian society and its strong roots in Javanese traditions, death rites such as *brobosan* and *slametan* provide a window into the complexity of their worldview, characterised by a harmonious syncretism between Islam, animism and *Kejawen* values (Hakam, 2017).

Death ceremonies in Gunungkidul generally begin with the *brobosan* ritual, a procession that symbolises the final honour and release of worldly ties. Based on participatory observation, the deceased's immediate family, especially children and grandchildren, take turns walking downwards under the coffin. Symbolically, this act of "ducking", as explained by Mr. Karto (a traditional leader), is not only a form of humility and surrender to divine fate, but also a physical representation of the separation between the real world and the unseen world, as well as an acceptance of natural law (Mas'amah et al., 2023). After the burial, the ritual series continues with *slametan* organised on the 3rd, 7th, 40th, 100th and 1000th days. These *slametans*, which are attended by neighbours and close relatives, take the form of joint prayers, *tahlil* recitation, and food

distribution. The food served has a deep symbolic meaning; *jenang abang-putih* (red-white) symbolises the two sides of life and death, while bubur suro is a symbol of complete surrender to God. From an analytical perspective, *slametan* has a dual function: apart from being a religious ritual, it is also a very effective social mechanism to strengthen community solidarity, reaffirm the value of *gotong royong*, and rebuild the social structure that was shaken by the departure of a member (Hendrawati, 2021).

The old age phase in Gunungkidul society is seen as a period towards the perfection of life. A person entering old age begins to prepare themselves spiritually to face death. Based on an interview with Mr. Sutrisno (village elder), older people are respected as wisdom holders and active links to the values of ancestral traditions. They are more intensive in religious practices, secluding themselves, and sharing advice as a form of *tirakat* towards the end of life (Bestari et al., 2023). When death comes, families not only experience emotional grief, but also interpret it culturally as a process of "returning to the origin", that is, reuniting with the Creator and the universe. Therefore, honouring the dead does not stop at the time of burial. This honour continues through practices such as grave pilgrimages, *nyadran* (village clean-up and ancestral pilgrimage), and periodic recitation of prayers. In the Javanese belief system, ancestors do not just go away; they are believed to be spiritual guardians who continue to protect and provide guidance to their living descendants. Thus, remembering and honouring ancestors is a cultural obligation as well as an effort to maintain cosmological balance between the real world (mortal realm) and the spirit world (afterlife realm) (Phan et al., 2025).

The most prominent feature of death culture in Gunungkidul is syncretism, which is a dynamic and adaptive fusion of various belief systems. In the performance of death rites, elements from Islam (such as the recitation of *tahlil* and *Yasin*), animism (belief in ancestral spirits and supernatural powers), and *Kejawen* (Javanese philosophy of life that emphasises inner balance and harmony with nature) coexist harmoniously. An interview with Mr. Joko (Modin) revealed a clear example of this syncretism: although *slametan* is interspersed with Islamic prayers, the timing of the event (3rd day, 7th day, etc.) and the type of food offered often still refer to *primbon* or *weton* considerations (calculation of auspicious days based on the Javanese calendar). Even in grave pilgrimages, people often include flowers, flower water and small offerings, which clearly reflect an animistic view that recognises the existence and influence of spirits. This syncretism is not an original form of mixing, but an intelligent cultural negotiation. The people of Gunungkidul did not reject external elements such as Islam, but processed and integrated them into pre-existing local value systems, giving birth to a distinctive and contextualised religious and cultural expression. Thus, the phase of old age and death in Gunungkidul culture is not the end of a biological journey, but the culmination of a human spiritual journey. The rituals that accompany it function as a way for the community to interpret death as a transcendent event that is personal, social and cosmological at the same time, opening a contemplative space for the living to reflect on the deeper meaning of life (Pahrudin, 2009).

Preservation and Change in the Human Life Circle in Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta

Cultural dynamics is a universal phenomenon that occurs in every society, including in Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta. In the perspective of cultural anthropology, culture is not a static entity but a system of meaning that is continuously reconstructed through a dialectical process between tradition and modernity (Geertz, 1973). This approach is particularly relevant for understanding the transformations that occur in the human life cycle in Gunungkidul, which includes a series of rites from birth, childhood, marriage, to death. The era of globalisation has created massive cultural exchanges through the acceleration of information flows, the development of communication technology, and intensified human mobility (Bruner, 1996). This phenomenon creates ambivalence in society: on the one hand, it opens up opportunities for innovation and cultural diversity, but on the other hand, it threatens the existence of local cultures that are full of historical values and collective identities.

Gunungkidul society as part of the Mataraman Javanese culture is known for its strong local wisdom that is reflected in daily cultural practices. The values of social harmony and spiritual relations with ancestors are embodied in various rites in the human life cycle that have not only social but also deep spiritual dimensions (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). However, as a region that is not isolated from global influences, Gunungkidul has undergone significant cultural transformations in recent decades. In analysing these cultural dynamics, a holistic approach in anthropology emphasises the importance of considering the overall interconnected social, political, economic and religious structures in understanding a culture (Sairin, 2002).

Birth rites in the Javanese tradition of Gunungkidul are the first phase in the life cycle and have deep philosophical meanings. Traditions such as *puput rambut* and *brokohan* are essentially not just ceremonial events, but symbols of the union between the baby with the universe and its ancestors. In the perspective of symbolic anthropology, these rites serve as a medium for the transmission of cultural values from one generation to the next. However, in the last two decades, these traditional practices have undergone a significant transformation in form and meaning. Many young families continue to carry out birth rites but with a modified format, for example, *brokohan* processions that were previously carried out with elaborate traditional food preparations, are now often replaced with ready-to-eat or scaled-down food (Meinarno et al., 2011).

The rite of passage from childhood to adulthood in Gunungkidul Javanese culture has a deep philosophical meaning. The circumcision tradition is not only seen as a religious procession, but also as a marker of social status and biological maturity (Suparlan, 2002). In its traditional form, the circumcision rite is carried out with a series of complex processions, including traditional ceremonies, *selamatan*, and performances of *wayang* or other traditional arts. However, under the influence of globalisation and modernisation, this rite has undergone a significant transformation. Based on the study of cultural anthropology, this change in the rite of adulthood can be understood through the concept of cultural erosion, where traditional practices lose meaning due to external pressures. In Gunungkidul, many families still maintain the tradition of traditional circumcision but with simplifications on elements that are considered impractical. In addition, there is a phenomenon of cultural commercialisation where the circumcision rite is used as an object of cultural tourism, especially in villages that develop ecotourism (Pemberton, 1994).

The wedding rite in Gunungkidul society is the culmination of a series of traditional processions that are full of philosophical meanings. *The mantenan* tradition has a complex series of rituals, starting from the proposal, *tarub*, *siraman*, marriage contract, to *panggih*, each of which has a deep symbolic meaning (Beatty, 1999). Each stage in the Javanese traditional wedding procession is not only interpreted as a union of two individuals, but also as a union of two extended families and a spiritual relationship with ancestors. However, in the context of globalization, the marriage rite undergoes the most visible transformation compared to other rites. Gunungkidul society today shows a tendency towards cultural hybridity in the performance of marriage rites. Many young couples are combining traditional elements with modern formats, such as carrying out Javanese traditional processions but with a wedding party in a building, using international bridal wear, and reducing traditional rites that are considered troublesome or irrelevant (Smith-Hefner, 2019). The influence of social media and global lifestyles has created a change in value orientation, where practicality and efficiency are often favoured over the symbolic and spiritual value of tradition.

Death rites in the Javanese tradition in Gunungkidul have a high complexity of meaning and implementation. Traditions such as *brobosan*, *tahlilan*, and *slametan* basically function not only as a final honour to the deceased, but also as a medium of social solidarity and reaffirmation of kinship ties within the community (Geertz & Mahasin, 1983). These rites have a strong spiritual dimension, where the community believes that the prayers offered can deliver the spirit to a better place. However, under the pressure of modernisation and globalisation, death rites have also undergone significant transformations. Based on the study of society and culture, it is found that social change never occurs in a vacuum, but is related to the historical context, economic conditions, technological developments, and cultural dynamics (Giddens, 1991). In Gunungkidul, the practices of *tahlilan* and

slametan have begun to be simplified, or even replaced by shorter and more formal religious processions. Nevertheless, in many villages in Gunungkidul, the *nyadran* tradition as part of the death rite is still carried out en masse, albeit with certain modifications (Quinn, 2008).

Despite the pressure of globalisation, the people of Gunungkidul show cultural resistance through various forms of tradition preservation, both individually and collectively. In the family context, there are still many parents and elders who actively teach traditional values to their children and grandchildren (Hefner, 1985). Processions such as birth *slametan*, traditional circumcision, and *panggih manten* are still maintained in many villages as a form of respect for ancestors. In addition, customary institutions, traditional arts groups, and local community leaders also play an important role in maintaining cultural continuity through various preservation initiatives and programmes. Based on the perspective of cultural anthropology, cultural revitalisation is an effort to revive local values with a contextual approach, not just conservative (Sairin, 2002). In Gunungkidul, cultural revitalisation strategies are carried out through various approaches, including training in traditional arts such as *karawitan*, *wayang*, and traditional dance which are often associated with moments in the life cycle. In some villages, traditional rites are even made part of the cultural tourism village agenda, such as mass *nyadran* traditions or traditional *mainten* performances that are open to the public (Ekowati, 2008).

Cultural education has a strategic role in preserving life cycle traditions in Gunungkidul. The integration of cultural values into the local education system can be a bridge to ensure the continuity of traditions in the midst of globalisation (Nuryanto, 2017). In the context of Gunungkidul, this can be realised through culture-based local content at the primary and secondary education levels. Traditions in the life cycle such as *puput rambut*, circumcision traditions, traditional proposals, and death ceremonies can be used as teaching materials that not only teach history and local wisdom, but also build identity, character, and a sense of belonging to the culture. Based on the study of society and culture, culture-based education not only strengthens local values amid the dominance of global culture, but also opens up economic opportunities through the development of a sustainable cultural ecotourism sector (Piliang, 2012). Revitalization through education can be done with participatory- educative methods, such as cultural project-based learning, training in Javanese language and literature, and visits to local cultural sites. Collaboration between teachers, schools, traditional leaders, and culturists is a key factor in introducing rite practices contextually to students (Riyanto, 2019).

Cultural dynamics in the human life cycle in Gunungkidul reflect the complexity of the interaction between tradition and modernity. On the one hand, globalisation poses a major challenge to the sustainability of traditional rites through shifting values, transforming practices, and reducing symbolic meanings (Barker, 2000). But on the other hand, globalisation also encourages awareness to maintain and revitalise local values through various cultural strategies. The Gunungkidul community proves that culture is not static, but continues to transform through value negotiation, social creativity, and cross-generational participation (Wikan, 1990). In the perspective of cultural anthropology, the changes that occur in the rites of life in Gunungkidul are not a form of cultural decline, but part of a natural process of social change. As asserted in the study of cultural dynamics, preservation is not necessarily synonymous with conservatism; conversely, modernisation does not necessarily mean erasing the past (Barker, 2000). In a world that is constantly moving, culture must be a living entity capable of transforming without losing its identity. This requires a collective consciousness, especially from the younger generation, to not only become consumers of global culture, but also agents of preservation and innovators of local culture (Appadurai, 2004). In this context, life cycle traditions are not only a legacy of the past, but also a cultural resource that can shape the character and identity of Gunungkidul's future generations.

The discussion with the findings of other researchers shows the unique position of this research in the map of Javanese cultural studies. In line with Beatty (1999) and Mulder (2005) research on syncretism and variations in Javanese beliefs, the research in Gunungkidul also found a harmonious blend of Islam, animism and *Kejawen* values, especially in death rituals such as

slametan and *nyadran*. However, this study found a more dynamic adaptation mechanism amidst the pressure of globalisation. While Smith-Hefner (2005) study on Javanese Muslim weddings identified tensions between tradition and modernity, the findings in Gunungkidul show the creativity of the community in negotiating values, as seen in the youth initiative (*Karang Taruna*) to document and promote traditions through digital media. This is a clear example of a cultural revitalization strategy, where technology is not always a threat of homogenization, but can be used as a preservation tool (Aidhi et al., 2023).

The central finding and novelty of this research is the emphasis on the triadic interaction between the body, the individual, nature and the community. The karst landscape with its sacred springs and sacred caves acts as a non-human actor that actively shapes ritual practices, while the community serves as a place for learning values and roles through the process of enculturation. In the contemporary context, life cycle traditions experience the pressures of globalisation and modernisation that result in shifts in form, substance and social participation. Nonetheless, Gunungkidul communities demonstrate cultural resistance and adaptation through individual and collective preservation, customary institution initiatives, and the awareness of the younger generation to document and revitalise traditions. A potential cultural strategy to ensure the continuity of traditions is to incorporate life cycle cultural values into a culture-based local education framework that can strengthen identity and open up opportunities for sustainable cultural ecotourism. Thus, life cycle traditions in Gunungkidul prove to be a living, dynamic, and continuously transforming cultural resource through value negotiation and social creativity across generations (Agustina et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on a thorough analysis of this ethnographic research, it can be concluded that the three research objectives have been answered through a synthesis between theoretical data that specifically focus on ethnography and empirical field findings. This research has not only succeeded in mapping a series of rites in the life cycle in Gunungkidul but also in analysing the meanings and dynamics surrounding them. Firstly, the research succeeded in comprehensively describing the ritual practices from birth to death. Field findings, such as the central role of the baby shaman in the *mitoni* and *puputan* processes, as well as the community's belief in spiritual power during vulnerable times, concretise van Gennep's theory of rites of passage. The analysis shows that each rite, from the first haircut (*Puput Rambut*) which means purification, circumcision as a male social initiation, to *Nyanggar* which marks the feminine transition, is not just a ceremony. These rituals function as symbolic mechanisms to manage individual status changes, which is reinforced by Geertz's theory of religion as a cultural system that provides meaning. Second, this research confirms and provides empirical evidence of the dynamics of triadic interactions between society, nature and community. Field data shows that the karst landscape of Gunungkidul is not just a passive landscape, but an active actor shaping local cosmology. The use of water from sacred springs in the *Puput Rambut* ritual observed by the researcher, as well as the community beliefs conveyed by Mr. Samin regarding the spiritual power of certain sites, attest to this. These interactions, as described in the cultural ecology framework, shape the character of individuals who are environmentally responsive and humble, while community participation in events such as circumcisions and *slametan* strengthens social solidarity and collective identity. Thirdly, the research critically documents the forms of preservation and the challenges facing the tradition. The field findings reveal a duality: on the one hand, the pressures of globalisation have led to ritual simplification and a shift in meaning among the younger generation. On the other hand, dynamic adaptation and revitalisation strategies are emerging. *Karang Taruna's* initiative, led by Mr. Heru, to digitally document traditions, as well as Mrs. Retno's perspective as a teacher who sees the potential of integrating cultural values into education, are clear evidence of the community's response. This finding is in line with the theory of cultural agency, where the community is not a passive recipient of change, but an active actor in negotiating values. The revitalisation strategy

through culture-based education proposed in this study emerges from the analysis of local potential, which aims to transform traditional heritage from mere collective memory into a living resource that shapes the character and identity of future generations. Thus, this research concludes that the human life cycle in Gunungkidul is a living cultural text. This text is not only written by ancestral values and classical anthropological theories, but also continuously revised and reinterpreted through daily practices, interactions with nature, and the creative responses of its people in the face of globalisation. The main limitation of this study lies in its methodologically intensive yet geographically limited focus on one neighbourhood (Bejiharjo) and temporal six-month period, so its findings and conclusions may not fully represent the diversity and long-term dynamics of life cycle traditions across the wider Gunungkidul region. For future research, it is strongly recommended to expand the scope of the study through a multi-site comparative ethnographic approach that covers various villages with different characteristics in Gunungkidul, as well as adopting a longitudinal design to observe cultural transformation more comprehensively over time. Further research could also investigate the political economy dimensions of cultural revitalisation, such as the role of government policies, the tourism industry, and changes in agrarian structures in shaping the practices and meanings of traditional rites in the contemporary era

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