

ARTISTIC VALUE IN THE RITUAL TRADITION OF DREADLOCKS SHAVING IN DIENG KULON VILLAGE, BATUR DISTRICT, BANJARNEGARA REGENCY

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Abstract

The practice of dreadlocks shaving is regarded as a sacred custom that continues to be upheld by the inhabitants of Dieng Kulon Village, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java. This ceremony integrates aspects of artistry, faith, and the cultural identity of the local community. This study seeks to elucidate the artistic components of the dreadlocks shaving ritual tradition in Dieng Kulon village. The employed methodology is qualitative, utilising ethnographic techniques, including observation and interviews with Dieng traditional leaders who conduct the dreadlocks shaving, enabling researchers to analyse this custom within a wider artistic and cultural framework. Clifford Geertz's concept of cultural interpretation is used in this study. The artistic aspects of the dreadlocks shaving ritual tradition as presented at the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) are what make this research unique. The emphasis is on the aesthetic aspect which together convert sacred rituals into dynamic performances. The results show that the artistic elements of the dreadlocks shaving tradition enhance the ritual's holiness while maintaining harmony between people, ancestors, and the natural world. The Dieng Kulon village community's ability to pass down cultural and spiritual values throughout generations in spite of changing social circumstances is demonstrated by the dreadlocks shaving custom.

INTRODUCTION

The residents of Dieng Kulon Village, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java, continue to practise dreadlocks shaving as a sacred rite. This ritual combines elements of art, belief, and the cultural identity of the local community. This tradition not only serves as a cleansing ceremony or a release from the 'curse' of dreadlocks on children, but also as a venue for artistic expression and the preservation of cultural heritage, which has now been transformed in the context of modernity and tourism at the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF). For the Dieng community, this tradition is considered to have fundamental aesthetic, spiritual and symbolic value for the individuals being cleansed, while also reflecting the harmonious relationship between the community, their ancestors and the universe.



In general, the people of Dieng Kulon village have a unique view that children born with dreadlocks are considered to be the incarnation of their ancestors or a manifestation of natural forces (Khasanah et al., 2021; Utomo et al., 2024). In addition, children with dreadlocks have different characteristics from other children, causing them to become isolated and even experience illnesses that do not heal. These individuals are expected to be cured of their illnesses and develop personalities similar to other children only through the ritual of cutting their dreadlocks (Sumarsono, 1 November 2025).

According to Sumarsono (2025), the process of dreadlocks shaving begins with a series of rituals in the context of local wisdom that describe harmony, compatibility and balance between humans, ancestors and the universe. However, amid rapid technological developments and the ongoing tide of modernisation, the continuity of the dreadlocks shaving tradition in the village of Dieng Kulon has also undergone changes in terms of location and community participation. This has led to the dreadlocks shaving tradition becoming a strong tourist attraction, drawing the attention of both domestic and foreign tourists to the Dieng Culture Festival (Saefudin et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2024).

Recently, the shaving of dreadlocks has also involved various traditional art performances, music and orchestras under the title Dieng Symphony Orchestra (Dieng Festival Culture.com, 2025). This procession is also coloured with cultural parades, the use of white cloth, and bathing rituals in springs with flower water that are rich in symbolic and aesthetic meaning. All these aspects reinforce the sacred atmosphere and also serve as tourist attractions (Dafa, 2024). In addition, the artistic elements in the dreadlock cleansing ritual at the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) play an important role as cultural expressions, spiritual symbols, and a medium for preserving traditions. The transformation of this ritual into a cultural festival demonstrates the adaptation of art and tradition to social, economic, and tourism changes, without losing its sacred meaning.

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the artistic significance of the dreadlocks shaving ritual tradition held by traditional leaders in the village of Dieng Kulon, Batur District, in collaboration with the local government under the banner of the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF). This study seeks to identify the factors that contribute to the artistic aspects of the dreadlocks shaving tradition and the preservation of this tradition amid modernisation, while also exploring ways to ensure that this tradition remains a symbol of harmony between humans and nature.

This study is divided into several sections, namely: introduction, research methods, literature review, myths and traditions of dreadlock shaving in Dieng Kulon Village, the history and implementation of the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), cultural interpretation from Clifford Geertz's perspective, aesthetic values in the tradition of dreadlocks shaving, and conclusions. Ultimately, the results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to cultural anthropology studies and the practice of preserving local culture in the context of global change.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach through observation and interviews with traditional leaders in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur Subdistrict, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java, regarding the dreadlocks shaving ritual tradition. The material object of this research is the theory of cultural interpretation proposed by Clifford Geertz, while the formal object of this research is the analysis of artistic value in the tradition of dreadlocks shaving carried out in Dieng Kulon village,

Batur district, Banjarnegara regency. The artistic value in the tradition of dreadlocks shaving is analysed based on Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Myths And The Traditions of Dreadlocks Shaving in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur Subdistrict, Banjarnegara Regency

The ritual tradition of dreadlock shaving performed in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur district, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java, has been widely written about and researched by anthropologists and cultural observers. In general, previous research has focused on basic ethnographic descriptions related to dreadlocks shaving, moving towards a functional analysis of dreadlock shaving as a rite of passage, and a critical analysis of the impact of the expansion of the tourism market on the authenticity and values of local culture.

Isrofiah, et al (2021), summarised the tradition of dreadlock shaving in Dieng in an article entitled "*Identitas Warga Asli Dieng Dengan Keunikan Ruwatan Rambut Gimbal*" or 'The Identity of the Indigenous People of Dieng with the Uniqueness of Dreadlocks Shaving.' This article specifically discusses the unique tradition of dreadlocks shaving gimbal performed by the indigenous people of the Dieng Plateau, which is believed to be related to Kyai Kolodete, the guardian of Dieng. There are various cultural and mythical aspects surrounding children with dreadlock, including the causes of dreadlocks, which are believed to be hereditary or a gift from ancestors, in addition to medical factors. In addition, the dreadlocks shaving, which is packaged through the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), now serves as a tourism event that boosts the local economy, although this raises concerns about the fading sacredness and authenticity of the ritual.

Ustadi Hamsah (2020), in an article entitled "*Religi Masyarakat Periferi: Analisis Rites of Passage Atas Ruwatan Rambut Gimbal di Dieng*", or Religion in Peripheral Communities: An Analysis of the Rites of Passage in the Dreadlocks shaving in Dieng, explores this ritual tradition as a unique manifestation of religiosity, different from practices in the royal palace, and its meaning for the local community. Using the rites of passage perspective of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, the author describes the stages and meanings of this ritual, including various versions of the myth of children with dreadlocks that have developed in the community. The article also concludes that there is a positive compromise between the concept of the sanctity of tradition and more worldly interests, such as economic tourism, in its implementation.

Moh. Soehada (an anthropologist and lecturer at UIN Sunan Kalijaga) in his article on "*Ritual Rambut Gembel dalam Arus Ekspansi Pasar Wisata*", or 'The Ritual of Dreadlocks in the Flow of Tourism Market Expansion' highlights how this tradition has undergone changes due to the expansion of the tourism market and government policies. According to Soehada (2013), there are two social responses to this change, namely the accepting group, which benefits economically from tourism, and the rejecting group, which firmly holds on to its original beliefs and traditions. Theoretically, this study concludes that the religiosity of the community is influenced by and serves to reinforce the prevailing mode of economic production, while also overseeing social change amid the capitalisation of tourism.

Clifford Geertz (1973), in his introduction to 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture', reveals that the word culture was understood by previous anthropologists to have different meanings, and that the key to understanding it

lies solely in the idea of meaning. Quoting Weber's thoughts, Geertz argues that humans are 'animals trapped in webs of meaning that they themselves have spun.' Therefore, there is no other choice but to use a method called thick description (describing not only what actually happened, but also how a person understands the event), developed by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle, as an ethnographic method.

Although many anthropologists and cultural observers have reviewed the dreadlocks shaving in various articles, this study highlights the artistic value of the cutting dreadlock as presented in the Dieng Festival Culture (DCF) held in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency. The artistic value in the tradition of dreadlock shaving can transform various actions related to the cutting dreadlock on Dieng children with dreadlocks into a profound aesthetic and spiritual experience, which makes the ritual not only functionally valid, but also beautiful, memorable, and sustainable. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the artistic value of the tradition of dreadlocks shaving carried out on children with dreadlocks in Dieng Kulon Village, which is packaged in the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF).

This research uses Clifford Geertz's (1973) theory of cultural interpretation, which emphasises that cultural symbols are media that carry deep meaning. Using this theory, the researcher aims to examine the manifestation of art in cultural symbols and the tradition of dreadlock shaving in Dieng Kulon village. The artistic elements in the tradition of dreadlock shaving serve to add sacredness to the dreadlock shaving ritual, while maintaining harmony between humans, ancestors, and nature.

Dreadlocks Myths

One of the unique characteristics of the community in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur district, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java, is the presence of children with dreadlocks. Dreadlocks can be understood as hair that sticks together, forming hard clumps that resemble ropes. For the people of Dieng, the belief in dreadlock has existed since ancient times and has developed into a myth that is deeply ingrained in the community to this day.

The origin of children with matted hair is believed to be related to local mythology, in which these children are considered to be descendants or gifts from spiritual figures such as Kyai Kaladete, the ruler of Telaga Balekambang. The community around Dieng believes that Kyai Kolodete was a warrior who had matted hair from childhood until his death (Febriyanto et al., 2018). It is said that his dreadlocks often hindered his movements during battle. As a result, he entrusted his dreadlocks to young children who had not yet committed many sins and were considered pure. Before Kyai Kolodete passed away, he told his children and grandchildren that he would entrust his dreadlocks to his descendants in the Dieng highlands (Iwandana, 2019). The dreadlocks that had been entrusted to the children would not be taken by Kyai Kolodete to the afterlife so that he could die in peace. Therefore, children with dreadlocks would continue to exist in the Dieng highlands. There are still children with dreadlocks in the Dieng highlands.

The Phenomenon of Dreadlocks Shaving in Dieng Kulon Village

Facts show that humans and culture will always coexist. Culture has been inspired as a result of social construction in which society influences the development of civilization. From an anthropological perspective, culture is the entirety of human ideas, actions, and creations in the context of social life that humans master through learning

(Koentjaraningrat 2002:180). Thus, almost all human actions can be identified as part of culture, because very few human actions in life do not need to be learned.

The Dieng Plateau has a variety of unique phenomena, ranging from natural phenomena to socio-cultural phenomena that occur in the communities of the Dieng Plateau. One unique phenomenon that is interesting to study is the phenomenon of cutting the hair of children with dreadlocks in the village of Dieng Kulon. Children with dreadlocks are believed to have certain unique characteristics and must be cleansed according to local tradition. Interestingly, cutting the dreadlocks of these children can only be done after a request from the child and must be fulfilled (Sulhani, female traditional leader in Dieng Kulon Village, 31 October 2025).

The tradition of dreadlocks shaving has grown and developed over centuries and continues to be preserved today. The process of shaving for children's dreadlocks is quite lengthy (Kemendikdasmen.go.id, 2022). The shaving process includes: *Firstly*, retracing. Retracing is carried out the day before by traditional leaders, the village head, the local tourism group, and other parties involved. This is a ritual to ask for blessings from the ancestors at several places such as Dwarawati Temple, Arjuna Temple Complex, Sendang Maerokoco, Gatotkaca Temple, Balaikambang Lake, Bima Temple, Sikidang Crater, Cave at Telaga Warna, Kali Pepe, and the Dieng cemetery. This is intended to ensure that the shaving ceremony runs smoothly.

Secondly, the *Jamasan* Pusaka ceremony at night, which is the washing of the heirlooms that will be carried in the parade the next day. *Thirdly*, the parade. The parade starts from the house of the traditional leader to the place of shaving. At the house, various offerings are prepared, such as tumpeng (cone-shaped rice dish) in several colours, market snacks, rice porridge, roast chicken, and flowers. While touring the village, the children with dreadlocks wear traditional Javanese clothing and white headbands and are escorted by elders, community leaders, traditional art groups, and the community on horse-drawn carts. This procession ends at Sendang Maerokoco or Sendang Sedayu.

Fourthly, bathing in the Sendang Sedayu or Sendang Maerokoco wells. Upon entering the wells, the children are protected by Robyong umbrellas and long cloths around Sendang Maerokoco, then escorted to the haircutting site. Fifth, the haircutting procession, where the children with dreadlocks who are participating in the procession are called one by one. The haircutting process takes about 30 minutes and takes place in front of the Arjuna Temple. The cut hair is wrapped in white cloth to be floated later. *Sixthly*, the submission of requests, where the ceremony continues with the submission of objects or requests desired by the children. *Finally*, the floating of the hair, the ceremony attendants are tasked with floating the dreadlocks into Telaga Warna, which flows into the Serayu River and empties into the South Coast of the Indian Ocean. This floating has the meaning of returning the bad luck brought by the dreadlocked children to the gods with the hope that it will be replaced with good fortune.

The existence of the curly hair cutting ceremony shows that cultural heritage has benefits that are considered important for the supporting community (Wuryani & Wulandari, 2019). The tradition of dreadlocks shaving in the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) is also supported by wayang performances, which convey messages and mandates containing noble values. These mandates are usually conveyed through the stories in the wayang. The symbolic delivery of messages has its own purpose so that the values expressed can be preserved properly.

In essence, dreadlocks shaving is a rite of passage, a traditional ceremony inherited from ancestors that is carried out to mark an important transition in the lives of children

who are born with natural dreadlocks (Singgih, 2014). The main spiritual purpose of this sacred ritual is to achieve safety, health, and happiness for the child. The Dieng community believes that dreadlocks is a spiritual gift from Kyai Kolodete and must be cut through a ritual to ward off all calamities, disasters, and evil. Dreadlocks shaving ritual is held on the first day of Suro according to the Javanese calendar with the aim of cleansing or freeing the children.

Historical Background and Implementation of The Dieng Culture Festival (DCF)

Geologically, the Dieng plateau is located on the border between Wonosobo Regency and Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java Province. Currently, the Dieng plateau has been designated as a National Geopark, which encompasses various natural and cultural heritage sites. One of the cultural heritages that is still practised in the Dieng plateau is the tradition of shaving dreadlocks. This tradition has sparked awareness among the youth of Dieng that Dieng has great potential that must be further developed in order to bring meaning to the lives of the local community (Rachmalia et al., 2021).

One of the efforts made by the local government to develop tourism in Dieng is by commodifying the ritual of dreadlocks shaving (Soehada 2013). Before the tradition of dreadlocks shaving was packaged into the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) agenda, the Dieng community carried out this tradition of dreadlocks shaving simply in people's homes (Sumarsono, 2025). Over time, in 2005, Alif Faozi, as the youth leader in Dieng Kulon, took the initiative to develop culture-based tourism. Since then, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) was formed. This group collaborated with the local government to create an event called Dieng Cultural Week. In 2010, the local community of Dieng and the tourism awareness group took the initiative to change the name of the event to the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), which combines sacred and profane aspects (Ayu et al, 2020). The Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) is held once a year to this day.

Before the start of the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), traditional leaders conduct a pilgrimage to several sacred sites in the Dieng region. According to Sumarsono (2025), the purpose of this pilgrimage is to pray for safety, health and smooth running during the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF). In addition, there is a cultural parade that starts from the residence of the traditional leaders. This parade is accompanied by a group of traditional elders, community leaders, young people with their parents and various arts performances. The new dreadlock shaving ceremony will be held the following day. In addition to the dreadlocks shaving ceremony, the committee also took the initiative to hold other events to enliven the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), such as traditional art performances, Jazz in the Clouds, lanterns, Clean Dieng, and several other events. Interestingly, the committee always evaluates these activities to make them more innovative and creative in enlivening the event (Suprobowati, 2021). It is no surprise that the segments of the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) change every year, even though some of the agenda items are fixed. This is aimed at creating higher quality events to attract the attention of the community and tourists.

Positioning Artistic Values in The Tradition of Dreadlocks Shaving

In the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF) agenda, there is an artistic dimension contained in the tradition of dreadlocks shaving, which goes beyond the description of the ritual stages alone. Upon closer observation, there is a dual function that is interrelated in the ritual of cutting gimbal hair. *Firstly*, it is a pure ritual that is essential for achieving inner

peace and spiritual liberation for children with dreadlocks. *Secondly*, this cutting also functions as a performing art, which provides entertainment and at the same time becomes an economic and tourist attraction. This clearly demonstrates how a local tradition is able to adapt and survive in the midst of modernization.

The Aesthetics of Dieng's Cosmology and Sacred Geography

The aesthetic value of dreadlocks hair cutting is deeply rooted in the ecological philosophy of the Dieng community, which expresses the close relationship between the human body and the mountainous environment. Local philosophy explicitly proposes a profound analogy: as stated on the Dieng Geopark website (n.d.), mountains are likened to the human head, and dreadlocks are seen as forests on mountains. In this context, the dreadlocks of Dieng children are understood as a symbol of the unbalanced relationship between humans and nature. The logical consequence of this analogy is that if dreadlocks symbolize forests, then the act of cutting, cleaning or balancing dreadlocks symbolically affirms the Dieng community's commitment to maintaining the balance of the macrocosm, namely their mountainous environment. Thus, the dreadlock shaving ritual is essential for re—establishing a harmonious relationship with nature (Prihatin, n.d.).

According to Clifford Geertz (1973), symbols are an important means of conveying cultural meaning. The symbolic dissection in the tradition of dreadlocks shaving is not merely a physical abnormality, but a spiritual manifestation in the child's body, which cosmologically represents the wild nature. The removal of dreadlocks through cutting is an act of balancing the microcosm (the child's body). This means that the tradition of dreadlocks shaving is not only seen as a physical act, but also as a symbolic act of purification, marking the individual's return to a more balanced cosmic order.

Cosmic balance in the Dieng Kulon area, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency is structured on the premise that human actions must be in harmony with ecological health, and this shaving ritual is a means of maintaining that harmony. Thus, the artistry in the tradition of cutting and releasing dreadlocks, as presented in the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), serves as an annual collective reminder of the philosophical conservation ethics and agrarian environment embraced by the Dieng community. It also carries a profound meaning about humanity's obligation to maintain harmony with greater natural forces.

Aesthetic Composition of Cultural Processions: Symbolism Of Formation

Processions (*kirab*) are a meaningful Indonesian cultural tradition that have become an integral part of Indonesian society. Processions always feature a unique blend of art, culture, and spirituality. In cultural processions, communities can express their cultural identity and pass on noble values to future generations. The preservation of this culture is important so that it is not eroded by the tide of globalisation (Mahardika & Darmawan, 2016).

In the cultural parade held as part of the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), there are several processions consisting of community leaders, traditional leaders, bearers of offerings and heirlooms, a procession of court ladies, and bearers of requests for dreadlocks children. Interestingly, during the parade, the children with dreadlocks are lifted onto a horse—drawn cart and followed by a traditional art troupe until the ritual of dreadlocks shaving procession ends.

The cultural parade also features soldiers or people entrusted with carrying heirlooms, such as keris, spears, and other heirlooms. Although the details of their meaning are not always explicitly explained, these objects have a significant artistic and

symbolic role. The presence of keris and other heirlooms reflects the belief in supernatural powers and the community's awareness to respect supernatural guardians, as well as demonstrating their commitment to their ancestral heritage. The supernatural powers are believed by the Dieng community to participate in guarding the entire procession of dreadlock shavings in Dieng.

If observed closely, the parade that takes place in the tradition of the dreadlocks shaving in Dieng is not just a parade, but a composition of movement and management of a line that is full of symbolic meaning and protective functions. This parade is designed to elevate the status of children with dreadlocks while ensuring their spiritual protection throughout the journey to the dreadlocks shaving location. In the cultural parade, children with dreadlocks wear white cloth, which symbolizes the purity and cleanliness of the human heart.

Gamelan as Accompaniment To The Procession

Gamelan is a traditional Javanese musical instrument that is often used in certain rituals. In the context of the curly hair cleansing tradition in the village of Dieng Kulon, which is packaged in the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), the use of gamelan music during the *jamasan* stage is very significant. *Jamasan* is understood as the process of bathing children with dreadlocks in Dieng with water from Sendang Sedayu. In order for the water to have maximum purifying power and to effectively remove the curse (*sukerta*) status from children with dreadlocks, this procession must be accompanied by active spiritual power, namely gamelan.

In the context of *Jamasan* in Dieng, gamelan can act as a concentration machine. This ritual demands total contemplation and surrender. Through the structured accompaniment of gamelan music, an auditory environment can be created to ensure that the mental and spiritual dimensions of purification are activated, while facilitating the role of traditional elders in reciting prayers that require full focus (Kasidi, 2017). At this point, gamelan music has a spiritual and moral function. With the accompaniment of gamelan music, the mental and spiritual dimensions of purification are activated simultaneously with physical cleansing, thereby validating the transfer of sanctity from the sacred water to the child being cleansed. Thus, the artistic element in the gamelan music accompaniment serves to bridge the gap between the physical reality of the child being bathed and the spiritual reality in which the release from bad luck occurs.

Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi: Vocal Aesthetics

One of the artistic elements that is the focus of attention in the tradition of the dreadlocks shaving, which is packaged in the Dieng Culture Festival (DCF), lies in the recitation or singing of *macapat*, namely the *kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi*. *Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi* was created by Sunan Kalijaga. Etymologically, the *Rumeksa Ing Wengi* chant means protection at night. The concept of night here symbolizes a time of uncertainty, vulnerability, supernatural danger, and negative spiritual activity. This chant is known as a *wedha* mantra, which functions as a healing prayer and is believed to generate supernatural powers for those who believe in it (Eviamelia, 2021). Thus, the main function of this chant is as a mantra to ward off evil and heal.

The following is an example of the rhyme of the *kidung rumeksa ing wengi*, which is sung during the Dieng tradition of cutting dreadlocks (Kavita & Maman, 2023).

Ana kidung rumeksa ing wengi: In the middle of the night, there is a prayer chant)
Teguh hayu luputa ing lara: I hope that everyone is healthy and safe.

Luputa bilahi kabeh: Free from all calamities
Jim setan datan purun: Even demons and jinns will not approach.
Paneluhan tan ana wani: Magic of all types will not dare
Miwah panggawe ala: particularly wicked actions
Gunaning wong luput: Black magic will also be exterminated
Geni atemahan tirta: Water will turn from fire
Maling adoh tan ana ngarah ing mami: I will keep thieves at bay
Guna duduk pan sirna: Every threat will vanish
Sakehing lara pan samya bali: Every illness will go back to where it started

This chant is highly pertinent to the goal of cutting dreadlocks –wearing children's hair in Dieng, which is to eliminate their status as dangerous or unlucky. This chant is specifically sung during the dreadlocks shaving procession, which is the climax of the entire ceremony. This chant has a very strong apotropaic (evil –repelling) and spiritual function, where the main objective is to ensure that participants are protected from disaster during the hair cutting.

The inclusion of the *Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi* in the dreadlock hair cutting ritual demonstrates the efforts of the Dieng community to protect and preserve traditional rituals rooted in local mythology with the spiritual power of more universal religious traditions. The dreadlocked child releases the curse placed on them by local entities, but the main protection during this critical release is provided through monotheistic vocal art, creating layers of spiritual security.

Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi has an influence on the lives of readers because it contains elements that are interrelated in terms of writing and meaning (Azizah & Hidayat, 2021). Therefore, *Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi* can influence the lives of individuals and the wider community, including in carrying out traditions or rituals that have been passed down from generation to generation, such as the tradition of shaving dreadlock in Dieng.

The Aesthetics of Negotiation: Profane Demands in Sacred Rites

The requests of children with dreadlocks in the tradition of dreadlock shaving in Dieng vary greatly. Generally, these children's requests can be practical items such as pets, fast food such as noodles, meatballs, satay, to other modern and consumptive items such as dolls, clothes, mobile phones, laptops and iPads. However, there are often requests from children that their parents cannot afford. According to Sulhaini (2025), there was a child who once asked for diamonds or pearls worth 1 billion rupiah. The negotiation of these demands actually reflects the spectrum of exchange between the traditional and contemporary worlds.

Fulfilling these requests is an integral part of the ritual drama. This can be understood as a "spiritual bargaining art". Modern requests such as smartphones, laptops and iPads are accommodated within a sacred framework as ritual equipment that must be fulfilled for spiritual safety. The aesthetics of this negotiation demonstrate the ability of the gimbal hair cutting tradition in Dieng to absorb and neutralise modern materialism within a sacred framework. The ritual's success in integrating these contemporary profane elements is a mechanism that allows the gimbal hair cutting tradition in Dieng to remain relevant and survive amid the changing times without losing its core values.

The Dramaturgy of The Dreadlocks Dissolution

After the shaving ritual, the dreadlocks, a physical manifestation of harmful spiritual ties, are not simply discarded by the traditional leaders. Instead, the dreadlocks are wrapped in white cloth and placed in a jug, which is then carried to the dissolution site (Sumarsono, 2025). This tradition is steeped in symbolic meaning. White cloth universally symbolizes purity and purification, while the jug symbolizes readiness to return to its original state. This signifies that the bad luck attached to the dreadlocked child has now been purified.

During the dissolution of the dreadlocks, the traditional leaders are tasked with dissolving the dreadlocks into the Telaga Warna (Colorful Lake). The water from Telaga Warna flows into the Serayu River and empties into the South Coast or the Indian Ocean. This dissolution completes the "purification map" established at the beginning of the ritual, and represents a dramatic act of cosmic release. The Dieng people can plainly see that the trait of children with dreadlocks, which was once thought to be a curse and an illness, has returned to nature or its original source when cut dreadlocks are thrown into the coloured lake. This continuous practice also shows how the Dieng community upholds customs, making them interesting and relevant.

There are two meanings to this ceremony. First of all, it symbolizes the child's misery being returned to the gods, or Nyi Roro Kidul, a native of Java's southern shore. Second, it symbolizes the expectation that good fortune will take the place of the dreadlocked child's misery. By releasing the materiality of catastrophe into the cosmic flow, the art of dreadlock cutting achieves dramatic resolution. In addition to purifying the infant, this act actively transforms bad energy into good energy, signifying an aesthetic shift from spiritual tension to complete harmony.

CONCLUSION

The custom of dreadlocks shaving in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java, is a multifaceted collective artwork, according to an investigation of the practice. Dreadlock removal is viewed as a complicated performance in which all elements—from art to geographic symbolism—work together to attain cosmic equilibrium and spiritual purification, rather than merely as a transitory or sacrificial ceremony. In addition, trimming dreadlocks is a philosophical act of conservation. An environmental ethic is ingrained in the rite itself according to the philosophy of mountains and dreadlocks. The community's shared duty to protect the Dieng landscape is subtly affirmed by the dreadlocked children's spiritual liberation. This ceremony successfully conveys the spiritual and cultural identity of the Dieng people to the world through the art of procession, the usage of gamelan, and the chanting of *Rumeksa Ing Wengi*. As such, it is a legacy that has to be continuously conserved and thoroughly researched. As demonstrated by the aesthetics of accommodating the children's wishes, this tradition's capacity to adapt and absorb contemporary dynamics is one of its primary artistic assets. The ritual's ability to transform profane items—like laptops, iPads, and smartphones—into a sacred framework shows how resilient culture is and how the custom can endure in the face of change.

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