

# ***Banyu Penguripan* at Sunan Kudus's Well: An Interplay of Spiritual Tradition and Ecological Consciousness**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the significance and function of *Banyu Penguripan* within the cultural tradition of the Kudus community, focusing on its intersections with spirituality, environmental ethics and local natural resource management surrounding the sacred well of Sunan Kudus. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research incorporates fieldwork that includes in-depth interviews with religious leaders, community members and well custodians, as well as participatory observation of rituals and practices associated with *Banyu Penguripan*. Complementary documentation was also gathered to support the analysis with relevant secondary data. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key patterns reflecting the integration of spiritual beliefs and environmental ethics, particularly in shaping culture-based conservation models applicable to local resource governance. Findings indicate that *Banyu Penguripan* functions not merely as a ritual act but as a profound symbol of the interconnected relationship between humans, nature, and the divine. The tradition embodies a form of environmental ethics that fosters communal responsibility for safeguarding natural resources, especially water, as a sacred and shared heritage. This study contributes to the discourse on sustainable environmental stewardship by proposing a culturally rooted conservation framework that emphasizes spiritual values as integral to ecological balance and intergenerational sustainability.

**Keywords:** *Banyu penguripan*, spirituality, environmental ethics, culture preservation

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali makna dan peran *Banyu penguripan* dalam tradisi masyarakat Kudus, yang meliputi aspek spiritualitas, etika lingkungan, serta pengelolaan sumber daya alam di sekitar sumur Sunan Kudus. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi lapangan, yang mencakup wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh agama, masyarakat lokal, dan pengelola sumur, serta observasi partisipatif terhadap ritual atau kegiatan terkait *Banyu penguripan*. Selain itu, dokumentasi digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data sekunder yang relevan. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi tema utama mengenai integrasi spiritualitas dan etika lingkungan dalam tradisi ini, serta model pelestarian berbasis budaya yang dapat diterapkan dalam pengelolaan sumber daya alam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Banyu penguripan* bukan hanya sekadar ritual, tetapi juga merupakan simbol hubungan antara manusia, alam, dan Tuhan, yang mengajarkan pentingnya menjaga keseimbangan alam. Etika lingkungan yang terkandung dalam tradisi ini mendorong masyarakat untuk menjaga dan merawat sumber daya alam, khususnya air, sebagai bagian dari tanggung jawab spiritual dan sosial. Penelitian ini diharapkan memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan model pelestarian berbasis budaya yang mengintegrasikan spiritualitas dan etika lingkungan, serta memperkuat kesadaran akan pentingnya menjaga kelestarian alam untuk keberlanjutan kehidupan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Banyu penguripan; Spiritualitas; Etika Lingkungan; Pelestarian Budaya*

## Introduction

Water has an important role to play in the survival of life on Earth (Rongrean, 2023). Water is the most abundant chemical compound on earth, it is also the most widely used in helping the sustainability of human life (Rahman, 2022). Starting from personal needs such as washing and even cooking baths, in addition to personal use of water, it is also used by industry to support its production. Humans use water to meet daily needs and economic needs. Water becomes

very crucial for human life (Widiarto & Wilaela, 2022). Even in general science, the science of water has its own study of hydrology. Hydrology studies the movement and distribution of water on Earth and in the atmosphere, on the surface of the soil, and below the surface of the soil, about the physical and chemical properties of water and its reaction to the environment, and its relationship to life (As'ad Taufiqurrahman, 2021).

The Sunan Kudus Well, known as *banyu penguripan*, has a very important position in the spiritual and cultural history of the Javanese people. As one of the legacies of the Sunan Kudus, one of the famous Songo Guardians, the well is not only revered for its historical value but also its deep connection with spiritual traditions and the environment (Al-Aqsho, 2019). For centuries, this well has been a place of pilgrimage for Muslims and the general public who believe that the water from the well has healing powers and can bring blessings (Fadil, 2020). However, in this modern context, some gaps need to be addressed related to how spiritual value can adapt and interact with the growing ecological awareness (Murtadho, 2019).

There is a tension between spiritual traditions that evolve over time and increasingly urgent environmental challenges (Widiarto & Wilaela, 2022). People who come for pilgrimages often only see the sacred side of this well without paying attention to the importance of preserving the environment, which can threaten the sustainability of existing natural resources (Alam, 2020). The *banyu* concept of life-saving, which teaches about the importance of balance and life, should encourage a higher ecological awareness (Ikmalinnuha, 2022). However, often this tradition is simply missed without any

concrete effort to involve the community in preserving the environment around the well.

Although numerous studies have examined the historical and spiritual significance of the Sunan Kudus Well, few have explored the intersection between the spiritual values embedded in *banyu penguripan* and contemporary environmental ethics. Most existing literature remains focused on ritualistic and mythological interpretations, overlooking the pressing ecological implications of sustaining the surrounding ecosystem (Ocsanda et al., 2024). In contrast, the integration of environmental ethics into daily communal practices is crucial—not only for preserving ecological balance but also for ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage (Syihabuddin & Kirwan, 2024).

In light of increasing global awareness of environmental crises—including climate change, pollution, and ecosystem degradation—there is an urgent need to reconceptualize human–nature relationships (Rambe et al., 2021). Environmental ethics, which promote respect for nature, sustainability, and accountability for anthropogenic impact, must be meaningfully woven into spiritual teachings and practices (Munji, 2016). This poses a critical challenge for religious leaders, scholars, and broader society: to mediate between spiritual sanctity and ecological exigencies in a cohesive, context-sensitive framework (Ilafi et al., 2024).

A key objective of this paper is to bridge two often compartmentalized domains—spirituality and environmental ethics. Through this lens, *banyu penguripan* is reinterpreted not only as a site of ritual purification but also as a powerful pedagogical symbol

for environmental stewardship. As such, it holds potential both as a spiritual refuge and as an ecological learning site for local residents and pilgrims. Positioned within this dual framework, the *banyu penguripan* tradition offers fertile ground for developing a culturally embedded model of environmental ethics. By aligning spiritual belief systems with ecological values, pilgrimage sites like the Sunan Kudus Well can evolve into symbols of resistance against environmental degradation and promote equilibrium between humanity and the natural world. This integrated perspective provides a conceptual and practical foundation that can be adapted to other sacred ecocultural landscapes.

This study underscores that environmental ethics remain underemphasized in many of Indonesia's pluralistic sacred sites—particularly those with strong ecological dimensions yet limited ecological interpretation. Through a focused case study of *banyu penguripan* at the Sunan Kudus Well, the research reveals the transformative potential of spiritual traditions in reinforcing environmental responsibility. The findings advocate for an integrative conservation paradigm—one that embeds spiritual values into ethical ecological frameworks, thereby fostering intergenerational sustainability and communal participation in heritage-based environmental stewardship.

## Literature Review

The concepts of spirituality and ecology help explain how religious values can shape human attitudes towards the environment (Barizi & Yufarika, 2025). The ecological crisis is often considered a spiritual crisis, as modern humans have become separated from

nature and sacred values. In religious views, nature is seen as God's creation that must be taken care of, and humans act as khalifahs to care for it (Syihabuddin & Kirwan, 2024). Spiritual awareness can encourage ecological responsibility in everyday life. The concept of eco-theology shows the relationship between religious teachings and the principle of environmental sustainability (Agustina Dewi S, 2019). In this context, Sunan Kudus's teachings that emphasize harmony between humans, nature, and God are a clear example of how spirituality can encourage awareness and practice of environmental conservation.

Previous studies have highlighted the link between spirituality and ecological awareness (Nashr, 1968; Nasr, 2003) emphasized that in the Islamic tradition, maintaining the balance of nature is part of devotion to God, so the ecological crisis is also spiritual. (Mukhlis, 2022) strengthens this argument by pointing out that religious values, if deeply internalized, can be a key driver for environmentally friendly behavior. In this context, (Abidin & Muhammad, 2020) introduced the concept of Islamic eco-theology that underscores the role of religious teachings as an ethical foundation in environmental conservation. However, they tend to focus on the textual and normative approach of religion, without much exploration of local practices or forms of cultural religiosity in society.

Meanwhile, a more contextualized approach based on local traditions is offered by (Andariati, 2019) and (Meyresta et al., 2022) who examine how environmental ethics develop in indigenous cultures and beliefs. Andariati notes that local wisdom values often harbor strong ecological sustainability principles, although they are

not always formally narrated as “environmental ethics.” Meyresta et al. emphasize the importance of cultural practices such as rituals, abstinence, and community-based resource management as forms of environmental conservation that live in people's daily lives. When compared to the theological religious approach, these two studies provide a basis for seeing the practice of ecological spirituality as part of an organic and contextual tradition. This research tries to combine these two approaches by looking at *banyu penguripan* at Sumur Sunan Kudus as a spiritual practice that also contains ecological and sustainability values.

Although a number of studies have addressed the relationship between spirituality and ecology or environmental conservation based on local traditions, there is still a gap in studies that integrate the two holistically in the context of living cultural sites, such as Sunan Kudus's Well. Most previous studies tend to separate the normative theological approach from the contextual cultural approach. In fact, in community religious practices such as *banyu penguripan*, spiritual values and ecological awareness are intertwined in the form of concrete religious experiences. This research offers novelty by portraying the practice of *Banyu penguripan* as a meeting point between spiritual traditions and ecological responsibilities that live in people's daily lives. This approach is important because it can broaden perspectives in the management of cultural and environmental heritage, not only in terms of physical conservation, but also in terms of strengthening ecological meaning and awareness derived from local spiritual values.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative methodology using a field-based approach to deeply examine the *banyu penguripan* tradition in relation to spirituality, environmental ethics, and natural resource management in the vicinity of the Sunan Kudus Well (Gunawan, 2013). The research was conducted in the area surrounding the well, a spiritual center for the Kudus community, selected for its cultural and ecological significance.

Data were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentary analysis. Interviews were conducted with religious leaders, community members, and well custodians to elicit their interpretations of the spiritual and environmental values embedded in the *banyu penguripan* tradition. In parallel, participatory observation enabled the researcher to directly engage in rituals and related communal activities, offering experiential insights into the lived practices and values embodied in this tradition. Archival materials and literary sources were also reviewed to provide historical and contextual depth (Sugiyono, 2018).

The data were analyzed thematically to identify core themes reflecting the interplay between spiritual beliefs and ecological ethics in the daily practices of the Kudus community. To ensure data credibility, triangulation and member-checking techniques were employed—namely by cross-validating findings from interviews, observations, and documentation, and confirming interpretations with key informants. Ultimately, this methodological framework seeks to illuminate the multifaceted role of *banyu penguripan* as a



culturally grounded model of environmental stewardship rooted in spirituality and community-based heritage preservation.

## Results and Discussion

### *Banyu penguripan of Sunan Kudus: A Conceptual Review*

The *da'wah* of Sunan Kudus demonstrated a tolerant and adaptive approach that succeeded in embedding Islamic teachings within a society predominantly influenced by Hindu traditions. His inclusive strategy is evident in symbolic acts such as the construction of the Kudus Mosque tower, the prohibition of cow slaughter (in deference to Hindu beliefs), and the institutionalization of *banyu penguripan* as a sacred element of local practice (Al-Aqsho, 2019). This adaptive engagement not only facilitated religious conversion but also enabled a harmonious cultural synthesis.

Across world religions, water holds profound symbolic and spiritual significance. Muslims revere Zamzam water, Hindus venerate the Ganges, Buddhists sanctify *Paritta* water, and Christians ritualize holy water. Sacred water is either intrinsically pure—by virtue of its source—or ritually sanctified. While inherently pure water, such as Zamzam or Ganges water, is valued for its divine provenance, ritual waters such as *Paritta* or Christian holy water derive their sacredness through liturgical invocation. In religious praxis, “holy” water serves purification functions, whereas “sacred” water implies deeper metaphysical connection to the divine and warrants heightened reverence (Interview with Danny, YM3SK staff, 2024)

The concept of *banyu penguripan*—literally “water of life”—predates Islam in Kudus and resonates with Hindu water rituals. Historical traces of this concept are observable in the use of *tirtha* in Hindu prayer, comprising both *tirtha* from the *Bhatara-Bhatari* (deities) and from venerated priests. *Tirtha* functions to spiritually cleanse the devotee, often applied by anointing the face as an act of purification (Ikmalinnuha, 2022). Among the variations of *tirtha*, *tirtha pangurip* is especially notable, used in *bebanten* (offerings) to instill spiritual vitality—*pengurip* being the vitalizing element that animates ritual materiality.

This sacred function of water finds strong theological resonance in Islam. The Qur’ān references water (*al-mā’*) 62 times, often in close semantic proximity to the concept of life (*al-ḥayāt*), which appears 76 times. These Qur’anic connotations encompass life, vitality, growth, endurance, and utility. In contrast, the word for death (*al-mawt*) occurs 50 times in its singular form and six times in plural (*al-amwāt*), frequently associated with the cessation of sensory and cognitive faculties. This juxtaposition underscores the symbolic polarity between life and death, with water emerging as a metaphor for divine sustenance and existential continuity (Al-Aqsho, 2019).

Based on the above explanation, *banyu penguripan* may be interpreted as sacred water imbued with the power to revitalize the body, senses, mind, and other faculties. It embodies the concept of spiritual and physical vitality, wherein the dysfunction or inactivation of these human faculties is metaphorically equated with death. Through this lens, the symbolic function of *banyu penguripan* extends beyond mere ritual use and enters the realm of theological anthropology—water as a conduit of life and sanctity.

Sunan Kudus's da'wah was not limited to the Menara Kudus Mosque but expanded through a decentralized strategy. He strategically appointed emissaries in various regions to disseminate Islamic teachings, guided by several key considerations. First, the spatial aspect of da'wah was critical; the guardians of Islam selected regions based on their sociopolitical importance and geographic centrality. Second, Sunan Kudus recognized the diversity of local wisdom, especially given the cultural contrast between mountain communities and coastal societies. Rather than imposing uniformity, this approach embraced plurality and sought cultural inclusion through adaptation. Third, alternative cultural practices were developed to facilitate religious acculturation. These culturally attractive practices functioned as bridges that drew communities closer to Islam. Fourth, the strategy involved engaging influential local figures to reduce potential conflict and enhance communal receptivity. Fifth, the fulfillment of essential communal needs, particularly access to water was prioritized to ensure public welfare and ritual continuity.

This approach led to the establishment of religiously and culturally distinct zones, each anchored by charismatic figures affiliated with Sunan Kudus. For instance, while the Menara Kudus is associated with the sacred water known as *banyu penguripan*, other regions feature water sources such as *belik*<sup>1</sup> and *sendang*<sup>2</sup>, which are

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<sup>1</sup>Belik is "a spring in the middle of the field that is used as a place to collect water for the household needs of local residents. In addition, belik is also used as a ritual place at certain events. Belik is generally located near rivers and large trees but also sometimes appears in the middle of the field or even appears between chunks of rock". See *Banyu Panguripan Cosmology* p. 21

<sup>2</sup>Sendang is "a pond in a mountainous area and so on whose water source comes from a spring inside it, the water is usually clean because it flows continuously". See *Banyu Panguripan Cosmology* p. 21

similarly venerated. These sites serve not only religious functions but also fulfill social and psychological roles. Communities often conduct *slametan* rituals, seeking blessings from these sacred waters believed to possess spiritual efficacy.

Over time, myths surrounding the *banyu penguripan* have proliferated within local oral traditions. One prevalent legend claims that the sacred spring lies directly beneath the Kudus Tower. It is said that beneath the mosque's stairs exists a small aperture into which, when a stone was once dropped, the sound of splashing water was heard—suggesting the presence of a hidden well. Another narrative asserts that the *banyu penguripan* beneath the tower possesses miraculous healing powers, even the ability to resurrect the dead. To safeguard its sanctity and possibly to curb superstitious exploitation, it is believed that Sunan Kudus sealed access by constructing the tower directly above the Panguripan Well.

Adding historical nuance to this belief, Danny Nur Hakim—commonly known as Danny, a 45-year-old custodian of the Menara Kudus Mosque and staff of the YM3SK Foundation—acknowledged the likelihood of an ancient well beneath the tower. In 2014, the Central Java Cultural Heritage Preservation Center (BPCB) carried out the installation of dampers around the Menara Kudus structure, lending credence to the speculation of subterranean cavities, possibly including the Panguripan Well itself.

During the installation of vibration-damping belts around the foundation of the Kudus Tower—specifically on its southern, eastern, and northern peripheries—fieldworkers observed notable anomalies in the soil composition. While the soil on the southern and

eastern sides appeared typical in texture and composition, the soil on the northern side was markedly different. It was notably moist, water-saturated, and exuded a pleasant aroma. According to a staff member from the Yayasan Masjid Menara & Makam Sunan Kudus (YM3SK), these characteristics fueled speculation about an underground water source beneath the tower.

This hypothesis is corroborated by anecdotal information from BPCB coordinator Rabiman, who suggested the existence of a subterranean well beneath the tower. He posited that such a well might have functioned as a thermal regulator, stabilizing the temperature and integrity of the tower's structure. These observations reinforce longstanding community beliefs that a sacred well—believed to be the source of *banyu penguripan*—lies beneath the Kudus Tower. Though physical evidence remains elusive, the persistence of this narrative within local oral history illustrates the strong symbolic association between the tower and the presence of sacred water (Interview with Rozak, 2024).

In contemporary usage, what is referred to as *banyu penguripan* also appears as *banyu Tajug*, located in the Tajug Building to the west of the main Kudus Tower complex. This water is regularly used for the mosque's functional needs—ablution, bathing, and cleaning—as well as for ritual activities such as communal cooking during *buka bersama*, purification of heirloom artifacts, and other customary practices related to the legacy of Sunan Kudus.



Figure 1. Kirab Banyu Procession of Remembrance in Kudus  
*Source: Community Documentation*

From a theological standpoint, the role of *banyu penguripan* is also shaped by personal beliefs. Wildan, a pilgrim and first-time visitor to the Sunan Kudus complex, emphasized that the water should be regarded merely as an intermediary or symbolic medium—not as inherently possessing curative powers. He contends that the ultimate source of healing is Allah SWT, and the water serves only as a tool for spiritual mediation (Interview with Wildan, 2024). Similarly, another pilgrim, Aziz Baihaqi, remarked that any perceived efficacy of *banyu penguripan* arises from the prayers offered in earnest by those who visit the site. The accumulation of supplications, in his view, imbues the water with its reputed spiritual potency (Interview with Baihaqi, 2024).

Sunan Kudus, as one of the most renowned members of the Walisongo, occupies a revered position in the Islamic spiritual geography of Java. His tomb attracts numerous pilgrims from across

Indonesia who seek blessings and divine intercession through prayer and reverent visitation. These layered narratives and practices surrounding *banyu penguripan* reveal a complex interplay of faith, folklore, material culture, and sacred geography in the ongoing veneration of the site.



Figure 2. Portrait of *Banyu penguripan* Sunan Kudus.

Source: Sunan Kudus Archives

The blessing and efficacy of *banyu penguripan* are not grounded in the intrinsic properties of the water itself, but rather in the spiritual intention with which it is utilized. As stated by Salman Alfaris, a photographer at the Sunan Kudus tomb complex, any blessing derived from *banyu penguripan* must be interpreted through the lens of *lillāhi ta'ālā*—that is, for the sake of God alone (Interview with Salman Alfaris, 2024). This view underscores the idea that the water serves merely as a medium of divine will rather than a source of autonomous healing power. Complementing this perspective, Mr. Anwar, a pilgrim to the tomb, emphasized that *banyu penguripan* is intended not for curing physical ailments such as headaches or stomach pain, but for addressing spiritual afflictions such as inner unrest or psychological distress. Once again, the emphasis rests on

its function as a spiritual intermediary, used in purification rites while maintaining reverence for Allah and the sanctity of Kanjeng Sunan Kudus (Interview with Anwar, 2024).

### ***Spirituality and the Meaning of Sanctification in the Tradition of the Sacred Society***

The Sunan Kudus Well, commonly referred to as *banyu penguripan*, occupies a central role in the spiritual life of the Kudus community. Beyond its use in religious rituals, it is venerated as a symbol of purification and divine blessing. Many believe that the water from this well possesses the power to cleanse sins and offer protection to those who engage with it in sincere devotion. Its longstanding stewardship reflects the embeddedness of local spirituality within everyday cultural practice. Sunan Kudus, a key figure in the Islamization of Java, imparted teachings that harmonized worldly and spiritual aspirations. Consequently, the well is more than a physical resource—it functions as a site for inner reflection, peace, and the pursuit of divine favor (Assyarofi, 2024).



Figure 3. Punden ceremony and memorial service by the community.  
Source: Internet



For the people of Kudus, *banyu penguripan* carries a symbolic resonance that transcends its material form. It signifies spiritual cleanliness and sacred living, often understood as a vehicle for self-purification. Pilgrims frequently engage in prayer at the well, seeking divine blessings and hoping for spiritual tranquility. This ritual underscores the sacred relationship between humanity and nature as a conduit for closeness to God (Interview with Wildan, 2024).

Importantly, the influence of *banyu penguripan* is not confined to religious life. It permeates social customs, being used in weddings, traditional ceremonies, and the reception of important guests. In these contexts, it serves as a marker of communal unity and cultural reverence. However, this deep spiritual engagement has yet to fully extend into ecological consciousness. Current practices focus primarily on ritual and symbolic meanings, with less attention given to the preservation of the natural resources sustaining the well. Effective ecological stewardship is not yet fully integrated into this tradition, posing potential risks to the sustainability of the ecosystem surrounding the site (Interview with Wildan, 2024).

Addressing this gap requires a more holistic approach—one in which the spirituality embodied by *banyu penguripan* becomes a catalyst for heightened ecological awareness. The values of cleanliness, balance, and harmony with nature—long embedded in the teachings of Sunan Kudus—should be foregrounded in communal narratives and practices. Moreover, these spiritual values can be enriched through a deeper engagement with Islamic ecological teachings, which emphasize humanity's responsibility as *khalifah* (stewards) of the Earth. Integrating this theological

framework with the veneration of *banyu penguripan* offers a pathway toward harmonizing spirituality with environmental ethics (Interview with Wildan, 2024).

In sum, the spiritual significance of *banyu penguripan* extends far beyond ritual practice. It holds transformative potential as a foundation for nurturing ecological responsibility. By integrating these dimensions—sacred tradition and environmental stewardship—communities can work toward sustaining the cultural, social, and ecological balance surrounding the Sunan Kudus Well for future generations.

### ***Environmental Ethics and Natural Resource Management around the Sunan Kudus Well***

As one of the most significant pilgrimage sites in Kudus, the Sunan Kudus Well holds not only religious and cultural importance but also substantial ecological value (Ilafi et al., 2024). The water drawn from this well serves as a vital resource, used both for ritual purification and for fulfilling the everyday needs of local communities (Djuhan, 2020). Consequently, preserving the ecological systems that sustain the well, particularly water quality and surrounding biodiversity, is imperative in the face of mounting environmental threats (Rambe et al., 2021). While the surrounding community has long coexisted with its natural environment, this relationship has not always been grounded in a conscious understanding of the ecological consequences of human activity. Issues such as domestic waste contamination and the degradation of vegetation near the well illustrate the need for more environmentally

conscious management strategies (Interview with Danny, YM3SK Staff, 2024).

Effective stewardship of natural resources around the well is crucial not only for maintaining water purity but also for supporting the broader ecosystem. Wells function as more than water sources; they are integral ecological nodes that provide habitats for various flora and fauna (Jainuddin, 2023). When natural resource management is carried out without ecological foresight, the repercussions can be far-reaching, including water pollution and the collapse of local biodiversity (Izudin et al., 2024). It is, therefore, essential to reframe wells as environmental assets of shared ecological and cultural value—not merely utilitarian structures, but living systems integral to regional sustainability (Abdillah et al., 2024).

Neglectful management of such vital resources can lead to a spectrum of ecological problems. Wells may become polluted by untreated household waste, industrial runoff, or general human encroachment that disregards environmental safeguards (Hasyim et al., 2023). If these practices persist, the surrounding flora and fauna may be endangered, and the spiritual and social role of the well—as a locus of communal blessing and purification—may diminish (Tomsa, 2025). Hence, a holistic and sustainable approach to well management is needed—one that integrates technical expertise with socio-cultural sensitivity.

At the core of this approach lies the principle of environmental ethics, which offers a moral framework for human interaction with the natural world (Harjatanaya, 2025). Environmental ethics encourages responsible behavior grounded in respect for ecological

limits and intergenerational justice. Raising public awareness of the environmental consequences of daily actions is essential and can be facilitated through continuous education and community outreach (Syihabuddin et al., 2023). By embedding ecological awareness within local cultural practices, the preservation of the Sunan Kudus Well can become a model for environmentally rooted religious heritage stewardship.

The active participation of the local community is essential for preserving the ecological integrity of the environment surrounding the Sunan Kudus Well. Concrete actions such as tree planting, routine sanitation of the well area, and responsible waste management serve as tangible expressions of environmental stewardship (Interview, 2024). Beyond fostering a clean and healthy environment, these practices nurture a shared sense of ownership over natural resources. Such collective awareness forms the backbone of a sustainable, community-based conservation ethic (Masturin, 2025).

However, community efforts must be reinforced by institutional support. Local government bodies and environmental organizations play a critical role in advancing grassroots conservation initiatives. Environmentally favorable policies—such as comprehensive waste management systems, routine monitoring of water quality, and protection of endemic flora and fauna—are instrumental in developing a targeted and enduring framework for environmental governance (Interview, 2024). This synergy between formal policy structures and the community's informal ecological consciousness can substantially strengthen conservation outcomes (Interview with Danny, YM3SK Staff, 2024).

At the same time, the tourism potential of the Sunan Kudus Well must be managed prudently to avoid compromising its ecological and spiritual significance. Sustainable tourism practices grounded in environmental ethics and cultural preservation can yield long-term benefits for both local livelihoods and the integrity of sacred landscapes (Zulaikha, n.d.). The integration of ethical principles into tourism management strategies is thus crucial for balancing economic development with environmental sustainability (Ali et al., 2023).

In sum, environmentally ethical management of natural resources is indispensable for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Sunan Kudus Well as both a sacred pilgrimage site and a vital ecological resource (Interview with Anwar, 2024). Achieving this vision necessitates a collaborative approach involving community members, governmental institutions, and other relevant stakeholders, all working in concert to safeguard the ecological balance and cultural heritage of the site.

### ***Integration of Spirituality and Environmental Ethics: A Culture-Based Preservation Model***

The integration of spirituality and environmental ethics is a critical concept to be operationalized in the context of the Sunan Kudus Well. Within the spiritual traditions of the Kudus community, *banyu penguripan* holds profound symbolic significance. However, the ecological values embedded within this tradition are often overlooked. Teachings related to purity and blessings can be meaningfully linked to a broader consciousness of environmental responsibility, framed as part of humankind's duty to safeguard

God's creation (Andriansyah & Zumrotun, 2023). This integration begins with community-based education on the importance of maintaining a balance between spiritual devotion and ecological stewardship (bin Madi & Barmawi, 2022). Viewed through this lens, the act of preserving the cleanliness of the well and its surrounding environment becomes not only an ecological imperative but also a religious obligation rooted in spiritual ethics (Uyuni et al., 2024). Consequently, *banyu penguripan* has the potential to become a powerful symbol for environmental conservation.

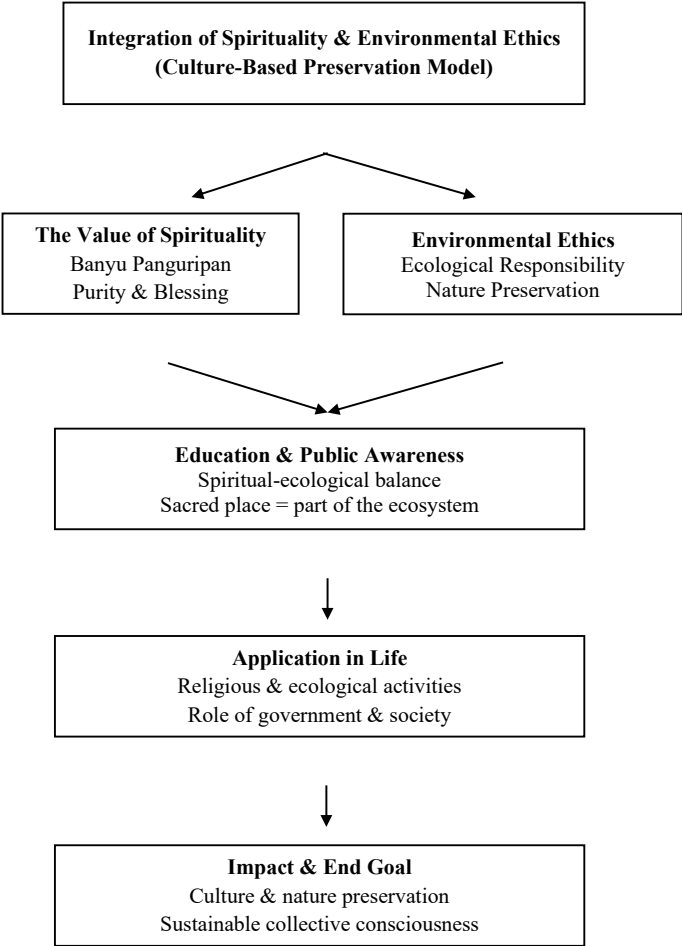
The spiritual reverence associated with *banyu penguripan* can serve as a catalyst for strengthening ecological awareness. Community members may be encouraged to recognize that protecting the sustainability of nature is equally vital to preserving the perceived blessings held within the well (Interview with Rozak, 2024). Thus, environmental conservation becomes both a moral responsibility and a means of pursuing divine approval. As a culture-based preservation model, the Sunan Kudus Well offers a template for other sacred sites to integrate spiritual values with environmental ethics. Sacred spaces can be understood not only as loci of spiritual sanctity but also as ecological systems that demand thoughtful stewardship. Such a paradigm promotes deeper human-nature relationships and reinforces collective responsibility for environmental care.

Moreover, the synthesis of spiritual and ecological values can be applied to the formulation of natural resource management policies in culturally significant areas. Local governments can play an active role by designing programs that promote culture-based environmental management, including educational initiatives that

directly involve communities in the protection of sacred sites (Subechiana, 2022). Practical applications of this integration might include periodic activities such as communal prayer followed by well cleaning or tree planting in the surrounding area. These rituals reinforce the perception that environmental preservation is not merely technical, but a sacred duty entrusted to all individuals (Interview with Salman Alfari, 2024).

In addition to providing a replicable model for other heritage sites, the integration of spirituality and environmental ethics can deepen public understanding of the need for balance between the sacred and the ecological dimensions of life. This dual awareness can cultivate a collective consciousness that not only honors cultural traditions but also supports the environmental sustainability necessary for future generations. Ultimately, the Sunan Kudus Well may stand as both a spiritually revered locus and a potent symbol of environmental resilience, embodying a culture-based conservation model rooted in ethical responsibility and intergenerational care (Interview with Merchant of the Kudus Tower Complex, 2024).

The Chart 1. Integration of Spirituality & Environmental Ethics



The Chart 1. Integration of Spirituality & Environmental Ethics

The chart presented above offers a systematic interpretation of the interrelationship between spirituality and environmental ethics within culture-based conservation practices. By mapping the progression from foundational values to anticipated long-term outcomes, the chart illustrates that environmental preservation is not solely a technical endeavor but also a culturally embedded and spiritually informed pursuit. It underscores how the integration of spiritual and ecological dimensions can cultivate collective



awareness, foster meaningful communal engagement, and generate enduring impacts, particularly in the sustainable preservation of natural ecosystems and cultural heritage. As a conceptual tool, the chart serves as a practical framework for guiding policy formulation, educational initiatives, and community-based activities that are grounded in local wisdom and spiritual traditions.

## Conclusion

*Banyu penguripan* stands as a vital symbol within the spiritual traditions of the Kudus community, embodying profound meanings related to life's continuity, inner peace, and the human–nature relationship. Conceptually, it is regarded not merely as ordinary water but as a conduit bridging the physical and spiritual realms. The practice, inherited from Sunan Kudus through the construction of sacred wells, fulfills not only the community's basic water needs but also serves as a vehicle for transmitting values of blessing and cosmic balance. The spiritual significance of *banyu penguripan* underscores the importance of maintaining harmony among humans, the environment, and the Divine. As such, it represents more than a ritual object—it reflects a philosophical worldview that reveres nature as a sacred trust requiring both preservation and respect.

Beyond its spiritual dimension, *banyu penguripan* conveys embedded messages of environmental ethics and natural resource governance, particularly in relation to water as a life-sustaining element. These ethical values have played an instrumental role in shaping the collective consciousness of the Kudus community, fostering a shared commitment to preserving surrounding ecological resources. Water management at the Sunan Kudus Well thus serves

as a compelling example of culture-based conservation—where ecological awareness is integrated with spiritual traditions. This model suggests that environmental protection is not the sole purview of scientific or technological intervention; it also flourishes through the continuity of indigenous knowledge and living spiritual heritage.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which synthesizes local spirituality and environmental ethics within the specific context of *banyu penguripan* at Sumur Sunan Kudus. While prior studies have tended to address ecological concerns through generalized religious or normative frameworks, this article contributes a grounded, culturally specific preservation model. By centering analysis on local symbols, it broadens the eco-spiritual discourse, particularly in the Indonesian context—where traditional wisdom and localized belief systems remain vibrant. The findings suggest that conservation is not only a matter of formal policy or technical solutions, but equally a cultural and spiritual pursuit rooted in the everyday lives of local communities.

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- Interview with KA, Pilgrim of the Sunan Kudus Tomb Complex, Kudus.
- Interview with RZ, Local Residents from Kudus.