



When Ritual Becomes Preservation: The Community's Role in Sustaining Petirtaan Belahan as Sacred Heritage

Yuliati Yuliati^{1*}, Shofwatul Qolbiyah²

¹Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

²Sigarda Indonesia, Malang, Indonesia
yuliati.fis@um.ac.id

Abstract. Petirtaan Belahan is a sacred cultural heritage site whose existence cannot be separated from the spiritual landscape of Mount Penanggungan as a representation of Mahameru. This study aims to determine the position of the spiritual landscape of Mount Penanggungan in shaping the concept of sacred heritage at Petirtaan Belahan, and to understand the role of the community in preserving Petirtaan Belahan. This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews and literature study. The results show that the sacred value of Petirtaan Belahan cannot be understood separately from the active role of the surrounding community. continuity of ritual practices carried out across generations is the main factor that maintains the sacred value of the site while also contributing to its preservation. Cultural activities held at Petirtaan Belahan also serve as a supporting aspect of preservation. Nevertheless, this study emphasizes that community-based preservation through ritual activities must still pay attention to the physical conservation of the site.

Keywords: Preservation, Community, Petirtaan Belahan, Sacred Heritage.

1 Introduction

Cultural property is the product and witness of various traditions and spiritual achievements of the past that shape the character of a society [1]. Cultural heritage, as part of cultural property, holds important meaning for a society amid the modernization and social change taking place. Cultural heritage as a legacy of the past is often associated with monuments or ancient buildings. In its development, however, cultural heritage refers not only to physical structures but also to the environments in which humans interact, such as urban centers, archaeological sites, industrial heritage, cultural landscapes, and heritage routes [2]. Cultural heritage is fragile, finite, and non-renewable, thus requiring experts to care for it, such as archaeologists, museum curators, or architects. Beyond serving as custodians, they also play a role in communicating heritage values to the general public [3]. Nevertheless, heritage preservation is not solely the responsibility of experts but is also a collaborative process involving various stakeholders such as the government, local communities, indigenous communities, academics, and the private sector.

Pearson & Sullivan (1999), in *Looking After Cultural Heritage*, define preservation as an effort to maintain the condition of an archaeological site with an orientation toward keeping it as close as possible to its original condition. A

preservation approach can be applied to a heritage site when the site already holds cultural significance, or when that significance would be diminished by excessive intervention, when there is insufficient information or resources to restore or reconstruct the place, and when a comparable form of restoration has already been carried out elsewhere. In some cases, reconstruction and restoration efforts at heritage sites actually reduce the site's cultural significance. Reconstruction efforts aimed at returning site elements to their original position often damage the site's significance by destroying other valuable evidence [1]. Cultural heritage preservation aims to maintain authenticity and safeguard integrity. Authenticity at a heritage site can be seen in its form or design, the materials used, its use and function, traditions, techniques, management systems, location and setting, language and intangible heritage, as well as the spirit and feeling associated with it. Integrity, meanwhile, refers to the presence of complete aspects that represent the condition of the heritage together with its important values [4].

Community involvement becomes increasingly important because communities are the party that lives side by side with cultural heritage and continuously builds social, cultural, and spiritual relationships with the site. The interaction between communities and heritage sites indirectly plays a role in sustaining the site's existence and the values attached to it across generations. Heritage preservation is not only understood as an effort to maintain physical integrity, but also as a process of safeguarding the values, identity, and collective memory attached to the heritage site. Community involvement in a heritage site used as living heritage by its supporting community tends to bring benefits to both the heritage site and the community itself. Conversely, when a heritage site is separated from its community, this causes an imbalance in the heritage management system, resulting in negative impacts on preservation. The community-based preservation approach views cultural heritage as playing a role in providing benefits to the community, thereby fostering a sense of ownership toward the heritage site. In the People-Centered Approach concept, communities are not merely implementers of preservation programs but also owners of knowledge and value systems that can contribute to the preservation of heritage sites [5]. Community involvement in heritage preservation can significantly contribute to improving the effectiveness of preservation, particularly in the aspects of maintenance and protection. Integrating the knowledge and traditions of indigenous communities into preservation strategies ensures culturally relevant and sustainable outcomes. This shows that community-based participation is an important part of efforts to maintain cultural integrity [6]. Communities in the context of heritage preservation can be categorized into three types: communities of place, referring to a group of people residing in or around the location of the heritage; communities of interest, referring to groups with an emotional or personal interest in the heritage even though they reside outside the location; and communities of practice, referring to individuals or groups professionally and directly involved in the management or handling of the heritage [5].

This body of knowledge and value systems constitutes local wisdom passed down across generations by communities in safeguarding existing cultural heritage. Local wisdom plays an important role in heritage preservation through local knowledge, values, and decision-making mechanisms that take into account cultural

and environmental sustainability aspects, thereby reducing the impact of tourism on cultural and environmental degradation around heritage sites [7]. Local wisdom also plays a role in strengthening the identity of a particular community. A community's wisdom in absorbing new culture and change demonstrates that local wisdom is formed through a process of adaptation and integration of external cultural elements deemed relevant to existing local values, without eliminating the values passed down by ancestors across generations [8]. The island of Bali, with its predominantly Hindu population, treats cultural heritage as part of the means of religious practice. Sites or objects surviving from the Hindu era are still held sacred and function as places of worship for Hindu devotees. Statues remaining from the Hindu era are kept in temples (*pura*) and used as media for worship or specific rituals [9]. This form of local wisdom, expressed through religious practices carried out across generations, serves to maintain the continuity of the function, meaning, and value of a cultural heritage. Communities involved in religious activities indirectly develop a sense of care and responsibility to protect and maintain heritage sites properly. The sacred value that communities construct and attach to a (tangible) cultural heritage can foster collective awareness for the preservation of that heritage.

Petirtaan Belahan is an archaeological site in the form of an ancient bathing place (*petirtaan*) dating from the Hindu-Buddhist period. The site is located in Wonosunyo Village, Gempol Subdistrict, Pasuruan Regency, East Java. The Petirtaan Belahan site has statues placed in wall niches that function to channel water from the spring into the pool. These statues take the form of goddesses believed by the surrounding community to be manifestations of Dewi Laksmi and Dewi Sri, goddesses of fertility. Based on textual data in the Cunggurang Inscription, Petirtaan Belahan is estimated to have been built around the 10th century CE, contemporaneous with the reign of Pu Sindok [10][11]. The local community also refers to the Petirtaan Belahan site as "*Sumber Tetek*", its name derives from the water spouts that flow from the breast area of the statues. Based on the Decree of the Governor of East Java Number 188/627/KTPS/013/2017, Petirtaan Belahan forms part of the Mount Penanggungan Cultural Heritage Area, designated as a Provincial-level Cultural Heritage Site with the criterion of being a highly important object [12]. Just as the Balinese community plays a role in preserving cultural heritage sites, the community surrounding Petirtaan Belahan also engages in preservation through local wisdom values that have grown and developed within it. This study aims to answer the question of how the geographical-cosmological position of the Petirtaan Belahan site contributes to the construction of its sacredness, and how the community plays a role in preserving the Petirtaan Belahan site.

Previous research related to Petirtaan Belahan was conducted by Zeni Zulaikah, Yatmin, and Budiono in an article entitled *Kajian Petirtaan (Candi) Belahan di Kabupaten Pasuruan* (2024). That study examined the iconography of the statues at Petirtaan Belahan. Its findings show that Petirtaan Belahan has statues representing gods and goddesses, namely Dewa Wisnu, Dewi Sri, and Dewi Laksmi [4]. Meanwhile, Shofwatul Qolbiyah and Rahman Alwi Rifa'i conducted research entitled *Penilaian Risiko Gerakan Tanah sebagai Dasar Mitigasi Bencana di Situs Petirtaan Belahan* (2026). That study examined Petirtaan Belahan from the perspective of disaster risk assessment and mitigation. Its findings indicate that Petirtaan Belahan has a light-to-moderate category risk of land movement, and that

disaster mitigation efforts can be carried out as a preventive measure to keep the temple site and its surrounding environment preserved [12].

Based on this prior research, studies on Petirtaan Belahan from a community perspective have not yet been conducted specifically, making this study relevant to undertake. This study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the role of the community in efforts to preserve Petirtaan Belahan as a sacred cultural heritage site. More specifically, this study is aimed at: (1) identifying the meanings attributed to Petirtaan Belahan as a sacred cultural heritage site; (2) analyzing how the community interprets the sacredness of this site in their preservation practices; Through these objectives, this study is expected to make an academic contribution to the study of community-based cultural heritage preservation, while also providing practical input for stakeholders in formulating sustainable and participatory preservation strategies for Petirtaan Belahan.

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the community's role in the preservation of Petirtaan Belahan as a sacred cultural heritage through a contextual depiction of social and cultural phenomena, rather than statistically testing cause-and-effect relationships. This approach was chosen because the issues under study—namely, forms of participation, interpretations of sacredness, and preservation challenges—are complex and laden with subjective meaning, thus requiring a deep understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the community as the primary agents in the site's preservation. The research was conducted in the Petirtaan Belahan area, Belahan Jowo Hamlet, Wonosunyo Village, Gempol Subdistrict, Pasuruan Regency, East Java, involving the community surrounding the site, caretakers, local traditional and religious leaders, as well as relevant government agencies (such as the Cultural Preservation Office) as both research subjects and informants.

The data for this study were collected through three main techniques. First, field observations (both non-participant and limited-participant) were conducted to directly observe the physical condition of the site, ritual practices, and patterns of community interaction with Petirtaan Belahan in daily life. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with key informants selected through purposive sampling—specifically, individuals considered to possess knowledge of and direct involvement with the site, such as caretakers, community leaders, ritual practitioners, and representatives of cultural institutions. Third, a documentary study was conducted by examining written sources, including previous research reports, cultural heritage archives, photographs, and historical and archaeological literature relevant to Petirtaan Belahan, to strengthen and supplement the data obtained from observations and interviews. To ensure the credibility of the data, this study employed source and method triangulation—that is, comparing and cross-checking data obtained from various informants and through different data collection methods.

Data analysis in this study utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which proceeded continuously through four interrelated stages: data

collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification (rujukan). The data collection stage involved obtaining raw data directly from the field through observation, interviews, and documentary analysis, all conducted simultaneously throughout the research process to ensure comprehensive and in-depth data. The collected data was then reduced by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and grouping the data based on the research focus, which included forms of community participation, interpretations of the site's sacredness, and various challenges in conservation efforts, while data unrelated to the research focus was set aside. After the reduction process, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives and supplemented with tables, matrices, or charts as needed, so that patterns, relationships between categories, and trends related to the community's role in site preservation could be systematically understood. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and verification—that is, the process of formulating conclusions based on the identified patterns and themes, followed by re-examining their validity and consistency by cross-referencing them with field data and triangulation results. These four stages proceed in a circular rather than a linear manner, allowing the researcher to revisit data reduction or presentation if new information emerges or if conclusions lack sufficient empirical support, until credible and defensible conclusions are reached regarding the community's role in the preservation of Petirtaan Belahan as a cultural heritage site of sacred significance.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Petirtaan Belahan and Its Significant Value

Petirtaan Belahan is a cultural heritage site that cannot be separated from the location of Mount Penanggungan. In the beliefs of the ancient Javanese people, Mount Penanggungan is a sacred mountain formed from a fragment of the summit of Mount Mahameru that was moved from Jambudwipa to Jawadwipa. Mount Penanggungan is also known by the name Pawitra, meaning sacred. In the Tantu Panggelaran manuscript by Mpu Kutritusan (1635 CE), it is told that Bhatar Guru traveled from Mahameru to Mount Pawitra to meditate. On Mount Pawitra, Bhatar Guru bathed three times a day for three nights. The drops of his bathwater flowed onto a waru tree along the path, and from this a lake was said to have formed on Mount Pawitra [13].

In the cosmology of the ancient Javanese kingdoms, mountains occupied a highly important position as a symbol of political legitimacy. Ancient Javanese kingdoms each had their own sacred mountain, which served as a local representation of the Hindu-Buddhist concept of *Mahameru* believed to be the center of the universe and the dwelling place of the gods. Mount Pawitra itself is often identified as the sacred mountain of the Majapahit Kingdom [14]. Based on the Cultural Heritage Mapping of the Mount Penanggungan Area, 36 cultural heritage objects dating from the Hindu-Buddhist era were identified and subsequently grouped into three categories according to their level of importance: 14 objects classified as less important, 10 objects classified as important, and 12 objects classified as highly important. Within this classification, the Petirtaan Belahan area is categorized as a highly important cultural heritage site.

The Petirtaan Belahan site is administratively situated within Wonosunyo Village, Gempol Subdistrict, Pasuruan Regency. Physically, the Petirtaan Belahan structure takes the form of an elongated wall whose front surface displays niches for placing statues. The niches on the right and left sides contain statues depicting a goddess whose breasts release flowing water. Because of this form, the local community calls Petirtaan Belahan by the name *Sumber Tetek* (see fig 1. Petirtaan Belahan Site). The bathing structure is approximately 6.85 meters long, divided into two sides forming a concave angle, 6.30 meters wide, and 4.60 meters high. Petirtaan Belahan is constructed of red brick. In front of the wall of the bathing structure lies a square-shaped pool used to collect water from the spouts. Petirtaan Belahan does not stand alone as an isolated site. Not far from its location are two ancient gates in the *paduraksa* form. These two ancient gates are believed to form a single unit with Petirtaan Belahan, functioning as an entrance gate that separates the sacred area from the profane [16].



Fig. 1. Petirtaan Belahan Site

A place may hold historical significance because it has influenced or been influenced by historical figures, events, periods, or activities [1]. Petirtaan Belahan holds significant value from various perspectives. Historically, this site is believed to date back to the 10th century CE, contemporaneous with the reign of Pu Sindok, the founder of the Isana Dynasty. Based on its connection to the Cunggrang Inscription, which mentions the name *tirta pancuran I Pawitra*, Petirtaan Belahan is a bathing complex situated near the relics from Pu Sindok's era. This site is also closely linked to the activities of the ascetics (*rsi*) in the Cunggrang area, as mentioned in the Kakawin Nagarakertagama, making it significant for the history of Hindu-Buddhist development in Indonesia. After the royal capital was moved from Central Java to East Java, Pu Sindok emerged as the ruler of Mataram and the founder of the Isana Dynasty, bearing the coronation title Sri Maharaja Rake Hino Mpu Sindok Sri Isanawikrama Dharmmotunggadewa. Throughout his reign, from 929 to 948 CE, he issued a number of policies, ranging from granting *sima* status to those who had rendered meritorious service, to the establishment of sacred religious sites, and the construction of public infrastructure such as dams. According to the inscriptions issued at the start of his reign, particularly around 929 CE, indicate that her policy focus was primarily on a development agenda [15]. A number of archaeological sites erected during the Pu Sindok era include Candi Lor in Nganjuk, Candi Songgoriti in Batu, Candi Gunung Gangsir, and Petirtaan Belahan in Pasuruan, and of these structures, the Petirtaan Belahan is the only one built during his reign [16].

From a scientific perspective, this area serves as a source for interdisciplinary research: for archaeology, it provides data to reconstruct the lives of ancient Javanese society; for architecture, its simple form actually reflects a design adapted to the steep slope; while for astronomy, the chronogram (*sengkalan memet*) at this site records lunar eclipse events based on the ancient Javanese calendar system and mythology. From a religious perspective, Petirtaan Belahan serves as a conduit for sacred water from Mount Penanggungan—personified as *tirta amerta*—and is still used today by the community for *melukat* rituals (self-purification) as well as by Hindus for worship on specific days. Its significance to the community is evident in its role as both an ancestral heritage site and a water source that sustains the surrounding farmland—a role celebrated through the *Ruwat Desa* tradition—while also driving the local economy through historical and culinary tour guide services and MSME products in Wonosunyo Village [12].

3.2 Petirtaan Belahan as a Sacred Heritage

Sacred Heritage is a form of cultural heritage that integrates tangible and intangible dimensions, such that the significance of a cultural heritage lies not only in the physical site itself but also in the spiritual meaning, myths, and religious practices that accompany it. Within the concept of sacred heritage, the space or location of a site becomes an integrated part of its sacredness, because geographical factors also shape the community's religious experience. The placement of sacred sites in particular locations, such as highlands or isolated areas, shows that landscape is not merely a physical backdrop but an element that reinforces spiritual symbolism and supports religious practice. According to Roberta Gilchrist (2020), the concept of sacred heritage can be categorized through several criteria, such as: locations associated with events in the lives of gods, saints, or prophets; pilgrimage landscapes associated with healing; places associated with visions and miracles; sites of religious ritual; the graves of saints, prophets, and founders; shrines associated with relics or icons; ancestral or mythological places of the gods; natural landscapes that radiate mystical power; and memorial sites that commemorate persecution and genocide [17].

Within the concept of sacred heritage, a site's sacredness is formed cumulatively, consisting of layered meanings that mutually reinforce one another. Petirtaan Belahan exemplifies this theory, in that its sacredness as a site does not derive solely from the structure itself. Petirtaan Belahan, as a sacred space, is formed by its geographical position on the slope of Mount Penanggungan, which the ancient Javanese believed to be a sacred mountain and a personification of the summit of *Mahameru* from India. Natural landscapes considered to possess mystical power often serve as the foundation for the development of sacred sites, as supporting communities tend to extend the sanctity of the mountain down to the surrounding landscape elements. In ancient Javanese cosmology, mountains occupy the position of an axis connecting the human world with the upper world of the gods. Situated on the eastern slope of Mount Penanggungan, Petirtaan Belahan occupies a special position within the cosmology of the ancient Javanese kingdoms as a local representation of the *Mahameru* concept. This geographical position carries a cosmological element

that has rendered the Petirtaan Belahan site inherently sacred since the time of its construction.

When this framework of Sacred Heritage is applied to the Petirtaan Belahan area, it becomes evident that this site meets several criteria simultaneously, thereby qualifying it as a sacred and multidimensional cultural heritage site. The first criterion clearly applicable to Petirtaan Belahan is its status as an ancestral and mythological site of the gods. The presence of statues of Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Sri—embodiments of the consorts of Lord Vishnu—which iconographically flank an empty niche believed to have once housed a statue of Lord Vishnu (the embodiment of King Airlangga), positions this site as a material representation of Hindu cosmology. The practice of deifying a king as an incarnation of a god was a common pattern in the ancient Javanese tradition, in which a worldly ruler was projected as a manifestation of divine power to legitimize his authority while simultaneously ensuring his spiritual immortality after death. Thus, Petirtaan Belahan is not merely a functional structure but also a medium for mythological narratives linking the historical figure of Airlangga to the Hindu pantheon. This mythological dimension is reinforced by the presence of a chronogram (*sengkalan memet*) that records the event of a lunar eclipse through the story of Kala Rahu. The narrative of the churning of the ocean (*samudramanathana*) to obtain the nectar of immortality (*tirta amerta*), as well as the beheading of Kala Rahu by Lord Vishnu's discus (*cakra*), are events that directly involve the lives of the gods and serve as cosmological references for the construction of the site. In this regard, Petirtaan Belahan also fulfills Gilchrist's first criterion—a location associated with events in the lives of the gods—because the water flowing from the statue is personified as *tirta amerta*—the water of immortality that, mythologically, originates from that cosmological event.

The second, a natural landscape that radiates mystical power. The orientation of Petirtaan Belahan toward Mount Penanggungan further underscores its fulfillment of the criterion of a natural landscape that radiates mystical power. In ancient Javanese cosmology, Mount Penanggungan is viewed as a replica of Mount Mahameru, the center of the cosmos inhabited by the gods; thus, the area on its slopes—including Petirtaan Belahan—is considered to possess its own sacred significance. The water flowing from the mountain springs to the statue's fountain is not merely a hydrological phenomenon but is interpreted as a flow of spiritual power originating from the sacred mountain. The relationship between the mountain, water, and the Petirtaan Belahan structure is a distinctive pattern in Ancient Javanese religious cosmology, which positions natural elements as an integral part of the belief system, not merely a geographical backdrop.

The third, Petirtaan Belahan become temple that sssociate with relics or icons. The statues of Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Sri at the Belahan Petirtaan can also be understood as icons in Gilchrist's sense—that is, material objects that serve as intermediaries between the profane and the sacred. The uniqueness of these statues lies in their function as channels for holy water flowing from their chests; thus, the statues serve not only as iconographic representations but also as active ritual devices connecting worshippers to a source of holiness. This characteristic makes Petirtaan Belahan comparable to temples that house relics or sacred icons in other religious traditions, where material objects serve as the focus of worship and a medium for the transmission of blessings.

The last, religious ritual site related to healing. The criteria for a religious ritual site are evident in the continued function of Petirtaan Belahan to this day. The ritual of *melukat* (self-purification), which visitors still perform—especially on Friday *Legi* nights—demonstrates that this site is not merely a static relic of the past but a sacred place that remains alive through contemporary religious practices. Its use as a place of worship for Hindus on major religious holidays—where the function of the *petirtaan* is considered equivalent to that of a *pura*—further reinforces the site's status as an active ritual space, not merely a cultural heritage site passively preserved.

Petirtaan Belahan can be understood as a sacred cultural heritage site that meets criteria in Gilchrist's (2020) framework such as a place of ancestral and mythological deities, a location associated with events in the lives of deities, a natural landscape that radiates mystical power, a temple associated with sacred icons, an active religious ritual site, and a pilgrimage landscape associated with healing. The multiplicity of criteria met here confirms that the sacredness of Petirtaan Belahan is multi-layered—drawing from the cosmology of the sacred mountain, the mythology of *tirta amerta*, the iconography of goddess statues, and the continuity of contemporary communities' ritual practices. It is precisely this layered character that should form the basis for conservation policy, as the management of the site cannot be oriented solely toward archaeological and material aspects but must also accommodate the living religious dimensions that continue to be practiced to this day.

3.3 The Role of Community in Preserving Petirtaan Belahan Site

The community-based approach in the study of cultural heritage preservation is increasingly being adopted globally as a response to the limitations of the top-down preservation model that has long been dominated by state authorities or expert institutions. From a global perspective, community involvement is seen not merely as a complement to policy, but as a prerequisite for the sustainability of preservation itself, since the community is the party that interacts most intensively with the site in daily life. When communities are positioned as active subjects rather than mere objects of policy, they tend to develop a stronger sense of ownership toward the site, which in turn fosters the emergence of informal oversight mechanisms against threats of damage, whether natural or human-caused, such as vandalism.

The community-based approach in heritage preservation studies emphasizes that the success of preserving a heritage site depends on the active involvement of the community as a stakeholder, rather than merely a passive object of preservation policies formulated by external parties. Within this concept, communities consist of three categories: the geographic community residing near the site, the community with an interest in the site but not residing in its vicinity, and the community that uses the site as a means of practice. In the context of Petirtaan Belahan, this community consists of people living around the site, the East Java Cultural Guardian Forum (*Forum Pamong Kebudayaan Jawa Timur*) as a partner of the local community in carrying out cultural activities, and people who conduct practices (rituals or ceremonies) at Petirtaan Belahan. These communities work in synergy with one another in preserving the Petirtaan Belahan site.

The First, preservation efforts by the community surrounding Petirtaan Belahan take the form of cultural activities carried out consistently, thereby helping to sustain the site both physically and in terms of the values attached to it. Once a year, the community of Wonosunyo Village carries out the *sedekah bumi* (village purification) tradition. *Bersih desa* is performed as an expression of gratitude for the abundance of the harvest. The *sedekah bumi* procession begins with the *Kirab Anak*, featuring mountain-shaped offerings (*gunungan*) of harvest

produce such as vegetables and fruit. Participants in the procession come from two hamlets near the Petirtaan Belahan site, namely Belahan Jowo and Belahan Nongko. The procession ends at Petirtaan Belahan as a main destination. Upon arrival at the *petirtaan* site, residents perform a purification bath ritual, *melukat* (spiritual cleansing), the ceremonial cleansing of heirloom objects (*jaman pusaka*), and communal prayer. The community around Petirtaan Belahan also carries out preservation efforts related to the physical condition of the site. The presence of dense vegetation and trees around the site poses a threat from falling branches. Although no case of falling branches directly damaging the site has yet been recorded, the community, through the Wonosunyo Village government, has taken the initiative to monitor tree branches and prune those at risk of falling onto the site.

Interest-based community preservation at Petirtaan Belahan is carried out by the East Java Cultural Guardian Forum (Forum Pamong Kebudayaan, FPK). The FPK acts as a community partner in maintaining, preserving, and revitalizing the cultural values attached to the Petirtaan Belahan site. The FPK serves as a cultural companion directly involved in various preservation activities at Petirtaan Belahan. During the *bersih desa* event, the FPK is present as both a cultural companion and an active participant, enlivening the event through cultural activities such as traditional dress parades, *keris* exhibitions and cleansing ceremonies (*jaman*), and cultural discussions on the Kahuripan Kingdom and King Airlangga.

At the start of the month of *Suro* (Muharram in the Islamic calendar), the FPK and the surrounding community hold a cultural activity known as the *Suroan* Tradition. In Javanese tradition, the *Suro* period is understood as a time of introspection and self-purification at the start of the year. During the *Suroan* event, the FPK is responsible for arranging the cultural procession as well as educating the community on the philosophical values of the *Suroan* tradition. The series of *Suroan* activities includes a cultural procession, *tirakatan* (nighttime vigil), communal prayer, purification rituals such as *jaman* and ritual bathing, and cultural performances such as traditional dance. On certain occasions (during the full moon), the FPK routinely holds *macapatan* (traditional Javanese sung poetry) events at Petirtaan Belahan as a form of preserving Javanese cultural values.

The third category of community is the community of practice. This community originates from outside groups who make use of the Petirtaan Belahan site for specific ritual purposes. As a legacy of the Hindu-Buddhist era, Petirtaan Belahan is used as a medium for Hindu religious rituals. On certain commemorative days, Petirtaan Belahan is used as a medium for *melukat* (spiritual purification). Some visitors to Petirtaan Belahan also believe that the water flowing from the spouts possesses particular properties. These beliefs, in turn, have given rise to myths that circulate within the community, such as the prohibition against menstruating women entering the pool area, out of consideration for the purity of the water. These circulating myths indirectly play a role in maintaining the preservation of the Petirtaan Belahan site as a sacred cultural heritage.

The impact of community involvement on heritage sites is bidirectional in nature, encompassing both beneficial outcomes and effects that warrant careful vigilance. On the positive side, local community engagement has proven capable of sustaining the social and spiritual functions of a site, as evidenced by numerous cases of religious sites across Southeast Asia and beyond, where ongoing ritual practices conducted by the community constitute a more effective conservation mechanism than mere fencing or formal oversight by heritage authorities. Furthermore, community participation opens space for the preservation of local knowledge concerning site-maintenance practices, which are frequently undocumented in official records yet transmitted across successive generations. From an economic standpoint, community involvement in site management—through, for instance, tour-guiding services, culinary offerings, or micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the vicinity of heritage

areas—generates economic incentives that reinforce community motivation to preserve the site, given that the site's continuity is directly correlated with the sustainability of their livelihoods.

Nevertheless, the community-based approach also carries potential impacts that necessitate mitigation. The intensity of community visitation for ritual or tourism purposes, if inadequately managed, may exert physical stress upon the structural fabric of heritage buildings, such as surface erosion of stone resulting from direct contact, the accumulation of offerings, or alterations to the site's spatial configuration to accommodate the convenience of ritual activities. In addition, tensions may arise from divergent interests among the geographic community residing in the vicinity of the site, stakeholder communities oriented toward scientific-academic preservation, and practice-based communities oriented toward ritual function—as exemplified by the three categories of community identified in the case of Petirtaan Belahan. Consequently, the success of the community-based approach within a global context depends substantially on the extent to which synergy among these community categories can be bridged through mechanisms of communication and collaborative management, thereby enabling the interests of material preservation, spiritual continuity, and community economic welfare to proceed in tandem rather than in mutual exclusion.

4 Conclusion

Petirtaan Belahan, as a sacred cultural heritage, cannot be understood separately from the active role of the community. The sacred value of Petirtaan Belahan derives from its position within the spiritual landscape of Mount Penanggungan as a representation of Mahameru cosmology. This sacred value continues to be maintained through the sustained ritual practices carried out among its supporting community. The community's role in preserving Petirtaan Belahan through the site's sacred value is closely linked to efforts to maintain the physical condition of the site. Cultural activities held at Petirtaan Belahan also serve as a supporting aspect in preserving the cultural values attached to the site. Nevertheless, community-based preservation through ritual activities must still take into account the physical conservation of the heritage.

Acknowledgments. A third level heading in 9-point font size at the end of the paper is used for general acknowledgments, for example: This study was funded by X (grant number Y).

Disclosure of Interests. The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

References

1. M. Pearson and S. Sullivan, *Looking After Heritage Places*. Melbourne: University Press, 2013.
2. G. Wijesuriya, J. Thompson, and C. Young, *Managing Cultural World Heritage*. Paris: Unesco, 2013.
3. L. Smith, *All Heritage is Intangible: Critical Heritage Studies and Museums*. Reinwardt Academy, 2011.
4. Z. Zulaikah, Yatman, and H. Budiono, "A Study of the Belahan Petirtaan (Temple) in Pasuruan Regency," in in *Seminar dalam Jaringan Konseling Kearifan Nusantara*, 2024.
5. S. Court and G. Wijesuriya, *People-Centered Approaches to The Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Living Heritage*. Rome: Iccrom, 2015.

6. T. Nguyen, "The role of local communities in the conservation of cultural heritage sites: A case study of Vietnam," *Journal Asian Sci. Res*, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.55493/5003.v14i2.5057>.
7. V. Septarini, "The role of local wisdom in the development of heritage tourism at the liyangan site, temanggung district," vol. 2, no. 1, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.17509/sabajotr.v2i1.67040>.
8. Y. Widayanti, R. Suwardiyati, and Z. Dwithia, "Preservation of Culture and Local Wisdom in the Protection of Traditional Banjar Arts," *Notarius*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 443–460, 2025.
9. I. B. Brata, I. B. Rai, Rulianto, and I. B. N. Wartha, "Preserving Cultural Heritage in Bali's Sustainable Tourism Development," in *Seminar Nasional Percepatan Penanganan COVID-19 berbasis Adat di Indonesia*, Denpasar, 2022.
10. T. A. Resink, "Belahan or Myth Dispelled, Indonesia," 1968.
11. I. Lutfi, "Epigraphy of the Penanggungan Cultural Heritage Site," 2019.
12. S. Qolbiyah and R. A. Rifa'i, "Mass Movement Risk Assesment as the Basis for Disaster Mitigation at Petirtaan Belahan Site in Pasuruan Region," *Berkala Arkeologi*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 1–20, 2026.
13. D. R. Nurhajarini and Suyami, *A Study of Myths and Cultural Values in the Tantu Panggelaran*. Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Cultur.
14. A. A. Munandar, "The Cultural Significance of Volcanoes from an Ancient Javanese Perspective," 2022.
15. H. F. Utama and S. Arif, "A Functional Analysis of the Policies of the Pu Sindok Administration in the 10th Century CE," vol. 12, no. 148, 2023.
16. S. Widiah and A. Kasdi, "Historical Study of the Cunggrang Inscription as a Historical Source during the Period of Mpu Sindok 929-947 AD," *Journal of History Education*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2018.
17. R. Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

