

SOCIO CULTURAL HYBRIDITY OF TENGGER TRIBAL BUDDHISTS

Parjono¹, Rakay Indramayapanna²,

Purnomo Ratna Paramita³, Sugeng⁴, Hong Djie⁵

¹²³⁴⁵Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Sriwijaya Tangerang; Indonesia

Correspondence Email; parjonostabnsriwijaya@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the sociocultural hybridity of Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency, focusing on the influence of the interaction between Buddhism and local culture on the social and religious life of the community. Through a descriptive qualitative approach with an ethnographic type, data were collected through interviews, observations, and field documentation. The data of this research is the sociocultural hybridity of Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency, then analyzed using the interactive analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model, namely through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The results show that Tengger Buddhists adopt various elements of Buddhism, such as the use of Buddha statues and Sanhyang Ismoyo, the Book of Adam Makno, and religious rituals, but still maintain strong traditional traditions, such as Kasada, Karo, unan-unan, entas-entas, pujaan mubeng, and others. This hybridity also affects religious harmony in the community, with high tolerance between religious communities and adherence to customs that are carried out together. This research contributes to the understanding of the interaction of religion and local culture and enriches the literature on sociocultural hybridity in religious contexts. The findings are expected to be taken into consideration in managing cultural and religious diversity in a multicultural society.

Keywords

Buddhists, Customary Tradition, Religious Harmony, Sociocultural Hybridity, Tengger Tribe,



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a multicultural country, is a social space full of encounters between various belief systems, religions, and local traditions (Jingyi & Jiangli, 2024; Sa'diyah, 2025; Xie & Ma, 2023). In this case, religious practices are not always present in a uniform or normative form as contained in formal religious doctrines (Sirait, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Instead, many communities in Indonesia live a religious life through a process of adaptation with local wisdom that has lived long before the entry of major religions (Lattu, 2025; Prastowo, 2023; Rafa et al., 2025). This shows that religion is not only practiced as a transcendental teaching, but also as a cultural system that is integrated with ethnic identity, local history, and the social structure of society (Khaidir, 2023; Parto et al., 2024).

One phenomenon that reflects these dynamics is sociocultural hybridity in religious practice, which is the process of mixing formal religious teachings with local cultural elements that produce new forms of religiosity (Amanda et al., 2025; Sari, 2023; Selviani, 2024). This hybridity can be seen in the use of local languages in liturgy, the integration of traditional symbols in religious rituals, the adaptation of teaching texts in the form of local narratives, to the way the community defines its spiritual figures (Pandie & Nugroho, 2025; Sasirais et al., 2025; Sutiyono et al., 2025). In cultural studies, hybridity is seen as a creative process in shaping identity and response to external influences, whether in the form of religion, modernity, or other global cultural forces (Alam, 2023; Durgut et al., 2024; Sujibto, 2024). Therefore, the study of forms of sociocultural hybridity in religious practice is important to understand how local communities form a distinctive and contextualized religious system (Bhandari, 2022; Umar & Lawan, 2024).

One example that is interesting to study is the Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency. Based on observations in this study, the Buddhist community of the Tengger Tribe still maintains a spiritual identity and local traditions that are deeply rooted in ancestral heritage. Their religious practices not only refer to conventional Buddhist teachings, but are also infused with elements of typical Tengger local traditions and Javanese cultural values, as well as influenced by remnants of Hindu religiosity from the Majapahit era. This phenomenon reflects what in cultural studies is referred to as sociocultural hybridity, a mixing that gives birth to new forms of religious practice and cultural identity.

In this case, the boundaries between Buddhism and local traditions are fluid and dynamically negotiated by the community. Based on interviews with traditional leaders of Ngadas Village, the use of Adam Makno and ancestor worship is considered part of a cultural heritage that

does not conflict with Buddhist values, but rather as a form of preserving the cultural identity of the Tengger Tribe. Practices such as the implementation of the Kasada ceremony, the use of the Adam Makno book, the worship of local figures such as Ki Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo, to the use of Javanese in religious rituals show that Tengger Buddhists do not rigidly separate religious doctrine and customs. Instead, they interpret the two complementarily as a unity that shapes their daily spiritual practices.

The main academic problem of this research is how this hybridization process takes place and shapes the religious identity of Tengger Buddhists. Hybridity is not only limited to ritualistic or symbolic forms, but also reflects the way this community understands and lives a religious life in the midst of cultural diversity and the challenges of globalization. On the one hand, the universal teachings of Buddhism are adapted within the framework of local culture, while on the other hand, Tengger traditional values undergo reinterpretation to remain relevant within the new religious framework.

Research from Kiriana (2021) examined the coexistence of Śiwa-Buddha in Bali and found that the harmony of the two belief systems was due to theological, philosophical, historical, psychological, and sociological factors. The form of hybridity is seen in the unification of symbols such as Ongkara and Hrih, as well as the collective belief of the Balinese Hindu community that Śiwa and Buddha are one spiritual entity known as Hyang Tunggal. Furthermore, Prayogo (2024) reviews the symbolic meaning of Paksi Naga Liman as a hybrid creature in the tradition of the Cirebon Sultanate which represents the acculturation of three major cultures: Islam, Hinduism, and Chinese. The hybridity reflects the harmony of Cirebon's multicultural society through the symbol of the heirloom kris that unites the elements of the upper, middle, and lower worlds. On a more conceptual scale, Nagatani (2023) builds a new framework for understanding religious and cultural mixing by classifying forms of cultural contact such as "syncretism", "hybridity in the narrow sense", "bricolage", and "separative coexistence". His case study in Dehong, Yunnan (China) shows how Theravāda and Mahāyāna religious practices can mix without losing their original identity.

Lee (2024) research on the religious experiences of Koreans also shows a form of layered belief (*chungch'ŭng-sinang*) as a result of historical encounters between different religions. This approach enriches our understanding of religious hybridity, which not only creates harmony but also forms a complex identity structure open to internal differences. On the other hand, Zhang (2024) through an ethnographic study on the Jain community in Singapore found that despite being a small

minority, this community demonstrates a high ability to navigate multicultural dynamics through spiritual adaptation and integration strategies that reflect religious hybridity in the urban and global landscape.

Departing from previous studies that have discussed hybridity in religious contexts, this research offers novelty in three main aspects. First, the object of this study focuses on the Buddhist community from the Tengger indigenous tribe, which geographically, historically, and culturally has different characteristics compared to Buddhist communities in Bali, China, and multicultural urban areas such as Singapore. Secondly, this research specifically explores structural forms of hybridity, including local religious texts (*Kitab Adam Makno*), spiritual symbols (*Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo*), and ritual systems integrated with *adat*. Third, this study also highlights how hybridity becomes a community strategy in responding to modernization and tourism, especially in maintaining the continuity of spiritual and cultural values in the midst of social change.

Unlike previous studies that emphasize symbolic or conceptual aspects, this research pays attention to daily practices, worship spaces, social systems, and liturgical language used in the Tengger Buddhist community. Thus, this research not only fills the literature void in the study of local Buddhism in Indonesia but also provides a new understanding of religion as a result of social and cultural negotiations in the context of indigenous communities.

This research uses the theory of hybridity Bhabha (1994) as the main framework for reading the process of mixing culture and religion. According to Bhabha (1994), In colonial and postcolonial contexts, the encounter of two cultural systems will give birth to a third space, a space where new identities are formed not through assimilation but through negotiation. In the context of Tengger Buddhists, the third space is created through religious practices that combine Buddhist values, Tengger customs, and Javanese-Hindu cultural influences, creating a distinctive form of religion that is not rigid to orthodox boundaries. In addition, religion as a cultural system Geertz (2013) is used to understand that religion is not only dogmatic-theological, but also a network of symbols, meanings, and social actions that live in the culture of a community.

This research aims to identify the various sociocultural forms of Buddhists in the Tengger tribe, analyze the types of hybridity between Buddhist socioculture and Buddhist teachings, and examine the implications of this hybridity for religious harmony. The research also aims to provide conclusions regarding these hybridities and their impact on inter-religious harmony. Theoretically, it is hoped that this research can increase knowledge about the sociocultural hybridity of Buddhists

in the Tengger tribe, while practically, it can be useful for lecturers, religious instructors, Buddhist education teachers, educational institutions, and students as reference material and culture-based curriculum development.

METHOD

This research was qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The focus of the study is the sociocultural hybridity of Buddhists from the Tengger Tribe in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency, East Java Province. The data in this study were religious practices, local traditions, cultural symbols, and community responses to the influence of Buddhism and local culture. The data source was the Tengger community in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency, East Java Province.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The observation phase was conducted from April to July 2024 in the Ngadas Village area, including direct observation of traditional ceremonies (Kasada, Unan-unan, and Vesak) and the daily activities of the community around Vihara Paramita. Interviews were conducted with key figures: the customary chief, the head of Vihara Paramita, Buddhist religious instructors, interfaith leaders, traditional healers, and Buddhist residents who actively participate in traditional and religious rituals. Documentation was obtained from photographs of religious activities, copies of the Kitab Adam Makno, monastery archives, and village records that record the social structure and traditional calendar of the Tengger community.

Data analysis in this study followed an ethnographic approach using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of the stages of data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage was carried out by filtering and sorting field data obtained from observations and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, shaman priests, and Buddhists in Ngadas Village. In the data presentation stage, researchers organized data in the form of descriptive narratives, direct quotes from sources, photographs of religious activities, and thematic tables that recorded forms of sociocultural hybridity. Verification was carried out through triangulation techniques, both source triangulation, such as matching information between traditional leaders and religious instructors, as well as method triangulation by comparing observation results to documentation and interview data, to ensure data validity and accuracy of interpretation. In the conclusion stage, the researcher used an interpretative and

reflective approach by combining Bhabha's hybridity theory (1994) and Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system (2013), as well as strengthening the analysis through comparison with similar research results in other local Buddhist communities to emphasize the novelty and contribution of this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

To understand the dynamics of Tengger Buddhism in Ngadas Village, this section presents the results of field findings obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings are organized systematically in a table to show the varieties, types, and implications of hybridity in the religious and social life of the community.

Table 1. Sociocultural Hybridity of Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village,
Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency

No	Variety of Sociocultural Forms	Types of Hybridity	Implication
1.	Ceremony of Kasada, Karo, Unan-unan, Entas-entas	Syncretism between Buddhist rituals and Javanese-Tengger customs	Preservation of ancestral traditions that strengthen cultural identity and increase interfaith social participation in traditional rituals
2.	Use of the book of Adam Makno	Integration of local religious texts with Buddhist values	Emergence of new spiritual narratives based on local wisdom, strengthening the roots of Buddhism in the local language and culture
3.	Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo statue in the monastery	Conformity of local spiritual symbols to Buddhist iconography	Demonstrates visual flexibility in Buddhism as well as respect for local figures as spiritual protectors of the community
4.	Vesak ritual with traditional Tengger clothing	Culturalization of Buddhism through local clothing and aesthetic expression	Forms a distinctive Tengger-Buddhist religious identity, increasing community pride in local culture
5.	Use of the Javanese language in mantras and ceremonies	Transformation of Buddhist liturgical language into the local language	Facilitate understanding of religious teachings and strengthen local values in religious practices
6.	Offerings (tumpeng, incense, bananas, flowers)	Adaptation of Buddhist offering forms to local agrarian traditions	A form of gratitude for the harvest and safety of life, strengthening relationships with ancestors and the universe
7.	Traditional greeting "Teguh Wiyono - Widodo Mulyo"	Integration of religious communication with traditional greetings	Strengthens social relations and respect between residents, symbolizes spiritual and cultural unity
8.	Sanggar Agung and the five-year ritual (Unan-unan)	Interfaith space for locally-based ecological rituals	Realizing interfaith harmony and ecological awareness in a spiritual context

9.	Use of the Gunungan symbol and Javanese script	Visualization of Javanese cultural values in Buddhist space	Showing respect for traditional aesthetic values and becoming a means of cultural education for the younger generation
10.	Prohibition of cutting down trees and not selling water	Integration of Buddhist teachings on compassion and local environmental wisdom	Shaping the ecological spirituality of the community, increasing environmental awareness as part of religious practice

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Based on the research results in Table 1, it can be explained as follows:

1. Kasada, Karo, Unan-unan, Entas-entas ceremonies

These ceremonies are part of the traditional rite system of the Tengger community that is still maintained by Buddhists in Ngadas Village. The type of hybridity that occurs is a form of syncretism between Buddhist teachings that emphasize respect for ancestors and spiritual ethical practices, with traditional Javanese-Tengger rituals that are full of cosmic and ecological meanings. For example, Kasada is not only an offering to Sang Hyang Widhi, but also contains Buddhist values such as compassion, karma, and respect for nature. The implication is that these traditions strengthen local cultural identity, increase people's social participation in maintaining ancestral heritage, and become a means of interfaith glue in the village.

2. Use of the Book of Adam Makno

Kitab Adam Makno is a spiritual text used by Buddhists in Ngadas, written in Javanese script and language, and contains teachings on virtue, human origins, and life guidance. It is used by Sanyata Javanese Buddhists as a guide to religious practice. The Book of Adam Makno was originally written in Javanese script, but was later made in Getrik to make it easier for people to learn. The language adjustment used is a form of language hybridity from Buddhism, with the local language written in the Adam Makno book. This shows the integration of local religious texts with Buddhism, where Buddhism is adapted to the social and cultural context of the local community. The implication is that the book becomes an important tool in shaping a down-to-earth, accessible, and culturally appropriate understanding of religion, as well as strengthening the legitimacy of locality-based religion.

3. Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo Statue in the Vihara

At the Paramita monastery in Ngadas village, there is a statue of Semar that is said to represent Sang Hyang Ismoyo, a Javanese puppet character who is considered a spiritual protector. This reflects the appropriation of local spiritual symbols in a Buddhist space, where traditional symbols are accommodated into the structure and iconography of Buddhism. The implication is that this integration is evidence of Buddhism's openness to local values and creates a distinctive form of

religion that is contextualized, without losing the universal Buddhist values.

4. Vesak Ritual with Tengger Traditional Clothing

In the Vesak celebration in Ngadas Village, Buddhists do not wear monkish clothing as usual in the city, but wear traditional Tengger clothing such as black clothes, udeng, and scarves. This is a form of culturalization of Buddhism through local aesthetic expression, where Buddhism is embodied through the material culture of the community. The implication is that this creates a distinctive religious identity, strengthens the spirit of cultural collectivity, and facilitates the acceptance of religious teachings in daily life.

5. Use of Javanese in Mantras and Ceremonies

Javanese is used in the recitation of mantras and prayers in various Buddhist rituals in Ngadas, instead of Pali or Sanskrit, as is common in the Buddhist tradition. This is a transformation of liturgical language into local language, as a form of linguistic and spiritual hybridity. The implication is that this makes Buddhism easier to understand, emotionally and culturally close to the community, and supports the preservation of local languages as part of spirituality.

6. Offerings (tumpeng, incense, bananas, flowers)

The practice of making offerings in religious ceremonies in Ngadas Village, such as tumpeng kabuli, gedang ayu, and incense, is a form of adaptation of Buddhist offerings with local agrarian and animistic traditions. In the Buddhist context, offerings are an expression of gratitude and respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, but here the form and medium follow local traditions. The implication is that the community can express Buddhist spirituality through symbols that are familiar and rooted in their culture, while fostering gratitude for the crops and safety of life, as well as maintaining harmonious relationships with nature and ancestors.

7. The traditional greeting "Teguh Wiyono - Widodo Mulyo"

This traditional greeting is used in interpersonal communication among the Tengger people. Its use by Buddhists shows the integration of religious communication with local cultural expressions, as the greeting contains prayers, hopes for safety, and well-being. The implication is that it strengthens social and emotional relationships between people, demonstrates Buddhist values such as loving-kindness (metta) and compassion in a locally specific form, and reinforces a sense of belonging to the culture and community.

8. Sanggar Agung

Sanggar Agung is used for ritual worship for all Ngadas villagers. This ritual place is used every month, three months, or six days every Friday Legi. All residents send prayers, bring offerings, and bring flowers to be brought to this Sanggar Agung. In addition, there is a ritual once every five years called unan-unan. Unan-unan is a ritual that basically we save the springs and mountains/and earth. In the Unan-unan activity, offerings such as buffaloes are given, which are carried from the village head's house to the Great Fencing with all the community members. This is an example of a hybrid spiritual space that crosses religious boundaries and symbolizes locally-based ecological rituals. The implication is the strengthening of interfaith harmony, the awakening of ecotheological awareness (environmental spirituality), and the preservation of ecological values as part of the community's shared beliefs.

9. Use of the Gunungan symbol and Javanese script

The Gunungan symbol (at the village gate) and Javanese script (at the monastery and Buddhist Sunday School building) indicate the visualization of Javanese cultural values in Buddhist religious spaces. These are not merely aesthetic ornaments, but are full of philosophical meanings about life, cosmic balance, and preservation of cultural heritage. The implication is that the people of Ngadas village not only maintain their spiritual beliefs but also preserve the existence of cultural values inherited from their ancestors while providing visual education to the younger generation about the richness of tradition.

10. Prohibition of cutting down trees and not selling water

This prohibition is part of a local value system that blends with Buddhist teachings on ahimsa (non-violence) and moral responsibility towards nature. It reflects the integration of Buddhist values and local ecological wisdom. Cutting down a tree should be replaced by planting 100 trees; water should not be commoditized. The implication is that there is a concrete ecological spirituality in people's lives, where protecting nature is not only an ethical act but also a religious act, which is in line with Buddhist teachings on maintaining balance and avoiding the suffering of other beings.

Discussion

1. Kasada Ceremony, Karo, Unan-unan, Entas-entas

The Kasada ceremony, also known as Hari Raya Kasada or Kasodoan, now called Yadnya Kasada, is one of the most sacred ritual traditions for the Tengger people. It is held annually on the 14th, 15th, or 16th of the month of Kasada, according to the traditional Tengger calendar, and

coincides with the night of the full moon that shines in the blue night sky (lazuardi biru). This celebration is a form of offering ceremony, where the Tengger people make offerings to Sang Hyang Widhi and ancestors by throwing or sending crops (palawija), which are considered to be located in the crater of Mount Bromo. The Kasada ceremony is considered an expression of gratitude, prayer, and hope for the blessings of life.

The Karo ceremony, which is one of the traditional celebrations of the Tengger people, is held in the month of Karo, which is the second month in the traditional Tengger calendar. This ceremony has a deep philosophy rooted in respect for ancestors, especially Ki Seco and Ki Satuhu. Both figures are believed to have died (sampyuh fighting) in the line of duty, so the Karo ceremony is a means to commemorate their sacrifice and dedication. In addition, this celebration has a broader spiritual purpose, namely to congratulate the ancestors of each family, blessing agricultural fields, food storage (pedaringan), cattle pens, granaries, sigiran, and water guardians (danyang banyu). This ceremony is believed to be a momentum to clean up and cut off the mistakes that have occurred within the family during the past year. Thus, Karo not only functions as a ritual of respect to ancestors and nature, but also as an effort to renew harmony within the family and community with nature and local belief values.

The Unan-unan ceremony is one of the important rituals in the tradition of the Tengger community, which is held once a year. Sewindu, in the context of the Tengger calendar, does not refer to eight years as in the Gregorian calendar, but takes place every five years. This ceremony has a deep meaning as a form of ritual cleansing of the village from the disturbance of spirits and purification of imperfect spirits. This purification aims to help the spirits reach the perfect realm of origin, namely, Nirvana. The ceremony involves the sacrifice of a buffalo, which is symbolic as a medium to remove all obstacles and hindrances (balak) that can disrupt the life of the community. With high spiritual and social values, Unan-unan is an important means of maintaining harmony between humans, ancestors, and the environment in the Tengger local belief system.

The Entas-entas ceremony is performed as a form of respect and devotion to the spirits of ancestors who have passed away. The ceremony is held on the 1000th day after a person dies, in accordance with the belief that during this period the spirit needs purification to be able to enter a higher realm, namely heaven. The term "Entas-entas" literally means to elevate or purify, reflecting the main purpose of the ceremony, which is to perfect the spirit's journey to the realm of eternal bliss or nyuwargakke. This ritual is not only a spiritual means to purify the spirit, but also a form of

responsibility of the family left behind towards the ancestors. In its implementation, various offerings are prepared, including food, flowers, and other symbols that are considered to help the spirit's journey. Special prayers and mantras are also chanted by traditional leaders or shamans in the Tengger community, who guide the ceremony procession solemnly. The Entas-entas ceremony has a broader value than just a religious ritual. This tradition strengthens family relationships, fosters respect for ancestors, and strengthens the cultural identity of the Tengger people, especially in Ngadas Village. The ceremony demonstrates a deep belief in the cycle of life and death, and the importance of maintaining a balance between the physical and spiritual worlds.

This series of traditional ceremonies became the center of the religious expression of Tengger Buddhists. The syncretic process between local rites and Buddhism gave birth to a contextualized form of spirituality. As theorized by Bhabha (1994), this is a form of third space, the space between where old culture and new teachings negotiate. The Kasada ceremony, for example, contains elements of offerings that in Buddhism are associated with good karma and respect for holy beings, but is carried out on Mount Bromo as the cosmic site of the Tengger custom.

This finding is in line with research by Wati & Ardelia (2023) on the Gawai Dayak celebration in Bumi Sebaloh shows that cultural traditions can be a space for the expression of pluralism in a multiethnic society. This celebration involves the active participation of various tribes in the entire series of events, from preparation to closing, which creates cross-ethnic interactions and shared meanings of Dayak cultural identity. Syarifah (2024) also asserts that rituals such as Unan-unan contain religious and ecological moderation values that are an integral part of the community's belief in the nature of Mount Bromo as a spiritual space. In the author's view, this practice is a local identity strategy to maintain spiritual authority in the face of the expansion of formal religious doctrine. However, there is a risk of distortion of spiritual meaning if the implementation of the ceremony is more directed towards tourism than religious rites.

2. Use of the Book of Adam Makno

Kitab Adam Makno, as a local teaching text, is a form of integration of Buddhist literature into the Javanese literacy tradition. The book is written in Javanese and adapted into getrik to make it easy for people to understand. This is an example of cultural translation, where universal Buddhist teachings are organized in a local Javanese-Tengger narrative.

This research extends the findings of Daulay et al., (2024) on the importance of traditional leaders in the delivery of religious teachings. However, Adam Makno has a stronger position as a sacred text, not just a local narrative. Afiah (2024) supports this through her research on the symbolic book of Adam Makno in Karo ceremonies. In the author's view, this book is a representation of local epistemology that strengthens religious legitimacy from below. However, the potential for marginalization from the formal Buddhist community could arise if the book is not institutionally recognized by the national sangha.

3. Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo Statue in Vihara

The centralization of local symbols such as Semar as Sang Hyang Ismoyo in monasteries is a practice of visual hybridity. It shows that Buddhist iconography can adapt to local non-Buddhist spiritual figures. Geertz (2013) religious acculturation theory explains this phenomenon as a blending of symbol systems that are still spiritually meaningful to the community.

This study complements the findings of Siregar (2024) on Batak ornaments in North Sumatra monasteries, but Semar in Ngadas is not just an ornament; he functions as a protective figure and spiritual connector. In the author's view, this practice enriches the plurality of Buddhist religious expressions in Indonesia. However, potential interpretive conflicts may occur at the level of orthodoxy as the use of wayang figures may be perceived as deviating from typical representations of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

4. Vesak Ritual with Tengger Traditional Clothing

The traditional clothing of the Tengger tribe in religious rituals signifies differences in position or social strata in Ngadas village. The shaman wears a black shirt with a yellow sash and an Iket on his head. Sociocultural hybridity can be seen in the traditional clothing used by the Tengger tribe in religious rituals. Buddhism does not specifically restrict performing religious rituals using certain clothing. As long as the clothes used do not have the potential to violate the precepts and bring up mental impurities, it can be done. The clothes used during religious rituals should be able to support the inner development of the people towards a better direction. The difference in social position in the Buddhist view is found in Aggañña Sutta Digha Nikaya 27, where the Buddha said that differences in position can be distinguished based on occupation. Sociocultural hybridity can be found in the use of different traditional clothing based on the work performed. The shaman priest wears different traditional clothing from other believers.



Figure 1. The Tengger tribe's traditional shaman clothing



Figure 2. Customary Clothing of the Tengger Tribe

The use of traditional clothing in Vesak is a form of culturalization of Buddhism through material expression. It is a practice of embodied hybridity, where the body becomes a cultural container that unites religiosity and ethnic identity. Clothes such as black shirts and scarves are not just clothing, but symbols of social status and respect for ancestors.

In the context of Chinese Buddhism, Budianto et al., (2024) found something similar when devotees wore traditional clothes during ancestor worship. However, in Tengger, the meaning of clothing is deeper because it is related to the social structure and function of the traditional shaman. According to the author, traditional clothing in worship is a form of affirmation of local identity. However, if the visual aspect is more prominent than the spiritual essence, it is feared that the religious meaning will turn into mere ceremonial.

5. Use of the Javanese Language in Mantras and Ceremonies

The Javanese language in the liturgy illustrates linguistic hybridity, which is the localization of the teaching language into a more communicative and emotional form. In line with Geertz (2013), language in religion is not only a means of communication, but also a symbolic medium that connects humans with transcendental values.

This was also found in the research of Pasaribu et al. (2025) which shows the use of Balinese in Buddhist prayers in Bali. But in Ngadas, the use of Javanese is not just as a tool, but as a sacred language in texts such as Adam Makno and mantras. According to the author, this creates emotional closeness and a deeper understanding of religious teachings. However, there is a risk of losing the original meaning of the teachings if the translation is not scientifically controlled

6. Offerings (tumpeng, incense, bananas, flowers)

The practice of offerings such as tumpeng kabuli, banana gedang ayu, and incense is are manifestation of local agrarian and spiritual rituals adapted into Buddhism. This is a concrete example of ritual hybridity, where forms of offerings prevalent in the kejawen tradition are harmonized with Buddhist values such as dana (giving), puja (reverence), and gratitude ceremonies for good karma.

In the research, Ngadat (2023) also noted the tumpeng culture as a symbol of metu dalam sing lempeng, meaning that this is a clue for the people who do, besides that the process of tumpengan is done by collaborating with the use of Javanese tradition by using community elders, and with the tradition of reading paritta manggala as well as the value of Buddhist teachings contained in tumpeng salvation is respect for luluhur, by thinking, saying, and acting well. Tengger offerings also contain deeper ecological and philosophical symbolism, such as the use of leaves as incense wrappers as a symbol of "returning to nature". According to the author, these offerings are a powerful medium of spiritual expression as well as a tool for cultural conservation. However, there is a risk of the offerings being read as mystical practices or even shirk by religious groups who do not understand the local context.

7. Traditional greeting "Teguh Wiyono - Widodo Mulyo"

This traditional greeting functions as a religious communication that contains local Buddhist values, such as wishes for safety and glory in life. This is in line with symbolic hybridity, which is the creation of new symbols that unify cultural identity and spiritual beliefs. This greeting is used not only socially, but also in religious spaces such as before and after puja.

This finding is in line with findings from Utari et al. (2024) and Rudiansyah et al. (2023) every element in the temple, from the architecture of the building to the ornaments on the sculptures, has a deep symbolic meaning and serves as a medium for the transmission of Buddhist teachings to its followers. In addition, the temple also plays an important role in strengthening the Buddhist identity of the surrounding area, as well as being a center of religious and cultural activities. According to

the author, this greeting became a kind of daily mantra that connected residents with Buddhist moral teachings. However, this practice could be forgotten by the younger generation if it is not formally preserved through religious and cultural education.

8. Sanggar Agung

Sanggar Agung is used for ritual worship for all Ngadas villagers. This ritual place is used every three months, six days every Friday Legi, all residents send prayers, bring offerings, and bring flowers to be brought to this Sanggar Agung. In addition, there is a five-year ritual called unan-unan. Unan-unan is a ritual in which we pray for the springs and mountains. This is a real form of *ecological hybridity*, where Buddhist spirituality is in direct contact with local environmental wisdom. The interpretation of water as a symbol of life and a source of spiritual blessings reinforces the value of *metta* (universal love) in Buddhism.

This phenomenon has similarities with folk religious festivals (*minjian*) in Chinese villages studied in a contemporary ethnographic study Guo et al. (2022). Festivals such as the Tamasha of Thanksgiving to God (*Choushen saihui*) and Tuanbai show a hybrid form of worship of local deities, respect for ancestors, folk entertainment, and adaptation to modern contexts. These festivals are no longer merely acts of sacred ritual, but also collective social spaces that bring together locals, government, migrants, and other social groups in a common cultural activity.

According to the author, Sanggar Agung in Tengger is a clear example of the hybridity of worship spaces: sacred and profane, religious and cultural. It is a prototype of a sacred place that is inclusive and has the power to reach across generations and across identities. However, the main challenge ahead is to maintain the depth of spiritual meaning so that it does not dissolve in the dominance of cultural performances and the demands of tourism. Preserving intangible heritage like this requires a reflective and collaborative approach between indigenous communities, religious leaders, and external parties such as the government and tourists.

9. Use of Gunungan Symbols and Javanese Script

The gunungan symbol installed at the village gate and the Javanese script in the monastery reflect visual hybridity, which is the visualization of belief through local aesthetic media. Gunungan symbolizes the cosmos, the balance of life, and the spiritual path, values that are also emphasized in Buddhism. The use of Javanese script marks the fusion of locality and spirituality.

This is in line with research by Sutyono et al. (2025) which states that contemporary Buddhist art not only retains deep spiritual meaning, but also serves as a platform for artistic innovation capable of connecting the past with the present. As such, Buddhist religious art becomes an effective tool to convey Buddhist teachings in a broader context that is relevant to modern audiences. The author argues that *gunungan* is an icon that unites art, religion, and philosophy of life. However, the meaning of this symbol can be blurred if it is not accompanied by cultural literacy education for the younger generation.

10. Prohibition of Cutting Trees and Not Selling Water

This prohibition reflects the values of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *karuna* (compassion) in Buddhism, hybridized with local ecological wisdom. The moral rules of not cutting down trees carelessly and the prohibition of commoditizing water originate from the customary value system, which is then institutionalized as a religious practice.

Such practices show that nature is not only regarded as a resource, but as part of a cosmological and spiritual system that must be kept sacred. This is in line with the findings of Rols (2025) shows that in early Taoism and ancient Buddhism, actions such as cutting down trees, polluting water, and diverting the flow of rivers are serious offenses against cosmic harmony. Acts of destroying nature are not only ethically forbidden but also have the potential to disrupt the divine order and cause natural disasters or spiritual disharmony. According to the author, the existing rules in the Tengger community are a form of ecological spirituality that should be used as a national model. However, the biggest challenge is economic pressure (commercialization of water and timber) that could undermine this value order if not protected by law and policy.

Thus, the findings in this study show that the sociocultural hybridity of Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village is a creative form of the adaptation process of Buddhism with local Tengger traditions and Javanese culture. Religious practice does not stand in a vacuum, but always interacts with the social, historical, and cultural context that surrounds it. The mixing process between symbols, language, sacred texts, traditional rites, architectural forms, and clothing is evidence that the Tengger people form a distinctive religious system, namely Buddhism, that "lands" locally.

This phenomenon is relevant to the theory of hybridity developed by Bhabha (1994) which states that in an interacting cultural space, there will be what is called a third space where identity is not fixed, but is negotiated and reconstructed continuously. In the context of the Ngadas community, the third space can be seen in the presence of Semar statues in the monastery, the use

of Javanese language in mantras, and religious rituals that are integrated with ancestral customs. Geertz (2013) Religion as a cultural system also reinforces this view that religious symbols must be understood in the interweaving of cultural meanings that people live by.

The author views hybridity in Ngadas Village as a form of cultural resistance to the homogenization of religion. In a world that tends to standardize religious practice, this community maintains its cultural sovereignty through the reinterpretation and recontextualization of Buddhism. However, the antithesis of this idea is also worth noting. On the one hand, hybridity can open up a space for cultural dialogue, but on the other, it risks theological ambiguity and conflicts of doctrinal interpretation. For example, the use of puppet characters such as Semar in Buddhist worship spaces can be considered syncretic or even heretical by orthodox Buddhists who emphasize the purity of teachings based on the Tripitaka.

Moreover, in a policy context, this finding is in line with the Religious Moderation agenda promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. These practices that accommodate local culture show that religiosity does not always have to be uniform, but can be local and multivocal. The government needs to support the preservation of such practices as part of Indonesia's multicultural spiritual and cultural wealth.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the religious practices of Tengger Buddhists in Ngadas Village are a distinctive form of sociocultural hybridity, in which Buddhism is localized in the context of the customs, culture, and spiritual environment of the Tengger community. The hybridity includes ritual, symbolic, linguistic, textual, and ecological aspects seen in the Kasada ceremony, the Adam Makno book, the use of Semar/Sang Hyang Ismoyo statues, Javanese language in prayers, and the prohibition of cutting trees and selling water.

The findings show that Tengger Buddhists do not rigidly separate religious teachings and local traditional heritage. Instead, they weave the two together in a spiritual practice that is flexible, contextualized, and firmly rooted in ancestral values. This hybridity not only strengthens the community's cultural and religious identity but also encourages the formation of interfaith harmony and high ecological awareness.

Theoretically, this research strengthens Homi K. Bhabha's third space discourse and Clifford Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system. Practically, this research contributes to the development of locally based religious moderation approaches, preservation of traditional wisdom, and multicultural education in the context of pluralistic societies. The sociocultural hybridity of Tengger Buddhists is a model of adaptation and religion that contributes to maintaining social and spiritual harmony amid the challenges of modernity.

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