

# Caring for Labuhan Merapi Tradition, One of The Local Wisdom-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts

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Rizki Arumning Tyas<sup>1</sup>, Pujiyanto<sup>2</sup>, Suyanta<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

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## Abstract

Local wisdom is the result of the dialectic process between the individual and his environment. One of the local wisdom in Merapi Mountain, Indonesia is the traditional ceremony of Labuhan. This study is a qualitative descriptive study with literature review techniques. Based on the results of this study, it is known that the traditional ceremony of Labuhan Merapi is one of the local wisdom, tradition, culture, and traditional intelligence in the residents of the southern slope of Mount Merapi. Merapi's traditional ceremony is one of the traditional intelligence that can be managed in building a community-based disaster risk reduction system, especially at the disaster mitigation stage. Traditional intelligence is formed from the results of people's interaction with their physical environment over a long period of time. The formation of traditional intelligence allows people to know and read the signs of nature related to the eruption disaster of Mount Merapi. People who are able to know and read the signs of nature will be more sensitive to their surroundings, so it will form a community that is aware and resilient to face disasters.

## Keywords

tradition; labuhan merapi; disaster risk reduction; local wisdom

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the high potential of disaster, the area around Mount Merapi is largely occupied by residents. Various relics of past communities found show at least there has been a residence since the 800s AD that continues through generations until now (Degroot, 2009: 12). In fact, population growth in Merapi eruption danger areas averaged 2.8%, exceeding the national average population growth of 2.5%. The number of people living in this area is not separated from the towing factor in the form of the potential such as natural resources that are very large (Sudi-

byakto, 2011: 91).

As a society that has occupied disaster-prone areas for generations and repeatedly experienced catastrophic eruptions, there is traditional intelligence in dealing with disasters that are formed as a result of the introduction of society to its physical environment. Traditional intelligence (local genius) is intelligence in environmental management to maintain the balance of nature

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### Corresponding author

Jl. Colombo Yogyakarta No.1, Karang Malang,  
Caturtunggal, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah  
Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281

### Email

[rizki.arumningtyas@gmail.com](mailto:rizki.arumningtyas@gmail.com)

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that has long been worked on by a community so that it has become a local culture. Traditional intelligence is also known as local wisdom, local knowledge, and indigenous knowledge (Sunarto, 2008: 323).

From the experience and observations obtained through generations, the people from the southern slopes of Mount Merapi must always follow the laws of nature and have an attitude of "*nrimo ing pandum*" that is to accept the concrete reality faced as part of life that will or should not be lived (Endraswara, 2012: 36). From this point of view, life is a fanatical attitude that all things are arranged and determined from the "top". The people from southern slope of Merapi have a belief that as long as the people of Mount Merapi still want to preserve Javanese culture by still carrying out the tradition in the form of several rituals held around Merapi and not hurting it by damaging the body of the mountain, surely Mount Merapi will not be angry and issue a devastating eruption.

Thus, the people of Merapi are not only taught how to utilize the surrounding nature, but they are taught how to adjust themselves to the natural life that is outside of him (in Javanese called *adi kodrati*) for always maintain harmony in his life. To be important by the people of Merapi support its environment's harmony with the implementation of congratulations, prayers, offerings, reading spells, *semedi*, fasting, pilgrimage to ancestral tombs, and so on. The welfare of life can only be achieved depending on the success in adjusting to the natural forces that exist in the surrounding environment.

This article explores the local wisdom that exists in the residents of Merapi, such as the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan Merapi*, covering the history, procession, meaning of philosophy, values, and the residents perception and influence of the traditional ceremony. This paper also contains the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan Merapi* which is a form of local wisdom as an effort to mitigate and reduce the disaster risk.

## METHODS

This study is a qualitative descriptive with a data source in the form of literature on local wisdom, tradition, and people's perception of the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan Merapi*. The data collection in this study use systematic, factual, and accurate review literature techniques regarding existing facts and their relation to disaster risk reduction efforts. The data sources used are from books and journals, historical records, interviews, and documentation.

## DISCUSSION

### Local Wisdom of Merapi Mountain Areas Community

Javanese people, especially the people of Merapi based on a philosophy of life, "*Hamemayu Hayuning Bawono, Ambrasta dur Hangkara*". Literally, the philosophy can be interpreted as nurturing beauty and salvation, the welfare of life in the world and eradicating the nature of anger and greed. This Javanese philosophy is the rationing and teachings of the life virtues (*piwulang/wewarah kautaman ing urip*) which teaches that the relationship of man with God, nature, and fellow human beings is a whole unit. The main task of human beings in this world is to preserve nature and its environment, including the social environment. Various forms of community behavior that show awareness of the nature preservation are reflected in various traditional ceremonies aimed at the preservation of nature.

According to Krishna (2013: 62), Javanese people understand that the world and its space resides as an entity that is not separated from its consciousness. Not even just fused with his open-to-the-inside consciousness, the existence of Javanese humans is swallowed up by nature. Thus, instead of Javanese people understanding themselves as a "*res cogitans*" who are able to reflect on their consciousness away from space, Javanese consciousness is a small part of space. The existence of Javanese people is fused with nature, so that the two are inseparable.

The relationship between Merapi residents and its environment is very strong, as if the two are inseparable. Suhartini (2009:3) revealed that they live in various natural ecosystems in Indonesia and have long coexisted with nature harmoniously, thus knowing various ways of utilizing natural resources sustainably. The villagers have special uniqueness such as simplicity, emotional bonding, folk art, and loyalty to cultural leaders as well as concepts that develop in the hamlet as the ins and outs of Javanese society. Various perceptions, views and attitudes of the people around regarding Mount Merapi, are inseparable from myths that are held for generations. The closeness of the residents to nature is also reflected in the ethics of the residents during interacting with nature. The ethical patterns of the surrounding community towards Mount Merapi are divided into several ethical patterns of society in maintaining the balance of the cosmos, such as ethics in farming, ethics in livestock breeding, ethics in settlement, and ethics in life (Triyoga, 1991: 56).

### **Labuhan Merapi Traditional Ceremony**

*Labuhan* Merapi Traditional Ceremony was held in Kinahrejo, Umbulharjo, Cangkringan every 30th *Rejeb* according to Javanese date. This ritual is usually followed by elderly people and nature lovers. This traditional ceremony is a manifestation of gratitude for the *Jumenengan* (coronation) of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono. The goal is to ask for the personal safety of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono, Yogyakarta Palace, and the people of Yogyakarta from all the delicate creatures in Java. The items (in Javanese called *uborampe*) carried are the property of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono, consisting of *Semekan Bangun Tolak*, *Semekan Gadung*, *Semekan Gadung Mlati*, *Sinjang Kawung*, *Komplang*, *Sinjang Kawung Alit*, *Kampuh Poleng*, *Destar Daramuluk*, and *Peningset Udaraga*. This *Labuhan* ceremony began by opening *uborampe* brought from the Palace of Yogyakarta and praying for it by applying for permission to all who are sit in Merapi, among them *Eyang Empu Romo*, *Eyang Empu Ramadi*, *Eyang*

*Panembahan Prabu Jagad*, and other refugees (Gunawan, 2006: 42).

The night before the traditional ceremonial procession of *Labuhan* Merapi began, the people around precisely at the house of the Merapi Mountain's careather (in Javanese called *Juru Kunci*) held a congratulatory ceremony, called *Kenduri*. In the process of the *Kenduri* there is a *tetembangan* that is read by the *Juru Kunci*. The *tetembangan* tells the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* conducted every year held at Parangkusumo Beach, Mount Merapi, and Yogyakarta Palace. *Labuhan* was intended to send "something" to the Merapi supporters. *Labuhan* is also intended to ask God for salvation and apologize for the sins committed in previous years and ask that the victims of mount Merapi eruption be forgiven and receive the blessing of glory in the Hereafter.



**Figure 1.** The Journey to *Timanganti*

Source: <http://www.menggapaiangkasa.com>



**Figure 2.** *Timanganti*

Source: <http://www.old.hifatlobrain.net>

The *Kenduri* is also accompanied by various items such as grilled chicken and *ulam sari*, *sego golong*, *jenang baro-baro*, *netonan*, *ameng-ameng* and *kembang setaman*. The procession continues tomorrow, starting at 06.00 WIB. Merapi's careather led a group of *abdi dalem* walking together to first stop or commonly called *Timanganti*. First stop is a place in the form of a *Punden Berundak*. All *ubo rampe* such as *kembang setaman*, umbrella, *Redi Merapi* box, fruits, and chicken are lowered, continued by burning the frankincense. In *Timanganti* there are several rituals that are essentially praying for welfare and peace, asking permission from the keeper of Merapi to continue the ceremony to the next stop, and pondering God for forgiveness.

After finishing the procession in *Timanganti*, then the group proceeded to *Bangsalsri Manganti* as the culmination of *Labuhan* ceremony series. The traditional ceremony of *Labuhan Merapi* began after the group of *Punokawan abdi dalem* from Yogyakarta Palace led by the careather of Mount Merapi reached *Bangsalsri Manganti*. Dozens of people brought *sesajen* in the form of *sego gurih* and side dishes such as boiled chicken meat. They also brought ten kinds of *ubo rampe* mentioned before.

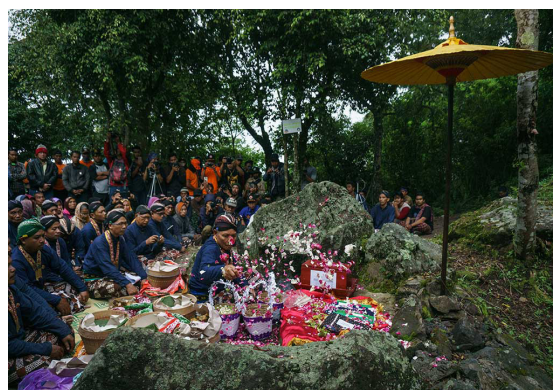
The traditional ceremony of *Labuhan Merapi* began by placing *sesajen* and *ubo rampe* on the stone of *Bangsalsri Manganti*. *Sesajen*, *kembang setaman*, and frankincense's cover is opened, as well as a box of *Redi Merapi* opened by two *abdi dalem* using screwdrivers. In the box there is a *ubo rampe* in the form of fabrics with different colors and names, fragrances, and a certain amount of money. One of the *abdi dalem* took and showed to the other *abdi dalem* and people who came, then mentioned the names of the *ubo rampe*. The names of *ubo rampe* are *Peningset Udaraga*, *Desthar Doro Muluk*, *Sinjang Poeleng Ciut*, *Semekan Bangun Tulak*, *Semekan Gadung Mlati*, *Semekan Gadung*, *Sinjang Kawung Kemplang*, *Sinjang Cangkring*, *Ses Wangen*, *Arto Tindeh* and *Kambil Watangan*. After the reading the names of *ubo rampe*, followed by a reading to whom *ubo rampe* was given and what

purpose *ubo rampe* was given. *Ubo rampe* was given to *Eyang Sapujagad*, *Eyang Empu Romo*, *Empu Rahmadi*, *Eyang Megantoro*, *Branjang Kawat*, *Nyai Gadung Mlati*, *Bromo Dedali*, *Panembahan Prabu Jagat*, *Fario Warli* and *Krincing Wesi*.



**Figure 3.** The Journey to *Bangsalsri Manganti*

Source: <http://www.travellingyuk.com>



**Figure 4.** *Bangsalsri Manganti*

Source: <http://www.old.hifatlobrain.net>

After the provisions of *ubo rampe* were mentioned one by one, the careather of Mount Merapi gave a foreword followed by a prayer asking for the salvation and happiness of life, followed by the reading of *Al Fatihah* continued by *Doa Sapu Jagad* that was recited in Arabic and Javanese. The ceremony continued by plant a cantil tree. While planting the tree, male and female *abdi dalem* prepare serve the *sego gurih* and chicken meat by dividing it into small plastic bags. The other man put *ubo rampe* back in the *Redi Merapi* box. The ceremony continued by provide offerings to the participants,

tourists, security members, and volunteers.

However, after the 2010 Merapi eruption, *Timanganti* and *Bangsai Sri Manganti* were damaged, so the procession began in Pelemsari Mosque, Plosokerep. In this place, *Kenduri* was led by the careather of Mount Merapi. Then the participants went to Kinahrejo Mosque to perform an evening musings and prayers. Next, the group will return to Plosokerep, where the troupe is entertained by *uyon uyon* art by the Umbulharjo village arts community, continues the prayer readings, *tahlil*, and *tirakat*. The Procession of *Labuhan* Merapi then proceeded to *Alas Bedengan* as the location of *Labuhan* Merapi. The initial to final procession of *Labuhan* Merapi is carried out in *Alas Bedengan*.

In the procession of *Labuhan* Merapi traditional ceremony, there are *sesajen* in the form of food that has a philosophical meaning. Chicken and *ulam sari* which are often called *ingkung* symbolize sincerity in carrying out the ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi and willingness to sacrifice both time and energy while carry out the ceremony. *Sego golong*, which is shaped like a ball, has the meaning of roundness and determination. *Jenang baro baro* is a rice porridge that is grated by coconut and brown sugar water (in javanese called *juruh*) is meant as a symbol of prosperity. *Netonan*, in the form of white and brown rice porridge symbolizes the success of the Indonesian nation, with a red and white flag. *Among among* symbolizes the various personal institutions that perform this customary ceremony, but can unite. Then, the flowers such as roses, jasmine, *kanthil*, and *kenanga* which means that what is offered is a good and fragrant offering so that it is expected to be received by God.

Basically, this *Labuhan* Merapi ceremony has local wisdom values that must be maintained and preserved. As for the local wisdom values that can be learned from the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi is one of the tangible manifestations of synergy between nature, humans, and plants in a cooperation with the aim of maintaining each other's safety. The planting of *kanthil* trees performed during the *Labuhan* Merapi ceremony is intended to keep people close to

nature. This traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi also teaches the importance of tolerance, please, help, do not discriminate against human degrees, sacrifice each other, and *gotong royong*. This is proven by the willingness of the participants in climbing the steep mountain, they remaintiped in participating in the traditional ceremony.

There are customary norms that must be adhered to by every citizen of Merapi in particular and the people of Yogyakarta in general. The norms include that there is a prohibition on picking, carrying, and damaging crops on the slopes of Mount Merapi and when it is violated, it will bring distress to the perpetrator. The enthusiasm of the people who participated in the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi to take the blessing in the form of *sego gurih kepelan* and *tetelan ingkung* is very high. They still assume that if they get these things, they will have the blessing of health, health, and peace.

According to Krisanto (2011:2), Merapi as part of the historically process has been able to form an adaptive disposition of its citizens. The traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi certainly affects the point of view of Yogyakarta people, especially the people of Merapi Mountain. The community believes by attending the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi aims to give blessings, so that his family is given peace, health, and abundant living. In addition, their goal is to get items in the form of *sego kepel* (a package containing rice and *ingkung* pieces) that is believed increase peace, abundant living, and health for their family. The community also believes that the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi will cause havoc for Yogyakarta and especially the people of Mount Merapi.

*Labuhan* Merapi as an annual traditional ceremony brings blessings to the local community of Yogyakarta. This ceremony is a form of maintaining harmony between human and nature. Nature is respected for its existence by maintaining its sustainability which in turn, nature can bring a positive impact to human. Visitors who come help drive the local economy in Yogyakarta. The

tourist attraction of this ceremony, especially Mount Merapi also scents the name of Yogyakarta as a city of tourism. On the other hand, as a component of the imaginary line of Yogyakarta which includes the South Sea, Yogyakarta Palace, and Mount Merapi, from time to time, proven that Merapi is an important part of Yogyakarta life.

### **Labuhan Merapi as Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts**

Natural disasters that constantly hit the earth are remembered and even recorded in some ancient Javanese inscriptions and manuscripts in later centuries by ancestors in the form of literary works or chronicles. In addition to these records, they remember them well and even such natural disaster are often associated with events that occur in the family or other important accident.

It is the human experience that give rise to a new habit or some kind of warning, in case the accident happens again, they are ready to overcome it. In today's terms, it is called disaster mitigation, which is human efforts to overcome similar disasters that can occur at any time, so that there are no many casualties. This will be very interesting when associated with traditions or customs related to the ceremony named *ruwatan*, which is essentially an attempt to synergize or harmonize the relationship between human and their surrounding environment. Humans are able to adapt to their surrounding environment. In adapting to the environment, there are acts of wisdom carried out by the community. The concept of local wisdom or local knowledge systems is a typical knowledge of a particular community or culture that has evolved over a long time as a result of the reciprocal process relations between the population and its environment. One of the cultural development is the creation of a natural resource management system. Their various traditions, traditional ceremonies, and daily actions have a deep meaning for their relationship with their environment (Nababan, 1995: 15).

In general, Indonesia, especially Java, is one of the most disaster-prone areas. Catastrophic events and experiences from

time to time are remembered by ancestors. Through these memories, if the symptoms of natural disasters will occur, they can first anticipate or move to other safer areas. Human efforts to anticipate disasters repeatedly, then bring up the system related to the nature of belief or religio containing elements of the upper world (creator of Nature, supernatural powers) and the underworld (humans) as inhabitants of the earth and all the flora that existed into a system called tradition (Purwadi, 2006: 367).

People's tradition everywhere, especially in Java and Bali, the careather of the mountains in Java and its surrounding communities can read the signs of nature such as: vertical-shaped clouds as a sign that there will be a major natural disaster; cloudy is very dark/ thick, while other clouds/ skies are clear as a sign of a storm. Meanwhile, signs of fauna and flora, such as animals descending mountains (bats, monkeys, tigers, snakes) as a sign of earthquake/ volcanic activity. It is also like a low-flying dragonfly as a sign of rain; chickens are still fore for food as a sign that there will be longlasting heavy rain. In addition, when there will occur a large scale of natural disaster, usually we can find the signs of rumbling in the sky or within the earth, also the soil temperature becomes warmer than usual.

Local wisdom in the form of tradition for disasters (mitigation) is proved useful in predicting natural disasters, so that the community can avoid the impact before the real disaster occurs. From the experience of Merapi eruptions that have occurred repeatedly, the people of Merapi generally have ecological knowledge and wisdom in predict and mitigate natural disasters. Local knowledge is derived from the many empirical experiences of human and ecosystem interactions (Wikantiyoso, 2010: 28). Merapi people not only observe the symptoms of mountain activity, but also include observation of flora and fauna around the mountain in the face of natural turmoil. Javanese people call the observation of this natural phenomenon by the term *Titen* which can interpreted as conscientious and remembering a phenomenon that affects life and

livelihood of society. Some things that are generally in concern include: objects, places, events, animal behaviors, repetitive events in nature, and human relationships (what to remember, where they are located, when they occur). According to Gunawan (2014: 92), *Titen* can be interpreted as a behavior that always pays attention to natural phenomena, the natural environment of Merapi, and the life of its people from time to time. Although the record of the *titen* results is not widely found in the community, there is a discursion mechanism about the results of *titen* through the family hereditary. One of the steps to grow the *Titen* phenomenon in the community is through the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi. The procedure and implementation of the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* Merapi suggests that all participants of that ceremony should go down directly to the ceremonial place. From that, of course, there will be interactions between humans and the environment that if the activity is carried out repeatedly, will become a habit. People will know Merapi environment as their environment. It will certainly be beneficial, humans will become aware when there is an unusual phenomenon that may lead to dangerous activities or eruptions of Mount Merapi.

From *Titen's* approach, at least, there are two important phenomena that are used as observations to determine the danger signs. First, the behavior of animals, namely the migration of animals (down from mountain). Animals will search the most comfortable place with the instincts they have. If the animal feels unsafe, it will look for other places that are more comfortable. Aspects that can interfere with the comfort of the animal include air temperature, weather, and noise. Animals will leave the mountains if there is a change in air temperature that tends to exceed the threshold for life (both hotter and colder). Animals will also leave if there is an unfamiliar noise such as the noise of logging in the forest (Gunawan et. al, 2007: 39). Second, the condition of the flora, the observable symptoms of the plant are withered leaves at the change of weather or perky plants that have begun to tilt as a rest-

raining of erosion or landslides. This information indicates that the public already knows about some signs of nature when there will be natural motion. *Titen* behavior has contributed greatly to the benefit of mankind, especially the community of Merapi. This shows that there has been some form of traditional intelligence in disaster mitigation. Traditional intelligence is a manageable asset in building a community-based disaster management system, especially at the disaster mitigation stage. Traditional intelligence is formed from the results of people's interaction with their physical environment over a long period of time. The formation of traditional intelligence allows people to know and read the signs of nature related to the eruption disaster.

Traditional intelligence is one of the important assets in the development of disaster management systems. Sartini (2004: 112) explains that traditional intelligence or local wisdom is formed from the cultural excellence of the community in a broad sense. Fidiyani and Kamal (2012: 426) point out that the emergence of local wisdom in a society initially occurs because human beings are adjusting to the geographical environment in which they live and other influences that interfere with the cultural stability of the place. This provides valuable capital for the development of effective disaster management. In relation to disaster repellent, Sartini (2004:113) explains there are several aspects in local wisdom namely conservation and preservation of natural resources, development of human resources, cultural development and science of knowledge, as well as admonition, belief, literature, and abstinence. Traditional beliefs based on Lavigne et. al (2008: 273) affects the community perception to disasters that further affect people's short-term behavior in the face of disasters.

From a scientific perspective, such traditional intelligence can be semiotic and descriptive. Analytical or natural semiotics is in the form of faunal, physical, and vegetal semiotics. Descriptive semiotics or cultural semiotics are embodied in the form of teachings or advice from previous generations re-

garding signs of catastrophic eruptions and their handling. Faunal semiotics are animal's behavior that are understood and informed hereditary in society. Physical semiotics in the form of signs of nature especially related to the weather and the condition of the landscape. Vegetal semiotics in the form of plant conditions, especially community agricultural crops that can be used as a mark for eruption disasters. Cultural semiotics are found in the form of advices that are often spoken with the addition of certain myths (Sunarto, 2011: 3).

The eruption of Mount Merapi in last 2010 is quite clear in the memory of most of the people living in disaster-prone areas. Based on the recognition of some residents, they even feel afraid of the sound of rumbling, even it is not sure the sound of the rumble is sourced from Mount Merapi or the other. The trauma of the past and the excessive fear make the citizens comply with the rules set by the government when there are instructions to evacuate. Supported by cultural semiotics that develop in the community, it supports disaster management programs launched by the government. Like it or not, an approach with these kinds of things is still needed to attract the hearts of the public. Whatever it is, while the main objectives in disaster risk reduction efforts can be achieved, it can be done and preserved to uphold ancestral values.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, there are several points that can be taken, first, local wisdom of Merapi community in the form of traditional ceremony *Labuhan*, *Ruwatan*, or other similar designations is basically a guide to mankind wherever it lives, in order to remember the environment and its reciprocal relationship between nature, humans, flora, and fauna that exist. Local wisdom has been able to adapt, investigate, overcome, and master nature. Ancestors through tradition have directed their next generation to preserve the environment, keeping the earth green with various forms of ceremony on an individual, group, regional, or even broader

scale.

Second, one of the local wisdom in Merapi is the *Labuhan* Traditional Ceremony. The traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* is a manifestation of high cultural value crystallized from empirical experiences, which is also a form of respect for nature. Through the traditional ceremony of *Labuhan* merapi in the context of tradition, humans are taught to live harmoniously between humans, nature, and all the flora-fauna that exists.

Third, in terms of disaster management, local wisdom can serve as one of the models that is ready to be implemented. In this context, Merapi society had a model that has manifested both in daily life behavior and incidentally at certain accident, including in the management of natural disasters. Its model of application to values, norms, and ethics of behaving for the sustainability of nature is constructed hereditary. Living harmony with nature is one of the evidence that society has thought visionary, nature exists not only today, but for the sake of the future.

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