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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural values and ecological awareness in Jember coastal oral traditions: A study of the Watu Ulo legend and Petik Laut Puger

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ABSTRACT
This study examines and compares cultural values embedded in two coastal oral traditions in Jember Regency: the Watu Ulo Legend and the *Petik Laut Puger* ritual. Grounded in cultural value theory and an ethnographic perspective, this study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach, collecting data through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analysis focused on religious, moral, social, ecological, and cultural identity values. Findings reveal that both traditions transmit interconnected cultural values through distinct mechanisms. The Watu Ulo Legend emphasizes courage, responsibility, wisdom, self-control, social harmony, and respect for nature through narrative representations and moral consequences. Conversely, *Petik Laut Puger* embodies religiosity, gratitude, solidarity, mutual cooperation, ancestral respect, ecological awareness, and cultural continuity through collective ritual practices. Comparatively, the legend functions as a narrative medium for moral reflection and ecological understanding, whereas the ritual reinforces communal identity, spiritual relationships, and intergenerational cultural transmission through participation. Both traditions reflect a shared coastal worldview that positions the sea as an interconnected economic, social, ecological, spiritual, and cultural space. The study's novelty lies in its comparative interpretation of narrative and ritual traditions as complementary mechanisms of cultural value transmission within a shared coastal landscape. These findings contribute to understanding cultural values as a relational system and provide a conceptual foundation for integrating local oral traditions into Indonesian language education to strengthen critical cultural literacy and ecological awareness.

Keywords: cultural values; oral tradition; Watu Ulo Legend; Petik Laut Puger; culture literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Oral tradition serves as a repository and medium for the transmission of cultural values, as it preserves the ways in which communities understand the relationships between humans and God, fellow human beings, nature, and their collective history. Finnegan (2012) emphasizes that oral tradition is not merely a form of verbal text but a living social practice embedded within the community. Within this framework, cultural values do not exist as a set of teachings detached from everyday life; rather, they are embodied and transmitted through narratives, symbols, rituals, prohibitions, prayers, and collective practices.

Cultural values embedded in oral traditions are important to examine because they constitute an integral part of local knowledge transmitted across generations. In the context of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO (2022) also recognizes oral traditions and social practices as forms of cultural expression that represent community identity and require continuous transmission and revitalization to ensure their sustainability.

Coastal communities develop systems of cultural values shaped by their close relationship with the sea. The sea provides a primary source of livelihood while simultaneously presenting risks, uncertainties, and natural forces that require caution and adaptability. Consequently, religiosity, solidarity, mutual cooperation, respect for nature, and community identity tend to occupy significant positions within coastal cultures. These values are preserved and transmitted through both oral narratives and ritual practices, enabling communities to maintain their collective knowledge and cultural orientations across generations.

This study focuses on the Legend of the Origin of Watu Ulo Beach and the ritual oral tradition of *Petik Laut Puger*. Based on the research findings, the Watu Ulo Legend represents a narrative form of oral tradition, whereas *Petik Laut Puger* represents a performative-ritual form. Despite their different forms and modes of expression, both traditions have developed within the same coastal cultural landscape of Jember Regency and similarly position the sea as a central element in community life. The coexistence of narrative and performative-ritual traditions within the same cultural landscape provides an important basis for examining how cultural values are articulated through different forms of oral tradition.

Comparing narrative and ritual oral traditions within the same coastal cultural landscape is essential for understanding how cultural values are constructed, expressed, and transmitted through different forms of cultural communication. Although both

traditions emerge from communities whose livelihoods, collective memories, and cultural orientations are closely associated with the sea, they employ different mechanisms of meaning-making. Narrative traditions primarily communicate cultural values through storytelling, characterization, symbolic representations, and the consequences of human actions, whereas ritual traditions embody cultural values through ceremonial expressions, collective participation, symbolic practices, and repeated social interactions. As Finnegan (2012) emphasizes, oral traditions should be understood not merely as verbal compositions but also as culturally situated practices.

The selection of the Watu Ulo Legend and Petik Laut Puger provides a particularly relevant comparative framework because both traditions belong to the coastal cultural landscape of Jember Regency while representing distinct modes of cultural expression. Their shared geographical and sociocultural context enables the study to identify common cultural orientations associated with marine environments without overlooking differences in how these orientations are articulated. The Watu Ulo Legend represents cultural knowledge through narratives of human conduct, moral consequences, and relationships with natural forces. Conversely, Petik Laut Puger expresses cultural knowledge through prayers, gratitude, mutual cooperation, collective ceremonies, and the maintenance of inherited practices. Comparing these traditions therefore allows the analysis to move beyond the identification of individual cultural values toward an examination of the relationship between cultural forms, modes of transmission, and the social functions of values.

Furthermore, this comparison is significant because coastal cultural identity cannot be adequately understood through either narrative representation or ritual performance alone. Narratives preserve collective interpretations of places, historical memory, and ethical principles, while rituals provide recurring opportunities for communities to enact, negotiate, and reproduce these principles through social participation. The comparative examination of both traditions thus provides a more comprehensive understanding of the sea as an interconnected ecological, economic, social, spiritual, and symbolic space.

Previous research on Watu Ulo has identified elements of character education and social values embedded in its folklore (Lestari & Rahmat, 2022). Meanwhile, studies on *Petik Laut Puger* have revealed dimensions of gratitude, safety, solidarity, and the relationships between fishing communities, tradition, and belief systems (Juliana et al., 2023; Siswahani & Artono, 2021). These studies have provided important insights into the cultural significance of each tradition. However, comparative research specifically

examining the configuration of cultural values across narrative and performative oral traditions situated within the same coastal cultural landscape remains limited. Such a comparative perspective is necessary to understand not only the distinctive values represented in each tradition but also the shared cultural worldview underlying them.

Earlier work by Purnani (2018) specifically examined cultural values in didactic oral folklore from Jember, including the Watu Ulo origin narrative, and identified personal, religious, and social values as prominent dimensions. This earlier study established an important basis for understanding Watu Ulo as a carrier of cultural values, but its emphasis remained on identifying and classifying values within folklore texts.

The examination of cultural values is also relevant to education, particularly to the development of cultural literacy. Oral traditions can serve as meaningful cultural literacy resources when students are encouraged not merely to recognize their forms but also to understand the values, contexts, and worldviews of the communities to which they belong. Bitu and Rahardi (2020) demonstrate that the preservation of local wisdom values in oral traditions can be integrated into educational contexts, while Hadi et al. (2025) position oral traditions as valuable resources for strengthening linguistic and cultural literacy.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to explore and interpret the cultural values embedded in the oral traditions of coastal communities in Jember Regency. A qualitative approach was selected because the study was not intended to quantitatively measure the frequency of cultural values, but rather to understand the meanings, worldviews, local knowledge, and value systems represented through community narratives and cultural practices. An ethnographic design was employed because cultural values embedded in oral traditions cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts of the communities that sustain them. Oral tradition was therefore understood not merely as a text or orally transmitted narrative, but as a living cultural practice that is maintained, interpreted, transmitted, and collectively performed within the community.

The objects of the study comprised two forms of oral tradition that have developed within the coastal cultural landscape of Jember Regency: the Legend of the Origin of Watu Ulo Beach and the *Petik Laut Puger* ritual oral tradition. The Watu Ulo Legend was positioned as a narrative form of oral tradition, whereas *Petik Laut Puger* was regarded as a performative-ritual form of oral tradition. These two traditions were selected because

both have developed within the coastal communities of Jember Regency and share a strong relationship with the sea, yet articulate cultural experiences and values through different modes of expression. These differences provided an important basis for comparatively examining how cultural values are represented through orally transmitted narratives and collectively performed ritual practices.

The study was conducted in the coastal areas of Jember Regency, particularly around Watu Ulo Beach in Ambulu District and within the fishing communities of Puger. These locations were selected because of their direct relationship with the existence and continuity of the two traditions under investigation.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data also included interview accounts concerning community understandings of the values transmitted through these traditions. Secondary data consisted of cultural documentation, field notes, photographs, audiovisual recordings, documents related to traditional practices, and scholarly literature relevant to oral tradition, coastal culture, Watu Ulo, and Petik Laut Puger. Secondary data were used to strengthen contextual understanding, compare information across sources, and support the interpretation of primary data.

Primary data were obtained from informants selected through purposive sampling. Informants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, involvement, and proximity to the traditions under investigation. They included tradition bearers and storytellers, community leaders, cultural practitioners, individuals involved in the organization and performance of *Petik Laut*, and members of fishing communities who possessed knowledge of or participated in these traditions. Informant selection was not based solely on social status but primarily on the ability of individuals to provide relevant information concerning the history, implementation, meanings, functions, and cultural values of the traditions. Data collection continued until the information obtained was sufficient to explain the categories of cultural values that constituted the focus of the study.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was employed to examine the sociocultural context of the communities, patterns of social interaction, the use of cultural symbols, and collective practices associated with the traditions. In *Petik Laut Puger*, observations focused on the sequence of ritual activities, community participation, forms of cooperation, ritual symbols and objects, prayers and oral expressions accompanying the ritual, and the relationship between the community and the marine environment. In the case of the Watu Ulo Legend, data collection focused on narrative variants known within the community,

modes of storytelling, narrative elements considered significant by community members, and community interpretations of the meanings embedded in the legend.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to provide a consistent framework of inquiry while allowing informants sufficient space to elaborate on their cultural knowledge and experiences. Documentation complemented observational and interview data through field notes, photographs, audio or audiovisual recordings, and other relevant documents. These three data collection techniques were employed complementarily so that the interpretation of cultural values did not rely on a single type of data source.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which comprises three major components: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data analysis was conducted interactively throughout the data collection process. During data condensation, interview transcripts, observational notes, traditional narratives, and documentation were selected according to their relevance to the research focus. Data indicating representations of cultural values were subsequently coded and grouped according to similarities in meaning. The coding process considered not only informants' explicit statements but also the contexts in which particular expressions occurred, ritual actions, cultural symbols, and the relationships among these elements.

The coded data were subsequently organized into five analytical categories: religious values, social values, moral values, ecological values, and cultural identity and preservation values. Religious values were identified through data reflecting gratitude, prayer, appeals for safety, recognition of divine power, and spiritual interpretations of life. Social values were identified through solidarity, togetherness, mutual cooperation, participation, and interpersonal relationships within the community. Moral values referred to behavioral norms, responsibility, prudence, respect, prohibitions, and the consequences of human actions. Ecological values were examined through community perspectives and practices related to respecting, utilizing, and protecting the sea and coastal environment. Cultural identity and preservation values were identified through a sense of belonging to tradition, intergenerational transmission, youth participation, the maintenance of cultural symbols, and the continuity of traditional practices.

Data credibility was ensured through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from tradition bearers, community leaders, cultural practitioners, and members of fishing communities.

Methodological triangulation was undertaken by comparing interview findings with observational and documentary data. When differences or inconsistencies emerged, the data were not immediately standardized or treated as errors; instead, they were re-examined by considering the context, the informants' positions and experiences, and the available supporting evidence. This procedure was particularly important because variations in oral accounts are a common characteristic of oral traditions and may themselves reflect the dynamics of cultural transmission and interpretation within the community.

At the final stage, conclusions were drawn by identifying consistent patterns within each category of cultural values and examining the relationships among these categories. The findings were subsequently interpreted through perspectives on oral tradition and discussed in dialogue with relevant previous studies. Finally, the identified configuration of cultural values was examined in terms of its relevance as a resource for developing cultural literacy in Indonesian language education. Through this procedure, the analysis systematically progressed from empirical data, coding, and value categorization to intertradition comparison, cultural interpretation, and the formulation of educational implications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Values as a Relational System in Coastal Communities

The findings demonstrate that the cultural values embedded in the Watu Ulo Legend and the *Petik Laut Puger* ritual oral tradition do not operate as isolated elements. Religious, social, moral, ecological, and identity-related values are closely intertwined, as they emerge from the communities' experiences of interacting with the sea. The research findings indicate that the sea is perceived not merely as a geographical landscape but simultaneously as a natural, economic, social, spiritual, and cultural space. This conceptualization is analytically significant because it explains how a single cultural practice can simultaneously embody gratitude, solidarity, ecological awareness, and the affirmation of cultural identity.

These findings suggest a shift from a categorical toward a relational understanding of cultural values. Gratitude, for instance, should not be understood solely as a religious value. Similarly, gotong royong (mutual cooperation) is not merely a social value; it also functions as a mechanism through which rituals are prepared, performed, sustained, and transmitted across generations.

This relational interpretation is consistent with the study by Ramli et al. (2024) on the internalization of smong local wisdom through oral tradition in Simeulue. Their study demonstrates that oral traditions can preserve local knowledge and transform it into collective memory transmitted across generations. Similarly, Ilhami et al. (2025) found that the Bau Nyale tradition encompasses sacredness, solidarity, sacrifice, justice, and the transmission of cultural values through habituation and ancestral authority.

The Watu Ulo Legend: Morality, Cosmology, Ecology, and Spatial Identity

In the Watu Ulo Legend, moral values are represented through the relationship between the characters' actions and their consequences. The research findings identify courage, responsibility, wisdom, self-control, adherence to norms, and awareness of the consequences of one's actions. Analytically, these six values can be grouped into two orientations. The first is an agentic orientation, encompassing courage and responsibility, which positions individuals as subjects who are required to make decisions and take responsibility for their actions. The second is an orientation toward self-restraint, encompassing wisdom, self-control, adherence to norms, and awareness of consequences. The combination of these two orientations suggests that, within the cultural worldview represented by the legend, courage is not synonymous with unrestricted action; rather, it gains legitimacy when accompanied by the capacity for self-restraint.

These moral values are closely related to religious and cosmological values. The research findings position nature as part of an order that extends beyond human existence. Consequently, humans do not occupy an absolute or dominant position in relation to nature. Respect and caution emerge from an acknowledgment of these limitations.

The relationship between cosmology and ethics further generates ecological values. The sea is not merely the setting in which the narrative unfolds but also a powerful natural force that establishes boundaries for human action. This finding resonates with Yenrizal et al. (2024), who demonstrate that the Uluan oral tradition conveys environmental messages through symbols and social interactions, as well as with Nopriyasman et al. (2024), who show how local knowledge of natural signs provides a framework for interpreting environmental risks.



Figure 1. Photo of a rock formation shaped like a snake



Figure 2. Photo of a rock formation shaped like a snake

Social values in the Watu Ulo Legend are reflected in respect, solidarity, responsibility, adherence to norms, and concern for the common good. However, one of its most distinctive social dimensions lies in the status of the narrative as a form of collective cultural heritage. Although the story may be narrated by individuals, the authority of its meaning is shaped by community recognition and acceptance. Storytelling, therefore, constitutes a social practice that connects narrators, audiences, geographical space, and collective memory.

It is through these interconnections that cultural identity is constructed. Watu Ulo is not merely a place name; it functions as a point of convergence between natural formations, origin narratives, collective memory, and the community's sense of belonging to the coastal landscape. Rahmah and Wulandari (2024) identify a similar pattern in Onggoloco folklore, demonstrating that folklore can represent systems of knowledge, livelihoods, religious beliefs, and other cultural elements that contribute to the formation

of community identity. Precillia (2024) likewise emphasizes the role of folklore in sustaining cultural identity through the intergenerational transmission of local values.

Petik Laut Puger: Religiosity as a Framework for Understanding the Lives of Fishing Communities

In *Petik Laut Puger*, religious values constitute the central axis around which other cultural values are organized. The research findings reveal the presence of prayers, expressions of gratitude, supplications for safety and sustenance, ceremonial utterances, advice, and collective expressions. The orientation toward God as the source of safety and sustenance demonstrates that fishing is not understood merely as an economic activity. Weather conditions, waves, and the uncertainty of fishing yields expose fishing communities to circumstances that cannot be entirely controlled through technical skills alone. Religiosity, therefore, functions as a framework through which uncertainty is interpreted and given meaning. Supplications for safety reflect not only spiritual belief but also a realistic awareness of occupational risks, while prayers for sustenance connect the spiritual dimension with the economic needs of fishing households. Juliana et al. (2023), in their study of *Petik Laut Puger*, similarly found that the ritual is performed as an expression of gratitude, hope for abundant catches, and prayers for safety. Winanti et al. (2023) further demonstrate that *Petik Laut* has become a symbol of Puger community identity shaped through shared beliefs and social relationships.

> This interpretation is grounded in the interview data. Tauhid, a Puger fisherman, explained: "Doanya ya nyuwun keselamatan, ben para nelayan yang melaut diberi keselamatan, dijauhkan dari bahaya, terus diberi rezeki" [the prayer asks for safety, so that fishermen at sea are protected from danger and granted sustenance] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026). His statement places prayer directly within the lived uncertainty of fishing and links religiosity with occupational safety and livelihood.

The research data also reveal a process of religious reinterpretation. Expressions of gratitude, prayers for safety, and respect for predecessors are situated within a religious framework that remains acceptable to contemporary communities. This indicates that the continuity of tradition does not necessarily entail preserving all earlier interpretations unchanged. Rather, traditions can remain culturally relevant because communities continuously renegotiate their meanings. Jonorman et al. (2025), in their study of *Petik Laut* in Payangan, Jember, identified an integration of cultural and religious elements that simultaneously sustains community identity and social cohesion. In another coastal context in Jember, a study of *Petik Laut Paseban* similarly demonstrates the incorporation of Islamic elements into local cultural practices (Hamdanah, 2025).

> The interview record also shows that religious practice is not uniform or dependent on a single ritual formula. Tauhid stated, "Kalau doa khusus nggak ada. Masing-masing ya berdoa sesuai keyakinannya. Ya pokoknya nyuwun selamet, nyuwun dilancarkan" [there is no special prayer; each person prays according to their belief, essentially asking for safety and ease] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026). This evidence indicates that the religious meaning of the tradition is maintained through shared orientations—safety, protection, and sustenance—even when the verbal form of prayer varies.

This analysis is important for avoiding an oversimplified understanding of *Petik Laut* as a static "traditional" ritual. Changes in interpretation instead demonstrate the agency of community members in selecting, adapting, and maintaining elements they consider relevant to contemporary life. Siswahani and Artono (2021) documented changes and innovations in the *Petik Laut Puger Kulon* procession, further illustrating the dynamic character of the tradition. Religious values, therefore, can be understood not merely as components contained within the ritual but as a cultural framework through which communities negotiate the continuity of tradition in relation to contemporary religious beliefs.

Gotong Royong and Solidarity: Cultural Values Embodied in Practice

The value of *gotong royong* in *Petik Laut* differs from cultural values that are merely articulated through oral expressions. It can be directly observed in the division of responsibilities involved in preparing ritual equipment, food and refreshments, security arrangements, artistic performances, processional activities, and other collective needs. Therefore, *gotong royong* constitutes a cultural value that is simultaneously manifested as a social practice. Its presence can be verified through collective action rather than solely through normative statements.

> Community participation is also visible in the interview data. Tauhid stated, "Masyarakat ikut semua, Mbak. Biasanya dari desa juga ikut memfasilitasi dan memeriahkan. Ada lomba-lomba, bazar, pertunjukan wayang, terus ada kirab budaya juga" [the whole community participates; the village also facilitates and enlivens the event through competitions, bazaars, wayang performances, and cultural processions] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026). Suliman likewise stressed that Petik Laut is "kegiatan masyarakat sini" and that participation is not limited to fishermen (Suliman, fish-transport worker, interview, 26 August 2026). These statements provide empirical support for interpreting solidarity as enacted collective participation.

Within coastal communities, *gotong royong* possesses a strong social rationale. Fishing is carried out in a high-risk environment and depends considerably on social networks and collective support. Solidarity thus becomes a form of community capital for coping with uncertainty, while ritual provides a recurring social space in which these relationships can be renewed and strengthened. Juliana et al. (2023) specifically identify solidarity as an important dimension of *Petik Laut Puger*. Research on the *Nyungkem Mattowah* tradition among Madurese communities similarly demonstrates that traditional

practices can sustain respect and intergenerational relationships through continuously repeated social practices (Aj et al., 2025).



Figure 3. The manifestation of mutual cooperation in Petik Laut Puger

These findings therefore shift the understanding of *gotong royong* from a cultural slogan to a mechanism of community reproduction. Without collective labor, a community-scale ritual would be difficult to sustain; conversely, the recurrence of the ritual creates opportunities for community members to continually reenact and reinforce collective practices. The relationship between cultural values and ritual practice is thus reciprocal: cultural values enable the tradition to persist, while the tradition provides a social arena in which those values are reproduced and transmitted across generations.

Respect for Predecessors and the Value of Cultural Continuity in *Petik Laut Puger*

Respect for predecessors constitutes one of the cultural values identified in the Petik Laut Puger data. This value is reflected in community narratives that associate the performance of Petik Laut with practices inherited from previous generations. Informants described the tradition not as a practice that emerged only within contemporary community life, but as part of the cultural heritage of fishing communities that has been transmitted across generations.

> The intergenerational character of the tradition is directly confirmed by informants. Tauhid explained, “Ya karena sudah dadi tradisi dari dulu ... supaya tradisinya tetap ada dan nggak hilang” [because it has been a tradition since long ago ... so that the tradition continues to exist and does not disappear] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026). This statement shows that continuity is consciously understood by community members as a reason for maintaining Petik Laut, not merely as an analytical category imposed by the researcher.

The research data further indicate that such respect should not necessarily be interpreted as a form of ancestor worship or veneration. In the context of Petik Laut Puger, respect for predecessors is more appropriately understood as an acknowledgment of the role played by previous generations in shaping the traditions and cultural life of fishing communities. This distinction becomes particularly evident when respect for inherited traditions coexists with prayers, expressions of gratitude, and supplications for safety and sustenance addressed to God. This distinction is important for understanding the configuration of religious and cultural values in Petik Laut Puger in a more contextually appropriate manner.

From this perspective, respect for predecessors can be interpreted as a form of historical consciousness among Puger fishing communities. Community members recognize that the cultural practices they perform today are part of a longer historical process within coastal community life. When older and younger generations participate together in Petik Laut, the ritual becomes an intergenerational social space as well as a medium for the continuity of cultural knowledge.

These findings also demonstrate that respect for predecessors is closely related to the value of cultural preservation. The continued performance of *Petik Laut Puger* indicates that the community continues to provide cultural space for inherited traditions within contemporary social life. However, preservation does not mean that every element of the tradition must be maintained in a form identical to that of the past. The *Petik Laut* data instead reveal processes of adaptation and reinterpretation. Prayers, expressions of gratitude, supplications for safety, respect for predecessors, and various forms of communal participation are repositioned within frameworks of meaning that remain acceptable to contemporary communities. The continuity of *Petik Laut* is therefore more appropriately understood as a process of selective and dynamic cultural reproduction rather than as the complete replication of past practices.

This dynamic is also evident in the way the community maintains the substantive values of the tradition despite changes in its forms of performance. Elements related to gratitude, safety, togetherness, *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), respect for community history, and fishing-community identity continue to occupy important positions even when particular forms of ritual expression undergo adjustment. Siswahani and Artono (2021), for example, documented changes and innovations in the *Petik Laut Puger Kulon* procession. Their findings support the interpretation that *Petik Laut* is not a static tradition. Changes in form do not necessarily indicate the disappearance or weakening of

cultural values; instead, such changes may function as mechanisms through which communities maintain values they consider significant within evolving social and religious contexts.

In this regard, the Puger community should not be positioned merely as a passive recipient of traditions inherited from previous generations. Community members act as active agents in the process of cultural continuity. They determine which elements of the tradition should be maintained, reinterpret particular elements, and adapt their performance to contemporary social conditions. This process demonstrates an ongoing negotiation between respect for inherited cultural heritage and the need to maintain the social and religious acceptability of the tradition. Respect for predecessors therefore acquires meaning through the community's capacity to maintain cultural continuity without freezing the tradition in its historical forms.

Akhiroh et al. (2025) identified a comparable pattern among the Jalawastu community, where cultural identity is maintained through the practice and transmission of oral traditions while the community simultaneously responds to social change. Similarly, Parinduri et al. (2024), in their study of the *Markobar* tradition, demonstrate that oral tradition functions as a medium for preserving local wisdom while also regulating social relationships. In the context of *Petik Laut Puger*, the findings of the present study further demonstrate that cultural continuity operates through the interrelationship between memory, practice, and transmission. The community remembers the tradition as a legacy of previous generations, actualizes it through ritual performance, and transmits it through intergenerational social participation.

Respect for predecessors in Petik Laut Puger can therefore be understood as a commitment to the historical and cultural continuity of the fishing community, rather than as an obligation to preserve every form of past practice without modification. This value is manifested through the continued performance of the ritual, collective community participation, the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, and the community's capacity to reinterpret tradition in response to contemporary circumstances. Petik Laut Puger thus functions as a cultural space that brings together the heritage of previous generations, the social practices of the present generation, and the transmission of cultural knowledge to future generations.

Ecological Values: The Sea as a Subject of Cultural Relations

Ecological values constitute the strongest point of convergence between the Watu Ulo Legend and *Petik Laut*. In the legend, nature is represented as a powerful force that demands respect and caution. In *Petik Laut*, ecological values emerge from the recognition that the economic and social sustainability of coastal communities depends on the sustainability of the marine environment. Both forms of oral tradition therefore challenge a rigid separation between culture and the environment.

> The ecological dimension is particularly clear in fishermen's practical knowledge of marine risk. Tauhid stated, "Kalau pantangan khusus sebenarnya nggak ada. Lebih ke pantangan dari alam. Misalnya cuaca tidak menentu, ombak besar, angin kencang, ya jangan dipaksakan" [there are no special taboos; the restrictions come more from nature—unstable weather, large waves, and strong winds should not be forced against] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026). He further described the sea as something that "harus dihormati" [must be respected] because its conditions cannot be predicted. Samsul's account reinforces this observation: Puger faces the open southern sea, where waves become higher when winds intensify, requiring fishermen to remain cautious (Samsul, former fisherman/fish collector, interview, 26 August 2026).

Analytically, the ecological values identified in this study can be distinguished into three interrelated dimensions. First, the value of respect refers to the recognition that the sea possesses forces and boundaries that must be taken into consideration. Second, the value of dependence reflects an awareness that the economic life and livelihoods of coastal communities are fundamentally dependent on marine ecosystems. Third, the value of responsibility represents the ethical implication that the natural resources sustaining community life must be protected and managed in ways that ensure their long-term sustainability.

Asyifa' et al. (2025) identified an integration of community identity, social justice, economic dimensions, and ecological balance within Petik Laut traditions along the southern coast of Jember. In other contexts of oral tradition, Yenrizal et al. (2024) demonstrate that pantun can preserve and transmit environmental wisdom, while research on Hadih Maja reveals the interconnectedness between oral tradition, conservation practices, and sustainability agendas (Syahputera et al., 2024). These comparative findings strengthen the argument that ecological values in oral traditions are not merely supplementary themes.

Identity and Cultural Preservation: Tradition as Negotiated Memory

Cultural identity operates through different mechanisms in the two traditions. The Watu Ulo Legend constructs identity through narrative and place, as the community connects place names, landscapes, and collective memory. *Petik Laut*, by contrast, constructs identity through participation, as community members experience and

reinforce a sense of togetherness through the preparation and performance of the ritual. In other words, Watu Ulo tends to generate a narrative identity, whereas *Petik Laut* produces a performative identity.

> For Puger residents, the ritual is also experienced as a recurring community marker. Suliman stated that Petik Laut "masih" dilakukan setiap year and that "masyarakat juga ikut ... kan sudah jadi kegiatan masyarakat sini" [the community also participates ... because it has become an activity of the local community] (Suliman, fish-transport worker, interview, 26 August 2026). Tauhid similarly linked collective gathering with preservation, explaining that Petik Laut enables "masyarakat bisa kumpul bareng, tidak hanya nelayan saja" [the community to gather together, not only fishermen] while ensuring that the tradition "nggak hilang" [does not disappear] (Tauhid, fisherman, interview, 24 August 2026).

Winanti et al. (2023) found that *Petik Laut* functions as a symbol of identity for the Puger community. Precillia (2024) demonstrates that folklore contributes to the maintenance of cultural identity through documentation and the transmission of cultural values, while Senduk et al. (2025) show that oral traditions can function as repositories of collective memory and moral values. These studies support the findings of the present research, indicating that identity is not an attribute automatically or permanently attached to a tradition. Rather, it is continuously produced and reproduced through storytelling, participation, repetition, and processes of cultural meaning-making.

The relationship among oral narrative, performance, and cultural identity has likewise been observed by Purnani and Azizah (2025) in the context of Reog Ponorogo, where oral tradition and performance operate collaboratively in sustaining cultural heritage and community identity amid modernization. The present findings reveal a comparable but contextually distinct mechanism in Jember's coastal communities: Watu Ulo constructs identity primarily through narrative and spatial memory, whereas Petik Laut Puger reproduces identity through collective ritual participation.

Cultural preservation should therefore be directed toward sustaining the broader ecosystem of meaning in which these traditions exist. Textual documentation is important, but it is insufficient on its own. In the case of Watu Ulo, preservation efforts should maintain narrative variations, connections between the narratives and their geographical setting, and the voices of tradition bearers. For Petik Laut, documentation should encompass oral expressions, cultural practitioners, sequences of ritual activities, symbolic elements, and the community's reasons for maintaining, reinterpreting, or modifying particular aspects of the tradition.

Values	Watu Ulo	Petik Laut Puger	Analytical Meaning
Religious/ Cosmological	Human limitations within the natural order	Prayers, gratitude, safety, and sustenance	A framework for interpreting uncertainty and the human position within the broader order of

			life
Moral	Courage, responsibility, wisdom, and self-control	Collective responsibility	Human agency is bounded by norms and the consequences of actions
Social	Solidarity, respect, and concern for the common good	*Gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), togetherness, and solidarity	Values are reproduced through collective belonging and collective action
Ecological	Respect and caution toward the forces of nature	Dependence, ecological balance, and the sustainability of the marine environment	The sea is positioned as part of a broader system of life rather than merely as an economic resource
Identity	Spatial memory and origin narratives	Ritual participation and fishing-community identity	Identity is constructed through narrative and performative processes
Cultural Preservation	Intergenerational transmission of narratives	Reproduction and negotiation of ritual practices	The continuity of substantive cultural values can coexist with changes in the forms of tradition

Table 1. Analytical Matrix of Cultural Values in Two Coastal Oral Traditions of Jember

Comparative Interpretation: Shared Cultural Values and Distinctive Mechanisms of Cultural Transmission

The comparative analysis reveals that the Watu Ulo Legend and Petik Laut Puger share fundamental cultural orientations despite their different forms of expression. Both traditions acknowledge the significance of the sea in shaping coastal community life, emphasize the limitations of human control over natural forces, and contribute to the transmission of collective cultural knowledge. These similarities suggest that religious, moral, social, ecological, and identity-related values are not isolated cultural attributes but interconnected orientations shaped by communities' historical and continuing relationships with their coastal environment.

Nevertheless, the two traditions demonstrate distinctive mechanisms through which these values are communicated and reproduced. In the Watu Ulo Legend, cultural values are primarily represented through narrative structures, characters' actions, moral consequences, and symbolic interpretations of the coastal landscape. Courage, responsibility, wisdom, and self-control acquire meaning through the relationship between human decisions and their consequences. Ecological awareness is similarly constructed through representations of nature as a powerful force that demands caution and respect. The legend therefore functions as a narrative mechanism for ethical reflection, ecological interpretation, and the preservation of spatial memory.

In contrast, Petik Laut Puger communicates cultural values through collective practices that enable community members to experience and reproduce cultural meanings

directly. Religious values are expressed through prayers, gratitude, and supplications for safety, while social values are enacted through cooperation, collective preparation, and ritual participation. The ecological dimension is reflected in fishermen's recognition of natural uncertainty and their dependence on marine conditions. Unlike the legend, which primarily represents values through storytelling, Petik Laut provides a recurring social setting in which cultural values become observable through communal action.

A particularly important comparative finding concerns the relationship between cultural identity and modes of transmission. The Watu Ulo Legend constructs identity predominantly through narrative and spatial memory by connecting the coastal landscape with inherited stories and collective interpretations. Petik Laut Puger, meanwhile, reproduces cultural identity through performative participation, in which community members reaffirm their belonging through shared activities and the continuation of inherited practices. These differences indicate that cultural identity can be sustained through both remembered narratives and repeated collective experiences.

The comparative approach also demonstrates that the same cultural value may perform different functions depending on its mode of expression. Respect for nature, for example, operates as an ethical and cosmological orientation in the Watu Ulo Legend, whereas in Petik Laut it is closely associated with practical awareness of marine risks and livelihood dependence. Similarly, collective responsibility appears as a normative principle in narrative representations but becomes an enacted social obligation through ritual cooperation.

The contribution of this comparative interpretation lies in demonstrating that narrative and ritual oral traditions function as complementary mechanisms of cultural knowledge transmission. Narrative traditions preserve and communicate cultural meanings through representation and collective memory, whereas ritual traditions reinforce and negotiate these meanings through participation and repeated social practice. Their convergence reveals a shared coastal worldview, while their differences demonstrate the multiple ways in which cultural values are constructed, maintained, and transformed within coastal communities.

Implications for Cultural Literacy in Indonesian Language Education

The configuration of cultural values identified in this study is relevant to Indonesian language education because oral traditions provide learning resources that connect texts with their social and cultural contexts. However, their pedagogical use should not be

limited to activities that merely require students to identify "moral messages." Students should instead be encouraged to examine how cultural values are produced and constructed: who articulates them, in what contexts they are expressed, through which symbols they are communicated, and how these values are transformed as traditions respond to social change.

Setyawati et al. (2026) demonstrate that the *Bedandeng* oral tradition can be utilized as a resource for Indonesian language education based on local wisdom through its literary forms and cultural values. Ilhami et al. (2025) further show that the transmission of values within oral traditions occurs through habituation and the reinforcement of cultural authority. Based on the findings of the present study, the Watu Ulo Legend can be utilized for learning activities related to narrative texts, value interpretation, and ecological literacy. Meanwhile, *Petik Laut* can serve as a resource for analyzing speech contexts, descriptive and explanatory texts, cultural documentation, and critical reflection on the relationships among language, identity, and the environment.

This pedagogical orientation is also consistent with Purnani et al. (2026), who emphasize the potential of oral-tradition-based literacy in Indonesian language and literature education for connecting cultural knowledge, character formation, critical reasoning, mutual cooperation, and engagement with local cultural resources. The present findings extend this educational perspective by suggesting that oral traditions should not merely be introduced as local cultural content, but can be used to develop critical cultural literacy through interpretation of the relationships among language, cultural values, ecological awareness, identity, and community practices.

The primary implication of this study is therefore not simply that local traditions are "appropriate for use as teaching materials," but that educational materials should preserve the complexity and relational character of the cultural values they contain. Gratitude should be examined in relation to economic and ecological dimensions; *gotong royong* in relation to mechanisms of community participation; identity in relation to cultural change; and preservation in relation to the community's agency and right to reinterpret its own traditions. Through such an approach, cultural literacy can develop beyond factual knowledge toward the ability to critically understand the relationships through which culture is constructed, practiced, negotiated, and sustained.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Watu Ulo Legend and the Petik Laut Puger ritual oral tradition represent two distinct mechanisms through which cultural values are articulated and transmitted within the coastal communities of Jember Regency. The main contribution of this study lies in shifting the understanding of cultural values in oral traditions from an inventory of discrete values toward a conceptualization of cultural values as a relational system. Religious, moral, social, ecological, identity-related, and preservation values do not operate independently; rather, they are interconnected through the community's relationships with God, fellow human beings, the sea, collective memory, and community history. Within this framework, gratitude is not merely a religious value but is also connected to the coastal economy, social solidarity, and ecological awareness. Similarly, *gotong royong* is not simply a social value but functions as a mechanism through which traditions are reproduced and transmitted across generations. The comparison of these two traditions therefore demonstrates that oral tradition constitutes a system of local knowledge that connects values, practices, place, and memory through narrative and performative mechanisms.

Pedagogically, these findings provide a foundation for developing critical cultural literacy in Indonesian language education. Oral traditions should not be used merely as teaching materials for identifying moral messages; rather, they can serve as learning resources through which students examine how cultural values are constructed, practiced, negotiated, and transmitted. The contribution of this study therefore extends beyond enriching knowledge of the cultural values of Jember's coastal communities by offering a conceptual framework that connects oral tradition, relational systems of cultural values, and cultural literacy. Interpretation remains grounded in community perspectives.

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DECLARATIONS

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that the generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool OpenAI ChatGPT was used exclusively for language editing and/or grammatical improvement. The use of AI did not influence the scientific content, study design, data analysis, data interpretation, results, or conclusions of the manuscript. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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