



The construction of death rituals: A phenomenological study of the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung

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INFO ARTICLE

Article history:

Received Jun 1, 2026

Revised Jun 18, 2026

Received on Jul 22, 2026

Keywords:

Balinese Buddha
Construction-Related Deaths
Ritual Community

ABSTRACT

Death ritual in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung is practice religious that brings together Buddhist teachings, traditions Balinese ancestors, and dynamics life diaspora communities. Previous studies about Buddhist death rituals in general focus on teachings about death, stages ceremony, or function social rituals in Buddhist society as a whole general. However, experience subjective and construction the meaning of death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in the area transmigration Still limited. The gap This important reviewed Because the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung is undergoing a process of adaptation. different religions and cultures from Balinese people in the area origin. Research This aim analyze construction the meaning of death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung through approach phenomenology. Research use method qualitative with approach phenomenology. Informant totaling 8 informants, consisting of on one priest, one figure customs Bali, one chairman Buddhists, two member family, two Buddhists, as well as One member Balinese Buddhist community. Informant chosen purposively based on performance of death rituals. Data is collected through observation, interview in-depth, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, data extraction conclusions and interpretations experience subjective informant. Research results identify four theme main. First, the ritual is interpreted as respect final to ancestors. Second, the ritual becomes means strengthening hope on journey awareness going to birth back more Good. Third, rituals function strengthen solidarity and involvement citizens. New study This lies in the explanation of death rituals as room negotiation Balinese-Buddhist identity in community people, which was formed through interaction Buddhist teachings, traditions ancestors, spiritual experiences, and relationships social public.

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INTRODUCTION

Death rituals are a religious and cultural practice that holds significant significance in the lives of people who offer prayers for the community (Asih et al., 2022). In the Balinese *Buddhist* tradition, death rituals are not only understood as a final procession of respect for the deceased, but also as a spiritual medium related to the journey of consciousness, release of inner attachments, and respect for ancestors (Fida & Beganjing, 2025). For the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung, death rituals are an important part of maintaining cultural and religious identity amidst the lives of migrant communities (Angela & Nyanasuryanadi, 2026). The combination of Buddhist teachings and Balinese cultural traditions forms a unique pattern of puja interpretation for death rituals, both in spiritual, social, and symbolic aspects (Tantra & Maharani, 2024).

The theoretical framework of this research views death rituals as a socio-religious phenomenon containing religious, cultural, and social meanings. The essence of the experiences explored through in-depth interviews is expected to explain how the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung constructs the meaning of death rituals in their lives as a diaspora community. This phenomenon shows that death rituals are not merely ceremonial traditions, but social and religious constructions that are continuously maintained through community interactions (Damana, 2024). In practice, the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung not only follows Buddhist teachings but also adapts Balinese cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation (Damana, 2025). This condition is interesting to study because of the relationship between religious experiences, ancestral traditions, and the social dynamics of migrant communities in shaping the meaning of death rituals. Therefore, this research is important to understand how the Balinese Buddhist community constructs the meaning of death rituals in the daily lives of Buddhists (Angela et al., 2026).

Previous research on death rituals has been conducted from the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies (Yuliani, 2026). The study explains that Balinese death rituals have the function of maintaining the balance of human relationships with ancestors and the social environment (Kasus et al., n.d.). Other research shows that Balinese death traditions have undergone transformation in migrant communities due to the influence of the social environment and modernization. Furthermore, the study confirms that death ritual practices in Buddhist communities in Indonesia have a spiritual dimension related to beliefs in rebirth and the law of karma (Ponorogo & Fadhilah, 2025). However, these studies mostly discuss death rituals from a general cultural and religious perspective (Budi & Agama, 2024), so they have not specifically examined the construction of the meaning of death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung through a phenomenological approach (Hermeneutik, 2023).

Previous research Revealing the construction of the meaning of death rituals based on the life experiences of Balinese Buddhists as a diaspora community, especially by using a phenomenological approach, is still very limited (Ketut Suarja et al., 2023). Limited research novelty on the disclosure of the construction of the meaning of death rituals based on the life experiences of Balinese Buddhists in Central Lampung through a phenomenological approach. (Baele & Balzacq, 2022). By Karen That What just discusses the procedures or processions of death rituals based on Buddhist teachings or Balinese traditions, so that they are more descriptive in nature (Pareek et al., 2026).

Furthermore The research gap lies in the lack of subjective experiences of Balinese Buddhists in interpreting death rituals as part of their religious and social lives (Aryanto et al., 2026). This study differs from previous studies because it focuses on a phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experience, awareness, and meaning of community death rituals (Leadership & Buddhists, 2025). Thus, this study not only examines the form of the ritual but also reveals how the meaning of the ritual is constructed through the interaction between Buddhist teachings (Selwen, 2021), Balinese culture, spiritual experiences, and the social conditions of migrant communities (Yuliani, 2026).

Previous death rituals not only understood as a series of death rituals, but as a life experience (real experience) of each individual involved in it. Research can explore the experiences of families, religious leaders, and communities to discover the meaning they directly feel. (Fida & Beganjing, 2025) Death rituals are reviewed through the subjective meanings and interactions of the social aspects of the ritual participants. Research not only describes the procession, but also explains how past experiences and knowledge together shape ritual practices that still exist and are maintained. (Hermeneutics, 2023) Death rituals are analyzed as the result of ongoing social construction, the consequent changes influenced by modernization, technology, education, and cultural interactions. This approach allows studies to see the dynamics between tradition and social change (Budi & Agama, 2024) Death rituals are understood as a system of symbols and cultural communication that contain religious values, morals, and community identity. Research can interpret the symbolic meaning of each stage of the ritual to produce a deeper understanding. (Angela et al., 2026) Death rituals are reviewed as a process of social and spiritual transformation that strengthens community solidarity. Research can explore how rituals create a sense of togetherness, support emotions, and shape collective identity amidst changing times (Asih et al., 2022).

Buddhist spirituality (Buddhism) is unique in that it focuses on mind transformation, the law of cause and effect, and self-awareness, rather than on worship. Religion is an organized belief system with recognized dogmas, rituals, and institutional rules, while spirituality is a personal search for meaning and transcendental experience (Priono, n.d.). In Buddhism, death is a natural and final process, but it is also a temporary end to this moment of life. Death is not absolute extinction (Alvin Juliyanto Lase et al., 2026).

Accompanying the Dead (Maranasati): Family and relatives often recite prayers of well-being near the grave to help foster a calm and positive state of mind (Alvin Juliyanto Lase et al., 2026). During the funeral, when the body lies in state at home in a state of mourning, people routinely recite prayers. This is intended to provide a sense of well-being to the deceased and provide peace for the grieving family (Arimbawa, 2022).

Balinese community development activities are a process of development that means death and temple infrastructure, such as cremation sites, places for floating ashes. (Maulana & Dharma Putra, 2021) The implementation of the construction sector by Funeral Home construction workers, helps the management of the Funeral Home to ensure the strengthening of Balinese culture. (Latifah & Triningsih, 2024) The construction of Funeral Home facilities is used as a means of Balinese culture to honor the deceased by increasing Balinese spirituality (Alvin Juliyanto Lase et al., 2026) New innovations in motivating cremation to all Balinese people are strengthened by tourism (Wahyuni & Atmadja, 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in revealing the construction of the meaning of death rituals based on the life experiences of Balinese Buddhists in Central Lampung through a phenomenological approach (Wiwin, 2025). This study shows that the meaning of death rituals is formed through the interaction between Buddhist teachings, Balinese cultural traditions, and life experiences as a diaspora community, thus providing a new perspective that has not been widely discussed in previous research (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the construction of meaning in death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung through a phenomenological approach. This research is expected to contribute to the development of studies in the phenomenology of religion, ritual anthropology, and the study of Buddhism, particularly in understanding death ritual practices in the Balinese Buddhist community in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study is also expected to serve as an academic reference for further research on the relationship between religion, culture, and the social life of Buddhist communities in multicultural environments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a transcendental phenomenological design that draws on thought (Greening, 2019). This approach was chosen because it aimed to uncover the essential meaning (lived experiences) of Balinese Buddhists' experiences of interpreting death rituals. In this approach, the researcher applied the principle of epoché (bracketing), which involves suspending personal assumptions and views so that the informants' experiences can be understood as they experienced and interpreted them.

The research location is in the Balinese Buddhist community, Central Lampung Regency, Lampung Province. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, taking into account direct involvement in the implementation of death rituals, understanding of traditions, and willingness to provide in-depth information. The number of informants in this study was 8 informants, consisting of priests, Buddhist traditional leaders, Buddhist leaders, family members who had performed death rituals, Buddhists, and community members who actively participated in the rituals. This number was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which is when the information obtained is repeated and no new themes are found.

Table 1. Informant characteristics

Informant Type	Gender	Age (Years)	Role in Death Rituals
Pandita	male	58	Leads religious rituals
Balinese traditional figure	male	61,	person in charge of custom
Head of Buddhist Community	male	52	Coordinator of Ritual Activities
Family members	female	49	Ritual organizers
family members	male	46	Performing mily rituals
Buddhists	female	43	Participate in the Ritual
Buddhists	male	55	Buddhists RitualParticipants
Community Leader	male	57	Family Companion

The table shows the number, age, and category of informants with the actual informant research data. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation during the implementation of death rituals, and documentation studies in the form of photos, archives, and religious documents related to the ritual. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide freedom to informants in expressing their experiences and the meaning of death rituals. Data analysis followed the stages of transcendental phenomenology, namely: (1) epoché (bracketing), which is suspending the researcher's prejudices towards the phenomenon being studied; (2) horizontalization, which is identifying all important statements related to the informant's experience; (3) phenomenological reduction, which is grouping meaningful statements into units of meaning; (4) imaginative variation, which is exploring various conditions that shape the informant's experience so that the structure of the experience is obtained; and (5) synthesis of meanings and essences, which is compiling a textural description (what was experienced), a structural description (how the experience occurred), and formulating the essence of the meaning of death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, technical triangulation, member checking of informants, and peer debriefing to increase the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research on the construction of meaning in death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation with religious leaders, traditional leaders, and Balinese Buddhists directly involved in the rituals. The results are structured based on the research flow described in the methods

section, starting with the community's understanding of death rituals, the process of performing the rituals, and the construction of meaning formed in the community's social and religious life.

Ritual is Interpreted as Respect Final to Ancestors

Interviews revealed that Balinese Buddhists in Central Lampung view death rituals as an important part of their religious and cultural life. Death rituals are understood not only as traditional customs but also as a form of final respect for the deceased. For traditional leaders, these rituals have a spiritual purpose, aiding the journey of consciousness toward a better rebirth, in accordance with Buddhist teachings regarding actions during life (Informant 6). Furthermore, the community interprets death rituals as a way to release emotional attachments between the bereaved family and the deceased. For traditional leaders, there are funeral rituals that not only accompany the deceased, but also serve as a final tribute, expressing devotion and affection for the departed family member. (Informant 1) During the ritual, prayers, songs, and Balinese cultural symbols are considered to have spiritual significance that can bring peace to the family and assist in honoring ancestors.

Ritual Becomes Strengthening Hope on Journey Awareness Going to More Good

Based on the character customs In carrying out rituals in accordance with Buddhist teachings, they bestow merit through chanting and offering alms. This is done so that the family can attain inner peace and accept the deceased's passing with greater sincerity. (Informant 3) That according to observations, death rituals for the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung consist of several stages, from preparing the body, reciting prayers and chanting mantras, performing traditional Balinese ceremonies, to cremation or burial, depending on the family's circumstances. Each stage involves the active participation of the family, religious leaders, and the surrounding community. The following is a description of the stages of strengthening hope from death rituals found in the research:

Table 2. Construction of death rituals

Stages of the ritual	Activity Form	Meaning of Ritual
Preparation of the body	Respect the corpse	Form of respect
Reading Paritta	Reading awamangala	Inner silence
Balinese traditional procession	Take advantage of the offer	Delegation of service to ancestors
Cremation	Physical release	Release symbol

The table shows that each a) stage of the ritual has an explanation of its interrelated symbolic and spiritual meaning. Ritual is not only seen as a traditional process, but also as: b) a form of activity: the integration of Balinese cultural values and Buddhist teachings. c) the meaning of ritual: a series of actions or activities performed repeatedly based on procedures, traditions, or rules.

Rituals Serve to Strengthen Solidarity and Community Involvement

The results of the phenomenological analysis show that the construction of the meaning of death rituals is formed through religious experiences, cultural traditions, and social interactions of the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung. Death rituals are a reminder for figure accommodation that life happens in a way experience must be digested with inner calm. Therefore, we are encouraged to continue doing good, upholding the precepts, and increasing virtue while we are still alive." (Informant 9). Therefore, the community interprets death rituals as a medium to maintain spiritual connections with ancestors while strengthening social solidarity within the community. In addition to having a spiritual dimension, death rituals also function as a means to maintain Balinese cultural identity in diaspora communities. For customs Whenever a family is grieving, all the residents come to help. Some prepare the facilities ceremonial equipment, cooking, or accompanying the family. Community feeling that grief is a shared responsibility. (Informant 7) Therefore, the community's collective involvement in each stage of the ritual demonstrates the

values of reciprocal cooperation, solidarity, and respect for ancestral traditions. This demonstrates that death rituals are not solely religiously oriented but also serve a social function in maintaining harmony within the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung.

Based on the research findings, it can be understood that the construction of meaning in death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community is formed through a combination of Buddhist teachings, Balinese cultural traditions, individual spiritual experiences, and diaspora social dynamics. Thus, death rituals symbolize the continuity of religious and cultural values maintained in the lives of Balinese Buddhists in Central Lampung.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung are not only interpreted as traditional ceremonies or cultural traditions, but also as religious practices containing spiritual, social, and symbolic values. Through an analysis of the phenomenological theory approach, the findings that occurred in the Balinese Buddhist community understand death rituals as a means of final respect for the deceased, a medium for releasing spiritual attachments, and an effort to assist the journey of consciousness towards a better rebirth according to Buddhist teachings. This interpretation is formed through the subjective experiences of the community, which are passed down from generation to generation and influenced by the interaction between Buddhist teachings and Balinese culture.

Phenomenologically, the community's experience of performing death rituals demonstrates a close relationship between religious and social dimensions. Death rituals serve not only as a spiritual medium but also as a social space that strengthens community solidarity. The involvement of families, religious leaders, and the community in each stage of the ritual demonstrates the values of reciprocal cooperation and respect for ancestors that are still maintained in the lives of migrant communities. This suggests that death rituals symbolize the continuity of Balinese cultural identity and a means of maintaining social harmony amidst the multicultural environment of Central Lampung. The results of this study align with the research of I Made Suardana (2021), who stated that Balinese death rituals have spiritual and social functions in maintaining relationships between humans, ancestors, and society. This study also supports the findings of Ni Ketut Suryani (2022), who explained that Balinese migrants maintain their cultural identity through the practice of death rituals. Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the research of Made Dharma Putra (2023), who emphasized that death rituals in Buddhist communities are closely related to beliefs in karma, rebirth, and the release of worldly attachments. However, this study differs from previous studies because it places more emphasis on the subjective experiences of the community through a phenomenological approach. This research does not only discuss

This study not only discusses the form of death rituals, but also reveals how the meaning of these rituals is constructed through the lived experiences of Balinese Buddhists in Central Lampung. Thus, this study provides a new contribution to the study of the phenomenology of religion and the study of Buddhism, particularly regarding the construction of the meaning of death rituals in Balinese Buddhist communities in the diaspora. Although this study has provided an in-depth overview of the construction of the meaning of death rituals, there are several limitations to this study. a) This study was only conducted in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung, so the results cannot be generalized to all Balinese Buddhist communities in Indonesia. b) The limited time of the study prevented the researcher from observing all variations of death rituals performed in different social and economic conditions. c) The phenomenological approach relies heavily on the subjective experiences of informants, so there is a possibility of interpretation bias in the data analysis process.

Based on this, further research is expected to expand the research location, use an interdisciplinary approach, and compare death ritual practices in the Balinese Buddhist

community with other regions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of death rituals in the Indonesian Buddhist community.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the meaning of death rituals in the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung is constructed through a combination of Buddhist teachings, Balinese cultural traditions, and the social life of the diaspora community. Death rituals are interpreted as a form of final respect for the deceased as well as the implementation of religious and cultural obligations passed down from generation to generation. The results of the study identified three main themes, namely: (1) death rituals as religious practices that reflect Buddhist beliefs in the law of kamma and rebirth; (2) death rituals as a medium for preserving Balinese cultural traditions that are maintained in diaspora life; and (3) death rituals as a means of strengthening solidarity, mutual cooperation, and social relations between community members. These findings indicate that death rituals not only have religious meaning, but also function as a space to maintain cultural values and strengthen togetherness in the Balinese Buddhist community. This study contributes to the development of studies on the phenomenology of religion and the anthropology of ritual by explaining how Balinese Buddhists interpret and carry out death rituals in the context of diaspora life. The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which only covered the Balinese Buddhist community in Central Lampung, and its use of a phenomenological approach that focused on the experiences of informants. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies on Balinese Buddhist communities in other regions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the practices and meanings of death rituals within Buddhist communities in Indonesia.

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