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## **AN ANALYSIS ON THE SACRED REALM OF *KIRAB PUSAKA***

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**Abstract:** *Important lines of issues on which this study is based to reveal the religious phenomena of Kirab Pusaka. The first is that Kirab Pusaka is a mysterium reality in the sense of that it has represented the certain rituals held by the Solo Palace as the center of people. For this purpose, this study will examine how Kirab Pusaka could be the sacred, and how the Solo Palace is spiritually regarded as the center of the sacred. The second is about construction of Kirab Pusaka as the sacred especially for Solo people. It is important to not only study this event by taking a distance between the researcher and the object of the research, but also to directly experience it as the involved person. The researcher will have important role to manifest his experiences during interview with some people and observation in the field.*

**Keywords:** *Kirab Pusaka, Mysterium Reality, and The Sacred.*

**Abstrak:** *Garis-garis penting masalah yang menjadi dasar penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkapkan fenomena ritual Kirab Pusaka. Yang pertama adalah bahwa Kirab Pusaka merupakan realitas mistik dalam arti bahwa ia telah mewakili ritual-ritual tertentu yang diadakan oleh Keraton Solo sebagai pusat masyarakat. Untuk alasan pertama ini, penelitian ini akan memeriksa bagaimana Kirab Pusaka bisa menjadi sakral, dan bagaimana Istana Solo secara spiritual dianggap sebagai pusat suci. Yang kedua adalah tentang pembentukan Kirab Pusaka sebagai sesuatu yang sakral, khususnya bagi orang-orang Solo. Penting untuk tidak hanya mempelajari peristiwa ini dengan mengambil jarak antara peneliti dan objek penelitian, tetapi juga secara langsung mengalaminya sebagai orang yang terlibat. Peneliti akan memiliki peran penting untuk mewujudkan pengalamannya selama melakukan wawancara dengan beberapa orang dan observasi di lapangan.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kirab Pusaka, Realitas Mistik, dan Kesakralan.*

## INTRODUCTION

### The Background of Study

Kirab Pusaka is a routine activity of the Solo Palace for celebrating the new year of Islam (1 Muharram) or for what the Javanese culture has been known with the new year of Java (1 Suro). Kirab Pusaka is a closure of the ceremonies to welcome the new year of Java. It is usually realized on 1 Suro. In Javanese callender, the date was started on 18.00 WIB a day before it. Furthermore, the date 1 Suro which is constituted in the general callender takes on 22 November 2012, it was considered taking on 18.00 WIB, 21 November 2012. In the Javanese culture, the exchange of year represents the change of *Naga Dina* (exchange of day) and *Naga Taon* (exchange of year) at the same time, and it also relates to the change of cosmic character and its mysterium world, directly or indirectly influencing on human life in the world.

The interesting of this event is that Kirab Pusaka is regarded as the mysterium sacred ceremony held by the Solo Palace. The mysterium sacred is considered as the holy in which people experience it by means of celebrating the certain events and rituals. The mysterium sacred can be associated with animals, people, place, or anything. However, the sacred is called “sacred” through two important medium. The first is that people have experienced it as

the sacred or that the sacred represent itself as the sacred. The mysterium sacred should be interpreted in line with its associations. Some elements of the sacred can be parts of the sacred itself, even with the different level of human presuppositions.

Kirab Pusaka, in this case, is strongly regarded as the sacred realm in the sense of that it has successfully met some characteristics of the sacred. These characteristics are provided by some thinkers whose the ideas will be discussed briefly here. The first one is Sigmund Freud who explores two important thing related to this theme, *totem* and *taboo*. Totemism could be defined as the human's choice to associate themselves with the certain plant or animal, which serve as its sacred object. Taboo is considered as the forbidden actions during the ceremonies of the sacred symbols. The second is Emile Durkheim. While Freud focuses on the human's unconsciousness to conceive the sacred, Durkheim believes that the sacred is not automatically given; it is represented and transfigured by the society. Furthermore, the social personification is a main condition of the so-called sacred. Meanwhile, Mircea Eliade, the third sociologist, who is more radical than the first two thinkers, conveys the idea of the sacred into the primordial condition. It means that the sacred, for him, should represent itself as the sacred. This idea is also critique of Freud and Durkheim who reduce the reality of the sacred through outside of its own level.

### **The Significance of Study**

This research is important by two things. The first is that Kirab Pusaka is a mysterium reality in the sense of that it has represented the certain rituals held by the Solo Palace as the center of people. For this purpose, this study will examine how Kirab Pusaka could be the sacred, and how the Solo Palace is spiritually regarded as the center of the sacred. The second is about construction of Kirab Pusaka as the sacred especially for Solo people. It is important to not only study this event by taking a distance between the researcher and the object of the research, but also to directly experience it as the involded person. The researcher will have important role to manifest his experiences during interview with some people and observation in the field.

There are two important lines of issues on which this study is based to reveal the religious phenomena of Kirab Pusaka. The first is that Kirab Pusaka represents the idea of the sacred provided by some thinkers above. The second is to compare and—more importantly—complement the definitions of Kirab Pusaka for one thinker with the ones of other thinkers. These issues, however, are still open-ended; they have many different possibilities to interpret for which Kirab Pusaka is strongly significant to study for getting more understanding of certain religious phenomena.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Kirab Pusaka and Defense Mechanism**

Kirab Pusaka is an ancient civilization of Solo Palace. It was initially started from Paku Buwono II. Kirab Pusaka has involved some important elements during the procession. The most prominent is Kebo Bule which spiritually gives *berkah* for Solo people. Freud, in this case, views this event as the ritual practices representing two fundamental things, such as “totem” and “taboo”. These are two practices of primitive people which strike modern minds as especially strange.

Totemism is a cultural rite of primitive people to which a tribe or clan chooses to associate itself with a specific animal (or plant), which serve as its sacred object, its ‘totem’ (Pals, 2006, p. 65). Based on this definition, it is clearly defined that people’s belief in Kebo Bule is representation of totemism, in which Solo people have spiritually believed and practiced from generation to generation. They try to associate themselves with Kebo Bule (animal) in order to get *berkah* and something sacred from it. This practice is strongly like animism in primitive people, especially African, who use the certain rituals for worship plant or animal.

Taboo, in other side, can be defined as “off limits” or forbidden (Pals, 2006, p. 65). It is an inseparable part of certain ritual consequences during totemic practices. According to Freud, one of the forbidden, in the earliest societies, is about no killing or eating of the totem animal. However, for him, the existence of taboo is ‘irrational’ in the sense of that people creates the rules that no one really want to keep. During Kirab Pusaka, people are forbidden to do some actions, such as turning on blitz (either from camera or lamps), bringing the alcoholic drink, and others.

Everyone who want to involve with Kirab Pusaka, it is obligation for them to obey these rules.

However, as Freud said, both totemism and taboo are not really reasonable. They assume that Kirab Kebo and ritual restrictions during this procession are consicous practices. They have endeavors to search for reasons underlying this ritual, but they alwas fail to do that. Freud said,

“Religious people try to be rational but do not succeed: their ritues of ‘taboo’ and rituals of tetemism cannot achieve what they suppose. But then the question remains: If it is a mistake to believe in totemis and taboos, why should anyone continue to do so?” (Pals, 2006, p. 66)

It indicates that religious people, for Freud, are neurotic people, who unconsciously practice the rituals without really knowing the reasons behind. The indicator of this assumption is that they want to do certain things, and at the same time they do not. In the context of Kirab Pusaka, people believe that this procession must be done by the Palace. If it is not, Solo people will be sick. However, although they believe it works, they never prove it. Kirab Pusaka was always realized by the Solo Palace every 1 Suro. It is also right for those who always use blitz to capture this procession even they know that it is strictly forbidden.

According to Freud, this represents that Kirab Pusaka (ritual of totemism) and its restrictions (ritues of taboo) are always unconscious practices in the sense of that they are grasped to be rational, but they are not really rational. What Freud makes analogy about our anxiety and love to our father could be applied to study Kirab Pusaka. People are afraid of ignoring the ritual, but they never prove it by ignoring the ritual.

Freud believe that the religious experience is seemingly like as the infantile experience in which people have tried to admit the powerful father, and at the same time they are always afraid of him. Religion arises from emotions and conflicts that originate early in childhood and lie deep beneath the rational, normal surface of the personality. This is so-called Oedipus Complex.

“Religion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity: like the obsessional neuroses of children, it arose out of the Oedipus Complex: out of the relation to the father.” (Pals, 2006, p. 71; Freud, 1961, p. 21: 43)

It is also strange, for Freud, that religious phenomena are representation of defense mechanism to deal with many disasters, such as earthquake, flood, illness, and others. When they have to do that, they need a powerful one, which is father, to get help. Some people believe that Kirab Pusaka can give them *berkah* and security from the unwanted events, such as illness and loss. If some of them are suspiciously sick or loss of trading, they usually use *celethong* of Kebo Bule to be *jimat*. Spiritually it works in many cases. Those who get *celethong* of Kebo Bule on 1 Suro, they tend to believe that their goods will be fashionable and marketable soon. That is why that Freud believe that religion is a fulfillment of the infantile needs.

For Freud, religion is an illusion. The illusion is resulted from the “primary process”, while the reality is coming from “secondary process” (Freud, 1961, p. xv). The first is strongly associated with human imagination, and the second is oriented to the factual. The dream of drinking water is a case of illusion in the sense of that people has to dream to drink a water to psychologically meet their needs and at the same time to reduce their tenses. All of the religious products are illusions because they are commonly used to meet the needs of neurotic people. However, this need is an emergency, and furthermore it can be either justified or faulted as well.

Kirab Pusaka is believed as one of the important rituals of the Solo Palace. However, it is done by some reasons that are not really rational. People believe that Kirab Pusaka is compulsory to do at the night of 1 Suro, but it is generally aimed to maintain the mysticism of the Palace and pragmatically to protect them from illness and temptation. By doing so, they are not afraid anymore and feel to be physiologically fulfilled. It indicates that people’s belief in Kirab Pusaka is an illusion to meet their imaginary, but emergency psychological purposes.

### **Kirab Pusaka and Building Solidarity**

When Emile Durkheim asserts that the idea of society is the soul of religion (1915, p. 419), he wants to point out the importance of social structures, relationships, and institutions in understanding human thought and behavior, including their beliefs. According to Durkheim, social solidarity is primary for creating basic structures of life as moral obligation and ownership of personal property. This is essential in Durkheim's thought, and it is applicable to understand the ritual procession of Kirab Pusaka in the Solo Palace.

The social solidarity could be seen through two codes, such as "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity" (Pals, 2006, p. 91). The first one refers to social condition in which the certain behavior is secured by punishments (often severe) for anyone who breaks moral code of the group. In Kirab Pusaka, such punishments could be spiritual consequences for those who disbelieve the sacredness of Kebo Bule. People commonly believe that they have to give the space for Kirab Pusaka. It is no wonder if some polices are prepared to secure this ritual from unwanted actions of people. If people disobey or disbelieve it by taking the disturbing deeds, they will be punished and scolded.

The organic solidarity, however, comes not from the threat of punishment but from the need that each person acquires for the work of the others. Some old people take a fasting (*puasa*) or *tirakatan* before and during Kirab Pusaka. However, these actions are aimed not merely to give respect for Kebo Bule; it is also indirectly addressed to create social solidarity among them. *Tirakan*, in this case, could be a medium to build bridges those who take similar one.

Finally, it will lead them to have—what Durkheim said—*the collective consciousness* (Pals, 2006, p. 91). There is uniform agreement as to what is right and what is wrong in almost all matters of human conduct. Each of both solidarities represents traditional and modern people. The traditional view point of Kirab Pusaka will convey the idea of mechanical solidarity, while the modern one will have the idea of organic solidarity. If the persons who are tied with mechanical solidarity will have high level of collective consciousness, but those who engage with organic solidarity, the level of collective consciousness remains low.

Kirab Pusaka, in this case, has successfully gathered people together not only in one place, but in one collective consciousness. They have been aware of giving respect to Kirab Pusaka by means of practicing the certain rituals, such as *tirakatan* and fighting over *celethong*. Indeed, not every people take *tirakatan* and *celethong* during the procession, but what they do demonstrates that Kirab Pusaka is a medium for building social solidarity among people. Furthermore, it can be recognized that Kirab Pusaka consists of the obligation of each to other people and all to the standards of society, and that is why that Kirab Pusaka as the representation of traditional belief (or religion) is inseparable from society.

Now, it is time to turn to the prominent themes of Durkheim's work, *the sacred* and *the profane*. Durkheim said,

“Sacred things are always set apart as superior, powerful, forbidden to normal contact, and deserving of great respect. Profane things are the opposite; they belong to the ordinary, uneventful, and practical routine of everyday life.” (Pals, 2006, p. 96)

Every religion, for Durkheim, is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to *sacred things*, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden. The sacred realm represents the identity of group. Only Solo People have Kirab Pusaka through Kebo Bule parade. Kirab Pusaka, furthermore, is an important identity which designates the certain group of society (Solo). Due to its central position for social structures, Kirab Pusaka could be the sacred in the sense of designating the communal interests of Solo people.

Generally speaking, Kirab Pusaka unites into one moral community called *Keraton* (Palace), to which all those of Solo people adhere to them. The key words here are “community” and “*Keraton*”. Durkheim's definition of the sacred realm as designation of the interests and welfare of an entire group of people, not just one or a few, has indicated that both of them (community and palace) represent their interests to be a member of social group. The community and religion, in this case, are inseparable.

By positioning the sacred realm into the core idea of community, we can go further to know the second theme of Durkheim's work, *the profane*. He points out that,



“The profane things are little matters; they reflect the day-to-day business of each individual—the smaller, the private activities and endeavors of the immediate family and personal life.” (Pals, 2006, p. 96)

In accordance with this statement, it is clear that the profane, for Durkheim, is something related to the individual business, personal life, not social ones. In the case of Kirab Pusaka, the profane could be every practice outside this procession, including trading and other activities. If they are still be related to Kirab Pusaka, they could be the sacred, and at the same time, they can never be the profane. Durkheim believe that the sacred could be either good or evil, but the one thing it can never be is sacred. The sacred, for him, occurs only if the certain community concerns themselves with the sacred. Kirab Pusaka is regarded as the sacred because Solo people involve themselves together with this event. Among the sacred things in Kirab Pusaka is Kebo Bule. There are some people, who have Kebo Bule outside the Palace, but if there are no communal interests to do with them, they could never be the sacred; they are profane.

Durkheim also gives further explanation of totemism. The totem, for him, is in the first instance a symbol. It is symbol of god *and* clan. Durkheim points out that,

“The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem.” (Pals, 2006, p. 100; Durkheim, 1915, p. 206)

It is actually appealing that Durkheim is obsessive to the importance of society for understanding religious phenomena. The worship to Kebo Bule is actually a symbol of god and community. This practice is a sign of god respected by Palace officials and of a clan identifying people in one social characteristic. It means that people’s devotion to Kebu Bole, for Durkheim, is how they express

and reinforce their devotion to their community. The devotion of Kebo Bule is identity for designating the certain community.

The ritual performances, including *tirakatan* and torch and benzoin parade, have built the collective emotion of group. Such worship, in Durkheim's view, is the "cult" from the Latin *cultus*, which consists of emotional group people held on certain set occasions (Pals, 2006, p. 103). It is the very core of the people's life in Solo. These are sacred, and all else is profane. Certainly, this is aimed to promote consciousness of the people, to make them feel a part of Kirab Pusaka, and to keep this procession in the way separate from the profane. In short, Kirab Pusaka and its rituals are symbolic expressions of social realities in Solo at that time.

### **Palace, Kirab Pusaka, and the Center of the World**

Eliade is one of the prominent sociologists who criticizes the earlier thinkers, including Freud and Durkheim, in the study of religious phenomena. His concepts of the sacred and the profane are specially aimed to make them clear in its own level. A religious phenomenon, he insists,

“... will only be recognized as such if it is grasped at its own level, that is to say, if it is studied *as* something religious. To try to grasp the essence of such a phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art, or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it—the element of the sacred.”  
(Eliade, 1963, p. xiii)

By saying that, Eliade tries to show that the sacred could be the sacred only if it manifests itself as the sacred. For our purpose, the Solo Palace is an example of how this place manifests itself as the sacred. This palace is not socially, psychologically, or economically constructed by people; this is the sacred from the beginning. Using Eliade's term, this palace is a center of the world.

Eliade uses a term “phenomenology” to understand religion rather than sociology, history, and psychology. The phenomenology (from the Greek *phenomenon*, “an appearance”) is the comparative study of things in the form, or appearance, they present to us.

Phenomenologically, the sacred should manifest itself as the sacred because it consists of something holy. It is clearly described,

“For primitives as for the man of all pre-modern societies, *the sacred* is equivalent to a *power*, and in the last analysis, to *reality*. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy.... Thus it is easy to understand that religious man deeply desires *to be*, to participate in *reality*, to be saturated with power.”  
(Eliade, 1957, pp. 12-13)

For Solo people, the Solo Palace is regarded as something sacred. Perhaps, they are not primitive ones, but the palace was built on 1744 when the primitive people are desirable. Today, this building has impact on modern people’s perception. They believe that this palace has power because it is the first place in which their culture was initially born. This palace is an ancestor of culture and civilization in Solo.

It is not only about the ancestor, the place is strongly also associated with the power. This is a powerful place in which Solo Sultan has governed people. It is a respected residence and the last castle to gather them in fighting over the colonists. The power of the Solo Palace is inevitable, and it is a place in which other people see the reality of Solo. It is representative of Solo in terms of culture, politics, and society. It represents not only reality, but also enduringness and efficacy. It has passed through many years, but it is still there, with all of its gloriousness, forcefulness, and greatness.

Finally, in Eliade’s view, it is easy to understand religiosity of Solo people by deeply understanding the existence of the Solo Palace. And, because of its greatness and readiness, the place manifests itself as the sacred, and people tend to go towards the sacred as the representative of reality. They have great endeavors to participate in the Solo Palace, which is saturated with power, and to be part of it. That is also reason why Kirab Pusaka is undertaken by going around the place.

In addition, Eliade points out the important indicator of the sacred from what he calls “archetypes”. He continues,

“They provide the very framework within which they think, the values which they admire, and the models—Eliade sometimes calls them “archetypes”—they choose to follow whenever they act.” (Pals, 2006, p. 201)

What he means “archetypes” are such mythological tales, within which they believe, admire, and model in daily basis activities. The archaic people tend to model the *arkhe* and heritage of their ancient civilization. When it is the case, Solo people should be seen in terms of their tendencies to believe and model the Solo Palace and its traditions. These sacred types govern all sorts of their activities from the grand and ceremonial to the ordinary and even trivial, and Kirab Pusaka is an example of the ritual ceremony in which they believe.

How does the Solo Palace make itself visible sacred for people? Eliade calls it “hierophany” (Pals, 2006, p. 201). This term is from the Greek *hieros* and *phainos* which means ‘sacred appearance’. The Solo Palace has, in fact, been visited by the sacred, perhaps in the form of a god. It is why that the location receives a ritual blessing, including Kirab Pusaka, which establishes it as the center power of a “world” (in Greek a *cosmos*: “place of order”). The Solo Palace and its rituals gather people to show it as the definitive divine of ordered structure; it is—what Eliade calls—sacred system (Pals, 2006, p. 201).

The consequence of this position is clear, that because the center is supported by the ritual ceremonies of community, it stands clearly separate from the disorder of the desert, forest, or open plain that normally surrounds it. It is no wonder if the Solo Palace as the sacred center is marked with a pole, pillar, or other vertical object that plunges into the ground and rises up to the sky. It takes position at the center of nine groups of buildings, such as *Alun-Alun Utara*, *Sasana Sumewa*, *Sithinggil Lor*, *Kamandungan Lor*, *Sri Manganti*, *Kedbaton*, *Kamagangan*, *Srimanganti Kidul*, and *Sithinggil Kidul*. If we look at it inside, there are many pillars and inheritances surrounding it, representing the power of this place related to the heaven and divine. This building, for example, is circled with

*buluwarti*, a bulwark with high of almost five meters and bold of one meter.

Because its existence as the center of sacred power, the Solo Palace could be *axis mundi*, that Eliade defines:

“... the point where one finds the sacred pole that connects heaven to earth, the holy place where the separate worlds of the sacred and the profane are joined.” (Pals, 2006, p. 202)

From this place, the mythological stories were told, the communal beliefs were accumulated, and the house of God was created. The Solo Palace as *axis mundi* is really evident, because it is embedded not only to the heaven, but also the earth. The life, for Durkheim, orients itself around a sacred center, a vertical “symbol of ascent” that links the sacred to the profane. The Solo Palace is the symbol around which the life of society is running.

The *axis mundi* of the palace manifests itself through an *imago mundi*, “a mirror image of the entire world as it was first fashioned, by divine action” (Pals, 2006, p.206). In this case, the Solo Palace flows out its sacredness among people. The models, structures, and patterns of the palace are also considered as important as its existence to be the center of the world. The palace was built at the center of Solo (*alun-alun*). The mythological aim is to show that such ceremonial house in the village center should be supported by four columns, which represent the four main directions, while the roof of the house symbolize the vault of heaven, and an opening squarely in the center allows prayers to rise along the vertical sacred pole directly to the gods.

The palace which consists of *imago mundi* manifests not only by itself, but also by *indirect expressions*. Eliade points out that the sacred which can be “wholly other” than anything in normal experience lies in its language, in symbol and in myth. He explains further that symbols are rooted in the principle of likeness, or analogy. There are many symbols in the Solo Palace, such as *keris* (wavy blade), *tombak* (spear), *makutha* (crown), red and yellow, *surya* (sun), *candra* (month), *kartika* (star), *bumi* (earth), *paku* (nail), *kapas-padi* (cotton-grain), and *pita merah putih* (red-white ribbon).

Another element of the sacred is myth. The myth, for Eliade, is also symbolic, but in a slightly more complicated way: myth is symbol put into a narrative form. The myth about Kebo Bole, for example, is very considerable. Kebo Bule is sacred because it is a palace's pet. The myth about the palace remains varied. For example, the large mirror alongside *Kori Kamadungan* means 'self-introspection', while *Kemandungan* is derived from *mandung* which means 'stopping'. The legend of *Nagari Surakarta* is famous, in which the Solo Palace will survive only for 200 years. After this time, the power of kingdom will diffuse into many pieces of authorities. This legend is seemingly right today because since the first building on 1745 to the Indonesia independency on 1945, the palace was declining. A year after this time, on 1946, the Solo Kingdom was revoked from Susuhan authority. However, the most important of these myths is that it tells a tale of the gods, of the ancestors, and of the heroes, and their world of the supernatural. It strengthens the fact that the palace is the center of the world.

## **CLOSURE**

The in-depth analysis of Kirab Pusaka will lead us into two important things of the sacred. Firstly, Kirab Pusaka is considered as the sacred because it was influenced by neurotic factors, by society, or even by itself. Freud and Durkheim have similar directions to see Kirab Pusaka, but in terms of different way: psychoanalysis and sociology. Freud has successfully pointed out the psychological problem of people's rituals to Kirab Pusaka, while Durkheim has provided the appealing sociological views of Kirab Pusaka as the designation of the sacred realm. However, both Freud and Durkheim fails to understand the sacred power of Kirab Pusaka in its own level, and it is why that Eliade has criticized them and provided the phenomenological understanding of the sacred. He believes that that Solo Palace is the sacred because it manifests itself as the sacred, the center of world, the *axis mundi*, which is shaped by *imago mundi*, and which is indirectly expressed in symbols and myths. However, Durkheim's view of Solo Palace is not really applicable to understand the moving sacred, such as Kebo Bule, because the cases he provided are mostly fixed places.

Secondly, understanding of Kirab Pusaka, its rituals, Kebo Bule, and the Solo Palace should go in hand with many possible

interpretations. What important here is personal reflection of Kirab Pusaka from the participatory perspective. It is easy to understand the phenomena of Kirab Pusaka by using many perspectives of sociology, but it is our task to directly experience it. By doing so, we should have “theoretical skepticism”, in which we have nothing to theoretically do in the field, but that experience will lead us to what should we do in the study. Kirab Pusaka could be really understood only if it was directly experienced by researcher. The ethical aims of such study must be reconsidered, such as for what it should be, and how it should be for our study of religion.

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