

The Community Phenomenon In Victor Turner's Theory: A Comparative Study Of Social Integration In The Fête De La Saint-Jean In France And The Erau Festival In Indonesia

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Abstract

Festivals are cultural spaces where collective identities are produced, negotiated, and maintained through symbols, rituals, and community participation. This study aims to compare cultural practices at the Fête de la Saint-Jean in France and the Erau Festival in Indonesia, explain the formation of liminality and community, and formulate patterns of social integration and the conditions that support and limit them. The study uses a qualitative interpretive approach with a comparative study design and qualitative content analysis. Data include ritual actions, cultural symbols, use of space, participation patterns, and social interactions obtained from visual, audiovisual, and textual documentation. Sources were selected purposively based on their credibility, completeness, clarity of context, and relevance to the research focus. Analysis was conducted deductively based on the concepts of separation, liminality, antistructure, community, and reaggregation in Victor Turner's theory, and inductively to identify contextual themes. Within-case analysis continued with cross-case comparisons, while the validity of the findings was maintained through source triangulation, examination of conflicting evidence, reflective notes, and audit trails. Both festivals transformed public spaces into ritual spaces that enabled the loosening of formal relations and social hierarchies. The Fête de la Saint-Jean fosters togetherness through spatial proximity and a symbolic orientation toward fire, while the Erau Festival generates reciprocal interactions through the use of water in Belimbur. Both mechanisms generate spontaneous communities characterized by equality, closeness, and collective emotion. However, the existence of ritual authority, role allocation, rules of organization, and zoning

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indicate that the resulting antistructure is partial. Differences in ritual mediums demonstrate that communities can form through diverse participation mechanisms. Fire focuses collective attention and experience, while water strengthens relationships through direct physical action. While both have the potential to support social integration, shared presence does not necessarily result in sustainable relationships if participants are merely spectators. Liminality opens the possibility for the weakening of hierarchies, but does not guarantee permanent social integration. Sustainable integration is determined by open participation, the maintenance of ritual meaning, community involvement, institutional governance, and the balance between cultural preservation and tourism interests.

Keywords: antistructure; community; cultural festival; social integration; liminality.

INTRODUCTION

Festivals are dynamic cultural spaces because collective identities are produced, negotiated, and represented through symbolic practices involving space, the body, memory, and community participation. Cultural identity is not understood as a fixed and finished reality, but as a position that is constantly being shaped through representation and changing social relations (Hall, 1990). Based on this understanding, festivals function not only as aesthetic celebrations or annual events, but also as social arenas where people form and display their understanding of themselves and their communities. Holding festivals in public spaces can open up the possibility of encounters between social groups with diverse backgrounds (Quinn et al., 2021). Community involvement in the production and use of cultural spaces can also foster a sense of belonging to the community and the place where the celebration takes place (Foster, 2022). Furthermore, the experience of gathering, focusing attention on a common object, and sharing emotions simultaneously has the potential to strengthen social connectedness among festival participants (MacCarthy et al., 2022). However, the presence of diverse groups in a single space does not automatically generate social cohesion, as the experience is also influenced by accessibility, a sense of security, social standing, and recognition of diversity (Qi et al., 2024). This framework provides a basis for understanding how traditional French festivals can transform public spaces into temporary spaces of togetherness.

In the French context, the Fête de la Saint-Jean demonstrates the complex relationship between religious ritual, seasonal traditions, and the formation of local solidarity. The festival



commemorates the birth of Saint John the Baptist and maintains the tradition of lighting the Fête de la Saint-Jean, associated with the summer solstice. Processions, music, dance, and gatherings around bonfires transform spaces typically used for everyday purposes into shared celebrations. Through this collective use, public spaces temporarily acquire the character of shared spaces, shaped by community presence and participation (Gamba et al., 2022). During the celebration, people are not merely spectators but also participate in a social experience shaped by physical proximity, collective attention, and the use of shared ritual symbols. The Fête de Saint-Jean can also function as a space for negotiating memory and identity in a multicultural urban environment (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). Meanwhile, the symbolic and theatrical elements of the celebration allow for the collective display and reaffirmation of local identities (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). Celebratory practices based on shared participation can foster a sense of collective ownership of space, traditions, and community (Woodman & Zaunseder, 2021). However, the use of public space for festivals still has the potential to generate contestations over access, representation, and management authority (McGillivray et al., 2022). The complexity of these social functions gains a relevant comparative context when compared with the Erau Festival in Indonesia.

In the Kutai Kartanegara community, the Erau Festival is a cultural practice that combines the traditions of the sultanate with the participation of an increasingly diverse community. The term Erau is derived from the Kutai word "eroh," which refers to a lively, boisterous, and joyful atmosphere. This celebration was initially associated with the rituals of the Kutai Kartanegara Ing Martadipura Sultanate, but later evolved into a festival involving local communities, immigrant groups, and visitors from various backgrounds. The actualization of local wisdom values in the Erau Festival plays a role in maintaining and strengthening the social identity of the Kutai Kartanegara community (Hubaib, 2021). One important part of the festival series is Belimbur, the practice of sprinkling water used in rituals. Belimbur not only has a meaning of purification but also serves as a cultural practice that can strengthen solidarity between religious communities through a shared acceptance of the symbolism of water (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021). Community involvement in this tradition represents the values of diversity, unity, brotherhood, and tolerance between the Kutai people and immigrant groups (Alfario et al., 2024). The cultural values of the Erau Festival also have the potential to support the formation of multicultural awareness and moderate attitudes in religious life (Angranti et al., 2025). However, the involvement of various groups in a single celebration is not enough to prove the formation of comprehensive social



equality. Equality in rituals generally occurs when the structure of daily life is temporarily relaxed (Turner, 1969). Therefore, the similarities in social function between Saint-Jean and Erau require further analysis through the concepts of liminality and community.

The concepts of liminality and *communitas* provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how these two festivals produce forms of togetherness that differ from everyday patterns of interaction. Liminality refers to a threshold state where individuals are situated between an abandoned social structure and a new, yet-to-be-formed one (Turner, 1969). In this state, status, position, and social divisions can be temporarily suspended, allowing for the formation of direct and relatively egalitarian relationships among ritual participants. This type of relationship is referred to as *communitas*, the experience of togetherness that emerges when individuals participate in shared symbolic actions and experiences. At the Fête de la Saint-Jean, this state can emerge when people gather around a fire, participate in a procession, and focus on the same ritual symbols. At the Erau Festival, physical interaction through Belimbur can reduce social distance because participants engage in shared actions without fully maintaining formal interaction patterns. The experience of intensive gathering can generate social connectedness through the formation of collective emotions and attention (MacCarthy et al., 2022). Festival spaces also allow participants to temporarily escape the instrumental demands of everyday life and engage in more expressive and symbolic social experiences (Skandalis et al., 2024). However, the experience of togetherness is not always felt equally, as the spatial conditions and social backgrounds of participants can influence the quality of the interactions that occur (Qi et al., 2024). Therefore, togetherness in festivals is better understood as a result of social participation and negotiation rather than as an automatic consequence of ritual performance (Woodman & Zaunseder, 2021). This understanding should then be linked to the involvement of the government and the tourism industry in managing both festivals.

The government's involvement in festival management demonstrates that community formation does not occur outside of power structures. Festivals can be used as a means to revitalize communities, build civic pride, and strengthen place identity (Gibson & Connell, 2012). In France, local government involvement in the preservation of the Fête de la Saint-Jean demonstrates that this tradition is positioned as part of the community's cultural and social capital. Festival policies can support cultural inclusion if community groups have equal access to public spaces and opportunities to represent their identities (Quinn et al., 2021). In organizing Erau, collaboration between the sultanate and local governments reconciles the interests of



preserving customs, strengthening regional identity, and promoting tourism. The social benefits of festivals tend to be stronger when communities are involved as actors producing culture, rather than simply being relegated to spectators (Foster, 2022). However, the use of public spaces for festival purposes can also create tensions when economic agendas and regional image are more dominant than the needs of the local community (McGillivray et al., 2022). These issues become even more complex when cultural rituals are packaged as tourism products. Commodification can influence how cultural elements are selected, presented, and interpreted for tourist consumption (Bai & Weng, 2023). The social sustainability of festivals thus depends on organizers' ability to maintain the link between cultural authenticity, community engagement, and destination development needs (Le et al., 2024). This situation highlights the need for research that not only compares ritual forms but also examines the limits of social integration generated by both festivals.

Although the social functions of the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival have been discussed in numerous studies, the available studies tend to be separated by region and cultural focus. Research on Saint-Jean has focused more on the festival's role as a space for negotiating memory and identity in a multicultural urban society (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). Other studies have positioned the celebration as a symbolic stage for the performance and affirmation of local identity (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). In the context of Erau, research has focused more on the dimension of religious solidarity within the Belimbur ritual (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021). The values of tolerance, brotherhood, and integration between the Kutai people and immigrant groups have also been the focus of previous research (Alfario et al., 2024). More recent studies have expanded the discussion of Erau to include religious moderation and multicultural education (Angranti et al., 2025). Scholarly studies directly examining the practice of the Fête de la Saint-Jean in France in this research corpus are relatively limited and scattered. Therefore, online documentary sources from the media, cultural websites, and institutional sites are used to complement the empirical context, particularly to examine the forms of celebration, regional variations, and the continuity of contemporary practices, but are not positioned as a substitute for scholarly literature or theoretical foundations. Despite providing an important empirical foundation, previous research has not systematically compared the mechanisms of community formation in the two festivals based on ritual media, bodily participation, use of public space, emotional intensity, and the loosening of social hierarchies. This gap needs to be examined because the similarity of integrative functions does not indicate that the Fête de la Saint-Jean and



the Erau Festival operate through entirely the same social processes. Based on this problem, this study aims to compare cultural practices in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival and explain the process of liminality and community formation in both celebrations. The analysis focuses on the ways, levels, and conditions that allow social hierarchies to be temporarily suspended, thus creating relatively equal interactions among festival participants. Thus, social integration is positioned as a process that needs to be critically analyzed, not as a consequence assumed to always arise from the holding of festivals. The aims of this study are:

1. Analyzing cultural practices, ritual symbols, and forms of collective participation in the Fête de la Saint-Jean in France and the Erau Festival in Indonesia.
2. Comparing the mechanisms of formation of liminality and community through the use of fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and water in the Belimbur tradition at the Erau Festival.
3. Explains how and to what extent both festivals suspend social hierarchies and encourage more equal interactions and social integration among their participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality and Community

The theory of liminality and community is used as the primary theory for analyzing the social processes of the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival. This framework is rooted in the concept of rites of passage, which divides rituals into stages of separation, transition, and re-incorporation (Van Gennep, 1960). The liminal stage is a threshold state where the old identity has been abandoned but the new identity has not yet fully formed. This condition places participants in a state of betweenness and in-betweenness, allowing for a temporary suspension of social status and hierarchy (Turner, 1969). During this process, symbols, actions, objects, and ritual spaces connect the social, religious, and emotional meanings experienced by participants (Turner, 1967). Liminality can also be part of a social drama that includes norm violations, crises, recovery actions, and community reintegration (Turner, 1974). However, liminal experiences do not always occur uniformly; they can be free, directed, or controlled, depending on the expectations and level of involvement of participants (Chaney & Goulding, 2025).

Communitas can form in liminal spaces, namely direct and relatively egalitarian relationships that emerge when participants share common actions, symbols, spaces, and emotional experiences. Communitas can be existential, normative, and ideological, but its existence remains linked to the temporality and loosening of formal social structures (Turner,



1969). Therefore, the concept cannot be used to describe every form of crowd, joy, or collective solidarity. The main characteristics of *communitas* include antistructure, temporality, emotional connectedness, and shared experience (Haggar, 2025). Its formation also depends on the availability of meaningful interactions among participants because liminal conditions do not always result in collective togetherness (Rodríguez-Mejía et al., 2024). In modern society, liminal experiences are distinguished from liminoid experiences, which are more voluntary, recreational, and individual (Turner, 1982). This distinction can indicate whether a festival still serves a transformational function or has evolved into an entertainment and consumption experience (Lengyel et al., 2025). This shift is increasingly relevant when cultural heritage festivals are developed as tourism destinations, and visitor engagement is not always accompanied by a deep understanding of the ritual (Baltaci & Cakici, 2026). This framework is used to assess community formation through the symbol of fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Belimbur ritual in the Erau Festival.

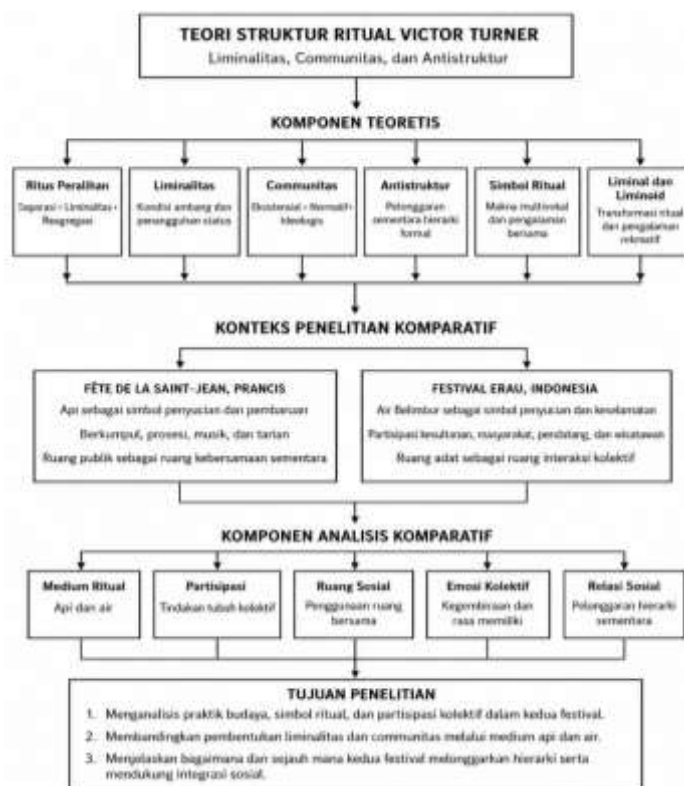


Figure 1. Comparative Theoretical Framework of Community Formation in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and Erau Festival

Fête de la Saint-Jean as a Fire Ritual and the Formation of Collective Identity

The Fête de la Saint-Jean is a celebration that combines Christian religious elements with the tradition of welcoming the summer solstice. In French online sources, the celebration is consistently placed on June 24, a few days after the summer solstice, and is described as a meeting of Christian spirituality, seasonal traditions, and fire-centered community practices (iCalendrier, 2026; Fédération pédagogie Steiner-Waldorf, 2026). The lighting of the Feux de la Saint-Jean not only marks the change of seasons but also forms a symbolic center that directs community attention and movement. In collective rituals, fire can serve as a medium connecting historical narratives, local identities, and social networks among participants (Colombo et al., 2021). The element of burning also provides a theatrical experience that transports participants to a symbolic space beyond everyday life (Swancutt, 2023). The intersection of local traditions and religious practices demonstrates that ritual sacredness can continue to be produced through the interplay of cultural heritage, religion, and contemporary societal interests (Isnart, 2020). Such urban rituals have the potential to shape memory and a sense of belonging to a territory when communities actively engage in its use (Cattacin et al., 2023). Popular documentation also records music, dances, processions, evening balls, and local variations in Provence, Alsace, the Drôme, and the Canigou region (Hostelworld Blog, 2019; Roca, 2023). However, designating festivals as cultural heritage can also transform living practices into official representations that do not fully reflect the experiences of local communities (Zhu & Liu, 2021).

Circling the fire, participating in the procession, dancing, and witnessing the lighting of the bonfire put participants in a shared rhythm of action. The alignment of actions, symbols, and emotional atmosphere can transform the festival space into a ritual environment that strengthens the connection between individuals and the community (Downey & Sherry, 2022). This transformation occurs not only through visual representations but also through bodily engagement and participants' ability to reinterpret the cultural heritage being performed (Wang, 2023). Participation in shared activities can increase emotional intensity, group identification, and a sense of belonging to a broader community (Pizarro et al., 2022). This experience is related to the concept of collective effervescence, which is the increased emotional energy that arises when a group of people focus their attention and actions on a common symbol (Rimé & Páez, 2023). However, the resulting connection does not always permanently erase social differences. Experiences of awe and joy during festivals can strengthen shared identity, but their impact is influenced by the level of engagement of participants and the meaning they attach to the ritual



(Rincón-Unigarro et al., 2025). Thus, fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean can be understood as a symbolic medium that opens up space for the formation of togetherness, rather than as an element that automatically erases social structures.

The Erau Festival as a Space for Ritual, Identity, and Social Integration

The Erau Festival is a cultural practice that connects the history of the Kutai Kartanegara Ing Martadipura Sultanate with the lives of contemporary Kutai Kartanegara society. The series of ceremonies, such as the erecting of ayu (the building of a tree), beluluh (the building of a tree), bepelas (the building of a dragon), and Belimbur (the building of a tree), contain symbols that emphasize the relationship between the sultanate, society, nature, and spiritual beliefs. In the context of social change in East Kalimantan, traditional rituals play a crucial role in maintaining local community identity (Rostiyati et al., 2024). Kutai's identity is also shaped through a long history of encounters between Malay, Javanese, Bugis, Chinese, and other local groups, so that regional culture cannot be understood as a completely homogeneous entity (Iswanto et al., 2025). The inheritance of cultural values occurs through ritual communication that connects symbols, collective action, and intergenerational participation (Tuti & Safitri, 2024). The process of introducing Erau to the younger generation also requires cultural media capable of translating traditional narratives into forms appropriate to societal developments (Farida & Pahlevi, 2025). Within the framework of rites of passage, activities involving symbolic journeys, purification, and changes of state can provide a space for rebuilding an individual's relationship with their community (Jenkins, 2023).

Belimbur plays a crucial role in shaping collective experiences because communities are directly involved in the act of sprinkling water on one another. Water in this ritual represents purification, salvation, fertility, and the renewal of social relationships. The fusion of spiritual meanings with celebratory activities demonstrates that the boundaries between sacred rituals and tourism activities are increasingly fluid in contemporary society (Polus et al., 2022). Developing festivals as tourist attractions can support the sustainability of cultural heritage, but can also alter the meaning, authority, and patterns of community participation (Du et al., 2024). Community support for festivals tends to be influenced by the value they place on cultural heritage, not just by the economic benefits received (Alazaizeh et al., 2025). The sustainability of Erau therefore depends on the ability of the government, the sultanate, and the community to maintain the social function of cultural heritage as a source of community cohesion and resilience



(Zabulis et al., 2025). Official recognition of a festival also needs to consider the potential for unequal representation when certain groups gain greater authority to determine the form of heritage presentation (Chan, 2023). Thus, Belimbur can become a space for community formation if participation does not stop at mass joy, but allows for relatively equal interaction, shared meaning, and recognition of the diversity of participants.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative interpretive approach with a comparative study design to interpret the symbolic processes that shape community in the Fête de la Saint-Jean in France and the Erau Festival in Indonesia. Both festivals are positioned as cases with different historical backgrounds, cultural systems, and ritual forms, but have comparable social functions. The research applies qualitative content analysis to visual, audiovisual, and textual documentation by paying attention to actions, symbols, interaction patterns, use of space, ritual objects, sounds, clothing, and collective participation. Victor Turner's theoretical framework is used deductively to identify separation, liminality, community, antistructure, and reaggregation, while inductive coding is used to accommodate other social patterns that emerge from the data. Through this design, the research is directed at identifying similarities, differences, and uniqueness of the mechanisms of weakening hierarchy and the formation of social integration in both festivals.

Data, Data Sources, and Units of Analysis

The research data includes ritual actions, cultural symbols, spatial arrangements, participation patterns, and forms of social interaction documented in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival. Analysis of the Fête de la Saint-Jean focuses on the preparation and lighting of the feux de la Saint-Jean, the movement of participants towards the celebration space, activities around the fire, and interactions between participants, while the analysis of the Erau Festival is directed at the series of ceremonies leading up to the Belimbur tradition, the implementation of rituals, water-sprinkling activities, the involvement of the sultanate and the community, and changes in social relations during the celebration. Primary data sources consist of documentary videos, festival recordings, photographs, audiovisual publications of official institutions, activity programs, and implementation documents, while secondary data sources include journal articles, books, cultural reports, policy documents, credible news, and Contextual



online sources from media, cultural websites, and institutional websites. For the Fête de la Saint-Jean, contextual online sources included iCalendrier, Hostelworld Travel Blog, Radio France/France Bleu, Pure France, and the Fédération pédagogie Steiner-Waldorf. These non-academic online sources were used primarily to examine dates, regional variations in practice, forms of participation, and contemporary representations, rather than as a primary theoretical basis. Sources were selected purposively based on completeness of access, clarity of origin and timing of the ritual, visibility of the ritual sequence, and relevance to liminality and community. The unit of analysis was determined by scenes, actions, symbols, and interaction events that demonstrate the shift in social relations from a structured state to a more fluid and egalitarian one.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through documentation studies and non-participatory observation of visual, audiovisual, and textual materials related to the two festivals. The collection began with a search for sources through official government websites, cultural institutions, festival organizers, public documentation channels, scientific databases, and credible news media. Each source was then recorded on an inventory sheet containing the title, author or publisher, year, location, document type, length or number of pages, access links, production context, and relevance to the research focus. For non-academic online sources, screening also takes into account publisher identity, author or date traceability, consistency of information with other sources, and editorial or promotional context that may influence festival representation.

After going through a screening process, sources were grouped by festival and ritual stages, then repeatedly observed to identify actors, actions, ritual objects, use of space, forms of interaction, and collective responses. The obtained data were then classified in a matrix based on the categories of separation, liminality, release of status attributes, egalitarian interactions, anti-structure, community type, and reaggregation. Data indicating unequal access, organizer dominance, participation restrictions, commercialization, or the persistence of hierarchies were also collected so that the analysis could explain the conditions that support and limit community formation.



Data Analysis Techniques and Validity

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. In the within-case analysis, each festival is understood as a unified ritual process encompassing the social conditions prior to the celebration, the process of separation from routine, the formation of liminal spaces, the suspension of social structures, the emergence of egalitarian interactions, the formation of community, and the return of participants to the social structure. Coding was conducted deductively based on the concepts of separation, liminality, community, antistructure, and reaggregation, and inductively to identify other themes emerging from the data. Furthermore, cross-case analysis was conducted by comparing the same ritual dimensions without ignoring the historical and cultural specificities of each festival. Fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and water in the Belimbur tradition are not directly positioned as symbols of social integration, but are interpreted based on observed actions, use of space, participation patterns, and changes in social relations.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis Matrix of the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival

Dimensions of Analysis	Fête de la Saint-Jean	Erau Festival	Focus of Interpretation
Separation	Participant movement to the celebration room	Preparation and opening of the Erau series	Separation of participants from social routines
Liminal space	Communal space around the campfire	Public space for the implementation of Belimbur	Changes in rules and interaction patterns
Ritual medium	Bonfire	Belimbur Water	Symbolic meaning and social function of ritual medium
Weakening of hierarchy	Closeness between participants in the celebration space	Involvement of the sultanate, community and visitors	Suspension of attributes and limits of social status
Community	The togetherness and intensity of collective experience	Spontaneous interaction through the activity of	Equality, spontaneity and solidarity



		splashing water on each other	
Antistructure	Easing of social restrictions during celebrations	The dissolution of formal relations during the performance of the ritual	The degree of weakening of social structures and hierarchies
Reaggregation	The end of the celebration and the return of the participants	Closing of the Erau Festival series	Continuation of integration after the ritual ends

The validity of the findings was maintained through source triangulation, examination of conflicting evidence, reflective note-taking, and the creation of an audit trail. Triangulation was conducted by comparing videos, photographs, official documentation, policy documents, credible news reports, and previous research findings. Data demonstrating exclusivity, conflict, organizer dominance, commercialization, or the continuation of hierarchies were also analyzed to ensure interpretations were not based solely on evidence supporting the formation of communities. The entire analysis process was documented through source lists, screening sheets, coding notes, comparison matrices, and interpretive memos. The results of the analysis were used to explain the mechanisms of liminality and community formation, identify similarities and differences in the processes of hierarchy weakening, and formulate patterns of cross-cultural social integration and the conditions that support or limit their sustainability.

RESEARCH RESULT

Comparison of Cultural Practices in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival

The Fête de la Saint-Jean is a celebration that brings together the tradition of honoring Saint John the Baptist with agricultural customs related to the summer solstice. This celebration is regularly celebrated on June 24 and is still found in various local forms in France (iCalendrier, 2026; Fédération pédagogie Steiner-Waldorf, 2026). This intersection of religious elements and seasonal traditions places fire as a central symbol in the celebration. The procession of lighting the Feux de la Saint-Jean serves not only as a ceremonial activity but also as a focal point for spatial orientation, drawing participants together in a shared celebratory space. In several regions



of France, the fire ritual is accompanied by music, dance, processions, and community gatherings, transforming the celebration into a space for the performance of local identity. Contemporary online documentation shows that Saint-Jean practices are not uniform across regions: iCalendrier describes bonfires, music, and dancing as common elements, Radio France notes the tradition of the brasier in Comminges, while Pure France describes the Recampado and the lighting of the brasier on Mont Ventoux (iCalendrier, 2026; Delbès & Massard, 2023; Roca, 2023). Collective meaning is formed through shared presence, spatial proximity, and the experience of witnessing the fire in a setting distinct from everyday life. However, the level of participant involvement is not always uniform, with some people actively participating while others are present as spectators. This variation demonstrates that togetherness at the Fête de la Saint-Jean is shaped through the intersection of religious ritual, local traditions, and contemporary community participation patterns (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000).



Figure 2. Photograph of the Bonfire of Saint-Jean-Baptiste at Versailles

The Erau Festival has historical roots in the traditions of the Kutai Kartanegara Ing Martadipura Sultanate and was initially associated with royal ceremonies. Its development demonstrates a shift from rituals centered on the sultanate to cultural celebrations involving the wider community. The Erau series retains the ceremonial elements of the sultanate, but its implementation also includes artistic performances, cultural activities, and public participation. Belimbur is a crucial part of this series, bringing together the sultanate, the Kutai community, immigrant groups, and visitors through the activity of sprinkling water on one another. Public spaces that previously served ordinary social functions were temporarily transformed into arenas for collective interaction with specific ritual rules. This transformation demonstrates that Erau not only represents the continuity of royal traditions but also serves as a means of negotiating Kutai identity within an increasingly diverse society. However, the festival's openness remains

within the limits determined by customary authority, organizational regulations, and regulations regarding the use of water.



Figure 3. Photo of Community Involvement in the Erau Festival Series

A comparison of the two festivals reveals that both stem from historical traditions maintained through intergenerational transmission, yet continually adapt to social change. The Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival both utilize public space as a community gathering arena and place natural elements as the primary medium for ritual. Fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean forms a focal point that unifies participants, while water in the Belimbur creates connections through reciprocal actions between participants. These two mediums have distinct meanings in their respective cultures, so they cannot be equated solely on the basis of their symbolic function. A more substantive similarity lies in the ritual's ability to transform public space from a mundane function into a space of collective experience. Music, performances, the celebratory atmosphere, and shared participation further bring together sacred, social, and recreational dimensions. Thus, the integrative potential of the two festivals stems not solely from the symbols of fire or water, but from the way these symbols are activated through social interaction.

The main differences between the two festivals are evident in the basis of ritual legitimacy, the forms of participant involvement, the intensity of social contact, and the relationship with the organizing authorities. The Fête de la Saint-Jean developed through a blend of Christian traditions, seasonal customs, and local identity, while Erau maintains customary and historical legitimacy related to the Kutai Kartanegara Sultanate. In the Saint-Jean celebration, participation is shaped more by communal presence around the fire, music, dance, and processions. In contrast, Belimbur generates more direct physical interaction through the activity of sprinkling water on each other. These differences mean that the resulting mechanisms of social closeness are not entirely identical. Saint-Jean tends to foster togetherness through symbolic

orientation and spatial proximity, while Belimbur builds interaction through reciprocal physical engagement. At the same time, the development of both festivals as tourist attractions carries the risk of shifting participants from ritual participants to consumers of the performance. Therefore, the unifying function of society depends on open access, depth of participation, and the organizers' ability to maintain a balance between sacredness, cultural preservation, entertainment, and tourism interests.

Table 2. Comparison of Characteristics of Cultural Practices in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival

Comparative Aspects	Fête de la Saint-Jean	Erau Festival	Comparative Interpretation
Historical background	Seasonal traditions that have been integrated with the celebration of the birth of Saint John the Baptist	Traditional ceremonies that developed within the Kutai Kartanegara Sultanate	Both come from historical traditions, but have different legitimate bases.
Cultural foundation	Christian traditions, agrarian customs, and local identities	Sultanate traditions, Kutai customs, and local community identity	Religious elements are more dominant in Saint-Jean, while traditional and sultanate elements are stronger in Erau.
Main ritual	Ignition feux de la Saint-Jean	A series of Erau ceremonies and Belimbur traditions	The main ritual becomes the center of the formation of collective experience.
Ritual medium	Bonfire	Belimbur Water	Fire unifies the orientation of the participants, while water produces direct interaction.
Execution room	Squares, village centers, church	Kedaton, banks of the Mahakam River, roads	Everyday spaces are temporarily transformed

	grounds, and local public spaces	and public spaces of Tenggarong	into spaces for ritual and social interaction.
Actors involved	Religious leaders, local government, communities, residents, and visitors	Sultanate, local government, Kutai people, immigrants and tourists	Both festivals bring together actors from diverse social positions.
Forms of participation	Gather around the fire, follow the procession, music and dance	Following the procession and sprinkling water on each other in Belimbur	Saint-Jean emphasizes spatial proximity, while Belimbur emphasizes reciprocal interaction.
Contact intensity	Tends to be indirect and centered on shared visual experiences.	More direct through physical contact between participants	Differences in contact influence how social closeness is formed.
Sacred dimension	Veneration of Saint John the Baptist and the symbolism of fire	The sanctity of customs, self-purification, and respect for the traditions of the sultanate	Sacredness is maintained through different cultural systems of meaning
Social function	Strengthening togetherness, collective memory, and local identity	Strengthening Kutai identity, community involvement, and intergroup relations	Both have potential as instruments of social integration.
The role of authority	Churches, local governments, and community organizations	Kutai Kartanegara Sultanate and local government	Authorities determine ritual procedures, use of space, and limits of participation.
Contemporary challenges	The change of tradition into entertainment and	Commercialization, tourism promotion,	Commodification can expand the reach of festivals while reducing the

	the decrease in ritual participation	and the changing meaning of Belimbur	depth of the ritual experience.
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The Formation of Liminality and Community in Both Festivals

The formation of community in both festivals begins with a stage of separation, when participants leave their daily patterns of life and enter a celebratory space with its own set of times, activities, and behavioral norms. At the Fête de la Saint-Jean, separation occurs as people move to the venue, join the procession, and focus on preparing the bonfire. At the Erau Festival, a similar process occurs as people enter a series of sultanate ceremonies and await the start of Belimbur. This transition does not necessarily result in a tangible loss of social status, but rather a symbolic separation from everyday routines and formal relationships. Attire, position, group origin, and social standing remain with participants, but they no longer serve as the primary basis for interactions during ritual activities. Separation thus becomes the initial condition that allows participants to enter a social experience distinct from the structure of ordinary life (Turner, 1969).

The liminal phase of the Fête de la Saint-Jean is formed when participants gather around the Fête de la Saint-Jean and direct their attention to the lighting and movement of the fire. The fire transforms the public space into a center of simultaneous visual and emotional experience. Spatial proximity allows local residents, visitors, religious leaders, and organizers to occupy relatively the same space and share the celebratory atmosphere. The activities of watching the fire, following the music, dancing, or moving in the procession reduce the private and formal distances that typically limit interaction. However, the resulting liminality is relative because not all participants occupy equal positions and roles. Ritual leaders, organizers, community leaders, performers, and spectators still have different functions. This condition indicates that the liminal space does not completely erase social structures, but rather loosens their influence during the celebration (Turner, 1969).

In the Erau Festival, the liminal phase reaches greater intensity when Belimbur begins, transforming the public space into an arena for collective participation. Water serves as a medium connecting participants through direct and reciprocal action. The act of splashing water creates physical closeness that reduces the distance between the Kutai community, immigrant groups, tourists, and some elements of the sultanate and government. This interaction temporarily shifts formal relationships into more fluid, spontaneous, and open ones. Nevertheless, the liminality of Belimbur remains constrained by ritual procedures, water use regulations, zoning, security, and



the distinction between the ceremony leader and the general public. These boundaries are necessary to maintain sacredness and order, but they also demonstrate that the weakening of hierarchy is not absolute. Belimbur therefore forms a threshold space that brings together ritual order and the spontaneity of community participation.

Communitas emerges when a liminal experience shifts participants' attention from individual identity to a sense of togetherness formed through collective experience. In the Fête de la Saint-Jean, togetherness grows through a shared orientation toward fire, spatial proximity, music, dance, and the emotional atmosphere of the celebration. In Belimbur, these relationships are formed through more direct physical participation, as participants become both givers and recipients of water sprinkles. Both festivals primarily demonstrate spontaneous communitas, as a sense of equality and closeness emerges during the peak moments of the ritual without relying entirely on formal relationships. However, events organized by the church, the sultanate, the government, and communities also exhibit elements of normative communitas, where shared experiences are organized through rules to maintain them as collective traditions. Thus, communitas in both festivals does not imply the complete loss of social identity, but rather indicates a reduction in the limiting power of that identity as participants engage in a shared ritual experience (Turner, 1969).

At the peak of the celebration, the weakening of hierarchies creates an anti-structural environment that allows for more open social relations than in everyday life. The anti-structure in both festivals is temporary and partial, as religious, customary, governmental, and committee authorities are still needed to regulate the rituals. After the fire is extinguished or the Belimbur ends, participants enter a re-aggregation phase, returning to their previous roles, statuses, and social obligations. Nevertheless, the experience of togetherness can leave a collective memory, a sense of belonging, and recognition of the existence of other groups. These impacts do not in themselves prove the formation of long-term social integration. Communitas should be understood as a momentary social experience that provides the possibility of strengthening solidarity, while its sustainability depends on the openness of public spaces, consistent participation, the meaning of rituals, and intergroup relations after the festival concludes. This distinction is important so that emotional togetherness during the celebrations is not immediately equated with permanent changes in the social structure.



Table 3. Stages of Community Formation in the Two Festivals

Stage	Fête de la Saint-Jean	Erau Festival	Social Meaning
Separation	Participants head to the fire ignition room	Participants enter the Erau series	Symbolic separation from routine
Liminality	Gather around the feux de la Saint-Jean	Following the Belimbur tradition	Relaxation of daily interaction rules
Antistructure	Closeness is formed through shared experiences around the fire.	Social distancing is weakened through water splashes	Temporary suspension of social hierarchy
Community	Togetherness grows through collective orientation and emotions	Togetherness emerges through direct interaction	Temporary equality and solidarity are formed
Reaggregation	Participants return after the celebration ends	Participants return after the Erau series is completed	Return to social structures with collective experience

Table 3 shows that both festivals have similar stages of community formation, but through different ritual mechanisms. The Fête de la Saint-Jean builds togetherness through spatial proximity and a collective orientation toward fire, while the Erau Festival fosters reciprocal interaction through water in Belimbur. In both festivals, the weakening of hierarchies is temporary as participants return to their social standing after the ritual concludes.

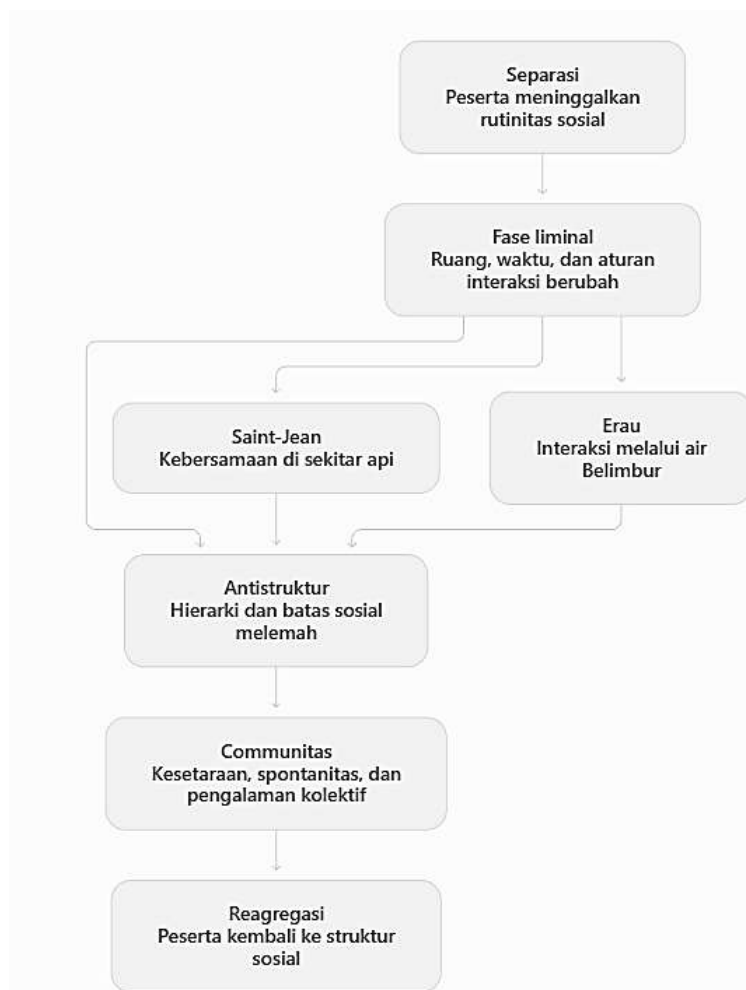


Figure 3. Stages of Community Formation in the Fête de la Saint-Jean and Erau Festival

Figure 3 shows that community formation at both festivals proceeds through similar stages, but utilizes different ritual mechanisms. The Fête de la Saint-Jean generates a liminal experience through participants' shared orientation and closeness around fire, while Belimbur forms it through reciprocal interactions with water. Both pathways lead to a temporary weakening of social structures and the emergence of collective togetherness before participants return to their respective social positions. This pathway emphasizes that community is not a permanent state, but rather a transitional experience that can serve as a foundation for social integration if the values of togetherness are maintained after the ritual ends.

Cross-Cultural Social Integration Patterns and the Boundaries of Community Formation

The pattern of social integration in the Fête de la Saint-Jean is formed through the relationship between public space, local traditions, and the collective experience around fire. The presence of people from diverse social and geographical backgrounds creates opportunities for closeness beyond formal, everyday relationships. Fire is not only the center of the ritual but also a shared point of orientation that connects participants to historical memory and local identity. Gathering, participating in the procession, witnessing the lighting of the fire, and engaging in music and dance reinforce a sense of belonging to the tradition and the celebratory space. However, the potential for integration is limited when most people are merely spectators. In such circumstances, the festival can generate visual and emotional togetherness, but it does not necessarily foster deeper social connections among participants.

In the Erau Festival, social integration is formed through encounters between the sultanate, the Kutai community, immigrant groups, the local government, and tourists. Belimbur provides a space for more direct interaction because participants not only witness the ritual but also engage in the activity of sprinkling water with one another. This participation reduces social distance and allows for the open display of Kutai's local identity without completely excluding the involvement of other groups. The physical interaction, joyful atmosphere, and shared emotional experiences generate solidarity that temporarily transcends differences in ethnicity, position, and group origin. However, this integration can lose depth when Belimbur is primarily promoted as entertainment or a tourist attraction rather than understood as part of a series of rituals with sacred rules and meanings. Strengthening integration therefore depends on a balance between preserving Kutai's identity, open participation, and protecting ritual values.

Cross-culturally, both festivals exhibit comparable patterns, namely the separation of participants from routine, the transformation of public space into liminal space, the use of ritual mediums to shape collective experiences, and the temporary weakening of social boundaries. The main difference between the two lies in the interaction mechanisms used. The Fête de la Saint-Jean fosters closeness through shared orientation and symbolic experiences around the fire, while the Erau Festival fosters reciprocal relationships through physical contact in Belimbur. Thus, social integration in the first festival tends to rely on spatial proximity and emotional simultaneity, while the second emphasizes direct participation. Despite these differences, the formation of community in both is influenced by the openness of space, equal opportunities for participation, the strength of ritual meaning, and the organizers' ability to maintain a connection



between the sacred and recreational dimensions. Conversely, commercialization, spatial segmentation, the dominance of authority, and the transformation of ritual into spectacle can maintain or even strengthen the social distance that the festivals aim to weaken.

These comparative findings extend Turner's theory by demonstrating that community can be formed through different arrangements of symbols and forms of participation. However, community cannot be understood as the permanent elimination of social structures, as the resulting equality remains limited by ritual order, the authority of the organizers, and the duration of the festival. Liminal experiences are more appropriately positioned as conditions that open the possibility of social integration rather than as evidence of sustained integration. Emotional togetherness during new celebrations has broader social impacts when it is sustained through collective memory, intergroup interaction, community involvement, and inclusive cultural policies. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in affirming that the relationship between liminality, community, and social integration is contextual. Festivals may temporarily weaken hierarchies, but the sustainability of integration is determined by how ritual experiences are translated into social relationships after the celebration ends (Turner, 1969).

Table 4. Convergence, Differences, and Limits of Social Integration in the Two Festivals

Aspect	Fête de la Saint-Jean	Erau Festival	Interpretation
Integration basis	Collective experiences around fire	Direct participation in Belimbur	Both of them use ritual medium to form togetherness
Forms of interaction	Spatial proximity and symbolic orientation	Physical contact and reciprocal actions	Integration mechanisms differ according to the character of the ritual.
Groups involved	Local communities, urban and rural groups, and visitors	lish Sultanate, Kutai people, immigrants, and tourists	The festival space brings together diverse groups
Supporting factors	Openness of space and community participation	Equality of participation and involvement across groups	Integration is strengthened when participants become ritual actors.

Limiting factors	The dominance of the role of the audience and commercialization	Ceremonialism, tourism, and access restrictions	Festivals can turn into spectacles without deep interaction.
Community form	Symbolic and emotional togetherness	Participatory and physical togetherness	Both produce temporary equality.
Sustainability	Relying on the maintenance of local memory and traditions	Depends on community involvement and preservation of customary meanings	Continuous integration requires follow-up after the festival

DISCUSSION

Research shows that the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival serve as cultural spaces where collective identity is reproduced through rituals, symbols, and community participation (Hubaib, 2021). In the Fête de la Saint-Jean, firelighting, processions, music, and community gatherings connect historical traditions with the formation of contemporary local identities (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). This description is reinforced by contemporary documentary sources that show that the feux de la Saint-Jean became a center of gathering, singing, dancing, and community celebration in various French localities, while also displaying regional variations (iCalendrier, 2026; Delbès & Massard, 2023; Fédération pédagogie Steiner-Waldorf, 2026). The Erau Festival also brings together the identity of the Kutai Sultanate with the realities of the Kutai Kartanegara community, which consists of local residents and immigrant groups (Alfario et al., 2024). The continuity of both festivals demonstrates that traditions are not simply passed down in fixed forms but are negotiated to reflect societal changes and the need for cultural representation (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). Thus, the festival serves as an arena connecting historical memory, local identity, and the community's need to maintain a sense of belonging to their community (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021).

The ability of both festivals to support social integration is related to the changing function of public spaces during the celebrations (Gamba et al., 2022). Fields, streets, religious areas, and the sultanate's neighborhood temporarily transform into social spaces that bring together groups of people from diverse backgrounds (Hubaib, 2021). Gatherings within the same space cannot be



considered integration if participants are merely spectators without engaging in meaningful interactions (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). In the Fête de la Saint-Jean, engagement takes place through processions, music, dance, and fireside activities, strengthening emotional connections with local traditions (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). Meanwhile, Belimbur fosters a more direct form of participation as people engage with one another through water-sprinkling activities without considering differences in group origin as the primary barrier to interaction (Alfario et al., 2024).

These changes in space and interaction patterns can be interpreted through the concept of liminality, a transitional state where participants emerge from social routines and enter a different ritual setting (Turner, 1969). In the Fête de la Saint-Jean, the liminal phase is formed through the concentration of participants around the feux de la Saint-Jean, which creates spatial proximity and a shared emotional experience (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). At the Erau Festival, this phase is evident when the public space transforms into a Belimbur arena, allowing local communities, immigrants, visitors, and elements of the sultanate to interact more fluidly (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021). However, the presence of ritual leaders, committee members, customary authorities, and security personnel indicates that role differentiation is maintained throughout the festival (Hubaib, 2021). Therefore, liminality in both festivals does not eliminate the social structure entirely, but rather reduces its rigidity to allow for more open relationships (Alfario et al., 2024).

Despite exhibiting comparable liminal patterns, the two festivals foster social closeness through different mediums and ritual mechanisms (Gamba et al., 2022). Fire in the Fête de la Saint-Jean serves as a visual and emotional focal point, uniting participants' attention in a collective experience (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). Social closeness in the celebration is primarily fostered through shared presence, simultaneous responses, and engagement in activities surrounding the fire (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). Conversely, water in Belimbur fosters reciprocal relationships, as each participant has the potential to be both a giver and a recipient of water (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021). These differences indicate that integration in the Erau Festival emphasizes physical participation, while the Fête de la Saint-Jean emphasizes spatial closeness and symbolic experience (Alfario et al., 2024).

The loosening of hierarchies and increased intensity of interactions allow for the formation of spontaneous communities characterized by closeness, joy, and temporary equality among participants (Turner, 1969). The experience of togetherness at the Fête de la Saint-Jean



emerges when participants direct their attention to the same symbols and engage in a collective emotional atmosphere (Morice & Rosati-Marzetti, 2018). At the Erau Festival, community is formed more directly through Belimbur, which reduces social distance between Kutai residents, visitors, and tourists (Alfario et al., 2024). The involvement of the government, the sultanate, religious institutions, and the committee indicates that spontaneous communities are then regulated in normative forms to maintain order and the continuity of the ritual (Hubaib, 2021). This arrangement can support the festival's continuity, but it can also limit equality if zoning, rules, and role assignments create new distances between participants (Ananda & Widiyanto, 2021).

The communities formed during both festivals do not automatically result in lasting social integration after the celebrations end (Gamba et al., 2022). Participants return to their jobs, positions, group identities, and formal relationships during the reaggregation phase (Turner, 1969). Liminal experiences can have longer-lasting social impacts if nurtured through community engagement, strengthening collective memory, and cross-group interactions outside the festival (Olazabal & Frigault, 2000). While commercialization can support the economic sustainability of festivals, it also risks transforming rituals into spectacles that diminish the depth of community participation (Hubaib, 2021). Based on these findings, the relationship between liminality, community, and social integration needs to be understood as a contextual process determined by the balance between sacredness, openness to participation, institutional governance, and tourism interests (Alfario et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This research shows that the Fête de la Saint-Jean and the Erau Festival have different forms, histories, and symbolic systems, but both function as cultural spaces that bring people together through collective experiences. The Fête de la Saint-Jean builds togetherness through spatial proximity and participants' symbolic orientation toward fire, while the Erau Festival, particularly through Belimbur, creates a reciprocal interaction with the medium of water. In both festivals, participants' shift from routine to ritual space creates a liminal phase that temporarily loosens formal relationships and social hierarchies. This condition allows for the formation of a community characterized by spontaneity, closeness, equality, and solidarity among participants. However, the weakening of hierarchy is not absolute because ritual authority, rules of



organization, and role allocation are maintained. Thus, both festivals have comparable integrative patterns, but form communities through different participation mechanisms.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study extends Victor Turner's theory of ritual processes in comparing European and Indonesian traditions by demonstrating that communities can be formed through diverse media, interaction intensity, and institutional structures. Liminality in contemporary festivals does not always result in a complete anti-structure, but more often creates a temporary loosening of class, position, ethnicity, and group origin boundaries. Practically, the research findings emphasize the importance of maintaining active community involvement so that festivals do not become merely cultural performances that are passively consumed. The government, traditional institutions, religious authorities, local communities, and organizers need to maintain a balance between ritual sanctity, open participation, security, and tourism development. Inclusive management can strengthen the festival's function as a space for social encounter without diminishing the cultural meaning that underlies its implementation.

Research Limitations and Recommendations

This research is limited to analyzing visual, audiovisual, and textual documentation, so it does not fully capture the subjective experiences of participants or the changes in social relations after the festival ends. Documentation produced by the government, organizers, media, or the public can also convey specific perspectives and does not always highlight inequalities, conflicts, or groups not involved in the celebration. Because some of the context of the Fête de la Saint-Jean is drawn from media, travel blogs, and institutional websites, these sources are used to a limited extent to describe practices, regional variations, and contemporary representations and are triangulated with scholarly literature; they are not used to replace a theoretical framework or draw causal conclusions. Further research is recommended using field observations, in-depth interviews, and focus groups with local communities, visitors, ritual leaders, organizers, and tourists. Longitudinal studies are also needed to distinguish ephemeral emotional togetherness from social integration that persists beyond the festival space. Comparisons can be extended to other festivals to more comprehensively understand the varying relationships between ritual symbols, liminality, community, commercialization, and social cohesion.



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