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Educational Values in the Batang Garing Philosophy of the Dayak Ngaju: Relevance to Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT
Batang Garing (also called Batang Haring) is a Dayak Ngaju cultural symbol discussed in literature on cosmology, character education, conservation, and mathematics. This article examines educational values associated with the symbol and their possible ethical relevance to Islamic education. It uses a qualitative library approach and a focused literature synthesis. Its contribution is a critical synthesis and ethical comparison, not the discovery of new cultural meanings. Publications were identified through academic search engines, journal and publisher sites, DOI records, GARUDA, and institutional repositories, then compared thematically. The search was targeted rather than exhaustive and is not presented as a systematic review. The clearest explicit mapping identified in the reviewed literature associates selected symbolic elements with religiosity, responsibility, environmental care, peace-loving conduct, and tolerance. The source's own abstract and table do not map every element identically, so the article preserves this interpretive ambiguity rather than resolving it by conjecture. The synthesis suggests that environmental care, responsibility, respect for difference, and peaceful relations can be discussed alongside Islamic ethical sources without claiming identical meanings or shared theological origins. No fieldwork or classroom intervention was conducted; interpretations require further dialogue with Dayak Ngaju cultural knowledge holders and Islamic education scholars.

1. INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom can inform character education because it carries a community's collective memories, symbols, knowledge, and value orientations. However, cultural symbols should not be detached from their context or assigned a single moral meaning without adequate evidence; culturally grounded education must attend to the community and the meanings reported in reliable sources rather than treating culture as decoration (Sakti et al., 2024). Batang Garing, also written as Batang Haring and commonly translated as the Tree of Life, is discussed in literature on Dayak Ngaju mythology and cosmology. Mirim and Sudiman (2018) examine its functions and meanings, including the cosmological relationship among the upper realm, the human world, and the lower realm. The study most directly connecting Batang Garing with character education is the ethnographic research of Wurdianto, Norsandi, and Fitriana (2022), which associates selected symbolic elements with religiosity, responsibility, environmental care, peace-loving conduct, and tolerance. These associations are interpretations reported in that study, not a verified consensus among all Dayak Ngaju communities. Other publications discuss Batang Haring as local wisdom in sustainable tourism (Mau & Sukawati, 2019), the potential application of Batang Garing cultural values in orangutan conservation (Farashwanti & Anisa, 2024), motifs in ethnomathematics (Mairing et al., 2024), and its visualization in mathematics learning (Setyawan & Munandar, 2026). Penyang et al. (2024) compare the terminology of the Tree of Life in Genesis 2:9 with Batang Garing in a Christian Dayak Ngaju context; this comparison does not establish identical theological foundations. Franciska and Artika (2026), meanwhile, examine ethnopedagogical values in the distinct Kandas culinary tradition. These studies demonstrate that Batang Garing and related Dayak Ngaju traditions

have been examined from cultural, environmental, religious, and educational perspectives, but their different research aims and types of evidence must not be conflated.

Research on local wisdom in Islamic education provides a conceptual context through studies of locally grounded learning materials, ethnopedagogy, multicultural competencies, environmental education, and Dayak traditions (Erawati & Rahmayanti, 2021; Fauzan et al., 2024; Mardhiah et al., 2021a, 2021b; Muhajir & Muslimah, 2025; Rianti et al., 2021; Wati et al., 2024). Recent discussions also treat local wisdom as substantive pedagogical knowledge rather than cultural decoration (Nugraheni et al., 2026; Sayuti & Hafizin, 2026). Although Batang Garing has been studied from cultural, ecological, religious, and educational perspectives, these works have not been brought together to distinguish culturally attributed meanings, character values explicitly mapped in prior research, and their possible ethical relevance to Islamic education. This article therefore asks: (1) How does the literature describe the cultural and cosmological context of Batang Garing? (2) Which educational values have previous studies associated with its elements, and what are the limits of that evidence? and (3) How can these values be discussed in Islamic education without conflating cultural meanings with Islamic theology? This comparison is academically important because it clarifies how Islamic education can engage culturally specific knowledge without appropriating it or collapsing distinct belief systems. Conceptually, it distinguishes source-reported cultural meanings, prior educational interpretations, and Islamic normative resources used for ethical reflection. The article offers a critical synthesis of these levels; it does not claim to discover new cultural meanings, establish a consensus among all Dayak Ngaju communities, or demonstrate the effectiveness of an educational intervention.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative library-based approach through a focused literature synthesis to compare descriptions and interpretations of Batang Garing in scholarly publications. The directly relevant corpus comprises seven studies: mythology and meaning (Mirim & Sudiman, 2018), tourism and local wisdom (Mau & Sukawati, 2019), ethnopedagogy and character values (Wurdianto et al., 2022), orangutan conservation (Farashwanti & Anisa, 2024), religious terminology (Penyang et al., 2024), ethnomathematics (Mairing et al., 2024), and mathematics learning (Setyawan & Munandar, 2026). Their publication years span 2018–2026; this describes the retained corpus and is not presented as a pre-established date cut-off. Contextual publications on Islamic education, local wisdom, environmental education, and ethnopedagogy were used to frame the comparison, not as direct evidence of Batang Garing meanings. Searches used academic and general search engines, journal and publisher sites, DOI records, GARUDA, and institutional repositories. Search terms included “Batang Garing,” “Batang Haring,” “Dayak Ngaju,” “ethnopedagogy,” “local wisdom,” “Islamic education,” and “PAI.” Bibliographic traceability and available metadata were checked on 20 October 2026. Sources were included when their bibliographic details could be traced and their content substantively addressed Batang Garing’s cultural context, symbolic meanings, religion, education, sustainability, or conservation. Contextual sources were retained when they contributed to the discussion of Islamic education, ecology, local wisdom, or ethnopedagogy; studies of other traditions, including Kandas, were not treated as direct evidence of Batang Garing. Sources with untraceable bibliographic details or no substantive relevance to these questions were not used as evidence. No formal language restriction or narrower publication-date threshold was pre-specified in the research record; accordingly, the article does not claim either. The available notes do not preserve aggregate counts of records retrieved, screened, or excluded, so no retrospective search-flow numbers are reported. The analysis recorded each source’s context, method, and evidence type; extracted descriptions of symbolic elements and associated values; and grouped them into themes of cosmology, environmental care, responsibility, tolerance, peace, and religiosity. Where full texts

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were available, relevant methods and findings were reviewed; otherwise, claims were limited to information explicitly available in abstracts or previews. The synthesis distinguishes source-reported interpretations, patterns across publications, and the authors' ethical comparison with Islamic teachings. Qur'anic references were checked against the official Qur'an Kemenag collection. No interviews, observations, or classroom interventions were conducted; the study is therefore a focused synthesis, not an exhaustive systematic review.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Cultural and Cosmological Structure of Batang Garing

Batang Garing/Batang Haring is described as a Tree of Life, but its significance extends beyond a literal tree image. Mirim and Sudiman (2018) situate it in Dayak Ngaju mythology and cosmology. Wurdianto et al. (2022, pp. 50–55) describe a vertical arrangement of upper, middle, and lower realms and discuss relationships among the spiritual world, human life, and the lower realm. These explanations should be read as source-attributed cultural accounts, not as an uncontested definition for all members of the community. The structure therefore needs to be understood on its own cultural terms before its educational value is evaluated. In this article, the reported cosmological description, the earlier researchers' interpretation, and the present authors' ethical comparison remain distinct analytical levels. This distinction supports careful interpretation without presenting a public monument or a single published diagram as definitive evidence of every cultural meaning. More specifically, Mirim and Sudiman (2018) describe Batang Haring as having an upward-pointing, spear-like form; branches bearing groups of fruits oriented upward and downward; leaves associated with the tail of the hornbill (tingang); and a lower section that includes a water-filled jar (Balanga) and Pulau Batu Nindan Tarung. Their account associates the upward form with Ranying Hatala Langit and interprets the symbol as expressing harmony among people, between people and nature, and between people and the divine. These meanings are attributed to the authors' account of Dayak Ngaju cosmology; they should not be treated as a universally verified interpretation or equated with Islamic theology.



Figure 1. Tugu Batang Garing at the roundabout in Kuala Kapuas, Central Kalimantan.
Source: Ezagren (Arief R. Randan), Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tugu_Batang_Garing.JPG (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Figure 1 shows the public monument identified by the author as Tugu Batang Garing in Kuala Kapuas. Its central pillar, Dayak-style ornamental panels, and hornbill-like finial document the visible form; cultural meanings are discussed through scholarly sources rather than inferred from the photograph alone.

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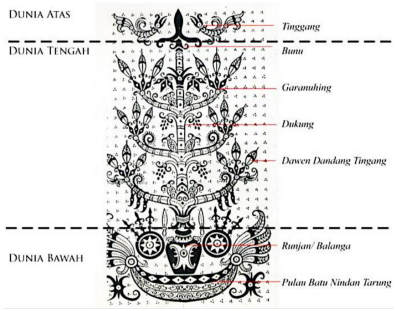


Figure 2. Symbolic structure of Batang Garing and its three cosmological layers.
Source: Wurdianto et al. (2022, p. 54), reproduced under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/); cropped to isolate the diagram.

Figure 2 presents the diagram published by Wurdianto et al. (2022, p. 54), separating the upper world (dunia atas), middle world (dunia tengah), and lower world (dunia bawah). The labelled elements include Tinggang/Tingang (hornbill), Bunu, Garanuhing, Dukung, Dawen Dandang Tingang, Runjan/Balanga, and Pulau Batu Nindan Tarung. The labels and interpretations are retained as presented in the source. In the accompanying discussion, these descriptions are attributed to the cited study and are not generalized as a uniform interpretation across all Dayak Ngaju communities.

Symbolic Elements and Educational Values Reported in the Literature

The clearest explicit mapping from Batang Garing elements to character values in the reviewed corpus is provided by Wurdianto et al. (2022, pp. 54–55), an ethnographic study. Its abstract associates the hornbill (enggang/tingang) with religiosity, Bunu with responsibility, Dukung and Dawen Dandang Tingang with environmental care, Garanuhing with peace-loving conduct, Balanga with tolerance, and Pulau Batu Nindan Tarung with environmental care, responsibility, and religiosity. Its table also describes Runjan/Balanga in relation to prosperity and relationships among humans, nature, and God. Because the abstract and table do not map every element identically, the discrepancy is reported rather than resolved by guesswork. These associations are findings of one study, not universal meanings shared by all Dayak Ngaju communities. Table 1 therefore records the source's reported associations together with qualifications about their evidential limits. The seven direct sources do not provide equivalent kinds of evidence. Mirim and Sudiman (2018) offer a mythological and interpretive account of cosmology; Wurdianto et al. (2022) provide the clearest ethnographic account linking selected elements with character values; Mau and Sukawati (2019) discuss local wisdom in sustainable tourism; and Farashwanti and Anisa (2024) consider possible conservation applications. Penyang et al. (2024) examine religious terminology and underline the need to distinguish theological contexts, while Mairing et al. (2024) and Setyawan and Munandar (2026) address ethnomathematical motifs and mathematics learning. The latter studies support the educational visibility or possible application of cultural motifs, but they do not independently verify the character-value mapping. Thus, the strongest cross-source convergence concerns ecological relevance; responsibility, tolerance, peace, and religiosity remain more dependent on the interpretation reported by Wurdianto et al. (2022).

Table 1. Symbolic elements and educational values reported in Wurdianto et al. (2022)

Symbolic element	Value reported	Analytical qualification
Tingang/Enggang (hornbill)	Religiosity (reported in the study)	The source's cultural-religious interpretation must remain distinct from Islamic creed.
Bunu (upward-pointing spear)	Responsibility	A possible ethical resonance with accountability; not evidence of a shared theological origin.

Symbolic element	Value reported	Analytical qualification
Dukung (connecting element)	Environmental care	The article relates this element to connection and balance; the interpretation remains source-specific.
Garanuhing (branch/fruit motif)	Peace-loving conduct	The study links it with respect in human relations; this should not be universalized.
Dawen Dandang Tingang (leaf motif)	Environmental care	The source associates the leaf with patience, self-control, and respect for nature.
Runjan/Balanga (water jar)	The article's abstract links Balanga to tolerance; its table describes Runjan/Balanga in relation to prosperity and human–nature–God relations.	The source uses overlapping/variable labels; the mapping is reported rather than resolved by conjecture.
Pulau Batu Nindan Tarung	Environmental care, responsibility, and religiosity (abstract)	The source associates it with the temporary nature of worldly life; the ethical interpretation remains attributed to that study.

Environmental Care and Ecological Responsibility

Environmental care is the most recurrent theme across the literature, although the sources support it in different ways. Wurdianto et al. (2022) explicitly associate selected Batang Garing elements with environmental-care character. Mau and Sukawati (2019) discuss Batang Haring as local wisdom in sustainable tourism, while Farashwanti and Anisa (2024) explore the possible relevance of Batang Garing values to orangutan conservation. The latter two are sustainability-oriented discussions, not evaluations of educational outcomes. A separate body of Islamic-education research addresses environmental attitudes and eco-theology (Fua et al., 2018; Mardhiah et al., 2021a; Rohman et al., 2024; Syukri et al., 2024). These works provide a normative and pedagogical context for discussing environmental responsibility; they are not direct evidence about Batang Garing and do not establish that the symbol produces measurable behavioural change. Mairing et al. (2024) examine geometry and values associated with Dayak Ngaju motifs through ethnomathematics, while Setyawan and Munandar (2026) discuss Batang Garing visualization in mathematics learning through factor trees and the topics of greatest common factors and least common multiples. These studies demonstrate applications of cultural motifs in mathematics-related learning, but they are not direct evidence of character education or Islamic education. Read together, the sources indicate that Batang Garing has been approached through cultural, conservation, and subject-learning lenses; the nature and strength of evidence differ, and no single publication establishes all of the educational meanings discussed in this article.

Responsibility, Respect for Difference, and Peace

Beyond ecological responsibility, Wurdianto et al. (2022) associate selected components with responsibility, tolerance, peace-loving conduct, and religiosity. Such values are potentially relevant to ethical reflection, but the labels should remain attributed to the source. Their meaning depends on the symbolic explanation and context reported by the authors and should not be generalized beyond the evidence available. Analytically, these categories point to different ethical dimensions: responsibility concerns accountable conduct; tolerance concerns how difference is acknowledged; and peace concerns relations and the handling of disagreement. They may overlap, yet they are not interchangeable. Their educational significance lies in the moral questions they raise, not in treating them as a ready-made instructional model or as proven outcomes of symbolic exposure. Religiosity needs particular caution because Batang Garing belongs to a specific cultural and belief context. Penyang et al. (2024) show that even a similar "Tree of Life" term may be considered within another theological tradition. Similar words or visual forms do not prove identical religious meanings. Thus,

a comparison with Islam must begin by recognizing that the cultural account and Islamic theology are distinct frameworks. The reported values are also interconnected: environmental care may imply responsibility, and respect for difference may contribute to peaceful social relations. This interconnection is an analytical observation, not evidence that the source's labels are universal or that every component carries all of these meanings.

DISCUSSION

Ethical Relevance to Islamic Education

The educational relevance of Batang Garing to Islamic education lies in the possibility of ethical comparison, not in theological equivalence. Environmental responsibility, accountable conduct, respect for others, and peaceful social relations are themes that can be discussed alongside Islamic ethical sources. Such comparisons are analytical interpretations made in this article; they do not mean that Batang Garing is an Islamic symbol or that its source meanings originate in the Qur'an. Q.S. al-A'raf [7]:56 prohibits causing corruption on earth after it has been set right; this provides an Islamic ethical frame for discussing environmental care. Q.S. al-Qasas [28]:77 links the pursuit of the Hereafter with doing good and avoiding corruption, offering a limited comparison with responsibility and the balance of worldly and afterlife concerns. The concept of *ummatan wasaṭan* in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:143 may support discussion of moderation, but it does not explain the three cosmological layers of Batang Garing. Likewise, Q.S. al-Hujurat [49]:13 and [49]:10 address human diversity and reconciliation as distinct Islamic ethical commitments. Table 2 summarizes these comparisons while keeping their theological sources separate. At the level of ethical reflection, the harmony among people, nature, and the divine reported by Mirim and Sudiman (2018) may be discussed alongside tawāzun as a point of comparison in Islamic education. This is a comparative interpretation, not evidence that Batang Garing and tawāzun share a theological origin. Wasatiyyah remains a distinct Islamic normative concept grounded in its own Qur'anic context, including Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:143; it should not be used to assign meaning to Batang Garing's three cosmological layers.

Table 2. Limited ethical comparisons between reported Batang Garing values and Islamic sources

Theme in Batang Garing literature	Possible ethical resonance in Islamic education	Qur'anic reference as a separate normative frame
Environmental care	A limited comparison with Islamic concern for avoiding harm and corruption; this does not establish the origin of the cultural meaning.	Q.S. al-A'raf [7]:56: prohibition against spreading corruption on earth after it has been set right.
Responsibility and worldly/afterlife concerns	May be discussed in relation to accountable conduct and doing good without neglecting worldly responsibilities.	Q.S. al-Qasas [28]:77: do good, seek the Hereafter, and do not spread corruption.
Balance and moderation	Tawāzun and wasatiyyah may be considered as Islamic concepts; they do not explain or equal Batang Garing's three cosmological layers.	Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:143: the Muslim community is described as ummatan wasaṭan.
Respect for difference and peaceful relations	These themes have ethical resonance but are not asserted as the direct meanings or theological sources of Batang Garing.	Q.S. al-Hujurat [49]:13 and [49]:10: human diversity and reconciliation.

Source: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (2019), with the authors' ethical comparison informed by Mirim and Sudiman (2018) and Wurdianto et al. (2022). The comparison does not imply shared theological origins.

Implications for Islamic Education Practice

The ethical comparison may inform Islamic education in three carefully bounded ways. First, in character education, teachers may use guided discussion of responsibility, respect for difference, and peaceful relations to invite reflection on ethical conduct; the reported cultural associations should be introduced as interpretations in cited scholarship, not as fixed meanings accepted by every Dayak Ngaju community. Second, in environmental education, the ecological theme may be connected with Islamic teachings on avoiding harm and caring for the earth, then developed through local environmental issues and community-informed activities rather than through symbolic explanation alone. Third, in multicultural learning, Batang Garing can serve as a case for practicing respectful comparison between knowledge traditions, including explicit discussion of their distinct cultural and theological contexts. These are conceptual possibilities for curriculum discussion, not tested teaching strategies or evidence of learning gains. Any classroom use should involve consultation with Dayak Ngaju knowledge holders and should avoid extracting symbols from their cultural setting.

Interpretive Risks and Study Limitations

Four interpretive risks require attention: symbolic reduction (assigning one value to an element without context), overgeneralization (treating one study as the view of all Dayak Ngaju people), theological conflation (equating cultural and Islamic meanings), and overclaiming (presenting possible educational relevance as proven effect). The available literature does not support these claims. Responsible interpretation therefore requires traceable sources, clear attribution, attention to each study's context, and consultation with Dayak Ngaju cultural knowledge holders where feasible. Differences among sources should be reported rather than smoothed over. Any educational use should distinguish documented cultural accounts from the authors' external ethical comparison. This focused synthesis is not exhaustive and is not a systematic review. Source access and detail vary, and the available research record does not preserve complete screening counts. No interviews with cultural knowledge holders or educators, field observations, or classroom interventions were conducted. Consequently, the article does not establish an authoritative interpretation for the whole Dayak Ngaju community or demonstrate the educational effectiveness of using Batang Garing. Further research should test and refine these interpretations through dialogue with cultural knowledge holders and Islamic education scholars.

4. CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed discusses Batang Garing/Batang Haring in relation to mythology and cosmology, local wisdom and tourism, character education, conservation, religious terminology, ethnomathematics, and mathematics education. Wurdianto et al. (2022) provide the clearest explicit mapping of selected elements to environmental care, responsibility, tolerance, peace-loving conduct, and religiosity. These are source-specific interpretations and should not be presented as universal meanings shared by all Dayak Ngaju communities. The article's contribution is a critical synthesis connecting the literature on Batang Garing with research on local wisdom and Islamic education while distinguishing cultural interpretation from Islamic normative sources. Environmental care, responsibility, respect for difference, and peaceful relations have possible ethical resonance with Islamic education, but the comparison does not imply common origins or identical meanings. The study's focused scope and absence of fieldwork limit its claims. Further research should consult Dayak Ngaju cultural knowledge holders and Islamic education scholars to assess and refine the interpretations.

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