



LOCAL WISDOM OF SUNAN AMPEL TOMB, SUNAN DRAJAT TOMB, AND BAJANG RATU TEMPLE

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ABSTRACT

Local wisdom examines an essential aspect of cultural identity, social values, and community resilience, particularly within three heritage sites. This study aims to analyze the forms and functions of local wisdom embodied in three significant cultural sites in East Java: the tomb of Sunan Ampel, the tomb of Sunan Drajat, and Bajang Ratu Temple. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through observation, documentation, and literature review to ensure systematic and valid interpretation. The findings reveal that each site reflects distinctive yet interconnected forms of local wisdom. The Sunan Ampel cemetery emphasizes moderation, spiritual devotion, and personal transformation, as seen in the figures of Sunan Ampel Lembu, Peteng, Mbah Sholeh, and Mbah Bolong. Sunan Drajat site highlights social welfare, humanitarian values, and moral responsibility, particularly through the symbolic meanings of its stairways, which promote empathy, vigilance, perseverance, spiritual discipline, and charity. Meanwhile, Bajang Ratu Temple demonstrates a synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist philosophy and local wisdom through its architectural design, narrative reliefs, and symbolic ornaments, representing moral teachings, cosmic balance, spiritual protection, and transformation.

Keywords: Cemetery, Local Wisdom, Temple, Tomb

A. INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom has emerged as a significant subject in social, cultural, and anthropological research, as it represents the identity, values, and resilience of a community. Within the context of Indonesian heritage, this wisdom is reflected in religious sites—ranging from Islamic sacred tombs such as Sunan Ampel and Sunan Drajat to Hindu-Buddhist temples such as Bajang Ratu which function not only as historical landmarks but also as dynamic spaces of moral learning and social interaction. The comparison between Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist sites becomes particularly important in the context of contemporary Javanese society, where religious plurality and cultural hybridity continue to shape patterns of social cohesion. Rather than merely filling gap, this study addresses how these distinct yet interconnected heritage sites embody shared values that contribute to social integration and conflict resolution in modern communities. This research offers novelty by demonstrating that local wisdom embedded in these sites is not a static

cultural residue, but an active social instrument that fosters tolerance, negotiation, and collective identity among diverse groups. In doing so, it highlights how historical narratives and ritual practices are continuously reinterpreted to respond to present-day social challenges. To analyze this phenomenon, the study employs a sociological-anthropological framework, incorporating the concept of syncretism to understand cultural blending, Bourdieu's notion of habitus to examine the internalization of values through ritual practices, and Durkheim's theory of social solidarity to explain how these sites reinforce collective bonds within pluralistic societies.

Previous studies have been studied as follows [1] Social Cohesion of Local Wisdom for Plural Communities. *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*, 23 , 210–223, [2] Local Wisdom and Social Resilience: Humanities Studies in the Face of Global Crises. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3 (2), 1511, [3] Local Wisdom in South Sulawesi's Folklores. *ELite Journal: International Journal of Education, Language and Literature*, 2 (4), 193–200, [4] Local Cultural Wisdom of Natural Disaster-Prone Communities in Probolinggo, Indonesia (Socio-Religious Perspective). *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*, 25 (1), 16171. [5] 'Harnessing Indonesian Local Wisdom for Innovative Tourism Development in the Creative Economy. *International Journal of Accounting and Management Research*, 5(2), 57–66.

The statements mean that local wisdom plays a significant role in research on folklore and socio-religious communities demonstrates that local wisdom shapes collective identity and preserves cultural continuity across generations.

Conceptually, local wisdom refers to traditional ecological and cultural knowledge developed through long interaction between communities and their environment. [6] local wisdom shapes social identity and contributes to sustainable development practices in Indonesian communities.[7] Indigenous knowledge and local wisdom plays an important role in addressing global challenges such as environmental sustainability, education, and cultural preservation.[8] indigenous and local wisdom contributes to water management, environmental sustainability, and community-based practices.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, this study focuses on the local wisdom found in three significant heritage sites in East Java: Sunan Ampel Tomb, Sunan Drajat Tomb, and Bajang Ratu Temple. These sites represent a synthesis of Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist cultural traditions, reflecting moral teachings, spiritual values, architectural philosophy, and community practices. However, although several studies discuss local wisdom in general contexts, there is still limited integrative research examining these three sites comparatively within a socio-cultural framework.

Therefore, the research problems of this study are: (1) What forms of local wisdom are reflected in the three heritage sites? (2) How do these forms of local wisdom contribute to social cohesion, moral values, and cultural sustainability? The objective of this study is to identify and analyze the local wisdom embodied in Sunan Ampel Tomb, Sunan Drajat Tomb, and Bajang Ratu Temple.

This research is expected to enrich academic discourse on local wisdom, particularly within universities and research institutions, and to contribute to the preservation and development of Indonesian cultural heritage and local wisdom embedded in Sunan Ampel Tomb, Sunan Drajat Tomb, and Bajang Ratu Temple.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a qualitative research method. [9] in which taken from Sunan Ampel Tomb, Sunan Drajat Tomb, and Bajang Ratu Temple according to John W. Creswell (2014), research methods are systematic approaches used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. [10] C. R. Kothari (2004) emphasizes that research methods involve techniques and procedures in data collection and analysis. While [11] Sugiyono (2017) defines research methods as scientific ways that are logical, empirical, and systematic. This following the framework established by Creswell (2014), this approach provides a systematic way to collect and interpret qualitative data to understand the complex social and spiritual values embedded in these heritage sites.

1. **Research Design** This study adopts a multi-case study design with a comparative-interpretive approach. This design is chosen to identify the specific forms of local wisdom at each site while simultaneously seeking a synthesis of values across the different religious and historical backgrounds of the three locations.
2. **Data Sources** The primary data for this research is derived from literature study and documentation, specifically focusing on the hagiography of Sunan Ampel and Sunan Drajat as presented in F. Rahman's work, alongside the architectural records of the Bajang Ratu Temple. Secondary data includes previous research on social cohesion, folklores, and ecological knowledge as referenced in the theoretical framework of this study.
3. **Data Collection Techniques** In accordance with the principles suggested by Kothari (2004) and Sugiyono (2017), the data collection is conducted through three main techniques:
 - 1) **Literature Study:** Reviewing books, journals, and historical manuscripts to extract moral teachings and philosophical values.
 - 2) **Documentation:** Analyzing photographs, site plans, and visual symbols of the tombs and the temple gate to identify architectural local wisdom.
 - 3) **Observation:** Systematic observation of the community practices and rituals currently performed at these sites to assess their impact on social cohesion.
4. **Data Analysis Procedures** The analysis is conducted through a qualitative descriptive process which involves:
 - 1) **Data Identification:** Categorizing information based on the research problems, specifically identifying forms of local wisdom and their social contributions.
 - 2) **Synthesis and Interpretation:** Interpreting how these values contribute to moral learning, social unity, and cultural sustainability.
5. **Data Validity and Reliability** To ensure the validity of the findings, the study utilizes triangulation of sources. By cross-referencing textual data from literature with visual data from the sites and the theoretical perspectives of local wisdom, the research aims to provide a logical and empirical conclusion that reflects the authentic heritage of East Java.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Sunan Ampel Cemetery

Sunan Ampel Tomb

[12] Halim, A., Prihananto, et al. (2021) says that Sunan Ampel emphasizes balance, tolerance, and cultural adaptation, allowing Islamic teachings to be accepted harmoniously within the local Javanese context.



Figure 1. Sunan Ampel Tomb

[13] Sunan Ampel's tomb has become an important center of religious devotion, particularly through the tradition of grave pilgrimage (*ziarah kubur*). This practice is not merely a cultural ritual but a spiritual activity aimed at strengthening one's faith (*taqwa*) to Allah SWT.

[14] Sunan Ampel's tomb in Surabaya represents more than a historical burial site; it serves as a vital center of religious tourism that integrates spirituality, culture, and community life. Based on Rahman (2020), the site plays a significant role in preserving Islamic heritage while also promoting spiritual reflection among visitors

The local wisdom of Sunan Ampel reflects a set of moral, spiritual, and cultural values that played a significant role in the spread of Islam in Java. His teachings emphasize harmony between religion and local traditions, creating a peaceful and adaptive approach to *dakwah* (Islamic preaching).

The Sunan Ampel cemetery complex should not be understood merely as a historical-religious site, but as a symbolic arena of identity negotiation in Javanese society. As one of the earliest centers of Islamic propagation in Java, the site represents a crucial moment in which Islamic teachings encountered and interacted with pre-existing local beliefs and cultural practices. This interaction did not occur through direct replacement, but through a gradual process of adaptation and reinterpretation.

In this context, the cemetery functions as a space where religious values are internalized through culturally meaningful expressions, allowing Islam to be accepted within the existing social framework. The practice of pilgrimage (*ziarah kubur*), for instance, can be interpreted through Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, in which repeated religious practices shape and reproduce internal dispositions, guiding how individuals perceive and enact their faith in everyday life. Through such practices, values are not only taught but embodied and sustained across generations.

Furthermore, from a Durkheimian perspective, the Sunan Ampel complex serves as a site that reinforces *social solidarity*, where collective rituals and shared beliefs strengthen the moral bonds within the community. The gathering of pilgrims in a common sacred space creates a sense of belonging and collective identity, bridging individual experiences with a wider social and spiritual order. Therefore, the Sunan Ampel complex operates not only as a site of remembrance but also as a dynamic social institution, where historical memory, religious practice, and collective identity are continuously constructed, reproduced, and maintained within a pluralistic cultural context.

Lembu Peteng Tomb

According to Babad Sadjarah Madura, his tomb was located at the head (jav.dagu) of Sunan Ampel tomb.



Figure 2. Lembu Peteng Tomb is located around the Sunan Ampel Tomb

Lembu Peteng was the ruler of Madura as stated in *Babad Sejarah Madura* who wanted to combat Kanjeng Sunan Ngampeldenta. But, being defeated, he became the student of Kanjeng Sunan Ngampeldenta, and died at Sunan Ampel cemetery. Lembu Peteng's local wisdom is the value of self-transformation toward righteousness and humility and willingness to learn. Therefore The story of Lembu Peteng, a former ruler who initially opposed Sunan Ampel but later became his follower, illustrates a process of cultural and spiritual negotiation rather than abrupt conversion.

This article shows that Lembu Peteng constructs new life after having a conversion from a Hindu to become a muslim and shows that his background from a high caste of Javanese man to have total surrender to new spiritual life and is willingly joining to become a disciple of Sunan Ampel. By doing repeated religious practices, Lembu Peteng can reshape his life and becomes more religious than his previous perspective. Thus, local wisdom in this site is not static, but reflects a dynamic process of identity formation, where Islamic values are internalized through culturally familiar narratives. This also supports the concept of syncretism, in which Islamic teachings adapt to and integrate with pre-existing Javanese beliefs rather than replacing them entirely.

Mbah Sholeh's Tomb



Figure 3. Mbah Sholeh's Tomb

It is based on the myth that Mbah Sholeh was first a robber. Kanjeng Sunan Ampel defeated him. He became the student of Kanjeng Sunan. Besides, he did clean the mosque. When he died, Kanjeng Sunan asked him and said that Mbah Sholeh cleaned the mosque well. Mbah Sholeh who had died, backed to live. It happened nine times. So, Mbah Sholeh has nine tombs. Mbah Sholeh's local wisdom is centered on repentance, personal transformation, devotion, and sincerity in service.

Mbah Sholeh's narrative—from a robber to a devoted servant that symbolizes moral reconstruction through repentance (*taubat*). Mbah Soleh changes his crime life into to do repeated religious practices and proximity to sacred authority gradually reshape individual dispositions and moral orientations. Therefore, local wisdom at this site should be understood as a dynamic process of identity construction, in which Islamic values are gradually absorbed through culturally embedded narratives. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of syncretism, where Islamic teachings are not imposed in a rigid manner but are harmonized with pre existing Javanese belief systems.

Mbah Bolong's Tomb



Figure 4. Mbah Bolong's Tomb

Sonhaji was one of Kanjeng Sunan Ampel's students. He was known as Mbah Bolong as he had a miracle to see a ka'bah from a hole in the wall.

Local wisdom of Mbah Bolong is the key values of strong faith and spiritual vision and devotion to learning and religious guidance.

Sunan Drajat's Cemetery Sunan Drajat Tomb



Figure 5. Sunan Drajat Tomb

[15] Sunan Drajat, as part of the Wali Songo, represents a significant figure in the reconstruction of Islamic history in Java and his role highlights the importance of integrating religious teachings with social responsibility and local cultural values.

[16] The tomb complex of Sunan Drajat not only functions as a place of pilgrimage but also serves as a center for learning about Islamic history and Javanese culture.

[17] Sunan Drajat is portrayed by Nur Huda (2019) as a prominent figure whose teachings strongly emphasize social welfare and humanitarian values. His approach to dakwah highlights the importance of helping the poor, promoting generosity.

The local wisdom of Sunan Drajat is Unlike Sunan Ampel, whose emphasis lies in cultural adaptation, Sunan Drajat's teachings highlight social *welfare and humanitarian ethics*. His dakwah integrates spirituality with concrete social responsibility, positioning religion as a tool for addressing inequality and poverty.

Sunan Drajat's Stairways

Sunan Drajat tombs consist of stairways. The stairways are not merely architectural elements, but they also carry symbolic and cultural meanings. The complex is designed in a terraced structure, where visitors must pass through several levels by climbing a series of stairs before reaching the main tomb.

a. The First Stairway

The first stair that enters the great door is written *memasang resep teasing sasonto (kita selalu membuat senang hati orang lain/ we always make the other happy)*



Figure 6. The First Stairway

b. The Second Stairway

The second stair is written *laksitaning suko kudu lan waspodo (dalam suasana riang kita harus selalu ingat dan waspada/ in a cheerful atmosphere, we always remember and are vigilant)*.



Figure 7. The Second Stairway

c. The Third Stairway

The third stair is written *Laksitaning broto tan nyepito marang pringgo bayaning lampa/ dalam perjalanan untuk mencapai cita cita luhur kita tidak peduli dengan berbagai rintangan/* in the journey to achieve the deal of noble, we do not care about various obstacles.



Figure 8. The Third Stairway

d. The Fourth Stairway

The fourth stairway is written *mulyo guno ponco waktu/suatu kebahagiaan lahir batin hanya bisa dicapai dengan sholat lima waktu/* an inner-born happiness can only be achieved by five-hour prayers.



Figure 9. The Fourth Stairway

e. The Fifth Stairway

The Fifth stairways are written *Wenhono teken marang wong kang wuto, Wenhono pangan marang wong kang keluwen, Wenhono payung marang wong kang kudanan* and *Wenhono sandang marang wong kang wuda* meaning give a walking stick to those who are blind, give food to those who are hungry, give an umbrella to those who are caught in the rain and give clothing to those who are naked. This stairway means social compassion, generosity, and moral responsibility, encouraging people to help others according to their needs.



Figure 10. The Fifth Stairway

The local wisdoms are Social Compassion, Generosity and Charity, Moral Responsibility, Practical Kindness (Contextual Help), Balance Between Physical and Spiritual Help and philosophical meaning. By using other words, this article studies that the stairways in the Sunan Drajat complex should be interpreted not merely as architectural elements, but as a structured ethical system. Each level represents stages of moral development, culminating in the fifth stair, which explicitly promotes social compassion and redistribution of resources (helping the poor, feeding the hungry, etc.).

From a sociological perspective, these teachings reflect a form of traditional welfare system, where moral obligations replace formal institutions. This aligns with Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity, where interdependence is maintained through ethical responsibility toward others.

Furthermore, the stairways can also be read as a process of internalizing habitus, where repeated exposure to these moral messages shapes community behavior over time. Thus, local wisdom here functions as a normative framework for social integration and conflict mitigation, particularly in communities with limited access to formal welfare structures.

Bajang Ratu Temple



Figure 11. Bajang Ratu Temple

The symbolic meaning of reliefs in Majapahit temples, including Bajang Ratu, reflects a complex integration of Hindu-Buddhist concepts and local wisdom. At Bajang Ratu, the reliefs, such as those depicting the *Sri Tanjung* and *Ramayana* stories—illustrate themes of loyalty, purification, truth, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. These narratives function as ethical guidance, intended to shape the character and behavior of society.

[18] According to Cahyono, Hidayat, and Dewi (2021), the use of UAV photogrammetry with oblique images provides a reliable method for creating detailed and precise three-dimensional (3D) models of Bajang Ratu Temple. This technique allows researchers to capture the structure from multiple angles, resulting in a comprehensive digital reconstruction that reflects both the geometry and surface details of the temple. The use of oblique imagery, in particular, enhances the accuracy of vertical and complex architectural elements that are difficult to document using conventional methods.

[19] Bajang Ratu Temple is located in Trowulan, Mojokerto, East Java. This temple is recognized as a monumental gateway (*gapura paduraksa*) that once functioned as an entrance to a sacred royal complex. Based on architecture, Bajang Ratu temple reflects the advanced brick construction techniques of the Majapahit period, characterized by its tall, slender structure and intricate relief carvings depicting stories from ancient Javanese literature

[20] The symbolic meaning of reliefs in Majapahit temples, including Bajang Ratu, reflects a complex integration of Hindu-Buddhist concepts and local wisdom. At Bajang Ratu, the reliefs, such as those depicting the *Sri Tanjung* and *Ramayana* stories—illustrate themes of loyalty, purification, truth, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. These narratives function as ethical guidance, intended to shape the character and behavior of society.

[21] Bajang Ratu Temple is portrayed by the Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia (2020) as a significant cultural heritage site that reflects the historical, architectural, and philosophical achievements of the Majapahit era. The temple functions not only as a monumental gateway (*paduraksa*) but also as a symbol of the transition between the worldly and the sacred realms.

Some ornaments and their meaning are as follows:

- 1) Kala–Makara (Protective Symbol)
The symbolic meaning are protection against evil forces, guardians of sacred space and boundary between the profane (outer world) and the sacred (inner space).
- 2) Narrative Reliefs (Moral and Ethical Teachings)
The symbolic meaning of Sri Tanjung are purity, loyalty, and truth and Ramayana are the struggle between good and evil and moral guidance for society.
- 3) Floral and Plant Motifs (Life and Harmony)
The symbolic meaning of lotus flower are fertility and prosperity, harmony between humans and nature, spiritual growth and purity and the ideal of balanced and harmonious living.
- 4) Geometric Patterns (Cosmic Order)
The symbolic meaning are order and stability of the universe, balance between physical and spiritual worlds and reflection of cosmic harmony
- 5) Gateway Structure (Transition Symbol)
Bajang Ratu itself is a *paduraksa* gate. The symbolic meaning is passage from worldly life to sacred realm spiritual transformation and purification and journey toward higher consciousness.

The local wisdom embedded in Bajang Ratu Temple reflects a profound integration of spiritual beliefs, moral teachings, cultural values, and technological awareness inherited from the Majapahit period. This wisdom is expressed through its architecture, reliefs, ornaments, and symbolic functions. First, the temple reflects moral and ethical values through its narrative reliefs, such as the stories of *Sri Tanjung* and the *Ramayana*. Second, the presence of Kala–Makara ornaments represents spiritual protection and the concept of sacred space. Fourth, the geometric patterns found in the temple illustrate the idea of cosmic order and balance. Fifth, the structure of Bajang Ratu as a *paduraksa* gateway symbolizes spiritual transformation.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that local wisdom embedded in Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist heritage sites in Java functions as a dynamic and integrative cultural force rather than merely a historical legacy. Across the three sites, local wisdom operates through different yet interconnected dimensions: identity negotiation,

social ethics, and symbolic transformation. These dimensions collectively reveal how Javanese society has historically managed religious plurality through adaptation, reinterpretation, and continuity of core values.

The Sunan Ampel complex reflects a process of cultural negotiation in which Islamic values are internalized through existing local frameworks, forming a flexible and adaptive religious identity. The Sunan Drajat site, on the other hand, highlights the ethical dimension of local wisdom, where religious teachings are translated into concrete practices of social welfare and communal responsibility. Meanwhile, Bajang Ratu Temple represents the continuity of moral and cosmological values, particularly through symbols of purification, balance, and transition between the profane and the sacred.

Taken together, these sites illustrate that *Nusantara identity* is not constructed through a single religious or cultural tradition, but through a long process of syncretic interaction, ethical integration, and symbolic continuity. This identity is characterized by tolerance, balance, and the ability to harmonize differences within a shared moral framework. Local wisdom, therefore, plays a crucial role as a cultural mechanism that sustains social cohesion and mediates potential conflicts in a pluralistic society.

In terms of practical implications, this study suggests the importance of community-based cultural preservation. Local communities should be actively involved not only as custodians but also as interpreters of cultural heritage, ensuring that the values embedded in these sites remain relevant to contemporary social challenges. Policies should encourage participatory management of heritage sites, integration of local wisdom into educational programs, and support for cultural practices such as pilgrimage and traditional rituals as forms of living heritage. By doing so, cultural preservation will not only protect physical sites but also sustain the intangible values that underpin social harmony in Indonesia.

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