



Optimizing Pilgrimage Traditions and Community Empowerment: Integration of Spirituality, Socio-Economy, and Technology in Pilgrimage Practices

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Abstract

Purpose

This study aimed to explore the optimalization of pilgrimage tradition by integrating social and economic empowerment and the use of technology to enhance spiritual experience, cultural resilience, and their role in strengthening social cohesion.

Method

The study employed a literature review and a theoretical analysis on the concepts of pilgrimage, cultural resilience, and religious tourism in the context of modernization and technology. This study used multi-dimensional approach to analyze the modernization of pilgrimage tradition. Here, this research used the digital technology, while maintaining its spiritual essence and socio-cultural resilience.

Findings

The Findings of the study showed that the pilgrimage tradition and religious tourism can have some contributions. They are empowering local economies through community-based management, strengthening cultural resilience by preserving traditional values, and using technology to improve an accessibility into the quality of spiritual experiences. Additionally, pilgrimage serves as a social interaction platform that fosters harmony in multicultural societies.

Conclusion

The optimization of religious tourism supports not only local economic growth, but also cultural preservation, national character building, and the maintenance of social harmony in Indonesia, while preserving its spiritual essence.

Keywords

Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism; Islamic History and Civilization; Cultural Resilience; Social Harmony; Modernization and Technology. .

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Abstrak

Tujuan

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan urbanisasi di daerah perkotaan terhadap penurunan populasi burung hantu penggali dan efek yang ditimbulkan akibat menurunnya populasi mereka.

Metode

Metode kualitatif digunakan untuk membantu dalam penelitian ini. Data-data yang digunakan diambil dari narasi dan percakapan antar tokoh di dalam cerita. Teori ekokritik juga dipakai untuk membantu menganalisis efek yang ditimbulkan akibat urbanisasi di dalam cerita.

Hasil/temuan

Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa urbanisasi menimbulkan dampak buruk bagi lingkungan. Urbanisasi tidak hanya mengakibatkan populasi burung hantu penggali mengalami penurunan, namun juga mengganggu keseimbangan rantai makanan, dan juga mempengaruhi populasi hama.

Kesimpulan

Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa urbanisasi memiliki efek negatif yang luas bagi lingkungan. Dampak negatif tersebut juga sangat merugikan bagi kehidupan manusia. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan bahwa urbanisasi harus direncanakan secara matang serta juga menimbang efek terhadap lingkungan dan ekosistem.

Kata kunci

sastra anak, burung hantu penggali, urbanisasi, ekokritik

المخلص

الهدف

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة العلاقة بين التحضر في المناطق الحضرية وانخفاض أعداد البوم الجور والآثار الناجمة عن انخفاض أعدادها.

الطريقة

واستخدمت الأساليب الكيفية للمساعدة في هذا البحث. أما البيانات المستخدمة فهي مأخوذة من الروايات والمحادثات بين الشخصيات في القصة. وتستخدم النظرية النقدية البيئية أيضاً للمساعدة في تحليل تأثيرات التحضر في القصة.

النتائج

ويخلص هذا البحث إلى أن التحضر له تأثير سلبي على البيئة. لا يؤدي التحضر إلى انخفاض أعداد البوم المختبئة فحسب، بل يؤدي أيضاً إلى تعطيل توازن السلسلة الغذائية، ويؤثر أيضاً على أعداد الآفات.

الخلاصة

ويخلص هذا البحث إلى أن التحضر له آثار سلبية بعيدة المدى على البيئة. كما أن هذه الآثار السلبية تلحق ضرراً كبيراً بحياة الإنسان. ولذلك، يوصي هذا البحث بضرورة التخطيط للتوسع الحضري بعناية، وكذلك النظر في آثاره على البيئة والنظام البيئي.

الكلمات الرئيسية

أدب الأطفال؛ بومة تختبئ التحضر؛ النقد البيئي

INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage, or visits to holy places and tombs of *wali* (saints), has become a longstanding tradition and a dynamic phenomenon within religious practice in Indonesia. This tradition is deeply rooted in the culture and history of Indonesian society, manifesting across various regions and local customs. In this context, pilgrimage is not only viewed as a form of worship or a reminder of death but also as a means to seek blessings (*tabaruk*) and draw closer to Allah through intermediaries (*tawasul*), via holy figures. This practice has evolved with the incorporation of modernization and tourism into pilgrimage, leading to the emergence of what is now known as religious tourism (Muhaimin, 1995; Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021).

However, despite the widespread acceptance of pilgrimage in Indonesia, there is a gap between its ideal and its reality. On the one hand, pilgrimages are often undertaken for spiritual reasons, such as praying for the deceased or seeking blessings. Conversely, modernization has introduced transformations, where pilgrimage is now increasingly linked not only to religious devotion but also to economic and tourism benefits, which serve local communities. For instance, research by Rohaeni and Emilda (2021) demonstrates that the pilgrimage at the Makom Sheikh Abdul Jalil site in Kampung Adat Dukuh, Garut, has empowered the local community economically by integrating religious tourism with the preservation of local culture. As they note, “The houses of the residents of Dukuh serve as homestays for tourists, and while there is no fixed tariff, guests are expected to show sensitivity and offer gratitude for help and services. This becomes an additional source of income for families” (cf. on the development of economic potential in Luar Batang Mousque site, Jakarta in Narulita, Aulia, Mardhiah, et al., 2019; Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021, p. 433).

The positive outcome, however, is often hampered by poor management and a lack of attention to the potential development of religious tourism in various regions. For example, in Benwo Village, the site of Prince Benowo in Bener District, Purworejo, the absence of proper planning and development has led to suboptimal management of religious tourism potential (Safitri & Hendrawati, 2020, p. 96). Another gap lies in the limited use of modern technology to enhance pilgrimage and religious tourism experiences. While the use of QR-code-based tourist maps in DKI Jakarta has proven to increase visits to pilgrimage sites, such technological applications remain unevenly distributed across regions (Narulita, Aulia, Amaliyah, et al., 2019). This situation highlights an imbalance between the vast potential of pilgrimage and the inadequate management practices that could otherwise optimize its spiritual, economic, and socio-cultural benefits. Research on pilgrimage and religious tourism is valuable not only for understanding religious practices but also for its role in promoting local economic development and cultural preservation.

Pilgrimage and religious tourism have immense potential to empower local communities, and they are evidences emphasized culture-based tourism rooted in local wisdom (Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021). On a broader scale, the practice of pilgrimage fosters social harmony and intercultural interaction, contributing to a more peaceful and moderate society (Firdaus & Rahmat, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to explore ways to maximize the potential of pilgrimage tourism or religious tourism as a sustainable spiritual and economic activity while bridging the gap between its current state and its untapped potential.

Several prior studies have explored different aspects of pilgrimage and religious tourism, focusing on sacred sites across Indonesia. These studies provide insights into the motivations, economic impacts, and cultural significance of pilgrimage or religious tourism, covering both Muslim and non-Muslim practices. Handriana et al. (2020) examined pilgrimage tourism from both theoretical and practical perspectives, offering practical recommendations for religious tourism managers (Handriana et al., 2020, p. 783). Similarly, Safitri and Hendrawati (2020) explored how the Prince Benowo site in Purworejo integrates religious practices with tourism, thereby benefiting the local economy. They advocate for improved tourism management to maximize the site’s potential, stressing the dual

role of sacred sites as both religious and economically viable destinations (Safitri & Hendrawati, 2020). The well-managed religious tourism can create job opportunities, preserve local traditions, and contribute to the welfare of local communities (Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021). This trend aligns with findings from other pilgrimage sites, where religious tourism stimulates economic growth by attracting local and international visitors (Fournié, 2019; Narulita, Aulia, Mardhiah, et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, Husda (2021) delves into the pilgrimage to the Tomb of Habib Muda Seunagan in Aceh, a site deeply embedded in local culture. This site stands out due to specific rituals such as *suluk* (spiritual retreats) and special prayers, distinguishing it from other pilgrimage traditions in Indonesia (Husda, 2021). Firdaus and Rahmat (2019) examined the impact of religious tourism at sites such as Sunan Gunung Jati and Tanah Lot, highlighting its role in promoting interreligious and multiethnic harmony. These sites, where pilgrims from diverse backgrounds gather, underscore how religious tourism fosters social unity and peace (Firdaus & Rahmat, 2019).

Endraswara (2006) emphasized the cultural significance of sacred sites, presenting them as spiritual and cultural reservoirs where symbolic interactions between humans and their environment take place (Endraswara, 2006, p. 22). In line with this, Mawarni & Puspitasari (2020) explored the religious site of Prince Jayakarta, where pilgrimage tourism strengthens cultural resilience. By showcasing authentic cultural resources, this site not only attracts visitors but also reinforces local identity amid globalization. This integration of religious tourism with cultural heritage fosters a sense of community belonging and fortifies cultural identity (Mawarni & Puspitasari, 2020).

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that the pilgrimage tradition is multidimensional. However, its spiritual essence must be preserved while integrating socio-economic, cultural, and technological dimensions to meet the challenges of modernization. This study seeks to answer the following questions: 1) How can pilgrimages and religious tourism be optimized to empower local communities and strengthen cultural resilience? 2) How can modernization and technology enhance the pilgrimage experience without compromising its spiritual essence? and 3) What role does pilgrimage play in promoting social harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society?

This study aims to offer insights to pilgrimage site managers and government bodies on developing sustainable and empowering religious tourism strategies. It also provides recommendations regarding the application of technology to facilitate religious tourism. Furthermore, this study introduces a novel, integrative approach to pilgrimage and religious tourism, examining it not just from a spiritual perspective but in conjunction with socio-economic, cultural, and technological factors. This approach differs from previous studies that tend to view these dimensions separately. Additionally, the study highlights the use of modern technology in religious tourism, a topic rarely discussed in the Indonesian context (Narulita, Aulia, Amaliyah, et al., 2019).

The findings of this study have implications in at least three domains: economic, social, and cultural. Economically, the study could inform the development of religious tourism as a sustainable sector, especially in regions with potential pilgrimage sites. Socially, it underscores the importance of pilgrimage as a tool for promoting harmony among religious and ethnic communities. Culturally, the study advocates for the preservation of local traditions through pilgrimage-based tourism that respects local wisdom (Mawarni & Puspitasari, 2020).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review or literature study method. The steps include data collection, which involves gathering literature from scientific journals, books, and reports related to pilgrimages, religious tourism, and tourism development in Indonesia. An analysis is then conducted on the collected literature to identify patterns related to the dynamics of pilgrimage and religious tourism, focusing on economic, social, and cultural aspects, as well as the use of technology in the current con-

text of religious tourism. The various findings and analysis results are subsequently integrated to form a comprehensive conclusion regarding the spiritual essence of pilgrimage or religious tourism, cultural resilience and local wisdom, social harmony, and the use of modern technology in religious tourism without diminishing its spiritual essence (Ratna, 2016).

In the analysis phase, a theoretical framework is employed, drawing from the theories of religious tourism and cultural resilience. The theory of religious tourism explains how spiritual journeys can serve a dual purpose, functioning both as worship and as a form of tourism (Muhaimin, 1995). Meanwhile, the theory of cultural resilience is used to understand how religious tourism can reinforce cultural identity amid modernization and globalization, by integrating local wisdom into tourism development (Mawarni & Puspitasari, 2020).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Heritage of Pilgrimage Tradition in a Religious, Social, and Cultural Perspective

In Indonesia, the tradition of pilgrimage is predominantly focused on visiting the tombs of saints or other charismatic figures, particularly those of the *wali*. Therefore, in this context, pilgrimage is synonymous with visiting graves or tombs. Grave pilgrimage is a common phenomenon throughout the Islamic world, although it is significantly influenced by local or regional customs (Chambert-Loir & Guillot, 2007, p. 9; Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Pilgrimage, in general, can include visits to the tombs of religious figures, mosques, relics, kings, their families, and particularly the tombs of the *wali* who were key to spreading Islam (Jamhari, 2001; Muhaimin, 1995; Suhadi & Hambali, 1994).

Many historical and religious sites feature the tombs of significant figures, such as the *Walisongo* (The nine guardians) sites in Java, and similar sacred places elsewhere in the world, including Europe and the Indian subcontinent (K. A. Griffin & Raj, 2017; Handriana et al., 2020; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Piramanayagam et al., 2020; Rohmawati & Ismail, 2017; Thorley & Gunn, 2008). Fournié, a researcher from Paris, France, has documented several of these sites related to *Walisongo*, as detailed in his work *Rediscovering the Walisongo*. The nine *Walis* are: Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim or Sheikh Morocco), Sunan Ampel (Raden Rahmat), Sunan Giri (Maulana Abdul Yakin, also known as Raden Paku), Sunan Bonang (Raden Makhdum Ibrahim), Sunan Drajad (Syarifuddin, also known as Raden Qasim), Sunan Kalijaga (Raden Mas Said), Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Shodiq), Sunan Muria (Raden Umar Said), and Sunan Gunung Jati (Syarif Hidayatullah) (Fournié, 2019).

In addition to the *Walisongo* sites, there are numerous other religious landmarks, such as Banten Lama, which features the Great Mosque of Banten and the tomb of Sultan Hasanuddin, and Cirebon's Mount Jati, where Sheikh Nurjati is buried. In Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta, there are also many pilgrimage sites, such as the tomb of Sunan Bungkul in Surabaya, the tomb of Fatimah binti Maimun in Gresik, and the tomb of the Kings of Mataram in Imogiri, Yogyakarta. These sacred sites, especially those associated with the *Walisongo*, hold great potential for development and attract significant attention both locally and internationally (Annisarizki & Sucahya, 2018; Fournié, 2019; Gunawan et al., 2018). Fournié views the *Walisongo* heritage as a potential destination for spiritual tourism, with the ability to attract not only Muslim pilgrims but also non-Muslim visitors. He states that "With the heritage of *Walisongo*, Indonesia has several sites (sacred tombs, mosques, historical sites) that are of interest to local and international visitors, both Muslims and non-Muslims" (Fournié, 2019, pp. 83-84).



Fig. 1: Dress procedures for Imogiri pilgrims, *Pranakan* clothes for men and *Kemben* for women; Maintaining local tradition (Source: Authors 2020)

1. Cultural Heritage and Religious Sites

Before delving into the concept of religious sites, it is necessary to first define the term “culture.” Culture is “the entire system of ideas, actions, and works of human beings in the context of community life that are acquired through learning.” The key components of culture include ideas (cognitive dimension), actions (practical dimension), and the results of actions or works (physical dimension)” (Tihami, 2011). Cultural forms can be categorized into three main types: (a) Cultural Ideas (Ideal Forms), which are abstract collections of ideas, values, norms, and regulations; (b) Activities (Actions), which refer to the patterned behaviors of individuals in society; and (c) Artifacts (Objects or Works), which are tangible results of human actions and can be seen, touched, and documented (Koentjaraningrat, 1996, p. 5).

These cultural forms can be further divided into two major categories: tangible culture, which is material and concrete, and intangible culture, which is abstract and nonmaterial (Vecco, 2010, pp. 321–324). Tangible heritage is defined as “a monument, group of buildings or site of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 52). Tangible heritage refers to physical items that can be preserved and interacted with. This encompasses objects created by cultural communities, like traditional garments, tools, and vehicles. It also includes significant structures such as temples, pyramids, and public monuments (Fahik et al., 2021, p. 3). According to UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre (WHC), tangible heritage encompasses “historic buildings and places, monuments, artifacts, etc., that are considered worthy of preservation for the future” (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/cairo/culture/tangible-cultural-heritage/>).

On the other hand, intangible heritage exists within the cultural realm and is not represented by physical objects. It encompasses elements such as songs, myths, beliefs, superstitions, oral poetry, and traditional knowledge (Fahik et al., 2021, p. 2). Intangible heritage is defined through an inventory that captures past efforts to describe oral traditions and folklore. It includes all tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by groups or individuals and recognized as embodying the community's cultural and social identity. Its values and standards are passed down orally, through imitation, or other methods. “Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 54). According to the WHC Convention, intangible cultural heritage includes

practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and cultural objects recognized as part of cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). The scope of intangible cultural heritage under Article 2, paragraph 2, includes: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals, and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe; and (e) traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003)

Cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is something that is passed down from generation to generation, continuously preserved, and sometimes redesigned to respond to environmental, natural, or historical factors. She adds that tangible cultural objects often have intangible aspects, such as the concept of the object, its symbolism, function, the message it conveys, the technology used to create it, and the behaviors associated with its use (cf. Munjeri, 2004; Sedyawati, 2006, p. 161). These two forms of culture are fundamentally interconnected.

Religious cultural heritage also consists of both tangible and intangible elements. The term “religious” in “Religious Treasures” reflects the religious identity of the Indonesian nation. Indonesia is known for its religiosity, with the first principle of Pancasila, “The One Godhead,” serving as the core of religious teachings. Indonesian history reveals that the country has absorbed many religious concepts, from the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms to the Islamic sultanates. These religious influences have fostered cross-cultural interactions among Indonesia’s ethnic groups, ultimately leading to changes in their respective social systems (Sedyawati, 2006, p. 317).

Considering the above, “Religious Treasures” can be equated with the term religious cultural heritage or religious heritage, which includes both tangible and intangible religious heritage (Thorley & Gunn, 2008). According to the Cultural Heritage Law (Law No. 11 of 2010), “Cultural Heritage” refers to tangible cultural heritage that holds important value for history, science, education, religion, or culture. Additionally, cultural heritage objects are categorized by age, with items being classified as heritage if they are 50 years old or older. Article 5 of the Cultural Heritage Law explains this in relation to age, representation of stylistic periods, and significance for history, science, education, religion, and cultural values that contribute to strengthening the nation’s identity.

It is challenging to separate Indonesian cultural treasures from religious teachings, making religious heritage an integral part of the nation’s identity. Additionally, religious sites, often referred to as *sacred sites* or *sacred natural sites*, are areas of special spiritual significance for the community (UNESCO, World Heritage Centre, “Heritage of Religious Interest,” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/religious-sacred-heritage/#statement>). The preservation of religious treasures is an important focus, as evidenced by the 2009 National Summit on religious issues (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2011). This underscores the importance of reviving cultural heritage to ensure the continuation of nation-building and the appreciation of local culture (Madjid, 1997a, pp. 155–158, 1997b, pp. 195–196; Sedyawati, 2006, p. 319).

2. The Pilgrimage and Its Motivation

According to the linguistic origins, the word *pilgrimage* is derived from the Arabic term *zāra-yazūru-ziyāratan*, which means “to visit.” In general, the visit can be made to both the living and the deceased. However, in common understanding, the meaning has narrowed, and pilgrimage is often interpreted as a visit to the deceased by going to their graves. The term grave pilgrimage refers specifically to the activity of visiting a deceased person at their grave. Hence, grave pilgrimage has become an integrated phrase (Indrawati et al., 2018, p. 89; Jamhari, 2001, p. 111). In this context, pilgrimages are usually made to places considered sacred or to the graves of saints, religious leaders, and community figures, especially those seen as *wali*. Sometimes, pilgrimage becomes a kind of “tour,” known as a pilgrimage tour, which is categorized as religious tourism (K. Griffin & Raj, 2017, pp. ii–ix).

The word *pilgrimage* can still be interpreted broadly as a visit, and this activity can be conducted at holy places or to visit certain people, whether living or deceased. In fact, a pilgrimage to the deceased does not always have to involve visiting their grave; it can also be done by visiting their living family members. Pilgrimage, in this context, can be understood as a form of maintaining relationships (*silaturahmi*) (Suhadi & Hambali, 1994, pp. 28–29).

In Javanese Islamic society, grave pilgrimage tourism usually has both general and specific motivations. The general motivation is to pray for ancestors or to seek blessings from them. The specific motivations include *ngalap berkah*, which means asking or seeking something from the ancestors (Chaer, 2014, pp. 49–50; Muhaimin, 1995, p. 176). “The trend of religious tourism or religious travel has long developed and is even considered the oldest form of economic travel. Every year, millions of people travel to major pilgrimage destinations around the world. It is estimated that nearly 240 million people per year go on pilgrimages. Religious tourism has become synonymous with the growth of tourism in modern times” (Indrawati et al., 2018, p. 89).

They are several key concepts regarding pilgrimage and tourism in Islam, namely:

- a. Pilgrimage or pilgrimage tourism is a form of worship, which is evident in the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to the Ka’ba (*Baitullah*). The religious significance of these journeys is outlined in the Qur’an, including in Surah Al-Baqarah: 196, Surah Ali Imran: 97, and Surah Al-Hajj: 27.
- b. Pilgrimage or pilgrimage tourism is closely linked to the pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination. This is illustrated in the Qur’an, Surah At-Taubah: 112, which highlights that traveling in Islam aims to gain knowledge and reflect. This is also mentioned in Surah Al-An’am: 11-12 and Surah An-Naml: 69-70.
- c. Pilgrimage or pilgrimage tourism serves as a means of *da’wah* (spreading religious teachings) to the community (Indrawati et al., 2018, p. 89).

The essence of grave pilgrimage is to remind pilgrims of death and the afterlife. By visiting graves, pilgrims are reminded that they too will one day die and be buried, just like those in the graves they visit. This awareness of death serves as a reminder to increase piety to Allah and acknowledge the existence of an afterlife. Additionally, pilgrimage is performed with the purpose of praying for the deceased, asking Allah to forgive their sins and grant them a good place in His presence (Mujib, 2016, pp. 207–208).

Arifuddin Ismail provides a detailed explanation of the objectives and motivations of pilgrimage. These objectives include: a) *Obtaining Blessings*: One of the most common motivations for pilgrimage is to seek blessings. The meaning of these blessings can vary depending on the socio-cultural background of the pilgrim. Understanding this context is crucial, as it provides a more comprehensive insight into the practice. The word *blessing* (*barakah* in Arabic) refers to happiness, an increase, or a divine gift that brings joy; b) *Ibrah (Lessons)*: Some pilgrims go on pilgrimage to gain lessons or insights, such as a reminder of death or inspiration from the life of the individual whose grave they visit; c) *Respect*: The culture of respect is deeply ingrained in Indonesian society, including in Java. Cultural practices such as *unggah-ungguh*, *andhap asor*, and *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* reflect the importance of respect, politeness, and filial piety. The Javanese language itself, with its levels of speech (*undha usuk*), demonstrates how people are expected to show respect; d) *Fulfilling a Vow (Nazar)*: *Nazar* comes from the Arabic word *nazar*, which means obligating oneself to do something that is not normally required. In religious terms, a *nazar* refers to a promise made to oneself to perform an act of worship if a specific intention is fulfilled, as explained in Surah Al-Baqarah: 270; e) *Repayment*: In the taxonomy of pilgrimage goals and motivations, repayment is also an important aspect. *Walis* are considered saints who have contributed to the community, and pilgrims visit their graves as a way to repay their merit; f) *Strengthening Religious Commitment*: Some pilgrims visit graves to strengthen their religious commitment, as opposed to those who primarily seek *tabarrukan* (blessings); g) *The Impact of Pilgrimage on Pilgrims and the Surrounding Community*: Pilgrimage brings blessings to the surrounding community, par-

ticularly economically, by generating additional income for those who manage the pilgrimage sites. Culturally, pilgrimage encourages the exchange of information and customs between pilgrims and the local community, as pilgrims come from various backgrounds (Ismail, 2013, pp. 151–152, 155–160).

3. Cultural Resilience and Character of the Nation

Cultural resilience is “a process of realizing collective consciousness organized in society to affirm, absorb, and adjust to various influences from other cultures through the process of cultural learning, namely enculturation, socialization, and internalization, which are based on shared historical experiences.” This means that cultural resilience involves efforts to adapt to external influences without significantly damaging the culture that has become the foundation of society. In this context, cultural resilience serves as a cultural strategy for dealing with change, rather than merely preserving cultural heritage (Makmur & Biantoro, 2014, p. 2).

The principles of cultural resilience include language, religion, art, and family structures, which together form the social system. These elements are interconnected and play a crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity. Every culture has language as its primary marker of identity. Furthermore, the appreciation of religion and art is an essential characteristic that must be preserved to safeguard cultural identity. The family system, as a cultural cornerstone, also plays a vital role. Therefore, through the principles of cultural resilience, a culture distinguishes itself from others (Makmur & Biantoro, 2014, p. 3).

National character, or the character of a nation, is related to the personality traits of a society as seen through the lens of social psychology. According to the *Master Design for Nation Character Development*, the character of a nation is defined as “the quality of unique and good behavior of the national collective, which is reflected in the consciousness, understanding, feelings, will (*karsa*), and behavior of the nation and state, resulting from the processing of thoughts, hearts, feelings, and will” (Yunus, 2013, pp. 71–72). The national character describes the distinctive personality traits of a country’s population. As it is tied to psychological aspects, national character is an abstract concept influenced by culture and embedded in the psychological mechanisms of a specific society. The development of a nation’s character is crucial, as it relates to the process of fostering and enhancing noble values rooted in Indonesian culture, inspired by the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Yunus, 2013, p. 72).

In the context of pilgrimage traditions, cultural resilience is particularly evident. Pilgrimage, especially to the graves of *wali* and other significant religious figures, exemplifies the process of cultural adaptation. The tradition has incorporated external influences such as tourism and modern practices while maintaining its core religious and cultural values. Pilgrimage not only serves as a religious activity but also helps preserve local languages, art forms, and family traditions, reinforcing cultural identity amid the pressures of globalization. As a cultural practice that links the past with the present, pilgrimage strengthens both spiritual devotion and the collective consciousness of communities, embodying the principles of cultural resilience.

Pilgrimage Tradition and Cultural Resilience

In relation to pilgrimages to holy places, some Indonesian Muslims view it as part of the tradition of *tabaruk* (seeking or taking blessings) and *tawasul* (intercession). In the context of seeking blessings, Muhaimin referred to this as *ngalap berkah*. According to him, visits to holy places following certain procedures are called pilgrimages. This term originates from the Arabic word *ziyārah*, which means “visit.” In general, this term can refer to almost any type of visit, whether to objects or individuals. However, in the local context, pilgrimage refers more specifically to a formal visit to a respected person, such as a renowned *kyai*, or to a sacred place, such as the tomb or relics of guardians and

saints, with the hope of obtaining *barakah* (blessings). While visits to living individuals, such as *kyai*, occur, they are often considered less significant than visits to the deceased (Muhaimin, 1995, p. 176).

The word *barakah*, or blessing, is a central value in the pilgrimage tradition. Linguistically, *barakah* means “grace or favor granted by God.” For instance, pilgrims at the Sunan Tembayat Tomb in Bayat interpret *barakah* as success in worldly affairs, which Jamhari described as “mundane qualities” such as prosperity, abundance, well-being, or sufficiency. In addition, other pilgrims view *barakah* in a transcendental sense, encompassing good fortune (*beja*), divine gifts (merits or rewards), and spiritual strength (*kadigdayan*) (Jamhari, 2001, p. 113). As Jamhari noted, *barakah* is “the main religious concept in pilgrimage, and serves as a lens through which people articulate their religious understanding” (Jamhari, 2001, p. 91).

The motivation for *ngalap berkah* or *tabaruk* during pilgrimage is often used as a *wasilah* (intermediary), serving as a means to convey the pilgrim’s requests to Allah. As Asmaran stated, “The activity of visiting the graves of saints is a manifestation of love for those dear to Allah. In turn, that individual will also be loved by Allah, and all their prayers will be answered by Him” (Asmaran, 2018, p. 199).

Meanwhile, Ismail identified four main motivations for pilgrimage: 1) *taktyarasa*—pilgrimage with the aim of obtaining blessings; 2) *gorowasi*—pilgrimage to a legendary figure to gain strength, popularity, personal stability, and longevity, or to seek inner peace; 3) *widiginong*—pilgrimage with the goal of seeking worldly wealth, position, or sustenance; and 4) *samaptadanu*—pilgrimage to ensure the safety and happiness of one’s children and grandchildren (Ismail, 2013, p. 152).

In the Javanese community, tombs are seen as sacred places that must be respected. They are considered the resting places of ancestors and family members who have passed away. Unlike ordinary tombs, the graves of certain figures hold a special attraction, prompting people to make pilgrimages for various reasons. Tombs of religious, historical, and even mythical figures have become spiritual tourism destinations, attracting both domestic and international visitors. “Ancestors who have died are believed to be capable of granting certain powers or blessings to individuals” (Latifah, 2023, p. 160). This belief has persisted across generations and is strongly rooted in tradition, not only among Muslims but also among followers of other religions. “Although there are criticisms that such practices might tarnish the concept of monotheism, in reality, the activity of visiting tombs has never diminished and, in fact, has grown more popular, especially when the visited tombs are perceived as particularly ‘sacred’” (Djuhan, 2011, p. 169). Through pilgrimage, pilgrims communicate with Allah. This communication, expressed through prayer, represents a form of *transcendental communication* with the Creator (Sylviana, 2018, pp. 119–120).

Despite varying views on its appropriateness, pilgrimage remains a cultural phenomenon that blends the practice of religious teachings with cultural expression. These two aspects—religion and culture—are deeply interwoven. As a cultural practice, pilgrimage can serve as recreation, education, a way to seek blessings, or a form of respect for ancestors. It also facilitates the transmission of social and cultural heritage from one generation to the next. At the same time, as a religious phenomenon, pilgrimage is seen as an act of worship, including prayers for the deceased at the pilgrimage sites (Sylviana, 2018, pp. 120–121).

It is important to note that in the process of transmitting cultural heritage and as a religious practice, the pilgrimage tradition also intersects with socio-cultural development and religious life. This, in turn, contributes to the resilience of the nation’s culture, character, and identity. This is emphasized in Law Number 17 of 2007 concerning the National Long-Term Development Plan for 2005-2025, which states that the development of socio-cultural and religious life is aimed at achieving the primary goal of creating an Indonesian society with noble character, morals, ethics, culture, and civilization, and a competitive nation (Bappenas, 2019, p. 2).

In the Technocratic Draft of the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN 2020-2024), one of the national development agendas is “Building the Nation’s Culture and Character.” This agenda emphasizes promoting and preserving culture to strengthen national identity. The general theme of the 2020-2024 RPJMN is “Prosperous, Fair, and Sustainable Middle-High Income Indonesia” (Bappenas, 2019, p. 1).

To achieve these goals, the RPJMN outlines seven national development agendas, including: 1) Strengthening Economic Resilience for Quality Growth; 2) Developing Regions to Reduce Inequality; 3) Improving Quality and Competitive Human Resources; 4) Building the Culture and Character of the Nation; 5) Strengthening Infrastructure to Support Economic Development and Basic Services; 6) Building the Environment, Improving Disaster Resilience, and Responding to Climate Change; and 7) Strengthening Stability, Governance, and Public Service Transformation (Bappenas, 2019, p. 3). One agenda particularly relevant to this study is the fourth: “Building the Culture and Character of the Nation.” It emphasizes the centrality of cultural and character development in national progress, aiming to create an advanced, competitive nation-state that stands strong in a global context. This is to be achieved through “strengthening the nation’s cultural resilience” and “advancing culture” (Bappenas, 2019, p. 5).

Endraswara explained that culture encompasses values, norms, and human creations, and it can be classified into three dimensions: 1) The cognitive dimension (creative culture), which includes abstract ideas and knowledge about life and the cosmos; 2) The evaluative dimension, which includes cultural values and norms regulating behavior and attitudes; and 3) The symbolic dimension, which involves human interaction with symbols in culture (Endraswara, 2006, p. 122).

The argument for preserving culture arises from concerns about “the weakening of the nation’s cultural resilience” and the suboptimal promotion of Indonesian culture. The RPJMN highlights that the flow of globalization, with its widespread social, cultural, economic, and political impacts, could weaken Indonesia’s cultural resilience. If not properly anticipated, globalization could erode local values such as *silih asah* (exchanging ideas), *silih asih* (loving one another), and *silih asuh* (caring for one another), replacing them with behaviors such as blasphemy, suspicion, and hatred (Bappenas, 2019, p. 116). On the contrary, if local values and wisdom are preserved and developed, they can build harmonious social relations and strengthen social cohesion. Thus, cultural resilience is essential in filtering foreign values that are incompatible with Indonesia’s own (Bappenas, 2019, p. 116).

In this context, pilgrimage has a significant impact on local culture, especially in maintaining and preserving local traditions and wisdom. For example, at the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Jalil, pilgrimage not only has religious significance but also empowers the local economy by reinforcing the local cultural identity (Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021). This demonstrates that pilgrimage can serve as a means of preserving and developing local cultural heritage, often integrated with religious practices. Moreover, pilgrimages to sites such as Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon and Tanah Lot in Bali help promote harmony between different religions and cultures. In these places, pilgrimage fosters interreligious and interethnic interaction, where visitors set aside their differences to unite in the shared purpose of pilgrimage. This shows that pilgrimage not only preserves local culture but also promotes social harmony in a multicultural society (Firdaus & Rahmat, 2019; Yunus, 2013, p. 68).



Fig. 2. *Left*: Porch for Chinese Ethnic, and *right*: Porch of *Pasujudan Gate* where pilgrims pray at the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb Complex, Cirebon (Source: Authors 2020)

As a religious and cultural practice, pilgrimage also contributes to cultural resilience and national identity. In the modern context, religious tourism based on local culture, such as at the Prince Jayakarta site, strengthens cultural resilience by showcasing authentic cultural resources as tourist attractions (Mawarni & Puspitasari, 2020). Such tourism promotes local values and identities in the face of globalization, playing a vital role in maintaining cultural uniqueness and protecting the nation's identity from the pressures of global homogenization.

Law Number 17 of 2007 emphasizes the importance of socio-cultural development to create a society with noble character and competitiveness (Yunus, 2013, p. 72). The pilgrimage tradition can serve as a tool to achieve these goals, as it helps transmit cultural and religious values from generation to generation, ultimately strengthening the nation's character and identity. Pilgrimage is not merely a spiritual activity; it is also a means of preserving cultural heritage, which has shaped the identity of the Indonesian people. Culture acts as a symbol that reinforces national identity, reflected in the character and mentality of both individuals and society. Values such as discipline, work ethic, honesty, lawfulness, perseverance, and determination all contribute to building a nation's cultural identity. The development of the nation's culture and character must also reinforce Indonesia's identity as a diverse nation-state, embodying unity in diversity, as expressed in the principle of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Bappenas, 2019, p. 114).

Modernization of the Pilgrimage: From the Spiritual Dimension to Socio-Economic Empowerment

Pilgrimage has long been an integral part of spiritual life in various religious traditions, including in Indonesia. In the modern context, pilgrimage is not only related to the religious dimension but also involves aspects of religious tourism. Religious tourism at holy places, such as the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Jalil in Kampung Dukuh, is now recognized not only as a spiritual activity but also as a means to empower the local economy (Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021, p. 432). This illustrates a shift in perspective—from pilgrimage as solely a means to draw closer to God, to an activity that also has significant social and economic impacts.

The modernization of pilgrimage is evident in efforts to increase tourist attraction through improved management, as seen at the Prince Benowo site in Purworejo. The management of this site aims to attract more tourists by integrating historical, cultural, and religious elements (Safitri & Hendrawati, 2020). This demonstrates how religious tourism can be optimized through modern management strategies that focus not only on spiritual aspects but also on economic and cultural dimensions. Another example is the Sunan Ampel site in Surabaya, where the mental image of Sunan Ampel is depicted as a

unique tourist destination. It is characterized by its impressive architecture, important business centers, and diversity in architecture, shopping, and scenery. In this context, the Sunan Ampel site serves as a religious tourism destination that combines old and new, traditional and modern, Eastern and Western elements (Fawaid, 2014, p. 71).

Modernization in pilgrimage is also reflected in technological advancements, such as the use of QR codes on pilgrimage tourism maps in Jakarta to facilitate access and increase the number of visits (Narulita, Aulia, Amaliyah, et al., 2019). This technology represents a modern adaptation to traditional religious practices, enhancing efficiency and convenience in the organization of religious tourism.

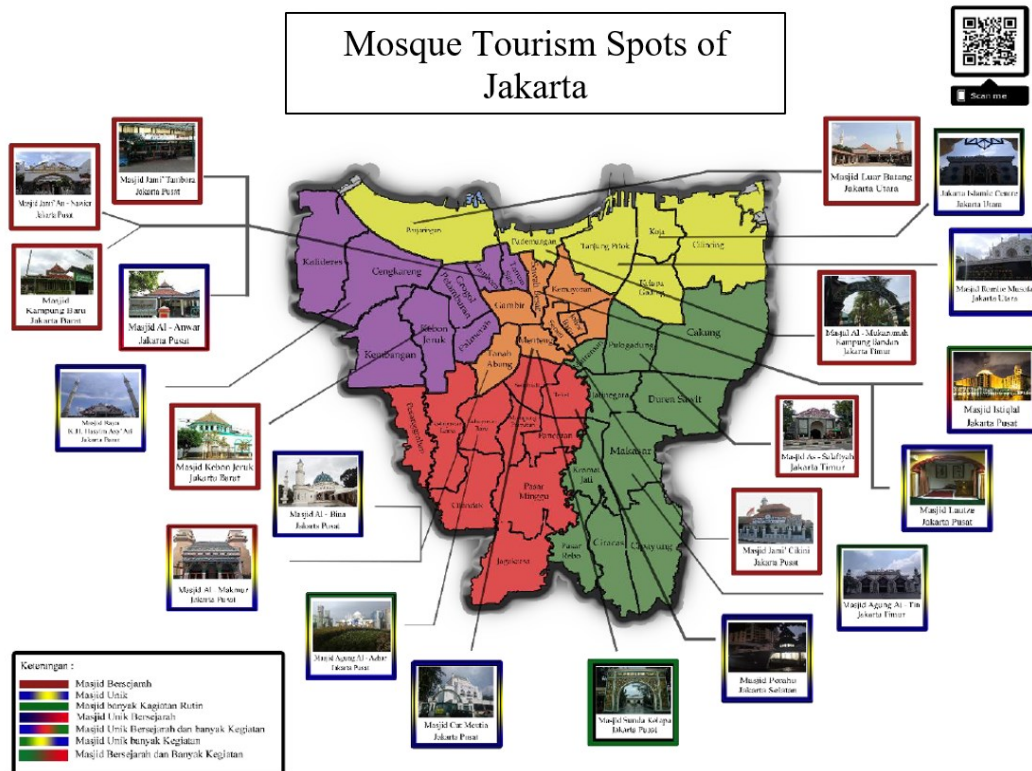


Fig 3. Mosque Tourism Spots of Jakarta (Source: Narulita, Suprasetio, & Humaidi, 2019, p. 168)

In relation to *tabaruk* (blessings) and *tawasul* (intercession), both are important concepts in Indonesian pilgrimage practices. Traditionally, *tabaruk* refers to seeking blessings from God through the intercession of saints or sacred places. Pilgrimages to the tombs of *wali* or religious leaders are often made with the hope of obtaining *barakah* (blessings). The meaning of *barakah* in the context of pilgrimage can vary, as explained above, from material benefits such as prosperity and well-being, to spiritual aspects such as luck and spiritual power (Jamhari, 2001, p. 113; Muhaimin, 1995, p. 176).

Alongside *tabaruk*, *tawasul* is also a common practice in pilgrimage. It involves making a request to Allah through the intercession of a holy figure. This pilgrimage practice is often considered an expression of love for those beloved by Allah, with the hope that the pilgrim’s prayers will be answered. These two concepts highlight how pilgrimage in Indonesia carries a strong spiritual dimension, where pilgrims not only remember death but also seek blessings and closeness to God through the intercession of holy figures (Asmaran, 2018, pp. 183, 189).

Religious pilgrimages and tourism hold significant potential for empowering local communities, especially in areas with sacred sites. For instance, in Kampung Adat Dukuh, the pilgrimage to Makom Sheikh Abdul Jalil serves not only as a spiritual activity but also as a means of local economic empowerment. Religious tourism based on local wisdom involves the community in economic activities such as providing accommodations, souvenirs, and pilgrimage-related services. Mosques can also become religious

tourism destinations, contributing to the local economy. This not only improves economic welfare but also strengthens the cultural identity of the local community (Mutalib & Naif, 2023, p. 96; Rohaeni & Emilda, 2021, pp. 432–436).

However, one of the challenges faced by many pilgrimage sites is suboptimal management, as seen at the Petilasan Pangeran Benowo site in Purworejo. Despite its potential for religious tourism, inadequate management and infrastructure pose significant barriers to attracting more visitors. Therefore, optimizing religious tourism requires improving site management and development strategies, involving local governments, the private sector, and local communities (Safitri & Hendrawati, 2020).

The development of religious tourism must also prioritize the preservation of local culture. Religious tourism can strengthen cultural resilience by showcasing authentic cultural resources and promoting local values. In the face of globalization, where local values are at risk of being overshadowed by external cultures, religious tourism can serve as a means of cultural preservation. By utilizing religious tourism as a tool for maintaining local culture, communities can retain their cultural identity while attracting tourists (Mawarni & Puspitasari, 2020, p. 61).

Modernization and the use of technology in the pilgrimage experience in Indonesia have transformed how pilgrims undertake their journeys, while still preserving the essence of spirituality. Technology play a crucial role in enhancing the pilgrimage experience without compromising its spiritual essence. For example, the implementation of QR code-based tourist maps in DKI Jakarta has facilitated access to information, increased visitor numbers, and improved the pilgrimage experience. This technology enables pilgrims to obtain detailed information about the sites they visit, including their history, rituals, and other relevant details (Narulita, Aulia, Amaliyah, et al., 2019, p. 457; Narulita, Suprasetio, & Humaidi, 2019, p. 168). Technology, such as pilgrimage guide apps, also enables pilgrims to access information about sacred sites more efficiently and safely, without diminishing the spiritual value. With the help of these apps, pilgrims can obtain historical information, routes, and prayer guides at pilgrimage sites through map-based tools, allowing them to focus more on their spiritual experience rather than dealing with technical issues (Jacobsen, 2019)

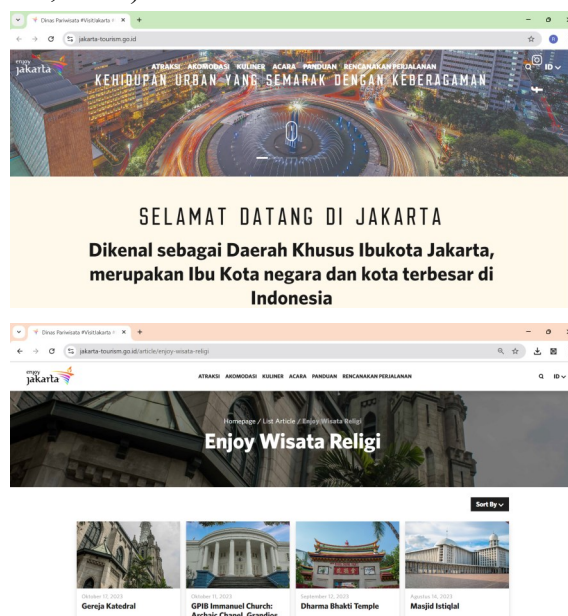


Fig. 4. Screenshot of www.jakarta-tourism.go.id (Source: Authors 2024)

The use of Virtual Reality (VR) technology, as another example, has also emerged as a significant innovation, enabling pilgrims who are unable to travel physically to “visit” holy places virtually, such as participating in virtual pilgrimages to Mecca. This is an example of how technology expands the accessibility of pilgrimages without compromising

spiritual objectives (Cuikitalia & Chanastalia, 2024). Moreover, Augmented Reality (AR) technology enriches the pilgrim’s understanding by adding interactive information about the significance of the locations visited. Real-time data is displayed, helping pilgrims grasp the spiritual importance of the site more profoundly.

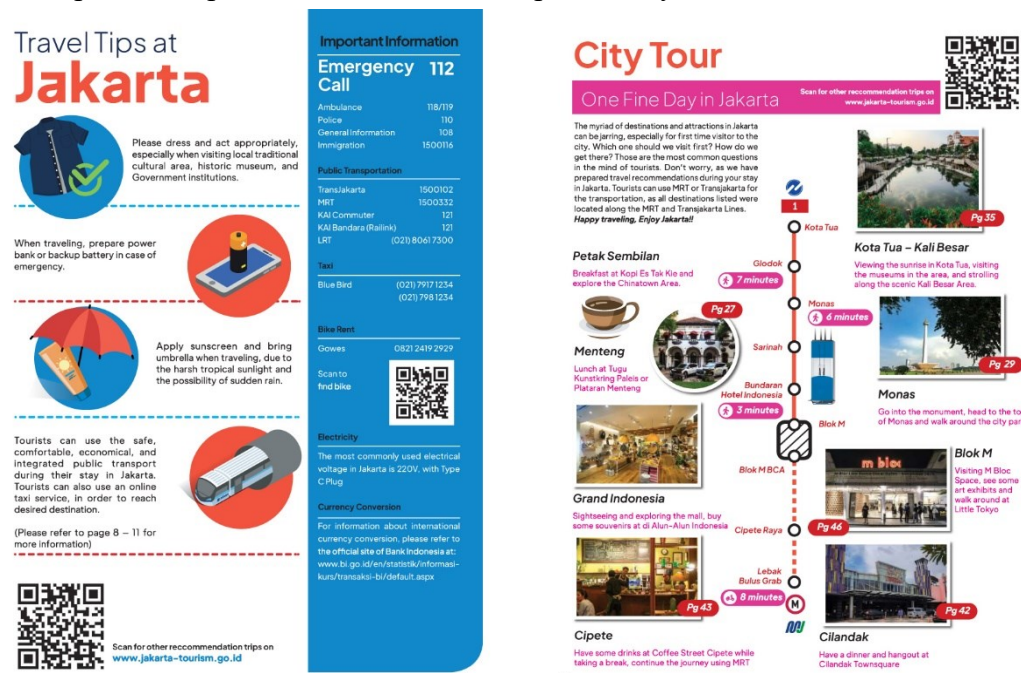


Fig. 5: QR Code facilities of Jakarta Tourism Office
(Source: *The Official Jakarta Tourism Guidebook Jakarta*, www.jakarta-tourism.go.id, p. 5-6)

Modernization is further reflected in the use of digital platforms that simplify booking accommodations, transportation, and pilgrimage-related services. These platforms allow pilgrims to focus more on worship rather than spending time on logistical arrangements. Technology enhances the efficiency and convenience of the pilgrimage process while safeguarding its spiritual core, ensuring that the deepening of one's spirituality remains the primary focus (Jacobsen, 2019).

Pilgrimage plays an important role in promoting social harmony in Indonesia’s multicultural society. Pilgrimage sites such as Satya Dharma Temple and Nurul Falah Mosque in Penjarangan, Jakarta; Al-Hikmah Mosque in Lebulung, Klungkung Village, Bali; and Al-Amanah Mosque, Pentecostal Church, and Girimerta Temple in Kampung Gang Ruhana, West Java serve as gathering points for various ethnic and religious groups. In this context, pilgrimage becomes more than an individual religious activity—it fosters social interaction, bringing people from different backgrounds together. This creates a space for intercultural and interreligious dialogue, ultimately strengthening social harmony. During these spiritual moments, differences in ethnicity and religion become less significant, as the focus is on the shared spiritual experience and sense of togetherness (Firdaus & Rahmat, 2019, pp. 112–114). A similar example of pluralism can be found at the Sunan Ampel site, where a vibrant and diverse atmosphere is created by the coexistence of Kampung Arab and Kampung Cina. While Kampung Arab is characterized by larger gates and colorful buildings, Kampung Cina features more luxurious structures. The harmonious coexistence of these two communities enhances the appeal of the site as a religious tourism destination with a relaxed and multicultural atmosphere (Fawaid, 2014, p. 71). Thus, pilgrimages and religious tourism can act as catalysts for strengthening social cohesion in Indonesia, a nation with high ethnic and religious diversity.

However, maintaining the sustainability of this harmony is a challenge, especially in the face of rapid social change and rising interreligious tensions in some regions. Religious tourism can play a key role in promoting values of tolerance, harmony, and respect

for cultural diversity through joint pilgrimages to sacred sites shared by various religious groups. In this context, religious understanding is important in determining how one practices their faith, including ritual observance, religious leadership, and the socialization of religious knowledge (Nuha, 2016, p. 59).

CONCLUSION

The tradition of pilgrimage and religious tourism from a modern perspective is no longer confined to spiritual aspects, but encompasses economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Through the concepts of *tabaruk* (taking blessings) and *tawasul* (intercession), pilgrimage maintains its essence as a profound religious practice. These two concepts lead pilgrimage to demonstrate its role in supporting local culture and in strengthening cultural resilience amid globalization. This practice, as seen in various holy sites across Indonesia, plays a crucial role in fostering social harmony, in empowering local economies, and in preserving the nation's identity.

The pilgrimage tradition, now enriched by a tourism dimension, holds a great potential to empower local communities through various economic activities related to pilgrimage, such as the provision of accommodations, souvenirs, and other related services. An example is Kampung Adat Dukuh, where the local community is actively involved in the local economy supporting pilgrimage activities. This case illustrates how religious tourism based on local wisdom can improve economic welfare while reinforcing cultural identity. The development of religious tourism, which integrates spiritual, cultural, and economic dimensions, also plays a pivotal role in preserving local cultural heritage in the face of globalization, thereby strengthening cultural resilience and protecting local values from external influences.

In the context of globalization, the modernization of pilgrimages, including the use of technologies such as QR codes, digital maps, and mobile apps, as well as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technology can enhance spiritual comfort and accessibility for pilgrims without compromising their spiritual essence. Technology allows pilgrims to access more in-depth information about the history, spiritual significance, and rituals associated with pilgrimage sites. By integrating spiritual guidance through technology, pilgrims are able to maintain focus on the central purpose of pilgrimage: spiritual reflection and the pursuit of closeness to God. The use of technology also facilitates the management of pilgrimage sites and helps attract more visitors, thereby supporting local economic development.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the pilgrimage tradition in Indonesia serves not only as an individual spiritual practice but also as a means of social interaction, bringing together people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. Pilgrimage sites, such as the graves of Sunan Gunung Jati and that of Sunan Ampel, including Tanah Lot, and Penjarangan sites, act as the meeting points for multicultural communities, fostering spaces for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Shared spiritual experiences during pilgrimages help reduce social and religious differences. These experiences also strengthen a sense of togetherness, and promote tolerance and harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society. Thus, pilgrimage becomes a vital instrument in maintaining social cohesion and encouraging harmony within the diverse social environment.

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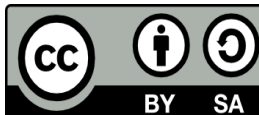
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