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Local Wisdom Values Of Sintren Dance In The Kacirebonan Sultanate

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ABSTRACT

Cirebon, as one of the cultural heritage centers in West Java, Indonesia, possesses a rich variety of traditional arts that contribute significantly to its tourism identity. One of these cultural expressions is Sintren dance, a traditional performance art that developed along the northern coastal region of Java and continues to be preserved within the Kacirebonan Sultanate. This study aims to analyze and describe the local wisdom values contained in Sintren dance in the Kacirebonan Sultanate, Cirebon, and to highlight its relevance as both cultural heritage and tourism attraction. This research employed a qualitative descriptive field study approach. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews and documentation related to Sintren dance performances at the Kacirebonan Sultanate. The study involved eight informants, including cultural expert, cultural practitioners (dalang and sinden), dancers, community leaders and tourism stakeholders. The collected data were analyzed descriptively to interpret the symbolic meanings and local wisdom values reflected in the Sintren dance. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that Sintren dance embodies various forms of local wisdom, including religious values, aesthetic values, moral teachings, respect for tradition, and social harmony. Originally rooted in ritual and sacred practices, Sintren has evolved into a cultural performance that functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of cultural education and identity preservation. The dance reflects the coastal community's worldview, spiritual beliefs, and collective memory. Furthermore, understanding these values can enhance tourists' appreciation of Sintren as a cultural attraction while encouraging younger generations to participate in preserving this traditional art form. The integration of local wisdom into cultural tourism enhances visitor experience while supporting cultural sustainability. This study contributes to the discourse on cultural tourism by highlighting the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage through community-based approaches.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom Values, Sintren Dance, Cultural Heritage, Kacirebonan Sultanate, Cultural Tourism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized for its rich cultural diversity, which serves as a significant asset in the development of the tourism sector [1]. Tourism not only functions as a recreational activity but also plays an important role in economic growth and cultural preservation [2]. Cultural tourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments globally, emphasizing authenticity, local identity, and meaningful experiences. However, globalization and modernization pose serious challenges to the sustainability of traditional arts. Younger generations tend to shift toward popular culture, leading to the gradual decline of traditional performances such as Sintren dance.

Cultural tourism has emerged as a prominent form of tourism that emphasizes local traditions, arts, and customs as key attractions [3]. Cirebon City, located in West Java, is known for its strong cultural heritage, including traditional performing arts such as the Sintren dance, which carries deep symbolic and spiritual meanings [4]. However, the existence of traditional arts like Sintren is increasingly challenged by modernization and shifting societal preferences. As a result, younger generations tend to show less interest in preserving such cultural expressions. This condition raises concerns about the sustainability of local cultural heritage [5].

Traditional arts such as the Sintren dance have high historical and cultural value and play a role in shaping the character of society [6]. However, in today's era of globalization, the existence of traditional culture is increasingly marginalized by modern culture.

Despite its cultural significance, studies focusing on the integration of local wisdom values in traditional

performing arts remain limited, particularly in coastal Javanese communities. This gap highlights the urgency of documenting and analyzing cultural expressions like Sintren dance. The objective of this study is to analyze the local wisdom values contained in the Sintren dance so that it can provide understanding to the community and tourists about the cultural meaning contained within it.

Sintren dance is not merely entertainment but represents a complex system of belief, spirituality, and social values. Originally performed as a ritual involving trance and spiritual invocation, Sintren reflects the syncretism of local beliefs and religious influences.Therefore, the preservation of culture based on local wisdom becomes very important, especially in supporting sustainable tourism development [5]. This research is expected to contribute to maintaining the existence of local culture as well as increasing public interest in traditional arts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Culture

Culture can be understood as a complex system consisting of ideas, behaviors, and human creations that are learned and shared within a society [6]. It represents the identity and way of life of a particular community. Culture is widely recognized as a dynamic system consisting of shared meanings, practices, and symbolic expressions that shape human interaction within a society [7]. In contemporary cultural studies, culture is not only seen as heritage but also as a living process that continuously evolves in response to social change [8].

2.2 Local Wisdom

Local wisdom refers to a set of values, knowledge, and practices that are developed and maintained by local communities over generations [9]. These values guide social behavior and reflect the community's adaptation to its environment. Local wisdom (indigenous knowledge) also refers to a body of knowledge, values, and practices developed by local communities through long-term interaction with their environment [10]. It plays a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and cultural identity [11]. According to recent studies, local wisdom is increasingly acknowledged as an essential component in sustainable development discourse [12].

2.3 Cultural Tourism

In the context of tourism, local wisdom plays a crucial role in creating authentic and meaningful experiences for visitors [5]. Cultural tourism enables tourists to engage with and understand the social and cultural characteristics of a destination [13]. Cultural tourism has shifted from a passive consumption model toward an experiential and participatory approach [14]. Tourists are no longer merely observers but active participants seeking authentic cultural engagement [15]. This shift increases the importance of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional dance, rituals, and performing arts. Furthermore, UNESCO emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage, including traditional performances, serves as a key driver for cultural sustainability and identity preservation [16]. Traditional dances like Sintren represent not only artistic expression but also embedded systems of belief, spirituality, and social values.

2.4 Cmmunity-Based Tourism (CBT) and Cultural Sustainability

Concept of community-based tourism emphasizes the involvement of local communities in managing and preserving cultural resources. This approach not only enhances cultural sustainability but also provides economic benefits to local residents [17]. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a strategic approach to integrate local wisdom into tourism development. CBT ensures that local communities actively participate in preserving and managing cultural resources while benefiting economically [18]. Studies show that integrating local wisdom into tourism enhances destination authenticity and strengthens cultural resilience [19]. Recent research also highlights that cultural performances can function as educational media that transmit moral values, social norms, and collective memory across generations [20]. Therefore, analyzing the local wisdom values embedded in traditional dances is essential for understanding their role in sustainable cultural tourism development.

3. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and interpret the local wisdom values embedded in the Sintren dance within the Kacirebonan Sultanate. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it allows an in-depth understanding of cultural meanings, symbolic expressions, and social practices that cannot be measured quantitatively [21], [23]. Through this approach, the researcher is able to capture the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of individuals directly involved in the Sintren tradition. The descriptive nature of this study emphasizes a systematic explanation of observed phenomena, focusing on how local wisdom values are manifested and understood within the context of cultural performance and community life [24].

Research Informants

The study involved 8 informants, selected using purposive sampling, consisting of:

- 1 cultural expert.
- 2 cultural practitioners (*dalang & sinden*).
- 1 Sintren dancer.
- 2 local community leaders.
- 2 tourism stakeholders.

A total of eight informants were selected in this study using a purposive sampling technique, based on their knowledge, experience, and active involvement in the Sintren dance tradition [21], [25]. The informants consisted of one cultural expert with academic insight into traditional arts, one Sintren dancer who have direct experience in performing the dance, two cultural practitioners (including the *dalang* and *sinden*) who play a central role in the ritual process, two community leaders who understand the social and cultural context of the

performance, two tourism stakeholders who are involved in promoting Sintren as a cultural attraction. This selection ensures a comprehensive perspective by representing various stakeholders, allowing the researcher to obtain rich and diverse data related to both the cultural and tourism dimensions of Sintren dance [27].

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through:

1. In-depth interviews using semi-structured questions.
2. Participant observation during Sintren performances.
3. Documentation, including photos, videos, and archival records.

Data in this study were collected through multiple techniques to ensure depth and accuracy of information. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions to explore informants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding the values contained in Sintren dance [21]. Second, participant observation was carried out during Sintren performances, enabling the researcher to directly observe rituals, movements, interactions, and audience responses in their natural setting [26]. Third, documentation techniques were employed by collecting photographs, videos, and relevant archival materials related to Sintren performances. The combination of these data collection methods allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the explicit and implicit aspects of the cultural practice being studied [24].

Data Validation

To ensure data credibility, this study applied:

1. Triangulation of sources (cross-checking informants).
2. Triangulation of methods (interview, observation, documentation).
3. Member checking (confirming findings with informants).

Source triangulation was used by comparing information obtained from different informants to identify consistency and variations in perspectives. Method triangulation was applied by cross-checking data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation [24]. Additionally, member checking was conducted by returning the findings to selected informants to confirm the accuracy and validity of the interpretations [21]. These validation strategies strengthen the reliability of the research findings and minimize potential bias in the data interpretation process [22].

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analysed using Miles & Huberman's interactive model, which includes [22]:

1. Data reduction.
   The researcher selects, simplifies, and organizes raw data obtained from the field by focusing on relevant information related to local wisdom values.
2. Data display.
   The data are presented in a structured form, such as narrative descriptions and thematic categorizations, to facilitate interpretation.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification.
   The researcher interprets the data to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings, and continuously verifies these conclusions throughout the research process.

This analytical framework enables a systematic and rigorous interpretation of qualitative data, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the cultural reality of the Sintren dance.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These findings suggest that Sintren dance serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for cultural education. The integration of local wisdom into tourism aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism, which emphasize cultural preservation and community involvement. Furthermore, developing cultural tourism based on traditional arts can generate economic opportunities while maintaining cultural authenticity. This approach supports long-term sustainability by balancing economic benefits with cultural conservation.



Figure 1. Preparation of Sintren Dancer
Source: Documentation (2025)

The Sintren dance that developed in the Cirebon area shows a blend of magical elements, religiosity, and folk art expression. In its performance practice, there are certain rituals before the dancers enter the phase of transforming into 'sintren.' This process is understood by the community as a symbol of surrendering to a higher power, which is conveyed in the meaning of the following verse:

A. When entering the Sintren performance room.

Turun turun sintren
Sintrene widadari
Nemu kembang yun ayunan
Nemu kembang yun ayunan
Kembange putri mahendra
Widadari temurunan

B. When Sintren and the Sintren puppeteer (*Dalang*) have prepared in place and are about to start the performance.

Kembang rampe oli tuku ning pasar kramat
Nok Fani dirante kang rantee dalang Mamat
Kembang rampe oli tuku ning pasar kramat
sintrene dirante kang rantee dalang mamat
Selasih Selasih Sulandana, menyangkuti ragae sukma
Ana sukma saking surga, wWidadari temurunan

C. When *Ranggap* (chicken coop) is opened.

Ya robana, robbana, robbana
Ya robana zhalamna anfusana, Wa inlam tagfirlana
Wa tarhamna lanakunanna, Min al-khosirin

D. After Sintren comes out of the *Ranggap* and then stands, the verse is changed to show that Sintren has dressed up and changed clothes, and the *Panjak* (musicians) are ready to accompany the performance.

Turun turun sintren
Sintrene dandan suwe
Dandan kalunge sesumpinge
Dandan kalunge sesumpinge



Figure 2. Sintren Dancer with Complete Costume
Source: Documentation (2025)

E. When Sintren performs the dance movement for the first time, the verse is changed again to show that Sintren is ready. In this part, the ritual of throwing money that makes Sintren weak and powerless can already be carried out.

Turun turun sintren, Sintrene widadari
Nemu kembang yun ayunan, Nemu kembang yun ayunan
Kembange putri mahendra, Widadari temurunan



Figure 3. Interaction with Audience
Source: Documentation (2025)

F. When the money-throwing procession is over, the puppeteer will put the sintren back into the ranggap as a sign that the performance is about to end.

Kembang kilaras ditandur tengahe alas
Paman bibi aja maras
Dalang sintren jaluk waras

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the Sintren dance contains various local wisdom values that have been passed down from generation to generation. Local wisdom is a value system that develops within the community and serves as a guide in daily life [24].

1. Religious Values

Religious values are seen in the ritual process before the performance, which reflects the relationship between humans and God. These values indicate that traditional arts cannot be separated from the spiritual aspects of society.

2. Moral Values

Moral values are reflected in the symbols of the performance, such as the meaning of money thrown to the dancers causing them to fall. This carries the message that humans should not be materialistic in life.

3. Aesthetic Values

Sintren dance has the beauty of movement, music, and costumes that reflect high aesthetic values in traditional art.

4. Social Values

The Sintren dance involves interaction between the performers and the community, thereby reflecting the values of togetherness and social solidarity.

The local wisdom values in the Sintren dance show that traditional arts not only function as entertainment but also as a medium for cultural education. This is in line with the concept that local wisdom can serve as a foundation for sustainable tourism development [33].

Moreover, the development of culture-based tourism can provide economic benefits while also preserving local culture [34]. Thus, the Sintren dance has great potential to be developed as a sustainable cultural tourism attraction.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Sintren dance embodies significant local wisdom values, including religious, moral, aesthetic, and social aspects. These values enhance its potential as a cultural tourism attraction that can be developed sustainably. This study highlights the importance of preserving traditional arts as part of tourism development strategies. Maintaining local cultural identity is essential to ensure the sustainability of tourism in the long term.

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