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Spirituality and Sustainability: How Local Wisdom in Desa Wates is Paving the Way for Cultural and Environmental Preservation

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Abstract. Local wisdom functions as a bridge between spirituality and sustainable living, especially in rural communities such as Wates Village. This article explores the integral role of local wisdom in maintaining cultural heritage and environmental balance in villages. Through in-depth study of traditional practices, such as the ritual of recitation of petilasan, earth almsgiving, and others, this research highlights how these customs are deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs that encourage ecological conservation. This paper argues that local wisdom in Wates Village not only strengthens cultural identity but also provides practical solutions for sustainable development. By examining how spirituality influences conservation efforts and community resilience, this research highlights the broader implications of local wisdom in addressing modern challenges. These findings show that the application of traditional knowledge systems can make a significant contribution to cultural continuity and environmental sustainability, as well as providing valuable insights for communities facing the pressures of globalization and environmental degradation. This research uses an interview method by going directly to meet the community and mingle so they can find out about the local wisdom that exists in this place. The aim of this research is to find out how much local wisdom exists in this village so that we KKN 102 students understand more about the culture in this village.

Keywords: local wisdom, spirituality, sustainability, cultural heritage, Desa Wates, Petilasan, Earth Almsgiving, environmental conservation.

Abstrak. Kearifan lokal berfungsi sebagai jembatan antara spiritualitas dan kehidupan berkelanjutan, khususnya di masyarakat pedesaan seperti Desa Wates. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi peran integral kearifan lokal dalam menjaga warisan budaya dan keseimbangan lingkungan di desa-desa. Melalui studi mendalam tentang praktik-praktik tradisional, seperti ritual pembacaan petilasan, sedekah bumi, dan lainnya, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana adat istiadat ini berakar kuat pada kepercayaan spiritual yang mendorong konservasi ekologis. Tulisan ini berpendapat bahwa kearifan lokal di Desa Wates tidak hanya memperkuat identitas budaya tetapi juga memberikan solusi praktis untuk pembangunan berkelanjutan. Dengan mengkaji bagaimana spiritualitas memengaruhi upaya konservasi dan ketahanan masyarakat, penelitian ini menyoroti implikasi yang lebih luas dari kearifan lokal dalam mengatasi tantangan modern. Temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan sistem pengetahuan tradisional dapat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap kelangsungan budaya dan keberlanjutan lingkungan, serta memberikan wawasan yang berharga bagi masyarakat yang menghadapi tekanan globalisasi dan degradasi lingkungan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode wawancara dengan cara mendatangi langsung masyarakat dan berbaur sehingga mereka dapat mengetahui tentang kearifan lokal yang ada di tempat ini. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui seberapa besar kearifan lokal yang terdapat di desa ini sehingga kami mahasiswa KKN 102 dapat lebih memahami budaya yang ada di desa ini.

Kata kunci: kearifan lokal, spiritualitas, keberlanjutan, warisan budaya, Desa Wates, Petilasan, Sedekah Bumi, pelestarian lingkungan.

1. BACKGROUND

Local wisdom is often an overlooked yet powerful resource for addressing some of the most pressing challenges faced by communities today. Embedded in the daily lives, customs, and rituals of indigenous and rural populations, it offers practical and sustainable approaches

to living in harmony with both the natural and social environment. In the context of Desa Wates, a village located in Central Java, Indonesia, local wisdom is more than a relic of the past—it is a living, evolving system of knowledge that continues to guide the community's approach to cultural, social, and environmental issues.

Desa Wates is renowned for its adherence to traditional values and practices, which are deeply intertwined with its spiritual worldview. One such practice is the recitation of petilasan ritual, a ceremony that honors ancestral spirits and reinforces the village's connection to its past. While primarily a spiritual tradition, recitation of petilasan also reflects a broader philosophy of ecological stewardship, as the ritual emphasizes gratitude for nature's gifts and promotes the preservation of natural resources. This holistic approach to life, where spirituality and nature are inseparable, positions local wisdom as a vital tool for promoting sustainable development in the village.

In an age of rapid urbanization and industrialization, many communities are witnessing the erosion of such traditions, leading to cultural homogenization and the depletion of natural resources. Desa Wates, however, stands as a testament to the resilience of local wisdom. By integrating traditional knowledge systems into modern development strategies, the village has managed to strike a balance between preserving its cultural heritage and addressing contemporary needs. This makes Desa Wates an important case study for understanding how local wisdom can contribute to both cultural and environmental sustainability in a globalized world.

This paper aims to explore the dual role of local wisdom in Desa Wates, focusing on its contribution to cultural preservation and environmental conservation. Specifically, it examines how the village's spiritual practices—particularly mbelek wali—serve as mechanisms for safeguarding both cultural identity and ecological balance. Through a combination of fieldwork, interviews with local residents, and an analysis of existing literature, the research highlights the ways in which Desa Wates has successfully utilized its local wisdom to navigate the challenges of modernity.

Furthermore, this study seeks to position the local wisdom of Desa Wates within a broader discourse on sustainable development. By demonstrating how traditional knowledge systems can offer solutions to global issues such as environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and cultural loss, the paper argues for the need to preserve and promote local wisdom as a vital component of sustainable development strategies. As communities around the world grapple with the impacts of climate change and the loss of cultural diversity, the case of Desa

Wates offers valuable insights into how ancient traditions can be harnessed to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

In the following sections, this paper will delve deeper into the relationship between spirituality, local wisdom, and sustainability in Desa Wates. It will explore how rituals like mbelek wali not only strengthen the social fabric of the community but also promote practices that ensure the long-term health of the environment. By analyzing the interplay between tradition and modernity in Desa Wates, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of local wisdom in fostering both cultural continuity and ecological sustainability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In their journal “Knowledge and Local Wisdom: Community Treasure” By Miss Roikhwanphut Mungmachon: The main problem discussed in the paper is the erosion of local knowledge and wisdom caused by globalization and development. As external influences penetrate communities, traditional knowledge and cultural practices are increasingly lost. This leads to a range of environmental and social issues, including environmental degradation and social discord. Furthermore, education systems and development policies often prioritize economic growth over the preservation of local wisdom, exacerbating the problem. Despite these challenges, the paper highlights that communities are actively working to address these issues. By collectively examining their problems, recovering their traditional knowledge, and integrating it with new information, these communities are finding effective solutions and improving their environmental and social conditions.

In their journal “Local Wisdom In Built Environment In Globalization Era” By Ispurwono Soemarno, Purwanita Setijanti: in this study is that while globalization and modernization lead to a more universal and culturally homogeneous built environment, local wisdom—defined as the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the built environment influenced by local culture—can still be preserved and adapted. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method to explore how local wisdom in architecture evolves in the face of globalization. It finds that while technology and communication advancements influence changes in spatial patterns and building elements, the core meanings and cultural significance embedded in local wisdom are maintained. The study suggests that local wisdom can adapt to technological advancements while respecting local character, climate, and natural conditions, allowing for a blend of cultures without losing the essence of local traditions.

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In their journal “Local Wisdom in a New Paradigm: Applying System Theory to the Study of Local Culture in Indonesia” By Althien John Pesurnay: in this paper is to introduce a new methodological perspective for studying local wisdom (kearifan lokal) in Indonesia by using a philosophical approach. The paper argues that human social systems can be understood as self-referential and contingent, meaning that they are shaped by their own internal logic and are influenced by various factors. Local wisdom is conceptualized as a social and communicative system that demonstrates self-organization or autopoiesis, meaning it maintains and regenerates itself through its own processes. This perspective aims to offer a deeper understanding of social reality and cultural dynamics by examining how local wisdom functions within these social systems. The methodology outlined in the paper involves a philosophical approach to studying local wisdom (kearifan lokal) in Indonesia with Phenomenological Perspective.

⁴
In their article “A Systematic Review on the Local Wisdom of Indigenous People in Nature Conservation” By Azlan Abas: In their study is to systematically review and analyze indigenous local wisdom in nature conservation, identifying key areas such as forest and water management, and explore how this knowledge can be integrated into scientific frameworks to support sustainable development goals.

3. **METHOD**

The methodology in this journal is with the Mix-methods. involves a detailed approach to studying the integration of local wisdom, spiritual practices, and sustainable development in Desa Wates. In this study, the research methodology is designed to explore the interplay between local wisdom, spirituality, and sustainability in Desa Wates. An ethnographic approach was employed to capture the community’s traditional practices and their impact on cultural and environmental preservation. Data were collected through detailed field observations, focusing on the recitation of petilasan, earth almsgiving, and other key practices. Semi-structured interviews with village elders, spiritual leaders, and local residents provided insights into the significance of these practices, while focus group discussions with various community groups revealed collective perspectives on the role of local wisdom in fostering resilience and ecological stewardship.

The findings were contextualized through a thorough literature review of relevant academic and historical sources. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, revealing how spiritual beliefs shape environmental practices and cultural identity. Ethical considerations were carefully managed to respect the community’s traditions, and validation measures were

9 implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results. This comprehensive methodology highlights the vital role of local wisdom in guiding sustainable development and preserving cultural heritage in the face of modern challenges.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reciting Petilasan Site of Sunan Ampel

In our field research, KKN 102 students discovered a lot of local wisdom in Wates village, one of which is the tradition of reciting the Koran in a Sunan Ampel petilasan. Petilasan, in Javanese, is taken from the word "telas" which means a former stopover place that has been occupied or passed by someone important. Usually this place is used as a maqam or in other forms. Another meaning in Sundanese is "Patilasan" which means the place where the traditional ceremonies of a region will be held.

From all the explanations above, the petilasan in Wates village is a maqam that was once used as a resting place by Sunan Ampel when spreading the teachings of Islam in the archipelago. This local wisdom makes it a habit for local people to hold recitations around the petilasan on certain days, namely on the eve of 1 Suro or Islamic New Year, and on other important days.

The spiritual significance of petilasan extends beyond mere historical commemoration. For many individuals, these sites are places of pilgrimage, reflection, and devotion. Pilgrims visit petilasan to seek blessings, engage in spiritual practices, and connect with the revered figures associated with the sites. This interaction underscores the enduring relevance of these figures in contemporary spiritual life.

12 Socially, petilasan sites often serve as centers for community gatherings and cultural events. They provide a space for people to come together, share their experiences, and celebrate their heritage. The activities that occur at these sites, from religious ceremonies to cultural festivals, contribute to the preservation and promotion of local traditions and foster a sense of unity within the community.

Despite their significance, petilasan sites face various challenges related to preservation and maintenance. Issues such as urbanization, environmental degradation, and insufficient resources can threaten the integrity of these sites. Ensuring their protection requires collaborative efforts from local communities, government bodies, and cultural organizations.

Efforts to preserve petilasan involve not only physical conservation but also the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. This includes documenting oral histories, promoting traditional practices, and educating younger generations about the importance of

these sites. By addressing both tangible and intangible aspects, it is possible to ensure that petilasan continue to serve as vibrant centers of cultural and spiritual significance.

Earth Almsgiving

Modern Interpretations and Practices:

In this case, we at KKN 102 tried to take part and also observe this earth alms celebration in order to find out what the villagers did to celebrate this. In contemporary settings, earth almsgiving manifests through initiatives aimed at environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture. These practices often include planting trees, supporting organic farming, and managing natural resources in a way that aligns with ethical and spiritual teachings. For example, some Islamic organizations have developed programs that integrate environmental conservation with community development, reflecting a holistic approach to almsgiving.

In this case, a lot of people in this village flocked to use the harvests from their farms, plantations and livestock to be used as alms to the earth. In Wates village, everyone attended the event because it has become a tradition passed down from generation to generation, from children to adults. This activity is an offering to nature because it has provided benefits to the economy and also the growth of their crops.

Impact on Environmental Sustainability:

The impact of earth almsgiving on environmental sustainability is significant. By promoting practices that restore and maintain natural ecosystems, these initiatives contribute to broader goals of ecological balance and resilience. Planting trees, for instance, helps combat deforestation, improve air quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. Sustainable agriculture practices reduce soil degradation and enhance food security. These actions align with global efforts to address climate change and environmental degradation

Social and Community Benefits:

Beyond environmental benefits, earth almsgiving also has profound social implications. Initiatives that involve local communities in environmental stewardship foster a sense of collective responsibility and empower individuals to contribute to their community's well-being. Projects that support sustainable agriculture can enhance local food systems and provide economic opportunities. Thus, earth almsgiving can play a role in both environmental and socio-economic development

Challenges and Future Directions:

Despite its benefits, earth almsgiving faces challenges such as limited awareness, inadequate funding, and the need for more robust integration into existing charitable frameworks. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from religious

institutions, environmental organizations, and policymakers. Future directions could include expanding educational initiatives on the importance of environmental stewardship and developing more comprehensive programs that link spiritual values with practical environmental actions

Cultural Significance of Petilasan:

Petilasan, or sacred historical sites such as the tomb of Sunan Ampel, serve as vital links to cultural and spiritual heritage. These sites are more than mere historical markers; they embody the narratives, values, and traditions of the communities that revere them. ¹³ The preservation of petilasan is crucial not only for maintaining historical continuity but also for sustaining cultural identity. These sites function as centers for communal activities, spiritual reflection, and cultural education, reinforcing the connection between past and present.

However, the preservation of petilasan faces challenges, including urbanization and environmental degradation. Balancing the need for development with the protection of these sacred sites requires careful planning and community involvement. Effective conservation strategies must address both physical preservation and the maintenance of the cultural practices associated with these sites.

Role of Earth Almsgiving

Earth almsgiving, or "zakat al-ard," represents a commitment to environmental stewardship through charitable actions. This practice aligns with ethical and spiritual teachings that emphasize the responsible management of natural resources. Earth almsgiving initiatives, such as reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and conservation projects, contribute significantly to ecological sustainability. These actions not only help mitigate environmental issues but also enhance community resilience and well-being.

The principles of earth almsgiving underscore the interconnectedness of environmental health and spiritual values. By integrating environmental considerations into charitable practices, earth almsgiving promotes a holistic approach to stewardship that respects both natural and cultural heritage.

Intersections and Synergies

The intersection of petilasan preservation and earth almsgiving reveals a shared ethos of stewardship. Both practices emphasize the importance of caring for valuable resources—whether cultural or natural. For instance, integrating environmental conservation efforts with the management of petilasan can enhance the protection of these sites while also addressing broader ecological concerns. This approach can foster a more comprehensive understanding of stewardship that encompasses both cultural and environmental dimensions.

By linking spiritual and cultural values with practical environmental actions, communities can create synergies that strengthen both cultural preservation and ecological sustainability. This integrated approach can lead to more effective conservation strategies and promote a deeper appreciation of the connections between heritage and the environment.

5. CONCLUSION

The exploration of petilasan and earth almsgiving underscores the profound connections between cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. Petilasan sites, such as the tomb of Sunan Ampel, represent crucial elements of cultural heritage, embodying historical narratives, spiritual significance, and community identity. Their preservation is essential for maintaining a tangible link to the past and fostering cultural continuity.

Earth almsgiving, on the other hand, highlights the ethical and spiritual commitment to environmental stewardship. By promoting sustainable practices such as reforestation and conservation, earth almsgiving aligns with broader goals of ecological sustainability and social well-being. The integration of environmental responsibility into charitable actions reflects a holistic approach to stewardship that values both natural and cultural resources.

The intersection of these practices reveals a shared ethos of stewardship that encompasses both cultural and environmental dimensions. Effective conservation of petilasan sites can be enhanced through environmental initiatives, and vice versa. This integrated approach offers a valuable framework for addressing contemporary challenges related to cultural and environmental sustainability.

6. SUGGESTION

To effectively integrate cultural preservation with environmental stewardship, it is crucial to enhance public awareness and education about the significance of both petilasan and earth almsgiving. Collaborative efforts among cultural organizations, environmental groups, and policymakers should be strengthened to develop and implement integrated conservation strategies that address both cultural and ecological concerns. Engaging local communities in these initiatives can foster a deeper connection between cultural practices and environmental actions, leading to more sustainable outcomes. Additionally, investing in research and innovation can uncover new approaches to combining these dimensions, while supportive policy frameworks can provide the necessary resources and guidance for achieving long-term

goals. By taking these steps, communities can better protect their cultural heritage and promote environmental sustainability, ensuring a richer and more balanced future.

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