

## Syncretic Religiosity in Punden Folklore: The Continuity of Islamic–Javanese Values in Rural Java, Indonesia

Khoirul Muttaqin<sup>1\*</sup>, Ma'murjon Abdurasulov<sup>2</sup>, Layli Hidayah<sup>3</sup>, Itznaniyah Umie Murniatie<sup>4</sup>, Prayitno Tri Laksono<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia; email: k.muttaqin89@unisma.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan; email: mmamurjonabbdurasulov1@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia; email: layli\_hidayah@unisma.ac.id

<sup>4</sup> Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia; email: itznaniyahmurniatie@unisma.ac.id

<sup>5</sup> Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia; email: prayitno27@unisma.ac.id

\* Correspondence

Received: 2024-11-15; Approved: 2025-07-12; Published: 2025-08-13

**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the role of *punden* folklore in preserving and transmitting the religious, moral, and social values of rural Javanese Muslim communities, particularly in Dukun Subdistrict, Gresik, Indonesia. This research is significant because the *punden* tradition represents a form of local religiosity that harmoniously integrates Islamic teachings with Javanese cultural practices, reflecting a dynamic synthesis between Islam and indigenous wisdom. The study employs a qualitative method, with data collected through observation and in-depth interviews involving local residents, religious leaders, and custodians of sacred sites. The findings reveal that *punden* folklore functions as a living value system that sustains the religious and social life of the Dukun community. First, pilgrimages and veneration of saintly figures such as Mbah Asyari and Mbah Banjar instill values of devotion, spiritual remembrance, and *ta'dhim* (reverence) as expressions of lived religiosity. Second, *sedekah bumi* and pilgrimage rituals demonstrate a harmonious integration of Islamic practices with Javanese cultural symbols such as flower scattering, incense, *wayang*, and *pencak silat*. Third, these traditions function as moral education and social adhesive that cultivate patience, sincerity, and humility while reinforcing *guyub rukun* (social harmony) and ecological awareness across generations. In practical terms, the study affirms that the *punden* tradition serves not only as an element of intangible cultural heritage but also as a social and religious mechanism that strengthens community resilience. The originality of this research lies in its integrative approach, which positions *punden* folklore as a living social and spiritual practice, offering new insights into Islamic–Javanese syncretism and the preservation of religious cultural heritage in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Islamic–Javanese culture; moral values; *punden* folklore; syncretic religiosity.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran folklor *punden* dalam melestarikan dan mentransmisikan nilai-nilai religius, moral, dan sosial masyarakat Muslim Jawa pedesaan, khususnya di Kecamatan Dukun, Gresik, Indonesia. Penelitian ini penting karena tradisi *punden* merupakan bentuk religiositas lokal yang memadukan ajaran Islam dengan praktik budaya Jawa secara harmonis, sehingga mencerminkan sintesis dinamis antara keislaman dan kearifan lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam terhadap warga, tokoh agama, dan penjaga situs sakral. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa folklor *punden* berfungsi sebagai sistem nilai hidup yang menopang kehidupan religius dan sosial masyarakat Dukun. Pertama, ziarah makam dan penghormatan kepada tokoh suci seperti Mbah Asyari dan Mbah Banjar menanamkan nilai pengabdian, ingatan spiritual, dan *ta'dhim* sebagai wujud religiositas yang hidup. Kedua, praktik *sedekah bumi* dan ritual ziarah memperlihatkan integrasi harmonis antara ajaran Islam melalui *tahlil*, doa bersama, dan rasa syukur kepada Tuhan, dengan simbol budaya Jawa seperti tabur bunga, dupa, *wayang*, dan *pencak silat*. Ketiga, tradisi ini berfungsi sebagai pendidikan moral dan perekat sosial yang menumbuhkan kesabaran, keikhlasan, serta memperkuat *guyub rukun* dan kesadaran ekologis lintas generasi. Secara implikatif, penelitian

ini menegaskan bahwa tradisi *punden* tidak hanya berperan sebagai warisan budaya takbenda, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme sosial dan religius yang memperkuat ketangguhan komunitas pedesaan. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada pendekatan integratif yang menempatkan folklor *punden* sebagai praktik sosial dan spiritual yang hidup, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi baru dalam memahami sinkretisme Islam–Jawa dan pelestarian warisan budaya religius di Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Budaya Islam–Jawa; nilai moral; folklor *punden*; religiositas sinkretik.

## 1. Introduction

Local religious traditions in Indonesia continue to demonstrate remarkable vitality as part of the nation's intangible cultural heritage. The number of officially designated Intangible Cultural Heritage (Warisan Budaya Takbenda, WBTb) elements has steadily increased each year, with 272 new entries in 2024, bringing the total to 1,941 items as of March 2024 (Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi, 2024). These designations encompass a wide range of cultural expressions, including local religious traditions, community rites, and festivals that sustain the spiritual and social continuity of Indonesian society. Among these practices are various forms of religiously inspired rituals such as grave pilgrimage (*ziarah makam*), *sedekah bumi* (earth-offering ceremonies), and *haul* (commemorations of saints or ancestors), which remain actively performed across the archipelago. In East Java, such traditions are particularly prominent in rural communities, especially in Dukun Subdistrict, Gresik, where the practices of *punden* pilgrimage—visiting ancestral or saintly tombs—and *sedekah bumi* are integral to both religious life and communal solidarity.

One of the most distinctive expressions of this heritage is the *punden* tradition—ancestral shrines or sacred burial sites believed to be the resting places of revered Islamic figures such as Mbah Kwasen, Mbah Banjar, Mbah Syarifah, and Mbah Asyari. These sites serve not only as spiritual centers but also as social spaces that bind the local Muslim community together through shared rituals and collective memory. Closely linked to the *punden* is the *sedekah bumi* ritual—literally “Earth Alms”—a communal thanksgiving ceremony expressing gratitude to God for agricultural abundance and divine blessings. However, according to several reports, including those by Fatriyan (2018), and Abdul Wahab (2023), this tradition has gradually been abandoned, especially among younger generations. This trend is evident in the declining participation of youth in organizing and preparing the ritual events over the past decade.

This decline reflects broader social transformations occurring in rural East Java, where urbanization, modern education, and religious reform movements have gradually reshaped local perceptions of traditional rituals. For some villagers, *sedekah bumi* has come to be regarded less as a sacred act of worship and more as a cultural performance. Such shifts illustrate a wider tension between modern Islamic orthodoxy and syncretic Javanese spirituality, a tension that continues to define the evolving religious identity of rural Muslim communities. The enduring presence of *punden* and *sedekah bumi* traditions, despite these changes, raises crucial questions about how local Islamic practices adapt to contemporary cultural landscapes. Although these rituals remain deeply embedded in the collective memory of the Javanese, their meanings and functions are continuously reinterpreted in response to social and religious change. Consequently, examining the *punden* folklore of Dukun, Gresik is vital for understanding how Islamic and Javanese values coexist, interact, and evolve within the lived religiosity of rural society.

Research on oral literature and folklore in Indonesia has been conducted extensively, but the majority of studies tend to emphasise educational or cultural dimensions rather than the religious–spiritual aspects of local traditions. The existing literature can be classified into three main research tendencies.

First, a large group of studies focuses on the moral and educational functions of folklore. Tadzkirah et al. (2022) demonstrate how oral traditions serve as vehicles for moral formation in early childhood education. Similarly, Pusposari et al. (2019) identify moral teachings in the *Ande-Ande Lumut*

tale, while Maziyah, Rais, and Kiswoyo (2019) analyse *Joko Dolok* folklore as a means of internalising values of faith and piety. These studies underline folklore's pedagogical role but rarely connect it to religious praxis or community spirituality.

Second, several scholars have examined folklore as an expression of cultural identity and local wisdom. Setiani et al. (2021) and Hutomo (1991) position folklore as a medium for preserving local identity and transmitting indigenous values. Danandjaja (1994) and Poerwadarminta (2014) similarly interpret oral traditions as a living record of communal life that embodies Javanese cosmology. However, these works remain largely descriptive and overlook the dynamic interaction between folklore and Islamic religiosity, particularly in rural Muslim communities.

Third, there is a growing body of literature exploring Javanese religiosity and syncretism. Classic anthropological analyses by Geertz (1997), Fauzi (2012), and Anam (2015) emphasise the integrative character of Javanese Islam that merges Islamic teachings with pre-Islamic cultural practices such as ancestor veneration and pilgrimage to sacred tombs. More recent studies (Aminullah, 2017; Sutarno, Purwanto, & Gunawijaya, 2023) observe how processes of modernisation and religious purification have challenged the continuity of syncretic traditions. Yet, these studies generally neglect the narrative and folkloric dimensions through which local religiosity is transmitted, such as the legends of *punden* figures in coastal regions like Dukun, Gresik.

From the above tendencies, it becomes evident that few studies have addressed folklore as a living medium for the transmission of Islamic–Javanese values within specific rural contexts. While many scholars acknowledge the syncretic character of Javanese Islam, there remains limited empirical investigation into how local oral traditions—particularly *punden* folklore—serve to preserve religious identity, shape moral consciousness, and sustain community resilience amid modern transformations. This gap forms the foundation for the present study.

This research aims to address the identified gap by examining how *punden* folklore in Dukun Subdistrict functions as a vehicle for sustaining and transmitting Islamic–Javanese religiosity in contemporary rural life. The study focuses on three interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to describe the religious and spiritual meanings embedded within oral traditions associated with *punden*, which reflect the community's collective worldview and moral values. Second, it aims to analyse how Islamic principles are integrated with Javanese cultural beliefs through local rituals such as *sedekah bumi* and pilgrimage to ancestral tombs, both of which serve as symbolic acts of devotion and social solidarity. Third, the research intends to explain the role of *punden* folklore in maintaining religious practices and shaping the collective moral identity of rural communities in Dukun. Through these objectives, the study contributes not only to the preservation of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage but also to the scholarly understanding of local religiosity as a dynamic synthesis between Islamic teachings and Javanese traditions that continues to evolve over time.

Grounded in ethnographic theory and supported by field observations, this study advances three core arguments. First, *punden* legends in Dukun act as living media for the internalisation and continuity of Islamic values within a distinctly Javanese cultural framework. Second, the fusion of local myths and Islamic teachings reflects a syncretic spiritual identity that reinforces communal religiosity, mutual respect, and social cohesion among villagers. Third, *punden* folklore functions as a form of moral education that nurtures ethical awareness, strengthens social bonds, and fosters collective resilience in the face of cultural and religious transformation. In this light, the research argues that oral traditions in rural East Java should not be regarded as static relics of the past, but rather as dynamic cultural systems through which Islam is continuously reinterpreted, recontextualised, and reaffirmed in everyday social and spiritual life.

## 2. Method

The unit of analysis in this study is *punden* folklore—oral narratives and community practices related to sacred sites located in Gedongkedoan Village, Dukun Subdistrict, Gresik Regency. These narratives, which recount the lives and virtues of revered Islamic figures such as Mbah Asyari and Mbah Banjur, serve as cultural expressions of local religiosity and collective memory. The focus of this

research is to explore how these stories and related rituals function as a means of transmitting Islamic–Javanese spiritual and moral values within the daily life of the rural community in Gedongkedoan.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design, as the primary objective is to obtain a detailed and contextual understanding of religious meanings embedded in local traditions. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive interpretation of phenomena that are social, symbolic, and experiential in nature. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2016), qualitative methods are particularly suited to exploring how individuals and communities construct meaning from their lived experiences. In this research, such an approach enables the identification of the ways Islamic and Javanese values intersect in oral traditions and community rituals (Winarno, 2015).

The study relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from local residents, cultural custodians, and religious leaders who possess knowledge about *punden* legends and associated ceremonies. Secondary data were gathered from local archives, village documents, and previous research discussing *sedekah bumi* and *ziarah makam* in East Java. These combined sources provide a multi-perspective understanding of how local religiosity is practiced and preserved in Dukun Subdistrict.

Field observations and in-depth interviews served as the main techniques of data collection. The fieldwork was conducted between April and May 2021, coinciding with the agricultural harvest period when *sedekah bumi* rituals are commonly held. Observations were carried out at several *punden* sites during community events to document rituals, symbols, and participant interactions. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 key informants—including local elders, cultural practitioners, religious figures, and visitors to the sacred sites—using semi-structured interview guides. Field notes, voice recorders, and photographs were used to ensure accuracy and completeness of information.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and thematic analysis techniques. Interview transcripts and field notes were first organised and coded to identify recurring themes related to religiosity, morality, and cultural adaptation (Anney, 2015). These themes were then interpreted to reveal how Islamic teachings are internalised within Javanese symbolic systems and communal traditions. The process followed the analytical stages of data reduction, display, and verification as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), to enhance the trustworthiness of findings, triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documentary sources.

### 3. Results

#### *Religious and Spiritual Meanings in the Tradition of Punden in Dukun Subdistrict*

The oral traditions surrounding the *punden* or sacred graves in Dukun Subdistrict embody a religious worldview that fuses faith in divine power with reverence for saintly intermediaries who are perceived as channels of divine grace. In the local understanding, the *punden* is not merely a burial site but a sacred threshold between the human and the divine—a locus of prayer, remembrance, and protection. The community regards visiting the *punden* as an act of devotion that reaffirms their dependence on God through respect for His pious servants believed to possess *karomah* (charismatic grace) (Muradi, 2021).

Among the many sacred sites in Dukun, the most revered is the grave of Syekh Hasan Asy'ari, also known in oral narratives as Ki Ageng Mbah Gunardo, located in Gedongkedoan Village. According to the local *juru kunci* (caretaker), Syekh Hasan Asy'ari was a *senopati* (commander) during the early Mataram Kingdom who was sent to the Gresik–Lamongan frontier to quell a rebellion threatening the kingdom. Historical legends recount that after successfully restoring peace, he chose to remain in the region rather than return to Mataram, eventually becoming recognised as the founder and spiritual guardian (*pembabat desa*) of Gedongkedoan. “Then, by the people, Syekh Hasan Asy'ari was believed to be the founder of Gedongkedoan Village, and until now, many pilgrims, both local and from outside the village, continue to visit his grave” (H. Toha, Personal Communication, 21 May 2021).

The grave of Syekh Hasan Asy'ari is located at the southeastern edge of the Islamic cemetery complex of Gedongkedoan, beside his wife's tomb. Measuring approximately 5.5 metres in length, the

tomb is covered by a wooden *cungkup* (canopy) that has been renovated several times through community self-help initiatives (*swadaya masyarakat*). As *Sadlili* further noted, “The maintenance of this site has always been done voluntarily by residents. Even the construction of the canopy was funded entirely through community donations.”

Local authorities also play an active role in preserving the site as part of the village’s intangible heritage. The head of Gedongkedoan Village, M. Ashari, stated that the grave remains well maintained and continues to attract daily visitors: “Every year during the *haul* (death commemoration), the place becomes very crowded. Not only villagers come, but also people from outside. The village government has built fences and a gate to protect and honour the legacy of our ancestors” (Moh. Syafik Personal Communication, 23 May 2021).

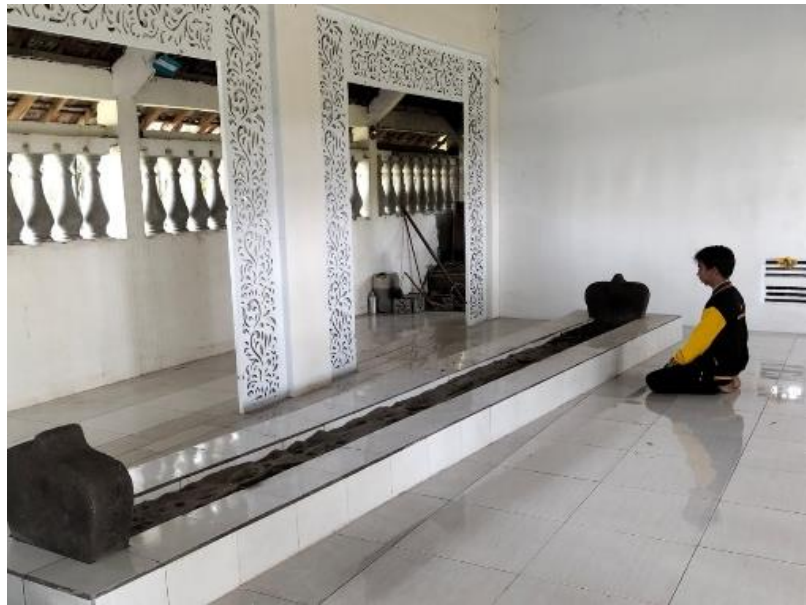
The continuous renovation of the *punden* area reflects the community’s enduring reverence for Syekh Hasan Asy’ari. The *cungkup*—originally built from teak wood—has been repeatedly restored to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims. For the people of Gedongkedoan, maintaining the site is an act of devotion and gratitude toward the village’s spiritual founder.

This local reverence is intertwined with a broader religious narrative recorded through oral tradition. According to community accounts, a miraculous incident further sanctified the grave’s status: a group of Madurese traders once transporting salt along the Bengawan Solo River saw their boat capsize near Syekh Hasan Asy’ari’s burial site. Believing it a divine sign, they traced the source of the disturbance and discovered the grave marked by a jet-black headstone.

Several years later, a group of Madurese people attempted to send salt to Lamongan via the Bengawan Solo River. Their boat began to capsize precisely at the location of Mbah Asyari’s grave. They then traced the cause of the disturbance and discovered Mbah Asyari’s grave marked by a jet-black headstone. From then on, every year they, together with local residents, came to honour Mbah Asyari (H. Toha, Personal Communication, 21 May 2021).

From that time onward, the site became a centre of pilgrimage visited by villagers and Madurese communities who regard Syekh Hasan Asy’ari as a saintly figure and a spiritual protector. His *punden* thus embodies both historical depth and religious symbolism—linking the heroic past of Javanese Islamisation with the living faith of present-day rural believers. The people’s ongoing care for the site, expressed through annual *haul* celebrations, floral offerings, and communal prayer, represents not only a ritual of remembrance but also a collective expression of gratitude, continuity, and faith that binds the community together across generations.

The spatial layout and physical features of the *punden* provide a tangible expression of the community’s reverence and collective memory. The elongated tomb of Syekh Hasan Asy’ari, enclosed within a modest whitewashed pavilion (*cungkup*), stands as both a sacred focal point and a symbol of continuity between ancestral piety and present devotion. Pilgrims usually enter quietly, sit cross-legged, and recite *tahlil* or personal prayers in front of the grave as a gesture of remembrance and respect. The simplicity of the site—marked by minimal ornamentation and communal upkeep—reflects the villagers’ emphasis on humility, sincerity, and *ta’dhim* rather than grandeur. This atmosphere of calm spirituality is captured in Figure 1, which depicts the grave of Mbah Asyari in Gedongkedoan Village, illustrating how the sacred space continues to function as a living centre of rural Javanese religiosity.



**Figure 1. The Grave of Mbah Asyari in Gedongkedoan Village**

**Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.**

During the annual pilgrimage, the atmosphere around the *punden* becomes deeply spiritual yet communal. The air is filled with the scent of burning incense and jasmine flowers; women arrange offerings of rice and fruit, while men sit cross-legged reciting *tahlil* and *shalawat* in a rhythmic unison. After prayers, villagers share meals from banana leaves beneath oil lamps that flicker against the gravestone's dark surface. This sensory setting transforms the ritual into an embodied expression of faith and togetherness, where sacredness and familiarity coexist.

Field observations reveal four interrelated patterns illustrating how the community interprets the relationship between religion, tradition, and spirituality. First, there is a pattern of *reverence toward holy figures as spiritual mediators*. For the people of Gedongkedoan, Mbah Asyari is not merely a historical ancestor but a saintly figure believed to be close to God. The story of the capsized salt boat is interpreted as a divine sign of his sanctity. Consequently, his grave is treated as a sacred site where supplications are believed to receive divine attention. Through *ziarah*, villagers seek tranquillity and divine protection mediated by the intercession of the pious—a practice consistent with long-standing Javanese-Islamic understandings of saintly charisma (*karomah*) (Budiwanti, 2011; Musman, 2021).

Second, there is a pattern of *integration between Islamic teachings and local customs*. During pilgrimage, visitors recite verses from the Qur'an and *tahlil* prayers while simultaneously performing cultural gestures such as scattering flowers and lighting incense. The combination represents a harmonious syncretism where Islamic devotion and Javanese aesthetics complement each other rather than compete (Aminullah, 2017; Jamhari, 2000). The Islamic element appears in the verbal and spiritual dimension of prayer, whereas the Javanese component emerges through sensory symbols of respect and gratitude.

Third, there is a pattern of *intergenerational transmission and continuity*. The annual pilgrimage attracts elders, youth, and even visitors from outside Gresik, particularly the Madurese community historically linked to Mbah Asyari. Parents bring children to observe and participate, ensuring that the tradition endures amid social transformation. Moh. Syafiq explained:

I come here not to worship, but to remember the good deeds of Mbah Asyari. My parents taught me that he was a pious man who helped others, so coming here reminds me to live kindly. (Moh. Syafiq, Personal Communication, 23 May 2021).

Fourth, the pilgrimage generates a *collective and emotional religious experience*. It is not solely an individual act of piety but a communal event that reinforces *guyub rukun* (social harmony). After prayers, participants exchange greetings, share food, and discuss village matters, blending spirituality

with everyday solidarity. Such experiences highlight that Javanese religiosity is communal rather than individualistic, where faith is felt through shared emotion and participation (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

Nevertheless, the field also reveals a contrasting perspective among a small number of villagers influenced by reformist Islamic teachings who regard the practice as *bid'ah* (innovation) or merely a cultural custom. As one local preacher remarked: "Visiting graves is fine, but some people here mix it with offerings and incense. That's culture, not religion." (H. Muslikh, Personal Communication, 22 May 2021).

This tension reflects an ongoing negotiation between purist interpretations of Islam and the inclusive spirituality of Javanese tradition. Yet, even critics acknowledge that the practice has strong social value in uniting the community.

From these observations, it can be concluded that the pilgrimage to Mbah Asyari's grave represents a living synthesis of devotion, culture, and social ethics. The tradition strengthens faith while preserving cultural heritage and collective identity. It embodies harmony between Islam and Javanese culture, where ritual, emotion, and moral values converge to form a dynamic system of meaning in daily life (Jb., 2017). The findings suggest that religiosity among rural Javanese communities operates not merely as formal worship but as a process of cultivating spiritual and social equilibrium. Religion here is experienced as an inseparable part of culture, history, and social interaction (Sutarno et al., 2023). The veneration of Mbah Asyari is thus interpreted not as worship but as affectionate remembrance of a saintly figure, demonstrating how Islam in Java spread through a gentle, adaptive process of acculturation that integrated new teachings without erasing ancestral traditions (Anam, 2015).

More broadly, the *punden* pilgrimage exemplifies how local Islam is both syncretic and humane, expressing faith through reverence, compassion, and togetherness. It plays a vital role in strengthening moral awareness and community solidarity amid modernisation (Baker & Miles-Watson, 2010; Sylviana, 2018). The *punden* thus serves as a symbol of continuity—a space where the community reaffirms its origins, nurtures spirituality, and negotiates the boundaries between the sacred and the social (Huda, 2015; Rizal, 2017).

#### *Integration of Islamic and Javanese Cultural Values in the Rituals of Sedekah Bumi and Ancestor Pilgrimage*

The religious values embodied in the *punden* tradition of Dukun Subdistrict are not isolated spiritual practices but deeply interwoven with Javanese cultural ideals that emphasise balance among humans, nature, and ancestors. This integration is most clearly expressed in two major rituals—the ancestor pilgrimage (*ziarah makam*) and the *sedekah bumi* (earth alms). These two rituals represent *ritual syncretism* in which Islamic teachings and Javanese cultural symbols coexist harmoniously. Such blending corresponds with Geertz's (Geertz, 1997) conceptualisation of Javanese Islamic syncretism, reflecting the community's ongoing negotiation between *syariat* (religious law) and *adat* (local custom) to sustain social harmony and spiritual meaning.

The ritual of *ziarah makam* is performed by the community as an act of devotion and remembrance. Villagers gather at the *punden*—the sacred tombs of figures such as Mbah Asyari or Nyai Syarifah—bringing flowers, reciting *tahlil* (Islamic chants), and praying for the souls of their ancestors. This practice accords with Islamic principles of *zikrul maut* (remembrance of death) and *doa untuk orang saleh*, which remind believers of the afterlife and the virtue of piety (Al-Ayyubi & Hanif, 2021).

Yet, the ritual is also rich in Javanese symbolism: the scattering of flowers, burning of incense, and the gentle lighting of candles are not understood as acts of worship but as gestures of reverence and gratitude (Sylviana, 2018). The air during the pilgrimage is filled with the fragrance of jasmine and sandalwood, the rhythmic chant of *tahlil* blending softly with the sound of the night breeze and occasional gamelan melodies played nearby. Elders murmur prayers while children watch attentively, learning to balance *ta'dhim* (respect) with *tauhid* (oneness of God) (Aminullah, (Aminullah, 2017). Such sensorial experience transforms the grave pilgrimage into a living form of *religious adaptation*, where Islamic devotion and Javanese aesthetics merge seamlessly within everyday spirituality.

H. Toha, explained this balance clearly:

When we begin the *ziarah*, we start with *tahlil* and recite Surah Yasin, so that everything stays within Islamic intent. The flowers and incense are only symbols of prayer and respect, not worship. It's how our ancestors taught us to express gratitude to Allah while remembering those who came before (H. Toha, Personal Communication, 21 May 2021).

If the pilgrimage embodies spiritual remembrance, the *sedekah bumi* ritual represents communal gratitude and the negotiation between religion, culture, and ecology. Held annually around the *punden*, this ritual marks thanksgiving for the harvest and the village's well-being. The ceremony begins with *doa bersama* (communal prayer) and *tahlil* led by the local *kyai* or *modin*, followed by processions carrying *tumpeng* (rice cones), agricultural produce, and symbolic offerings.

The collective atmosphere of *sedekah bumi* vividly reflects the synthesis of Islamic devotion and Javanese cultural festivity. After the *doa bersama* and *tahlil*, villagers and guests gather in an open space near the *punden*, where religious leaders, community elders, and local officials sit together to lead prayers and deliver sermons on gratitude and harmony. The event often extends into the evening, combining solemn worship with cultural expression through music, storytelling, and shared meals. The stage decorations, traditional attire, and participatory setting reveal how spirituality, culture, and social solidarity are intertwined in rural religiosity. This vibrant and inclusive scene is captured in Figure 2, which depicts the implementation of the *haul* and *sedekah bumi* tradition in Dukun Subdistrict, showing how the ritual serves as both religious devotion and communal celebration.



**Figure 2. The Implementation of the Haul and Sedekah Bumi Tradition in Dukun Subdistrict**  
Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.

During field observation in Tebuwung and Mentaras villages, the atmosphere was vibrant: the rhythmic beats of *kendang* and *gamelan* accompanied Qur'anic recitations, while men and women dressed in traditional attire sat together on woven mats. After the prayers, art performances such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry), *kentrung* (folk storytelling), and *pencak silat* were held through the night. The scent of cooked rice, coconut, and incense filled the air as children laughed and villagers exchanged food. The blending of *shalawat* melodies with Javanese music created a sensory harmony – an embodiment of *cultural negotiation* between sacred devotion and festive joy.

As Sukarni, a community elder, explained:



Every year before the harvest, we gather at the *punden* to recite prayers and *tahlil*. Afterwards, there are *pencak* and *wayang* shows. These are not just entertainment; they are symbols of gratitude and prayer for a safe and prosperous harvest (Sukarni, Personal Communication, 22 May 2021).

The ritual also demonstrates *community participation* and *collective religiosity*. Preparation is carried out communally—villagers contribute rice, vegetables, and funds, while religious leaders ensure that the entire event begins and ends with prayer. Abd. Salam emphasised the importance of maintaining this balance:

We make sure the *sedekah bumi* always starts with *tahlil* so that people remember the intention is to thank Allah. The cultural parts—like *wayang* or *kentrung*—are our heritage. They bring people together in happiness and peace (Abd. Salam, Personal Communication, 22 May 2021).

While the majority of villagers view *sedekah bumi* as an act of thanksgiving rooted in Islamic values, a small number of reformist Muslims question its orthodoxy. For them, the inclusion of offerings and traditional performances risks diluting the purity of worship. As one young preacher in Dukun remarked: “Some parts of *sedekah bumi*—like offerings or incense—should be avoided because they can lead people to superstition. We can be grateful to Allah without such symbols.” (H. Toha, Personal Communication, 21 May 2021).

The culmination of the *Sedekah Bumi* celebration is marked by the *Udhik-udhikan* procession, where community members engage in a unique form of giving. During this event, several individuals donate money by throwing it into the crowd, and it is eagerly contested by many people seated in the field in front of the shrine. This moment not only showcases the generosity of the participants but also highlights the communal spirit and excitement that permeates the gathering. The *Udhik-udhikan*, as a traditional practice, fosters a sense of unity, where both the act of giving and the competition for the thrown money create a shared experience among villagers. Figure 3 captures this vibrant scene, illustrating the crowd gathered in anticipation of the money distribution during the haul and *Sedekah Bumi* festivities in Dukun Subdistrict.



**Figure 3. People Gathered to Participate in the *Udhik-udhikan* Procession**  
Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.

However, for most residents, this criticism is seen not as rejection but as part of an ongoing dialogue between *syariat* and *adat*. They maintain that the true essence of *sedekah bumi* lies in the *niat* (intention) of gratitude to God, while cultural expressions are simply vehicles to manifest that devotion (Huda, 2015). This negotiation illustrates how religious adaptation enables the community to uphold *tauhid* while preserving local identity and harmony (Rizal, 2017).

The intertwined nature of these rituals reveals that the people of Dukun do not perceive religion and culture as separate domains but as complementary expressions of gratitude, devotion, and social unity. The *ziarah makam* and *sedekah bumi* ceremonies together form an integrated spiritual system in

which Islamic piety is manifested through cultural forms, while Javanese customs gain renewed meaning through Islamic ethics. This mutual reinforcement between *syariat* and *adat* highlights how local religiosity operates through both doctrinal devotion and symbolic participation. To illustrate this synthesis more clearly, Table 1 summarises the Islamic and Javanese cultural elements found in these two major rituals and interprets their integrative meanings within the framework of lived religiosity in rural Java.

**Table 1. Islamic and Javanese Cultural Elements in Two Major Rituals in Dukun Subdistrict**

Ritual	Islamic Elements	Javanese Cultural Elements	Integrative Meaning
Ancestor Pilgrimage ( <i>Ziarah Makam</i> )	Recitation of <i>tahlil</i> and <i>Surah Yasin</i> ; prayers for the deceased; <i>zikrul maut</i> (remembrance of death)	Flower offerings, incense burning, candle lighting	Respect for the pious through Islamic devotion that preserves traditional symbols of reverence.
<i>Sedekah Bumi</i> (Earth Alms)	Communal prayer, <i>tahlil</i> , gratitude for harvest blessings, <i>shalawat</i>	<i>Wayang kulit</i> , <i>kentrung</i> , <i>pencak silat</i> , sharing <i>tumpeng</i> and harvest produce	Gratitude to God expressed through social unity and cosmic harmony among humans, nature, and ancestors.

From the data presented, it becomes clear that both rituals—the pilgrimage and the *sedekah bumi*—represent complementary dimensions of the same spiritual system. In the pilgrimage, Islamic piety manifests through prayer and *tahlil* for the ancestors, while Javanese aesthetics appear in the symbolic gestures of flower scattering and incense burning as acts of respect rather than worship. In *sedekah bumi*, Islamic devotion is embodied in prayers and *tahlil*, while traditional art forms such as *wayang* and *pencak silat* reinforce social cohesion and express gratitude to God through joy and togetherness.

These rituals demonstrate that the people of Dukun do not separate religion from local culture; rather, they integrate both within a *living syncretic spirituality* that values *harmony*, *gratitude*, and *participation*. This integration reveals how Islamic principles are reinterpreted in local contexts, producing a spirituality that is contextual, inclusive, and adaptive—a model of *religious adaptation* that preserves *tauhid* while celebrating cultural diversity.

Ultimately, the coexistence of *ziarah makam* and *sedekah bumi* in Dukun Subdistrict exemplifies a uniquely Javanese expression of Islam—one that thrives through *cultural negotiation* and community participation, maintaining both the essence of faith and the rhythm of tradition amid the changing currents of modern life (Sutarno et al., 2023).

### *The Role of Punden Folklore in Preserving Religious Practices and Shaping the Collective Identity of Rural Communities*

The *punden* folklore in Dukun Subdistrict functions as a vital foundation of collective memory, moral education, and communal spirituality among rural Javanese Muslims. Through stories such as those of Mbah Asyari, Mbah Banjar, and Mbah Jiwo Suto, the community internalises moral and religious teachings that sustain both faith and social harmony. The *punden* thus operates not merely as a religious site but as a centre of social solidarity and moral formation, intertwining religious, cultural, and communal dimensions. This corresponds with Geertz's (Geertz, 1997) and Danandjaja's (Danandjaja, 1994) observations that folklore serves as a symbolic system for transmitting moral norms and collective values within traditional societies.

During fieldwork, storytelling often took place in simple communal settings—under the dim light of oil lamps near the *punden*, with elders surrounded by attentive villagers. The storyteller's voice echoed softly through the night air, mingling with the faint scent of incense as listeners sat in silence, occasionally nodding in reverence. In such moments, the boundaries between history, belief, and social experience blurred, transforming oral narration into a living act of moral education.

The story of Mbah Banjar reflects the moral centrality of the *mondok* tradition—the spiritual discipline of studying in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). The tale recounts a tragedy that became

a moral parable for humility and sincerity: “Once, a student named Mbah Banjar came to study under Sunan Prapen, carrying a lunch box. The other students mistook him for a thief and, without asking, they killed him.” (H. Muslikh, Personal Communication, 22 May 2021).

The villagers interpret this story as a lesson in patience, devotion, and moral restraint. Mbah Banjar’s willingness to endure misunderstanding for the sake of knowledge symbolises *ikhlas* (sincerity) and *sabar* (patience)—values deeply embedded in Javanese religiosity. The *mondok* tradition is therefore not viewed merely as an academic pursuit but as a spiritual journey of self-discipline and faith formation (Tadzkirah et al., 2022). This resonates with Fauzi’s (Fauzi, 2012) assertion that *pesantren* culture preserves Islamic moral values while maintaining their cultural resonance within Javanese society.

Another layer of *punden* folklore—embodied in the story of Mbah Jiwo Suto and Yuyu Kangkang—teaches moral awareness of the balance between humans, nature, and unseen forces. “At that time, the area was hit by a flood. Mbah Jiwo Suto sought the help of Yuyu Kangkang to cross the water. However, when he was nearly across, Yuyu Kangkang attacked and killed him.” (Moh. Syafiq, Personal Communication, 23 May 2021).

This narrative conveys a local theology of cosmic equilibrium, in which moral deviation from divine and natural order brings catastrophe, while maintaining harmony ensures prosperity. As Budiwanti (Budiwanti, 2011) and Muradi (Muradi, 2021) note, Javanese Islam integrates ecological and spiritual ethics through reverence for creation as a sign of divine power. The people of Dukun interpret such stories not as superstition but as reminders to live conscientiously and gratefully within God’s creation (Darlington, 2003).

Beyond moral symbolism, *punden* traditions perform a crucial social function as instruments of solidarity and cooperation. Collective activities such as *ziarah makam*, *tahlil*, and *sedekah bumi* engage every social group—from elders to youth, men and women, farmers and teachers alike. These rituals create regular opportunities for villagers to collaborate, share food, and renew kinship bonds. They exemplify what Ammerman (2013a) describes as *lived religion*: faith that is enacted through communal practice rather than confined to doctrinal belief.

As Setiani et al. (2021) highlight, oral traditions operate as intergenerational bridges, transferring moral and social values through shared participation. Moh. Syafiq expressed how the *punden* remains relevant even in the modern era: “For us young people, visiting the *punden* is not superstition—it’s our way to remember the values our grandparents taught us.” (Moh. Syafiq, Personal Communication, 23 May 2021).

This testimony underscores that religious identity is sustained not by formal teaching alone but through lived experience within the community. The continuity of *punden* traditions proves the adaptability and resilience of local religiosity in maintaining *guyub rukun* (social harmony) amid generational change (Hutomo, 1991; Ulfiyatin, 2003). Some younger residents are indeed less involved in ritual activities, yet during times of crisis—illness, natural disaster, or communal conflict—they often return to the *punden* for reflection and collective prayer. This cyclical return demonstrates that the *punden* remains a symbolic refuge for identity reconstruction and communal healing.

Such practices exemplify what Turner (Turner, 2014) refers to as *communitas*—the spontaneous bond of unity experienced in shared sacred participation. The *punden* thus acts as both sanctuary and school: a place where villagers learn ethical conduct, strengthen empathy, and reaffirm their belonging within a moral and spiritual community.

From these findings, four major tendencies emerge. First, *punden* folklore serves as a medium of moral and spiritual education, transmitting virtues such as sincerity, humility, and devotion to God. Second, it functions as a social adhesive, fostering collective cooperation through rituals that embody mutual care and unity. Third, it nurtures spiritual-ecological consciousness, teaching harmony between humans, nature, and divine will. Fourth, *punden* folklore acts as a preserver of religious and cultural identity, where Islam and Javanese traditions coexist and mutually enrich one another.

Ultimately, the *punden* tradition embodies a *moral order*—a lived framework of values that binds the community together through shared belief and practice. It represents a form of living Islam, where

religious principles are experienced through daily acts of solidarity, remembrance, and gratitude (Sutarno et al., 2023). Through this integration of moral instruction, social participation, and spiritual reflection, *punden* folklore continues to sustain the ethical and religious vitality of Dukun's rural society amid the challenges of modernity (Baker & Miles-Watson, 2010; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

#### 4. Discussion

This study demonstrates that *punden* folklore in Dukun Subdistrict sustains a triad of community values—religious—spiritual meaning, ritual syncretism, and collective identity. First, pilgrimage and veneration of saintly figures (e.g., Mbah Asyari) embed devotion, remembrance, and *ta'dhim* as lived religious meanings (Muradi, 2021). Second, grave pilgrimage and sedekah bumi instantiate a harmonious integration of Islamic practices (*tahlil*, communal prayer, gratitude to God) with Javanese symbols (flower scattering, incense, *wayang*, *pencak silat*)—ritual syncretism that acts as a social adhesive (Sylviana, 2018). Third, the narratives and rituals together form and transmit moral and communal identity across generations, reinforcing *guyub rukun* and communal resilience (Sutarno et al., 2023).

These outcomes emerge because Islamic teachings are internalised through long-standing local cultural frames. Ancestral stories and sacred places serve as familiar repositories of meaning, allowing values such as *tauhid*, gratitude, and reverence for the pious to be expressed through Javanese symbols without compromising doctrine. Saintly figures (e.g., Mbah Asyari, Mbah Banjur) function as moral exemplars, so reverence is experienced as devotion rather than worship. And because the rituals are collective—communal prayer, *tahlil*, and *sedekah bumi*—they also generate social cohesion by creating regular occasions for cooperation, shared meals, and kinship renewal (Anam, 2015; Budiwanti, 2011).

Read alongside Geertz (Geertz, 1997), Fauzi (Fauzi, 2012), and Aminullah (Aminullah, 2017), our findings corroborate an adaptive Javanese Islamic syncretism in which Islam does not displace local traditions but coexists with them through practices such as pilgrimage and *sedekah bumi*. They also support the arguments of Jamhari (Jamhari, 2000), Anam (Anam, 2015), and Al-Ayyubi & Hanif (Al-Ayyubi & Hanif, 2021) that *punden* traditions function simultaneously as spiritual media and social instruments, deepening local identity and solidarity. The novelty of this study lies in recasting *punden* folklore as a living value system operationalised through everyday ritual practice (rather than a static cultural text) and in tracing the concrete mechanisms—ritual syncretism, moral pedagogy, and social-capital formation—by which Islamic values are internalised in a coastal rural setting (Dukun, Gresik). A further applied contribution is to frame the *punden* as a dual-status religious—cultural site with governance implications for heritage—faith co-management.

Beyond its ritual and social dimensions, the *punden* tradition also embodies an ecological ethic deeply rooted in Javanese cosmology. The principle of *memayu hayuning bawana*—the moral obligation to sustain the beauty, harmony, and balance of the world—constitutes the philosophical foundation of many rural religious practices. This worldview positions humans as stewards responsible for protecting and nurturing their environment, aligning closely with the Islamic concept of *khalifah fil-ard* (stewardship on earth). As shown in several contemporary studies, *memayu hayuning bawana* functions as a living environmental philosophy that guides settlement design, water management, and ritual practices in highland Javanese communities such as Cetho Hamlet, Lawu Mountains (Ikhsan, Setioko, & Suprapti, 2018). Recent research further demonstrates that these values are increasingly invoked in green village programs and climate resilience initiatives in Yogyakarta, emphasizing community participation and ethical responsibility toward nature (Sulistiyan, Setyono, & Wahyunengseh, 2021). In *sedekah bumi*, prayers and offerings thus symbolize not only thanksgiving for agricultural abundance but also a covenant of *amanah*—a sacred trust toward the land and all living beings. This integration of Islamic stewardship and Javanese ecological wisdom transforms ritual participation into a form of everyday ecological awareness and moral education, consistent with the vision of *memayu hayuning bawana* as a model for sustainable environmental practice in modern Indonesia (Pujiyanti, Ahman, & Yusuf, 2023; Sumarmi et al., 2024). The *punden*, therefore, serves not only as a site of spiritual remembrance but also as a moral landscape where faith, culture, and ecology converge in mutual continuity.

Historically, Islamisation in Java unfolded as an accretive, dialogical process that layered new meanings onto existing cultural forms rather than displacing them. Islamic teachings advanced through familiar media—most famously *wayang* as a vehicle of da'wah—alongside syncretic mosque architectures that naturalised Islam within Javanese aesthetics, and through the reinterpretation of earlier rites within Islamic frames (Geertz, 1997; Headley, 2018; Schiffer, Suprapti, Rukayah, & Bahar, 2022). The cumulative effect was a vernacular Islamic idiom: practices, spaces, and narratives that felt culturally intimate yet theologically legible, allowing communities to inhabit Islam without severing ties to ancestral memory (Pangalila & Rumbay, 2024; Rofiq, 2024; Sugahara, 2023).

Socially, the *punden* operates as a religious public space that manufactures and renews social capital—trust, dense networks, and capacities for collective action. Cyclical practices such as *ziarah*, *tahlil*, and *sedekah bumi* institutionalise reciprocity: people gather, contribute, and coordinate, thereby rehearsing the very skills that sustain cooperation in agrarian life. These rites parallel cooperative traditions in other Indonesian settings and function as routine infrastructures of solidarity, binding kin groups, neighbourhoods, and generations in shared obligation and joy (Aricindy, Wasino, & Wijaya, 2023; Baker & Miles-Watson, 2010; Lloyd & Lewis, 2024). In this sense, Dukun's religiosity exemplifies lived religion: faith enacted through communal practice, eating, working, and remembering together, rather than confined to doctrinal abstraction (Ammerman, 2013b; Jordan, Krivokapic-Skoko, & Collins, 2010; Umarella, 2024).

Participation in collective rituals such as *ziarah makam*, *tahlil*, and *sedekah bumi* does not merely represent devotional acts but functions as a generative process of *social capital* formation. Through routine cooperation in organizing rituals, preparing communal meals, and maintaining *punden* sites, villagers cultivate interpersonal trust, reciprocity, and mutual assistance—key indicators of both *bonding* and *bridging social capital* (Baker & Miles-Watson, 2010; Putnam, 2000). These patterned interactions reinforce the community's moral economy, where faith-based activities translate into everyday collaboration and conflict mitigation. From the perspective of *lived religion* (Ammerman, 2013a), such embodied and repeated practices transform belief into social action, making religion a tangible infrastructure for social cohesion. In this causal relationship, ritual participation generates *bridging social capital* through shared labour and emotional synchrony, which in turn sustains *guyub rukun* (communal harmony) and strengthens resilience against socio-cultural fragmentation (Lloyd & Lewis, 2024). Consequently, *punden*-based religiosity operates not only as a moral pedagogy but also as a dynamic system of social reproduction that binds the rural Javanese community through faith, cooperation, and shared ethical commitment.

Ideologically, Javanese local religiosity is marked by inclusivity and contextualisation rather than puritan exclusivity. Everyday rituals—*slametan*, *tingkeban*, and related observances—translate doctrine through cultural grammars so that Islamic precepts are internalised as habitus and civic virtue, not merely as propositions. This moral translation is scaffolded by deeply rooted philosophical anchors—*sangkan paraning dumadi* (origin–destiny) and *memayu hayuning bawana* (safeguarding cosmic harmony)—which locate personal piety within responsibilities to community and creation (Aminullah, 2017; Ricklefs, 2007; Salim, 2013; Susilo & Syato, 2016). Complementary maxims—*agama ageming aji* (religion as moral adornment) and *sing penting brayan* (what matters is living in concord)—underwrite tolerance and interfaith coexistence as everyday ethics. The result is a humanistic model of religiosity that preserves cultural continuity while keeping Islamic values publicly relevant and socially constructive in contemporary life (Sodiqin & Umroh, 2024; Teguh, 2023; Tupan, Lattu, & Therik, 2022).

This study reveals both functions and dysfunctions in the way *punden* folklore operates within rural religious and social life in Dukun. Functionally, it works first as moral pedagogy: oral narratives cultivate patience, sincerity, humility, and reverence, consolidating a community “folk theology” that fuses belief with embodied practice (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Second, it fosters social cohesion through collective rites—*ziarah*, *tahlil*, and *sedekah bumi*—that routinely convene villagers, lower conflict, legitimise local leadership through wisdom and mutual respect, and cyclically renew *guyub rukun* (Ammerman, 2013b). Third, it safeguards cultural continuity by preserving intangible heritage

and deep attachments to place; the *punden* itself stands as a visible emblem of collective identity and historical endurance (Danandjaja, 1994).

At the same time, dysfunctions accompany these strengths. A generational semantic drift is evident when some youth read traditional symbols (offerings, incense) as superstition, creating internal frictions (Conradie, 2019; Mokgachane, Basupi, & Lenao, 2021; Su, 2011). A commodification risk emerges when rituals tilt toward spectacle or tourism commodities, thinning spiritual depth even as they promise economic gains (Dinç & Diker, 2023; Ghose & Aamir Ali, 2024). Finally, boundary effects can arise: a strongly cherished local identity may, unintentionally, harden social borders vis-à-vis outsiders.

Building on these findings, the practical implications center on turning the identified dysfunctions into opportunities for renewal through concrete, community-led measures. To address youth disengagement, *punden* narratives should be woven into mosque-youth activities and school co-curricular programs so that the youngest cohort encounters tradition as a lived, shared practice rather than as distant folklore. Story-telling circles, guided pilgrimages, and community archiving can anchor intergenerational learning, while concise ritual-literacy materials—booklets and khutbah notes that clarify theological intent (for example, offerings as *ta'dhim*—respect—not worship)—help reduce stigma and strengthen doctrinal clarity (Al-Ayyubi & Hanif, 2021). In this way, value transmission is enacted not only in sermons but through embodied participation, memory work, and place-based pedagogy.

To mitigate puritan polemics, the community can institutionalize *syaria-adat* dialogues that regularly convene *takmir*, *kyai*, *adat* elders, youth representatives, and village officials to codify a shared protocol: opening and closing rites with communal prayer and *tahlil*, and explicitly framing cultural symbols as reverential expressions rather than devotional objects. This theological clarity should be reinforced structurally through *Perdes* (Peraturan Desa) which regulate local governance and development affairs at the village level. Such *Perdes* can formally recognize the *punden's* dual status as both a religious and cultural site and mandate co-governance among *takmir*, *adat* leaders, youth groups, and the local culture office (Disbudpar, *Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata*, or the Office of Culture and Tourism) responsible for cultural heritage management and community-based tourism development. By aligning normative consensus with administrative structures, debates over ritual form are reframed into collective agreements on intent, stewardship, and cultural preservation.

To manage the risk of commodification, ritual programming can be ethically re-designed so that cultural visibility serves public virtue rather than spectacle. Pairing *sedekah bumi* with ecological actions—village clean-ups, tree planting, or water-source restoration—embodies its spiritual-ecological ethic as tangible common good. A community-based tourism code should cap commercialization, prioritize resident roles, standardize respectful narration of sites and histories, and earmark revenues for site maintenance and youth scholarships. Such measures keep economic benefits aligned with custodial responsibilities and protect spiritual depth from market dilution.

Finally, a durable preservation backbone is needed to secure memory and support teaching. A digital-community archive that curates oral histories, photographs, and interview transcripts can function as an infrastructural spine, allowing practice and knowledge to reinforce one another over time. Beyond safeguarding sources for future research, this archive materializes local ownership of heritage and provides ready pedagogical resources for schools, mosques, and youth groups.

In sum, these practical steps recast the *punden* tradition in Dukun as a moral order—a lived framework binding villagers through shared belief and practice—and as a form of living Islam expressed in gratitude, solidarity, and reverent remembrance. Treating folklore not as static text but as practice clarifies how historical accommodation between Islam and Javanese culture continues to generate social capital, moral formation, and communal resilience in the present (Ammerman, 2013b; Baker & Miles-Watson, 2010; Sutarno et al., 2023).

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that *punden* folklore in Dukun Subdistrict operates as a living value system that sustains the religious, moral, and social life of rural Javanese Muslims. Oral narratives and pilgrimages to saintly figures embed devotion, remembrance, and ta'dhim as lived religious meanings; ritual syncretism most clearly in *ziarah makam* and *sedekah bumi*, integrates Islamic practices (*tahlil*, communal prayer, gratitude to God) with Javanese symbols (flower scattering, incense, *wayang*, *pencak silat*) without erasing theological substance; and these traditions function as moral pedagogy and social glue that transmit virtues such as patience, sincerity, and humility while renewing *guyub rukun*, ecological awareness, and a distinctively Javanese Islamic identity across generations.

Conceptually, the research recasts *punden* folklore from a static cultural text into a practice-based system that internalises Islamic and moral values through everyday ritual life. It elucidates how this process unfolds through three interrelated mechanisms—ritual syncretism, moral pedagogy, and social-capital formation—thereby extending scholarship on Javanese Islam beyond heritage or identity frameworks into the domain of *lived religion*. Empirically, the study contributes village-level, field-based evidence drawn from five rural communities, incorporating intergenerational perspectives and *thick descriptions* of ritual settings. Practically, it advances an actionable governance agenda that includes heritage–faith co-management through *Perdes* (Peraturan Desa). This is complemented by the development of ritual-literacy materials, ethically grounded cultural programs linked to eco-action, and a digital–community archive, together offering a transferable model for sustaining intangible religious heritage while strengthening social cohesion.

The findings are bounded by a qualitative design, the site scope of five villages in Dukun, and a temporal window concentrated around April–May 2021 harvest-time rituals. Reliance on oral histories and participant observation entails interpretive subjectivity; youth and women's perspectives, while present, could be broadened; and the study does not quantitatively measure changes in social capital or track outcomes of the proposed interventions. Future research should pursue comparative, multi-sited work (coastal versus inland Java), longitudinal designs that follow ritual cycles across seasons and years, and mixed-methods approaches (e.g., surveys of social trust, network analysis of cooperation, GIS mapping of sacred sites). Before–after evaluations of ritual-literacy programs, co-governance by-laws, and ethical tourism codes would deepen causal understanding, while digital ethnography could capture how younger generations reinterpret *punden* meanings across on/offline spaces. Taken together, the evidence affirms that *punden* folklore in Dukun is not a relic of the past but a moral order and a form of living Islam that continues to generate spiritual depth, social solidarity, and cultural continuity amid modern transformation.

## References

- Al-Ayyubi, M. Z., & Hanif, M. (2021). Ziarah kubur perspektif pendekatan historis-sosiologis dan kontekstualisasinya dalam kehidupan kontemporer. *Jurnal Studi Hadis Nusantara*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.24235/jshn.v3i1.9022>
- Aminullah, A. (2017). Sinkretisme Agama dan Budaya dalam Tradisi Sesajen di Desa Prenduan. *Dirosat : Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.28944/dirosat.v2i1.64>
- Ammerman, N. T. (2013a). *Sacred stories, spiritual tribes: Finding religion in everyday life*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896448.001.0001>
- Ammerman, N. T. (2013b). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896448.001.0001>
- Anam, A. K. (2015). Pilgrimage tradition: Between the spiritual, da'wah and tourism. *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 8(2), 389–411.
- Anney, V. N. (2015). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, 5(2), 272–281.
- Aricindy, A., Wasino, W., & Wijaya, A. (2023). Local wisdom for mutual Cooperation in Indonesia: An ethnographic investigation on value of Marsiadapari tradition, Sianjur Mula-Mula Sub-District, Samosir Regency, North Sumatera Province. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 44(2), 555–564. <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2023.44.2.26>
- Baker, C., & Miles-Watson, J. (2010). Faith and traditional capitals: Defining the public scope of spiritual and religious capital—A literature review. *Implicit Religion*, 13(1), 17–69. <https://doi.org/10.1558/imre.v13i1.17>

- Budiwanti, E. (2011). Re-Islamizing Lombok: Contesting the Bayanese adat. *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 37(2), 85–114. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmi.v37i2.632>
- Conradie, A. (2019). Remaking Culture for Sale: The Strategic Commodification, Construction and Performance of 'Traditional' Cultural Identity in South African Cultural Villages. In *Interculturalism, Meaning and Identity* (pp. 65–76). [https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848881594\\_007](https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848881594_007)
- Creswell, J. (2016). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods Approaches*. University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Danandjaja, J. (1994). *Folklor Indonesia: Ilmu gosip, dongeng, dan lain-lain*. Pustaka Utama Grafiti.
- Darlington, S. M. (2003). Practical spirituality and community forests. In *Nature in the Global South: Environmental projects in South and Southeast Asia* (pp. 346–367). Indiana University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1198tsr.16>
- Dinç, A., & Diker, O. (2023). The Role of Folklore Museums in the Preservation of Rural Cultural Identity in the Context of Cultural Heritage. *Folklor/Edebiyat*, 29(116), 1077–1090. <https://doi.org/10.22559/folklor.2525>
- Fatriyan, F. (2018). Warga Desa Gedongkedo'an Pawai Tumpeng.
- Fauzi, M. L. (2012). Traditional Islam in Javanese society: The roles of kyai and pesantren in preserving Islamic tradition and negotiating modernity. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 6(1), 125–144. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2012.6.1.125-144>
- Geertz, C. (1997). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- Ghose, A., & Amir Ali, S. M. (2024). Intellectual property considerations in the preservation and revival of folklore through tourism: Strategies for sustainable cultural heritage management in India. In *Navigating Intellectual Property Challenges in Tourism* (pp. 55–82). <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-4171-1.ch003>
- Headley, S. C. (2018). Sembah/salat: The javanisation of islamic prayer; the islamisation of javanese prayer. In *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean: Inside and Outside the Mosque* (pp. 169–211). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315810744-8>
- Huda, M. D. (2015). Peran dukun terhadap perkembangan peradaban budaya masyarakat Jawa. *Jurnal Ikadbud: Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Daerah*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.21831/ikadbud.v4i10.12029>
- Hutomo, S. B. (1991). *Mengenal folklor Indonesia: Suatu pengantar*. Penerbit Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia.
- Jamhari. (2000). In the center of meaning: Ziarah tradition in Java. *Studia Islamika*, 7(1), 51–90. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v7i1.716>
- Jb., M. C. (2017). Spiritualitas Islam dalam budaya wayang kulit masyarakat Jawa dan Sunda. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, 9(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2015.091-03>
- Jordan, K., Krivokapic-Skoko, B., & Collins, J. (2010). Chapter 10: Italian immigrants and the built environment in rural Australia. *Research in Rural Sociology and Development*, 16, 141–154. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1057-1922\(2010\)0000016013](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1057-1922(2010)0000016013)
- Lloyd, N., & Lewis, P. R. (2024). A Socio-Technical Perspective on Fostering Sustainable Community Development via Social Capital and Social Cohesion. *Proceedings - 2024 IEEE International Conference on Autonomic Computing and Self-Organizing Systems Companion, ACSOS-C 2024*, 61–66. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACSOS-C63493.2024.00032>
- Maziyah, N., Rais, R., & Dasar, J. P. G. S. (2019). Analisis nilai spiritual dalam pembentukan karakter pada buku cerita rakyat karya Wirodarsono. *IVCEJ*, 2(1), 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.23887/ivcej.v2i1.17924>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitatif data analysis* (an expanded). California: Sage Publication.
- Mokgachane, T., Basupi, B., & Lenao, M. (2021). Implications of cultural commodification on the authenticity of iKalanga music: a case of Domboshaba traditional music festival in Botswana. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 19(2), 153–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2019.1700989>
- Muradi, P. N. (2021). Konsep karamah dalam masyarakat Islam (Konstruksi dan implikasi sosial keagamaan kewalian Abu Ibrahim Woyla di Aceh). *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)*, 2(3), 119–132. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jsai.v2i3.1392>
- Musman, A. (2021). *Sunan Bonang wali keramat*. Araska Publisher.
- Pangalila, T., & Rumbay, C. A. (2024). Multicultural relation between religious communities in Indonesia. *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies*, 80(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9645>
- Poerwadarminta, W. J. S. (2014). *Kamus umum bahasa Indonesia*. Balai Pustaka.
- Pujiyanti, A., Ahman, A., & Yusuf, S. (2023). Revitalizing the Family Education Environment: Integrating the Values of Memayu Hayuning Bawana in Sapanan Culture. *BIO Web of Conferences*, 79. <https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/20237906006>
- Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi. (2024). *Perkembangan Validasi Data Cagar Budaya, Museum, dan Warisan Budaya Takbenda Tahun 2024*.
- Pusposari, D., Saryono, D., Siswanto, W., & Hasanah, M. (2019). Ande-Ande Lumut folklore as the builder of youth



- character. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 6(5), 5424–5429. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v6i5.04>
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2007). *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions (c. 1830-1930)*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Rizal, M. A. S. (2017). Nilai estetika dan pendidikan naskah Singir Mitera Sejati dan Ngudi Susila karya Kiai Bisri Musthofa. *Wacana: Jurnal Bahasa, Seni, Dan Pengajaran*, 1(1), 54–71. <https://doi.org/10.29407/jbsp.v1i1.679>
- Rofiq, A. C. (2024). Continuity and change process to sanctify the holy month of Muharram in the Suroan tradition. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335779>
- Salim, A. (2013). Javanese religion, Islam or syncretism: Comparing Woodward's Islam in Java and Beatty's Varieties of Javanese Religion. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 3(2), 223–266. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v3i2.223-266>
- Schiffer, L. R., Suprapti, A., Rukayah, R. S., & Bahar, Y. N. (2022). Acculturation of Hindu, Java and Islamic Architecture at the Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque of Cirebon, Indonesia. *ISVS E-Journal*, 9(4), 72–87.
- Setiani, U A, Sukirno, S., Riyanton, M., & Kariadi, M. T. (2021). Using character education forms and values of folklores in Brebes Regency as the old literature learning materials. *Jurnal Lingua Idea*, 12(1), 40–50. <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jli.2021.12.1.3949>
- Setiani, Umi Ana, Sukirno, S., Riyanton, M., & Kariadi, M. T. (2021). Using Character Education Forms and Values of Folklores in Brebes Regency as the Old Literature Learning Materials. *Jurnal Lingua Idea*, 12(1), 40. <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jli.2021.12.1.3949>
- Sodiqin, A., & Umroh, R. R. (2024). Towards an Interreligious Fiqh: A Study of the Culture-Based Religious Tolerance in the Kaloran Community, Central Java, Indonesia. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 61(1), 159–180. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.159-180>
- Su, X. (2011). Commodification and the selling of ethnic music to tourists. *Geoforum*, 42(4), 496–505. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.03.006>
- Sugahara, Y. (2023). Sunan Bonang's Teaching: Ethical Sufism in Sixteenth-Century Java. In *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Vol. 316, pp. 126–148). [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004678897\\_007](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004678897_007)
- Sulistiyani, A. T., Setyono, P., & Wahyunengseh, R. D. (2021). The local elites perception of “hamemayu Hayuning Bawana” philosophies in the Green Village Program in Yogyakarta Province. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 724(1). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/724/1/012099>
- Sumarmi, Putra, A. K., Mutia, T., Masrurroh, H., Rizal, S., Khairunisa, T., ... Ismail, A. S. (2024). Local Wisdom for Global Challenges: Memayu Hayuning Bawono as a Model for Sustainable Environmental Practices. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, 19(2), 527–538. <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.190210>
- Susilo, S., & Syato, I. (2016). Common identity framework of cultural knowledge and practices of Javanese Islam. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 6(2), 161–184. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v6i1.161-184>
- Sutarno, A., Purwanto, S. A., & Gunawijaya, J. (2023). The dynamics of local religion in Indonesia's multireligious community. *Journal of Gender, Culture and Society*, 3(1), 32–41. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jgcs.2023.3.1.4>
- Sylviana, Z. (2018). Ziarah: Antara fenomena mistik dan komunikasi spiritual. *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi Dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam*, 10(1), 118–131. <https://doi.org/10.30739/darussalam.v10i1.273>
- Tadzkirah, A. L., Fitri, N., & Islam, P. (2022). Peran orangtua dalam menanamkan nilai agama dan moral pada anak usia dini. *Anakta: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 1(2), 80–86. <https://doi.org/10.35905/anakta.v1i2.4469>
- Teguh, T. (2023). Philosophical Perspective Of Islam In Javanese Culture: A Study Of Fossil Rocks Of Apak “Beringin.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 15(2), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.2021.4122>
- Tupan, J., Lattu, I. Y. M., & Therik, W. M. A. (2022). SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AS THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM AMONG JAVANESE MUSLIM MIGRANTS IN MALUKU. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.1-26>
- Turner, C. (2014). The Sociological Tradition or Traditions? *The American Sociologist*, 45(1), 22–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-014-9199-8>
- Ulfiyatin, L. (2003). *Sastra lisan dan folklore*. Balai Bahasa Yogyakarta.
- Umarella, S. (2024). Nahu Sanamang in the Tradition of Tulehu Indigenous People: A Study of Reciprocity in Maluku. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(7), 2450–2465. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i7.4395>
- Wahab, A. (2023). Wabup Gresik Apresiasi Budaya Sedekah Bumi.
- Winarno, K. (2015). Memahami Etnografi Ala Spradley. *Smart*, 1(2), 257–265. <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v1i2.256>
- Zinnbauer, B. J., & Pargament, K. I. (2005). Religiousness and spirituality. In R. F. Paloutzian & C. L. Park (Eds.),

*Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (pp. 54–70). Guilford Press.



Copyright © 2025 by the authors. This publication is subject to the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).