

THE ROLE OF THE JENANG KUDUS MUSEUM IN EDUCATION VISITORS ABOUT GUSJIGANG CULTURE



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Abstract

The Gusjigang culture was introduced by Sunan Kudus, emphasizing three important aspects of life: Gus (good character), Ji (studying and reviewing), and Gang (trading or entrepreneurship). As time passed, the Gusjigang culture was no longer recognized by the community. One alternative used to preserve the Gusjigang culture is by utilizing the role of museums. The museum that introduces the values of Gusjigang is the Jenang Kudus Museum. This study aims to determine the role of the Jenang Kudus Museum in increasing visitors' understanding of the Gusjigang culture. The type of research used is field research using descriptive qualitative research methods. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, literature studies, and observations. The sources in this study were the managers and visitors of the Jenang Kudus Museum. Data analysis was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results showed that the Jenang Kudus Museum plays an important role in increasing visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture. The collections in the Jenang Kudus Museum have interpretations of the meaning of Gusjigang culture. Gusjigang values are specifically introduced through the Gusjigang room, the Trilogi Ukhuwah room, the Al-Qur'an Gallery room, Asmaul Husna, and the Miniature Ka'bah, as well as the local wisdom room of the original Kudus community.

Abstrak

Budaya Gusjigang dibawa oleh sunan Kudus dengan menekankan pada tiga aspek penting kehidupan, yakni Gus (akhlak yang bagus), Ji (ngaji dan mengkaji), dan Gang (berdagang atau berwirausaha). Seiring perkembangan zaman, budaya Gusjigang sempat tidak dikenal oleh Masyarakat. Salah satu alternatif yang digunakan untuk mempertahankan budaya Gusjigang adalah dengan memanfaatkan peran Museum. Museum yang mengenalkan nilai-nilai Gusjigang adalah Museum Jenang Kudus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran museum Jenang Kudus dalam meningkatkan pemahaman pengunjung terhadap budaya Gusjigang. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian lapangan dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara mendalam, studi literatur, dan observasi. Narasumber dalam penelitian ini adalah pengelola dan pengunjung museum Jenang Kudus. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tiga tahapan, yakni reduksi data, penyajian data, dan menarik kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa museum jenang kudus memiliki peran penting terhadap peningkatan pemahaman pengunjung mengenai budaya Gusjigang. Koleksi-koleksi dalam Museum Jenang Kudus memiliki penafsiran makna mengenai budaya Gusjigang. Nilai Gusjigang secara khusus dikenalkan melalui ruang Gusjigang, ruang Trilogi Ukhuwah, ruang Galeri al-Qur'an, Asmaul Husna, dan Miniatur Ka'bah, serta ruang Kearifan lokal usaha asli masyarakat Kudus.

INTRODUCTION

Culture serves as the identity of a society, relating to intellect, customs, and life values. Culture refers to the habits that grow and develop within a society, which are preserved from generation to generation. Koentjaraningrat (1985) states that there are three forms of culture. First, culture as a complex of ideas, concepts, norms, regulations, and the like. This form of



culture is abstract, intangible, and invisible. Second, culture as a complex of patterned activities or behaviors of people in society. This form is often referred to as a social system, consisting of community activities carried out hereditarily. Third, culture as objects resulting from human creation. This form of culture is tangible, visible as objects resulting from human actions or behaviors [1]. Culture, in whatever form it develops within a society, plays an important role in human life. However, as times progress, some members of society are no longer familiar with the culture that exists in their environment. In fact, culture—especially local culture—is a regional treasure that must be preserved and whose knowledge should be utilized. One alternative for preserving culture so that it is not lost is by utilizing the role of museums.

Generally, museums are known as places to store ancient and historical objects. In fact, museums play a greater role than that. Museums are important in building awareness of the past as a lesson for the future [2]. Originally, museums were indeed used as places to store valuable artifacts from the past. However, with the passage of time, the role of museums has become more active, providing education, communication, and enjoyable entertainment. Museums play an important role in education, both cultural and formal education, so that the purpose of conveying education to visitors can be achieved effectively [3]. Museums also play a role in maintaining and preserving the culture of society through the collections they display [4]-[5]. According to ICOM (International Council of Museums), museums function as a means to foster faith and gratitude to God Almighty, as mirrors of human growth and civilization, as a means of introducing culture to society, as centers for the dissemination and equitable distribution of knowledge, as places for scientific research and documentation, as venues for the preservation of history, and as places for collecting and safeguarding natural and cultural heritage [6]. Museums also serve as places for learning as well as recreation, which is called educational tourism. Educational tourism is a travel activity aimed at gaining experiences and learning new things from the places visited. Educational tourism has two perspectives, namely the demand factor from the viewpoint of tourists and the reciprocal relationship factor in a travel tour [7].

One of the cultural heritages preserved in the Museum is the Gusjigang culture. Gusjigang is a culture taught by Sunan Kudus, emphasizing three main characteristics: being good, studying religious texts, and trading. Said, as cited in Mas'udi (2014: 239), explains that to instill an ideal work ethic, Sunan Kudus developed the concept of “Gusjigang,” which means that young people should be good in character, proficient in reciting the Qur'an, and skilled in trading [8]. Gusjigang itself is composed of three words: “gus,” which means good in morals, behavior, character, oriented toward noble conduct, politeness, honesty, and morality; “ji,” which refers to studying religious texts, being diligent in reciting the Qur'an, remembering the afterlife, and having the spirit of lifelong learning, manifested through the tradition of religious study; and “gang,” meaning trading, which emphasizes the importance of trading with ethics, honesty, and social responsibility, as well as learning to manage and earn a living properly. Through this concept, Sunan Kudus guided and spread Islam to the people of Kudus so that they would become individuals of good character and behavior, balanced between worldly and spiritual life. This tradition has become ingrained in the society of Kudus and its surroundings. Gusjigang is important to be known and practiced because it is not merely a cultural heritage, but also contains Islamic educational values that are relevant to be implemented in the current era [8].

Research on the Gusjigang culture is in line with the study conducted by Khoirun Alannauri et al. (2022), which explored the implementation of Gusjigang's local wisdom from the perspective of social studies learning at the Al-Mawaddah Islamic boarding school in Kudus [10]. The difference lies in the focus: the aforementioned research centers on the application of Gusjigang's local wisdom in social studies education, while this research discusses the role of the museum in increasing visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture. The similarity is in the subject matter Gusjigang culture.

Gusjigang is a tradition inherited from Sunan Kudus that holds many educational meanings [11]. The philosophy of Gusjigang from Sunan Kudus is a life philosophy with high noble values. The local wisdom values of Gusjigang remain a guide for life without changing the essence of the values contained within [8]. Therefore, it is necessary to instill religious educational values so that they can be passed down to future generations as a guide for society [12]. The Gusjigang culture taught by Sunan Kudus has become deeply rooted in the Kudus community. However, as times change, the Gusjigang culture has gradually started to fade. The community, especially the people of Kudus, are less familiar or even almost unaware of the Gusjigang culture. Therefore, in 2017, H. Muhammad Hilmy, SE. established the Gusjigang educational tourism site through the Jenang and Gusjigang Museum, later known as the Jenang Kudus Museum. He founded this museum with the aim of serving as a place to learn, appreciate, internalize, understand, and implement the values taught by Sunan Kudus.

Initially, the Jenang Kudus Museum was a place for producing Kudus's signature Jenang, but over time it developed into a center of business and culture, known as Mubarakfood [13]. This began in 1910, pioneered by a married couple named H. Mabururi and Hj. Alawiyah. Within the Jenang Kudus Museum, there is a special area dedicated to introducing Gusjigang. Through this museum, it is hoped that visitors can grasp the meaning and significance of the Gusjigang tradition, not only those from Kudus but also from outside the region. Based on this background, the researcher became interested in conducting a study on the role of the Jenang Kudus Museum in enhancing visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture. This study aims to determine the role of the Jenang Kudus Museum in introducing Gusjigang culture to visitors and to examine how information is presented through the collections and educational activities in the Jenang Kudus Museum.

METHODS

This research is a type of field study. Field research is conducted by directly seeking data sources from the managers and visitors of the Jenang Kudus Museum. The Jenang Kudus Museum was chosen because it is the only museum focused on introducing the Gusjigang culture. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Descriptive qualitative research emphasizes research results that portray the object of study in accordance with the actual reality [14]. In addition, the descriptive qualitative approach is also used to examine independent variables, without linking them to other variables. Data sources were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and literature study. The informants in this research are the managers and visitors of the Jenang Museum.

Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions [15]. Data reduction is done to select and review all research data obtained from the field. In this study, data reduction was carried out by collecting data and

information obtained through interviews and observation. Data presentation is done by presenting the results of interviews with the managers and visitors of the museum. Drawing conclusions is carried out to summarize the main findings of the research. The process of drawing conclusions involves verifying what has been found and obtained. The initial conclusions presented are still provisional and may change if no strong evidence is found to support them in the next stage of data collection.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The research results show that the Jenang Kudus Museum plays an important role in enhancing visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture through the structured presentation of information, cultural collections, and educational activities. The museum serves not only as a repository of historical artifacts, but also as an effective medium for cultural learning, especially in introducing the philosophical values of Gusjigang, which originate from the teachings of Sunan Kudus in the Kudus region itself.

In general, the improvement in visitors' understanding occurs through three main aspects: the museum as a source of cultural information, the museum as a means of preserving values, and educational activities that provide direct learning experiences. Communicative information delivery through dioramas, artifact collections, thematic galleries, and historical narratives helps visitors understand the interrelation between moral values (gus), religiosity (ji), and entrepreneurship (gang) in the lives of the Kudus community. The connection between Gusjigang values and the daily life of the Kudus society can be visualized through the replica of Kudus jenang-making process displayed in Figure 1.



Figure 1. A replica statue of a person stirring jenang

The images in this study depict a replica of the jenang production atmosphere as part of the educational collection at the Jenang Kudus Museum, which serves to provide visitors with a realistic illustration of the economic activities of the Kudus community. This visualization supports the research findings presented in the table, which demonstrate that the museum functions both as a source of cultural information and as an educational medium for the values of Gusjigang, especially the entrepreneurial aspect (gang).

Table 1. Development of Gusjigang Cultural Understanding Through Museum Education

No	Period	Time Frame	Key Characteristics
1	Historical Foundation of Gusjigang	The era of Sunan Kudus's preaching – the development of the Kudus community	The philosophy of Gusjigang (good character, proficient in recitation, skilled in trade) is instilled as a way of life for the community to achieve balance between worldly and spiritual matters
2	Establishment of Museum Jenang Kudus	Establishment of the Museum (1910 – 2017)	The museum was established as a means to preserve the history of jenang, local culture, and the values of Gusjigang through collections, dioramas, and cultural educational media
3	Museum as Cultural Information Source	Operational Period of the Museum (2017 – 2023)	Visitors gain an understanding of Gusjigang culture through collections, biographies of religious figures, the Qur'an gallery, and miniatures depicting the trading activities of the Kudus community
4	Cultural Preservation and Educational Role	Modern Era (2023 – Present)	The museum plays a role in preserving the values of Gusjigang from being lost due to globalization by presenting moral values, religiosity, and entrepreneurship in a visual and educational manner
5	Visitor Understanding Improvement	Research Period (2025–2026)	Educational activities have been proven to enhance visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture as the identity of the Kudus community

The research results table shows that visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture develops gradually, starting from the foundation of the community's cultural values, the establishment of the museum as an educational medium, and the increase in understanding after their visit. The presentation of collections, including the replica of Jenang production depicted in the images, strengthens the process of internalizing moral values, religiosity, and entrepreneurship derived from the teachings of Sunan Kudus.

DISCUSSION

The Role of Jenang Kudus Museum

The existence of museums today is not only as a place to store ancient artifacts, but also as a center of information for introducing culture. In addition, museums play an important role in shaping social dynamics [16], [17]. Museum collections do not merely present historical facts; they also embody moral, aesthetic, social, and economic values that are vital to study and convey [18]. The Jenang Kudus Museum has a variety of roles and functions. The Jenang Museum serves as a source of information for those who want to learn about the culture of the Kudus community, namely the Gusjigang Culture. This is consistent with the view put forward by Utami (2020) that museums serve as vital educational spaces for preserving cultural heritage [19].

In this museum, visitors can learn about the philosophy of Gusjigang culture (baGus, ngaji, and daGang) through a variety of interesting collections and artifacts. This illustrates that the people of Kudus are known for their good character, devotion in worship, and skill in trading. Based on interviews with visitors, they find it easy to understand the information contained in this museum through its various collections and artifacts, which carry implicit messages about Gusjigang culture. The Jenang Kudus Museum also provides clear information regarding religion and hard work, showing that both can go hand in hand in daily life. Through this clear presentation of information, the Jenang Kudus Museum plays a significant role in preserving the values of Gusjigang culture so that they are not lost over time.

In the modern era, the Jenang Kudus Museum functions as a visual medium that represents the combination of good character (baGus), devotion in worship (ngaji), and

entrepreneurship skills (daGang). As reflected in its vision, this museum serves as an institution for historical preservation, packaging traditional values into something interesting for the public to enjoy. With the presence of the Jenang Kudus Museum, the values of Gusjigang are no longer seen as old stories, but rather as a living cultural heritage that can be directly experienced by every visitor.

Moreover, the museum also serves as a relaxed yet effective educational facility to introduce the unique characteristics of the Kudus community to both domestic and international visitors, through its collection of historical objects and their explanations. Without the role of this museum, the values of Gusjigang might only remain as historical records, lacking the physical evidence that the public can directly observe and learn from.

Collections in the Jenang Kudus Museum

The presentation of collections in the Jenang Kudus Museum is carried out in a unique way, grouped according to the life philosophy of the Kudus community. The arrangement of the collections is divided into the three main pillars of Kudus society's philosophy (Gusjigang values): the value of Gus (Bagus), representing good character; the value of Ji (Ngaji), symbolizing religious devotion; and the value of Gang (Dagang), reflecting entrepreneurial skills.

Representation of the Gus (Bagus) Value

The Gus value is presented through the museum's collections in the form of brief biographies of Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, Kyai Tee Ling Sing, KH. Raden Asnawi, KH. M. Arwani Amin, KH. Turaichan Adjhuri and other Kudus ulema figures. Through these biographies, visitors can learn about positive behavioral characteristics. In addition, there is a special room featuring explanations of the Trilogy of Brotherhood, which covers Ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood among Muslims), Ukhuwah Wathaniyah (national brotherhood), and Ukhuwah Basyariah (brotherhood of all mankind). These three concepts emphasize the aspect of brotherhood among Muslims, the nation, and humanity as a whole.

Representation of the Ji (Ngaji) Value

The value of "Ji" (ngaji, or religious study) in the Jenang Kudus Museum is presented through a collection of Qur'ans and Asmaul Husna (the Beautiful Names of Allah). Both collections are displayed in special rooms called the Al-Qur'an Gallery, the Asmaul Husna Gallery, and the Ka'bah Miniature. In these rooms, there are several Qur'an collections with various materials and sizes. There are five mushaf al-Qur'an manuscripts, including two Qur'an manuscripts on palm leaves that are three centuries old, a Qur'an manuscript made from cowhide, and two Qur'an manuscripts on ancient paper [20]. The smallest Qur'an collection measures just 1.5 cm and contains all 30 Juz of Allah's verses, brought directly from Istanbul. This Qur'an is neatly stored in a glass case. To allow visitors to read it, the Jenang Museum provides a magnifying glass. In addition to the Qur'an and Asmaul Husna collections, the value of ngaji is also presented in the Indonesian Calligraphy Gallery, which features calligraphy by internationally recognized Kudus-born calligraphers such as Ali Rohman, Hambali Mahmud, Noor Aufa Shiddiq, Turmuzy Elfais, and HM Noor Syukron. These collections teach that as humans, we must seek knowledge—not only religious knowledge, but general knowledge as well.

Representation of the Gang (Dagang) Value

The Gang value is presented through museum collections that reflect entrepreneurship. Displays are showing the making of jenang, batik, and kretek cigarettes. Jenang is one of the signature foods of Kudus, so most of the people in Kudus work as jenang makers. The museum also introduces a figure named Nitisemito, the owner of the largest kretek factory with the brand Tjap Bal Tiga. In addition to showcasing prominent figures, the museum traces the roots of local trade, which began at traditional markets known as Pasar Bubar. Through Pasar Bubar, Jenang Kudus was first sold hand to hand. The market diorama is presented to illustrate how transactions and Jenang sales were conducted at that time.

The collection at the Jenang Kudus Museum is not limited to items related to history and jenang; there are also interesting collections such as portraits of Kudus in the past, including the train station in 1936, the theater building from 1929, the police station in 1928, the Kudus town square in 1926, and the "omah kapal" when it was still intact—a building commemorating the hajj journey of a wealthy Kudus entrepreneur [21].

Educational Activities in the Museum

The museum has a diverse collection, each with its own meaning to be learned. By utilizing these collections in a varied and recreational atmosphere, the museum becomes a learning medium and an educational tourism attraction [22]. One of the learning methods implemented in the Jenang Kudus Museum to introduce its collections is by providing museum guides. The presence of these guides is quite important, as they offer visitors more detailed explanations about the meaning of each collection in the museum [23].

Educational activities at the Jenang Kudus Museum are supported by the presence of museum guides, who play an important role in helping visitors understand the collections and transfer the cultural values contained within them. This service is available if visitors require a guide to assist them during their tour. The guides not only explain the history and function of the collections but also convey the meaning of Gusjigang culture communicatively and contextually.

Based on interviews with visitors, the main purpose of visiting the Jenang Kudus Museum is not just for recreation, but also to gain historical knowledge as a form of educational tourism. From these interviews, visitors explained that they were previously unfamiliar with the term Gusjigang and only knew the location as a souvenir center. However, after following the tour route and receiving explanations from guides as well as information presented in the museum, visitors realized that the Jenang Kudus Museum has a strong educational function and can engagingly present historical and cultural values.

The information delivered through exhibitions, dioramas, and historical narratives is considered easy to understand by visitors. One of the exhibits that provides an understanding of the history of Jenang Kudus is the Pasar Bubar Menara diorama, which depicts the trade activities of Jenang in the past through three-dimensional illustrations. This presentation helps visitors visualize the social and economic conditions of the Kudus society in earlier times visually and concretely.

Overall, visitors view the Jenang Kudus Museum not merely as a shopping destination but as an effective medium of cultural education. The Gusjigang concept is understood as a blend of faith and work ethic, shaping the people of Kudus into faithful traders and sustainable entrepreneurs. This demonstrates that the educational activities organized by the museum can enhance visitors' understanding of Gusjigang culture and encourage greater appreciation of local cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

The Jenang Kudus Museum serves as a primary source of information and a medium for preserving the Gusjigang culture. The museum has successfully packaged traditional values into attractive visual forms, ensuring that the teachings of Sunan Kudus—regarding good character (baGus), devotion to worship (ngaji), and entrepreneurial skills (daGang)—remain relevant over time. Through this museum, the values of Gusjigang, which have begun to fade among the millennial generation, are revived—not merely as records of ancient history, but as a living cultural heritage that can be experienced firsthand by both local communities and visitors from outside the city. The information and collections presented, along with educational activities facilitated by the guides at the Jenang Kudus Museum, have proven highly effective in increasing visitors' understanding of the Gusjigang philosophy. This effectiveness is implemented through the structured division of educational zones within the museum. Educational activities, supported by the presence of museum guides, greatly assist in conveying the meaning of Gusjigang culture in a contextual and communicative manner. This interaction has successfully transformed the perspective of visitors who initially came only to shop for souvenirs, making them fully aware that the Jenang Kudus Museum is an educational tourism destination that integrates the strength of faith and the work ethic of the Kudus community in a sustainable way. With the existence of this museum, it is hoped that visitors can absorb the educational philosophy contained within it, whether related to spirituality, intellect, or entrepreneurship.

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