

Transformation of Religious Rituals in Religious Tourism: History of Changes in Understanding and Celebration of Spirituality in the Community of Masjid Agung Banten Lama

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak transformasi tersebut terhadap pemahaman dan perayaan spiritualitas masyarakat sekitar Masjid Agung Banten Lama. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan data dari wawancara, observasi lapangan, dan dokumentasi, penelitian ini melibatkan 10 informan sebagai sumber data primer dan sumber data sekunder seperti artikel ilmiah. Teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah *purposive sampling*, dimana peneliti memilih sampel berdasarkan pertimbangan tertentu seperti sumber data primer dan sekunder. Teknik analisis data meliputi pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasilnya menunjukkan pergeseran fokus dari aspek spiritualitas ke hiburan dan rekreasi dalam kegiatan keagamaan di masjid. Pengunjung lebih tertarik pada foto-foto untuk media sosial daripada ziarah. Diperlukan pendidikan spiritual mendalam, terutama untuk generasi muda, agar nilai-nilai keagamaan tidak tergerus oleh aspek komersial dan hiburan dalam wisata religi. Dengan demikian, upaya pemeliharaan dan peningkatan pemahaman spiritual di tengah pesatnya perkembangan pariwisata religi di Banten menjadi penting untuk menjaga keaslian dan kesakralan tradisi keagamaan di kawasan tersebut.

Kata kunci: sejarah, wisata religi, ritual keagamaan, masjid agung banten lama.

Abstract

This study delves into how these transformations impact the spiritual understanding and celebration among the local community surrounding the Masjid Agung Banten Lama. Utilizing a qualitative approach involving interviews, field observations, and documentation, the research incorporates 10 informants as primary data sources alongside secondary sources like scholarly articles. Employing purposive sampling, researchers select samples based on specific criteria. Analysis techniques encompass data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal a shift from a spiritual to a recreational focus in mosque activities, with visitors prioritizing social media photography over pilgrimage. The study underscores the necessity for profound spiritual education, particularly among the youth, to safeguard religious values from commercialization and entertainment influences in religious tourism. Thus, preserving and enhancing spiritual comprehension amid Banten's rapid religious tourism growth is vital for upholding the region's religious traditions' authenticity and sanctity.

Keywords: history, religious tourism, religious rituals, masjid agung banten lama.

INTRODUCTION

Banten offers a variety of tourist destinations, including maritime, cultural, educational, and religious tourism. One tourism sector that continues to thrive

and consistently attracts numerous visitors is religious tourism, often called pilgrimage (Haki et al., 2023). The potential of religious tourism destinations in the province of Banten is widely

recognized by tourists, on a local, national, and international scale. One example is the area of the Masjid Agung Banten Lama located in the village of Banten, Kasemen District, Serang City. This area not only holds historical value as a representation of the glory of the Sultanate of Banten but also carries religious significance. Within this area, the tombs of the Sultan of Banten, including Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, a figure who played a significant role in the spread of Islam in the Banten region, can be found (Nurfadhila & Suganda, 2021).

Being an area rich in history and religious traditions, Masjid Agung Banten Lama attracts great interest from tourists seeking deep spiritual and cultural experiences. However, with the growth of the tourism industry and globalization, traditional religious practices at this site have undergone significant transformation. Fundamental questions arise regarding how these changes affect the understanding and celebration of spirituality among the involved communities. The Masjid Agung Banten Lama has evolved beyond being merely a religious center; it has become a stage for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the local community and tourists.

This phenomenon creates an atmosphere where religious rituals are not only practiced traditionally but also adapted to the diversity and dynamics of

the involved community. The growth in tourist visits may have had a significant influence on how society understands and celebrates spirituality, both positively through intercultural interactions and the potential risk of changes that could shift the original values of religion (Kim, B., Kim, S., & King, B, 2020). It is essential to investigate these changes to understand the possible social, cultural, and spiritual consequences that may arise. Fundamental questions involve whether these changes can undermine traditional religious values or bring about new benefits that enhance the quality of spiritual life in the community.

One previous study conducted by Salsabila (2023) outlined that visitors complained about their experiences after visiting the Religious Tourism Object of the Masjid Agung Banten Lama. They felt uncomfortable due to the presence of beggars or street musicians forcing visitors, vendors selling within the tourist area, and the presence of young couples (Chairunisa & Dwiyanto, 2023). Additionally, the presence of religious tourist visitors can influence the governance of tourist attractions, both in terms of regulations and the interaction between visitors and the local community. In this context, it needs to be explored how changes in religious rituals at the Masjid Agung Banten Lama are reflected in the changing understanding and

celebration of spirituality in the local community.

Therefore, research on the transformation of religious rituals in religious tourism at Masjid Agung Banten Lama is not only important for understanding changes in the local context but also for providing broader insights into the relationship between religion, culture, and the tourism industry in contemporary society. By deepening our understanding of this phenomenon, it is hoped that we can identify ways to promote harmony between tradition and modernity, and to preserve the essence of spirituality in an evolving era of globalization. Through a thorough analysis of the interaction between religious and tourism aspects, this study is expected to provide valuable insights into how these changes affect religious identity and spiritual values within the local community.

METHOD

The research approach used is qualitative to investigate phenomena related to the relationship and closeness between humans and their environment. The research method employed involves several phases, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The data in this study are derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are obtained through direct interviews and observations with the Outer Baduy community, while secondary data are

acquired from previous studies. Primary data collection is carried out through two main methods, namely interviews with 10 informants from various backgrounds around the Great Mosque of Banten Lama, as well as field observations to understand religious practices and spirituality directly. Data validation is conducted through data triangulation and follows the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where informants are selected based on specific criteria such as their knowledge and involvement in the research object (Sugiyono, 2015: 218-219).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Tourism Potential

If we look back at the history of religious tourism, religious travel is the oldest known to have existed more than 3,000 years ago (dating back to the Egyptian civilization), where groups of people followed religious rituals. During the first and second millennia, religious travel often involved visiting various locations that had become major destinations for religious travel in the past (Jahuri, J., Suendarti, M., & Hasbullah, H, 2022).

In contemporary society, the majority of individuals perceive spirituality as belonging to history (Jongmeewasin, S, 2016). The potential for religious tourism in Banten is very

high, with several locations continuing to be the destination for pilgrims up to the present. Pilgrims come not only from the local environment but also from countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Additionally, in conjunction with the activities of the Saints (wali) (Wali) in spreading the Islamic religion, which was previously dominated by Hinduism and Buddhism. The greatness and success of the royal figures and Islamic preachers in Java have gained wide recognition from the community. This has an impact on the sites and tombs, which are still respected to this day. The arrival of pilgrims makes these tombs a place considered sacred. Around the tombs, pilgrims believe that certain parts of the site possess spiritual power. Inside the tomb area, there is not only physical activity but also a spiritual dimension that acts as a spiritual force for the pilgrims (Pataruka & Indonesia, 2018).

The purpose of religious tourism at the cultural heritage site of the Old Banten Sultanate reflects the historical phenomenology of community religion with cultural traditions that have survived until today, at least metaphysically, after its physical existence ended. The sacred character of the relics of the Banten Sultanate has become a characteristic used to make pilgrimages and is supported by the oral tradition of the community (Suweko, S. K., & Kridarso, E. R, 2018). From the customs or religious traditions that exist in Banten Lama, it can be

concluded that humans and their groups have always had a belief in the existence of a higher entity. They always develop certain ways to worship and adore it, confirming the existence of human religious instincts (Jazuli, R., & Nurikah, N, 2021).

Visitors to the Great Mosque of Banten come not only from Banten itself but also from outside the region, creating the potential for indirect cultural exchange through interactions and conversations with various people. Although the initial purpose is for pilgrimage, the expansive and up-to-date Great Mosque of Banten provides an opportunity to introduce the history of Banten to visitors. Therefore, in addition to its primary function as a pilgrimage site, the mosque can also serve as a means to promote and understand the histories present in Banten.

Transformation of Religious Rituals

The idea of religious tourism is evolving and advancing gradually with time, undergoing stages of segmentation, the emergence of new market segments, and the formation of fresh identities (Iliev, D, 2020). Religious tourism has its own charm for tourists with spiritual values and inter-religious tolerance which can be a guide for life (Ariyono, K. Y., Irdiana, S., Darmawan, K., & Khairullah, M. N. 2023). This phenomenon is part of the culture for people who perform

pilgrimage rituals with the intention of praying, having a purpose or hope, as well as worshiping God and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation (Sylviana, Z, 2018). The views and assessments made by religious scholars and the community towards the figures of the King and Saints (wali) in the context of the spiritual dimension cannot easily disappear. Pilgrims who come with pure intentions can feel a spiritual experience that is not easily visible. This perspective serves as a reference for other pilgrims who seek blessings and hope to have a positive impact on their future lives. The sincere pilgrimage intentions of visitors can bring about a sacred spiritual dimension. Figures like kings and saints (wali) are considered sacred individuals and are part of the sacred aspects represented in the concept of holiness. Moreover, the views held by pilgrims towards the tombs are not merely visits to objects considered lifeless. Instead, they create a connection with spirits believed to still possess life (Pataruka & Indonesia, 2018).

According to research from (Ariyono, K. Y., Irdiana, S., Darmawan, K., & Khairullah, M. N. 2023) he explains in Islam, aside from mosques, the tombs of religious figures saints (wali) often serve as tourist attractions. Their gravesites also become pilgrimage destinations. Additionally, there are other historical sites such as temples, museums,

educational institutions established by them, and so forth. When visiting sacred places, tourists are not confined by specific religious sentiments. Likewise culturally, a community is considered incomplete in its religious traditions if it has not visited sacred sites like the tombs of saints (wali).

Based on the results of interviews with several sources, it is agreed that the benefits of pilgrimage to the Sultan's tomb, believed to have spiritual blessings and provide blessings to the local community, play a significant role in opening up business and trade opportunities. Despite providing positive impacts such as increased livelihoods for the local community, there are also negative effects, such as the tendency of pilgrims from outside the region to litter indiscriminately. Nevertheless, the tradition of pilgrimage and the role of the mosque, especially Masjid Agung Banten, have not undergone significant changes. Since ancient times, the mosque and the Sultan's tomb remain places for prayer and remembrance of Allah's saints (wali), with special traditions such as Marhabanan, a characteristic of the Sultanate of Banten, held every Friday night after dusk.

The majority of the local population, especially those who are native natives, have a fairly good understanding of religion, marked by their discipline in performing religious practices such as the five daily prayers. However, street

vendors from outside the region may have different habits from the native natives, who tend to pay more attention to the reputation of their ancestors. In general, the recognition of the positive results of religious tourism in development and prosperity, sharpens the competitiveness between regions, for greater tourist attractiveness (Konstantinos, T., & Maria, M, 2024).

History of Changes in Understanding and Celebration of Community Spirituality

Religious tourism has been among the oldest forms of travel associated with leisure globally, tracing its origins back to ancient times (Schweinsberg, S., & Sharpley, R, 2024). Religious tourism is commonly associated with a range of other terms, including Islamic tourism, spiritual tourism, pilgrimage tourism, and ritual tourism (Yoga Adi Pradana, M., Wisadirana, D., & Imron Rozuli, A, 2024). Religious tourism emphasizes the communication of messages related to places of worship and holds high religious values. There has been a significant shift in the purpose of visits to Masjid Agung Banten. Results from interviews with several respondents indicate that in the past, people came for pilgrimage, but now more come just to take photos to meet their social media content needs. The development of Masjid Agung Banten, which is increasingly high-quality, received mixed responses from the

respondents. While acknowledging the benefits of increased visitors and bustling activities in the mosque, respondents also expressed disappointment because the vending areas, passed down from previous generations, are now enclosed by fences and barriers. This has led to a decline in income for local traders who have to compete with external vendors who have more proximate locations to the mosque.

There has been a shift in focus from the spiritual aspect to entertainment and recreational activities in the implementation of religious activities in the mosque. It is not uncommon to encounter tension between original religious traditions and modern aspects emerging through adaptations to attract tourists. Some view these adaptations as a threat to the authenticity and purity of religious traditions. Certain residents feel that religious values are sidelined in the efforts to capture the attention of tourists who are more interested in visual experiences and entertainment. Mosque administrators and the local community tend to adjust religious practices according to tourists' preferences, leading to changes in rituals and ceremonies that were once more distinctive and sacred.

The development of Banten Lama has transformed its role from a pilgrimage site to a tourist destination that emphasizes photo-taking activities rather than pilgrimage. Although there are still some pilgrims on regular days, visits are

more dominated by an interest in taking photos than engaging in pilgrimage activities. The local community supports religious tourism in various ways, including acting as photographers or providing an ustadz as a guide for those unfamiliar with pilgrimage activities. Active participation of the local community also involves introducing historical sites in Banten. Overall, the positive contribution of the local community plays a crucial role in the success of religious tourism.

Religious tourism at Masjid Agung Banten not only enhances the community's awareness of the history and Islamic culture in Banten Lama but also provides opportunities for increased income and welfare for some local residents. Although its impact is not evenly distributed across the entire region, the presence of religious tourism opens up new business opportunities for the residents around Masjid Agung Banten Lama.

CONCLUSION

The potential for religious tourism in Banten demonstrates a high level of appeal. The arrival of pilgrims makes the tombs a considered sacred place, where the surroundings are believed to possess spiritual power. Religious tourism at Masjid Agung Banten can enhance community awareness of the history and Islamic culture in Banten Lama. While the majority of visitors may not be fully engaged in learning the historical aspects, their main focus is capturing moments

through photography, video-making, and other content within the mosque area. The mosque serves as a medium to introduce Banten's history to visitors from outside the region, creating the potential for cultural exchange through interactions with various individuals.

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