

# LOCAL WISDOM IN SURAKARTA VILLAGE FOLKLORE AT CIREBON REGENCY

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**Abstract**—Local wisdom is known as an expression of the symbolism of a place or region that can be differentiated from other regions. In this case, local wisdom can be identified by tracing a region's folklore or oral traditions. This study examines the folklore of Surakarta Village in Cirebon Regency to find a form of local wisdom to improve cultural literacy. This research is descriptive research with an ethnographic strategy. In obtaining data, researchers used interview, observation, and documentation techniques. Data validation in this study used triangulation techniques. The data analysis technique uses the interactive analysis model of the Miles and Huberman model. The research found that Surakarta Village folklore contained local cultural wisdom through customs, beliefs, and artifacts. The local wisdom includes the tradition of Slametan Memitu, Tajug Gêdhe building, and Jatisura Bath in Surakarta Village.

**Keywords**— *local wisdom; Surakarta village folklore; cultural literacy*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ideas, values, or thoughts about a place adopted, believed, and sustainable by the local community for generations are defined as local wisdom [1]. Regarding local wisdom, it consists of two words: *viškaus* (wisdom) and *loka* (local). Local wisdom is a person's decision-making in using their intellect (cognition) to act and behave about an object, thing, or activity in a particular place [2]. Meanwhile, a detailed depiction of environments, dialects, customs, dress, thoughts, and feelings specific to a particular region is regarded as a local color associated with local wisdom [3]. Color represents a characteristic style or variation of something natural, while local refers to a particular location or region [4]. In this case, the local wisdom of an area can be identified through the exploration of folklore in the area.

Folklore was first presented to the world of science by William John Thoms, an expert on cultural antiquity in England [5]. Folklore can also be explained as a wealth of traditions, literature, art, law, social behavior, and others [6]. Folklore has a collective soul and possession. Folklore also expresses a cultured society [7]. Therefore, folklore, tradition, and collectivity are indivisible because those three are integrated whenever the results are more appropriate. Based on the classification of folklore, Brunvand, a folklorist from the US, classifies folklore into three, namely: verbal folklore, 2) partly verbal folklore, and 3) non-verbal folklore [8].

First, types of oral folklore included: a) folk languages such as accents, slang, circumlocution or indirect speech, traditional ranks or traditional positions, graded language, onomatopoeic and onomastic words, b) traditional expressions such as true proverbs, proverbs with incomplete sentences, proverbs, parable proverbs, milk proverbs, c) traditional questions such as riddles, d) folk rhymes and poems such as *wangsalan*, *parikan*, *gurindam*, *syair*, e) folk prose stories such as myths, legends, and fairy tales, f) folk songs [9], [10]. Second, partially oral folklore is folklore in the form of folk beliefs and folk games. Third, non-oral folklore can be in materials such as traditional food.

The folklore of a region, such as legends and myths, often encapsulates local wisdom that serves as an identity for the local community. These narratives symbolize the preservation of fundamental cultural values. For instance, the Yukigata tradition in the Northern Alps of Japan, which includes Mount Shirouma, Mount Jiigatake, and Mount Chogatake, is deeply intertwined with the Yukigata folklore. This tradition is a unique interpretation of the Japanese people's profound respect for nature and their continuous efforts to harmonize their lives with it.

In this regard, traditions or customs in the community are a form of local wisdom related to the principles of culture. Based on Koentjaraningrat, seven elements of culture are the main content of all nations in the world: language, knowledge system, social organization, living system and technology, livelihood system, religious system, and art [13]. Language represents a means for humans to satisfy their Social needs in interaction or relationship with others [14]. The knowledge system in culture is related to the system of equipment and technology that strongly influences individuals and society [15]. The social organization system is about different kinds of community units in the environment in terms of living and interacting [16]. The living equipment and technology system is related to objects used as living tools with primary forms and technology [17]. The religious system is related to the belief system, religious ceremony system, and people who recognize the religious system that is usually dedicated to establishing epistemological verities [18]. Meanwhile, art is related to the traditional artistic activities of a society.

Generally, folklore in the form of legends of a region contains many cultural elements that contain moral symbols [19]. Legends usually exist in the classical form of a cluster of

stories called a cycle and are regarded as a historical event by the community as the owner because it has a great relationship with historical memories [20], [21]. Literary legends, especially as a type of folklore, are recognized as oral literature related to local characteristics of the earth and their attributes [22]. Regarding this case, the researcher used an ethnographic approach to find local wisdom that describes the community's lifestyle in Cirebon.

In this study, the researcher's keen interest led to an exploration of the folklore of Surakarta Village in Cirebon Regency. The aim was to identify a specific form of local wisdom that defines the locality's identity. The researcher's observations revealed several cultural heritage sites in Cirebon Regency, particularly in the Suranenggala sub-district area. These findings were substantiated by the presence of heritage sites like *Tajug Gêdhe* and Jatisura Baths in Surakarta Village, Cirebon Regency. The research's ultimate goal is to unveil the local wisdom embedded in the legend of the Origin of Surakarta Village, thereby shedding light on the lifestyle of the Cirebon society and contributing to cultural literacy.

## II. METHOD

Research methods are considered as steps that are performed by researchers in order to obtain information or data in research [23]. In this case, the researcher used a qualitative method. The research location is in Surakarta Village, Suranenggala District, Cirebon Regency, held in September 2023. The researcher used a qualitative method to trace the local wisdom in the legend of the Origin of Surakarta Village. An ethnographic approach was used. Ethnographic studies are qualitative research procedures to describe, analyze, and provide an interpretation of elements of a cultural group, such as cultural patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time [24].

In this research, there are two types of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data in this study was derived from informants related to local wisdom and the legend of the Origin of Surakarta Village. Secondary data is obtained from literature studies, journals, and data from various related agencies and institutions [25]. Data collection techniques in this study were interviews, observation, and documentation. The data was tested for validity by triangulation of data sources. The researcher used the interactive analysis model, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification [26].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Foklore Surakarta Village*

Legend, as part of folklore, contains local wisdom of culture and environment (ecology) that represent the identity of a region. The research by Amalia and Tohir (2022) found that the Story of Tembalang is a legend that reflects the identity or origin of the Tembalang area in Central Java. The story contains environmental or ecological local wisdom through a message to conserve the cleanliness of natural springs, preserve forests, and prohibit polluting the sea [27]. This differs from the Legend of Surakarta Village Origin,

which dominantly contained local cultural wisdom to represent local identity.

Based on the interview with an eldership in Surakarta Village, Mr. Sarudin, 57 years old, and the leader of BPD Surakarta Village, discovered that Surakarta Village is popularly named Surantaka. The history of Surakarta Village began with the entrance of an aulia, or Sufis called Sheikh Nur Sahid, a derivative of Sultan from East Java, that brought a holy tajug, Tajug Gêdhe, in the form of prayer mats. Seven hundred years ago, the sheik visited Surakarta and encountered a resident called Ki Bluwo. In another place, there is another visitor named Nyi Mas Harum Sari, who is said to have been a master warrior in the Kingdom of Cerbon.

Once upon a time, when Nyi Mas Arum Sari or Nyi Mas Wari cultivated flowers in the morning, the flowers always faded away in the evening. Nyi Mas created a competition to solve this issue: " Whichever person can resuscitate the flower if the woman will be used as a child or friend while if the man will be used as a husband." It turned out that fate determined that a traveler named Sheikh Nur Sahid could revive the flower. Since then, Nyi Mas has been known as Harum Sari. Nyi Mas has three names: Nyi Mas Cempaka Mulya alias Nyimas Wari alias Nyi Mas Harum Sari. It is known as Nyi Mas Cempaka Mulya because it means the livelihood of flowers. Then Nyi Mas Harum Sari married Sheikh Nur Sahid and had a descendant named Ki Agus Sulaiman / Bagus Sulaiman / Ki Lemaju, whose hermitage is in Pegagan Kidul Village.

During the revelation of Islam, the Cirebon region often conflicted with the Indramayu Kingdom. There was a conflict between Ki Sheikh Sulaiman and Hulu balance, or Indramayu Kingdom's men, who killed Ki Sheikh Sulaiman's head and discarded his head in a river.

Ki Sulaiman was recognized as a brave man who defended or resisted oppression, causing the severance of his head. Therefore, he got the title of Prince Surantaka. Sura means *wani* or brave, and *antaka* means *êndas* or head with the purpose of having the bravery to expiate his head. When his head was thrown away, a strange incident resulted in the river's flow, which was supposed to lead to the sea but turned out to lead in the opposite direction. Therefore, another name for Ki Sheikh Sulaiman is Ki Gede Kilomaju. In addition, it is said that with the help of Ki Gede Mayung, the head can be connected again. To capture the incident, the river was renamed *Karang Sambung* River, which is currently located in Karangreja Village. Surakarta refers to ancient Javanese words *Sura*, meaning brave, and *Antaka*, meaning head; therefore, the village is commonly known as Surantaka Village. Regarding this matter, in this village, there is also a myth about the prohibition of playing football because it is considered disrespectful to the ancestors, who are said to have kicked the head of the prince of Surakarta before being thrown into the river. However, if passed, the myth about the prohibition of playing soccer might cause accidents or disaster for residents engaged in it.

Although the village is popularly named Surantaka

currently, the government administrative name of the village is Surakarta. Surakarta derives from the word Sura, meaning wani or brave, and karta, meaning crowd. Historically, this village can be called Surakarta because it relates to the *Keris Nagarunting* incident in Mataram. At that time, the Mataram troops were chasing Prince Sura or Ki Suro, a prisoner of the Mataram Sultanate. It is said that they were the descendants of Prince Surantaka. Then, many of the Mataram troops settled in this area. Therefore, in the Cirebon area, we also know an ancestor named Ki Buyut Trusmi/Pangeran Alak-Alak because he was also one of the commanders of the Mataram troops from the 83 troops trapped by *Bêngawan Asêm Jajar*. Accordingly, the event became the origin of the name Surakarta.

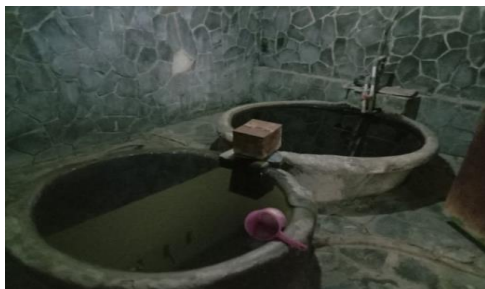
#### Local Wisdom of Surakarta Village

Among the local wisdom in Surakarta Village folklore is an artifact of the historical heritage, such as *Tajug Gêdhe*. Currently, the *jug* is preserved by a descendant of Sheikh Nur Sahid named Ki Sheikh Alimudin. Supposedly, the *jug* was the place for discussions of the aulia while deciding on political attitudes. Surakarta villagers believe there is a prohibition (*pamali*) to punch the gong around the *Tajug Gêdhe* yard. If the prohibition is breached, it will be a disaster for the offenders. The portrait of Tajug Gedhe is below.



**Figure 1. Tajug Gedhe of Surakarta Village Source: Research 2023**

Additionally, in addition to *Tajug Gedhe*, researchers also found Jatisura Bath, whose water source never runs out or becomes dry. In fact, until now, the local community has believed that bath water can be used for skin diseases. Figure 2 illustrates the portrait of Jatisura Bath.



**Figure 2. Jatisura Bath Source: Research 2023**

Beyond artifacts, Surakarta villagers practice customary forms of local wisdom, such as *Ngunjung*, *Slametan Mêmitu*, *Têmoan*, *Munjuk Sunan*, *Ngupati*, and *Mudun Lêmah*. *Ngunjung* is a traditional ceremony for visiting ancestors' graves during the season of cultivation or rain. *Slametan*

*Mêmitu* is a traditional ceremony for expecting mothers when they are seven months pregnant. *Têmoan*, usually meaning a gathering, is conducted when the community wants to organize a celebration of a ritual circumcision or wedding. The *Munjuk Sunan* tradition celebrates raising an upper timber to make a roof. *Ngupati* is a traditional ceremony or *slametan* conducted when pregnant women reach the age of four months. *Mudun Lêmah* is a traditional ceremony when the baby is already seven months old and before learning to walk. Afterward, the tradition of respecting the day of birth is that people usually make food according to the month of their birth. Those born in the month of *Mulud* or *Rabbiul Awal* usually make *apem*. Residents born in the month of *Suro* or *Muharram* make *bubur suro*. A person born in the month of *Shafar* will make *apêm sapor*.

#### Cultural Literacy in the Local Wisdom of Slametan Mêmitu Tradition

The *Slametan Mêmitu* ritual is a cultural manifestation of activities in the complex of polarized activities and behavior among humans in society [13]. *Mêmitu* is a ritual occasion conducted when a child's first pregnancy becomes seven months old [28]. The term *memento* derives from the word '*pity*', meaning seven. At the age of seven months, the womb goes through a period called '*Sapta Tukwila mart-abate Alam insane kamil*.' *Sapta kukila* means seven bones. Usually, a person with seven months of pregnancy frequently talks and invites quarrels. Meanwhile, *martabate alam insane kamil* means that the baby is completely mature and ready to be born at seven months. However, at seven months, expectant mothers often provide *rujak* (traditional salad), which is supposed to compensate for this. Therefore, the community interprets the *menu* tradition as a *slametan bus waiting*.

Meanwhile, the steps of the *mêmitu* tradition in the Surakarta Village community begin from the provision of water for the bathing of expectant mothers and the bathing procession to the recitation program. The social value contained in the ceremony is to gather harmony, to establish a partnership, to provide interactions among the community, to sustain the value of *gotong royong* and to overcome individualism.

The purpose of the *Slametan Mêmitu* tradition in Surakarta Village is similar to Javanese society in general, such as an endeavor to sustain the traditional rituals carried out from generation to generation [29]. In this case, the purpose of *Mêmitu* is to '*ngumpliti*', meaning to complete as is commonly known during the seventh month of pregnancy, the baby's limbs begin to be established, such as the ears, nose, and hands. In the *Slametan Mêmitu* ceremony, a *Kidung Murtasiyah* song represents the process of the *Slametan Mêmitu*. The song *Kidung Murtasiyah* is below.

#### Kidung Murtasiyah

*Kekidungan cerita Dewi Murtasiyah Lelakonan kasmaran si dangdang gula Kinanti megatruh sinom parijaka Sesenggakan sendonan dalang mamaca Waktu bobot kebisian pitung wulanan*



*Siram kembang campur kidung rerujakan Jambe riwe  
memecah blotong ning prapatan Nandakaken si dadap lagi  
slametan*

Ref:

*Bluluk gading nggo anak-anakan Ping pitu dangdan adus-  
adusan*

*Sampe nderegdeg digrujug esuk-esukan Rena bunga kluarga  
pada curakan*

*Biasane tanggale pitu-pituan*

*Guyub rukun sawengi pada melekan Ngalap berkah sawise  
amin-aminan Sesajian binagi pada bubaran*

Meaning

The story of Dewi Murtasiyah

The story is about the love of sugar dangdang Kinanti  
megatruh parijaka

The puppeteer's voice reads

When she was seven months pregnant

Flower bath mixed with song and salad

Jambe riwe breaks the barrel at the intersection, signaling that  
someone is having a slametan

Ref:

A coconut geding for children

Seven times to put on makeup when taking a bath Until  
shivering is washed in the morning

The happy atmosphere of the family at the curakan (sawer)

Usually, the date is all seven Gathering without sleeping all  
night Getting blessings after amen-aminan

Distribution of food at dispersal (after the event)

However, some of the materials that need to be prepared  
in the traditional ceremony are: 1) *jarik* or *tapi* (long cloth) of  
as many as seven sheets; 2) miniature houses that have been  
decorated; 3) *pendil* or *belanga* (a kind of pottery that in  
ancient times was used to collect water) containing water of  
various types of plants such as banyan and sugar cane, as well  
as coins for storage; 4) seven kinds of flowers including king  
kong flowers, red roses, white roses, Cempaka flowers,  
kenanga flowers, cantil flowers, and jasmine flowers; 5)  
offerings containing uduk rice, *juwadah*, basil salad, various  
fruits and tubers, wulung sugar cane (black sugar cane); and  
6) bluluk gading or young coconut. Pictures of some of the  
offerings are as follows.



**Figure 3. Slametan Memitu Materials Source: Research 2023**

The ritual is about preparing the materials and  
decorating the bathing place with various festive attributes.  
This is a symbol of the expression of happiness and  
gratefulness of the family of the expecting mother and father.  
A portrait of the *Slametan Memitu* bathing place is shown in

Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Slametan Memitu Bathing Place Source: Research 2023**

The *Slametan Memitu* ceremony is a procedure that the  
husband and wife must carry out as the expectant parents of  
the baby. First, the event begins with reading the book of  
*Barjanji*, which tells the story of the birth of the Prophet  
Muhammad. Cirebon people usually call it *Marhabanan*.  
Second, after reading the Book of *Barjanji*, the meal is  
distributed, and the water brought out is mixed into the bowls  
in the houses. Third, the candidate's mother begins to be  
bathed accompanied by the recital of *sholawat* three times.  
The people allowed to bathe her are parents, relatives, and  
village elders. Fourth, the ritual is concluded with the  
recitation of *sholawat*. The portrait of the *Slametan Memitu*  
bathing procession is shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. The Slametan Memitu Bathing Procession Source: Research 2023**

The expecting mother wears a *tapi* (long cloth) decorated  
with flowers during the bathing ceremony. Every time  
someone washes the water or bathes the expectant mother, the  
cloth must be changed seven times. Upon the seventh  
washing or bathing procession, the yellow coconut that is held  
must be dropped. At the same time, the male partner picks up  
or catches the coconut before it falls to the ground. A portrait  
of the seventh bathing procession is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Seventh Bathing Procession Source: Research 2023

Afterward, the father-to-be grabs the *pencil* and quickly runs to the crossroad or street junction, breaking the *pencil*. Nearby, children and residents run and prepare to fight for the distributed coins. The items that should not be taken include banyan leaves, coconut flowers, and yellow coconuts. Later, the male partner carries the yellow coconut used during the bathing procession to the river to be thrown. In the ceremony, the husband is also not allowed to bathe in the well, but in the river, and when heading to the river, it is recommended to run.

One myth in the *Memitu* tradition that flourishes in the Suranenggala sub-district. People believe that if the *rujak* in the *Slametan Memitu* offerings is delicious, the baby will be female during pregnancy. Otherwise, if the salad is not delicious, the baby in the womb will be male.

In this case, the *Slametan Memitu* tradition in Surakarta Village is interpreted as a manifestation of local wisdom included in the Javanese Muslim tradition from an Islamic perspective. This is relevant to Agustin's research, which shows that Javanese Muslim communities have traditions related to Slametan's life cycle [30]. Therefore, the *Slametan Memitu* tradition in Surakarta Village shows that the Cirebon community, particularly Cirebon Muslims, carry out traditions related to the *Slametan* concept.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results found that the folklore of Surakarta Village Origins is related to local wisdom in the artifacts, beliefs, and traditions. The artifacts in the form of *Tajug Gêdhe* and Jatisura Bath are the setting where the events in the folklore of Surakarta Village Origins take place. The local wisdom in the form of Surakarta Village community beliefs reflects the identity of the Cirebon community. Local wisdom in the form of tradition is a manifestation of the expression of the Surakarta Village community in the organization of social life that reflects the lifestyle of the Cirebon community. For example, in the *Slametan Memitu* tradition, social values unite harmony, collaboration, and helpfulness among the community, sustain the value of *gotong royong*, and eradicate individualism.

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