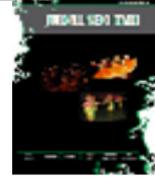




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Islamic-Javanese Syncretism in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance by Wahyu Santosa Prabowo

Janggan Mustika Jati^{✉1}, Wasi Bantolo^{✉2}

Department of Dance Arts, Faculty of Performing Arts, Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze Islamic-Javanese syncretism reflected in Sunan Kalijaga's dance works. Sunan Kalijaga, as one of the Wali Sanga, played an important role in the spread of Islam in Java by integrating elements of local culture into religious practices. This study uses a qualitative approach with textual analysis and observation methods of dance performances inspired by the teachings of Sunan Kalijaga. The results of the study show that the dance presented is not only a form of artistic expression, but also combines Islamic values with Javanese traditions. The symbolic elements in the movements, costumes, and music reflect the blend of Islamic teachings and local culture. This research also identifies the social and cultural impact of this syncretism on the Javanese community, as well as how dance becomes a medium to strengthen religious and cultural identity.

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✉ Corresponding Author:
Email: 1. jangganmustika@gmail.com
2. wasi@isi-ska.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

The expression symbol of the combination of Islamic-Javanese religiosity is often found in the khanasah of traditional art in the life of the Javanese people. The treasures of Javanese traditional art in question include the life of Javanese dance arts. The symbols of Islamic-Javanese religiosity revealed in Javanese dance art depict the fusion of Islamic and Javanese cultural elements expressed in the form of dance performances. Furthermore, in the expression of the dance art, the symbol of Javanese Islam is expressed through several aesthetic-artistic elements, namely the elements of movement, accompaniment, fashion makeup and also the element of property.

The process of syncretism is the way to enter the integration of Islam-Javanese in the artistic treasures of the Javanese people. Islamic-Javanese syncretism began with the position of Javanese culture which had a rich and strong religious tradition before Islam entered. The richness of religion is like animism and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs that have been firmly rooted in the life of the Javanese people (Trisnawati, 2009). The acculturation process occurs when the elements of the old culture are maintained and harmonized with the teachings of Islam that came in later. The results of Javanese cultural syncretism with Islam include so that several Javanese religious practices such as slametan (joint meal ceremonies), wayang kulit (puppet performances), and gamelan (traditional musical instruments) are integrated with Islamic teachings (Kusumo, 2015).

Koentjaraningrat explained that in general, syncretism is a characteristic inherent in Javanese society. Most Javanese people have the belief that human life in this world has been determined by the laws that apply in the universe. This belief has led many of them to adopt the attitude of *nrimo*, which means accepting whatever happens, as well as being passive about their life's journey, by surrendering themselves completely to predetermined destiny. In this context, Koentjaraningrat observes that the Javanese Islamic group emerged as a result of a harmonious fusion of elements of Islamic teachings and Javanese culture. Even though sometimes they do not perform prayers or fasting as they should, they still hold fast to the teachings of faith in Islam. In the view of the abangan Muslims, God is called *Gusti Allah*, while the Prophet Muhammad is revered as *Kanjeng Nabi* (Irwanti, 2019).

The combination of Islamic-Javanese religiosity in the treasures of Javanese traditional dance, one of which is the Sunan Kalijaga Dance.

The Sunan Kalijaga Dance is the work of Wahyu Santosa Prabowo. She is a Javanese dance artist and Dance Lecturer at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Surakarta. The Sunan Kalijaga dance contains Islamic values combined with Javanese religiosity with the theme of Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual journey in preaching. The creation of this work was motivated by Wahyu's experience while a guest lecturer at the University of Michigan in the United States. At that time, Wahyu Santosa Prabowo was asked to work on a dance work that reflected the teachings of moderate Islam which reflected as a good and tolerant religion. The desire of these academics then became the initial ideas and ideas that subsequently gave birth to the concept of a dance until the work Sunan Kalijaga Dance was created (interview: Wahyu Santosa Prabowo).

Syncretism is a concept that describes the process of merging or combining various elements from various traditions, cultures, or systems of thought into a new unity. This concept is often used in the context of religion, culture, and philosophy. The term "syncretism" comes from the word "*Syncretism*" in Latin meaning "merger" or "unity." The theory of syncretism helps us understand how cultures and religions evolve and influence each other in an increasingly connected global context. Syncretism is a social and cultural phenomenon that occurs when various elements from different traditions, religions, or cultures join or influence each other (Irwanti, 2019).

The Islamic-Javanese syncretism in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance has actually been reflected in the figure of Sunan Kalijaga as a figure in the dance. Sunan Kalijaga was born in 1455 AD, with the name R. Syahid (R. Sahid) or R. Abdurrahman or Prince Tuban. The son of the Duke of Tuban Aria Wilatikta is one of the Wali Sanga who is very close to Muslims on the island of Java, because of his ability to incorporate Islamic influences and teachings into Javanese tradition (Putriana, 2019). During his da'wah journey, he also always used art which at that time was very popular and attached to the hearts of the Javanese people. In doing da'wah, he chose art and culture as a means of preaching, and was very tolerant of local culture. Sunan Kalijaga's view is that da'wah must be carried out beautifully and comfortably, namely gradually, by following traditional customs that have been attached and familiarized by the community while giving influence to the community (Indarwati et al., 2020).

The journey of Sunan Kalijaga's Islamic teachings that continues to place Javanese culture as a means of da'wah is then expressed through aesthetic-artistic expressions in the work of Sunan Kalijaga Dance. The combination of Islamic culture with Javanese culture is further revealed through symbols of various aesthetic elements or the beauty of dance, namely movement, accompaniment, makeup and property. The symbols of the combination of Islamic-Javanese religiosity are expressed through aesthetic-artistic elements such as movement, accompaniment, makeup, and property.

The definition of syncretism refers to the incorporation of elements from various cultural and religious traditions. In this context, Islamic-Javanese syncretism refers to the way Islam interacts and adapts to the local culture of Java (Irwanti, 2019). Furthermore, the relevance of Islamic-Javanese syncretism in Sunan Kalijaga Dance Works can be analyzed to see how Islamic elements are integrated with Javanese dance traditions. Dance elements can be traced through the analysis of movement, music and fashion in the "Sunan Kalijaga" dance to identify symbols that reflect syncretism. Identification of symbols in movement, music and clothing will find meanings that can represent the spiritual and moral values of Islam and Javanese culture.

This research will examine what the form of the Sunan Kalijaga Dance looks like and what symbols reflect the syncretism of the combination of Islamic-Javanese religiosity in the form of choreography.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative research is considered appropriate as an approach considering that the object of research is a dance work. According to Sugiyono, the qualitative research method is a research used to research on natural objects where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out in combination, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. (Prasanti, 2018).

Data collection was carried out through interviews and observations. Interview with dance creator and dancer, Wahyu Santosa Prabowo, to get a deeper understanding of the Sunan Kalijaga Dance. Observation by observing the dance performance directly to capture the technical and artistic elements of the Sunan Kalijaga Dance. Data collection is also carried out through literature studies, namely collecting

and analyzing written sources related to the Sunan Kalijaga dance. Sources of literature are books, articles, and documents. In addition, it is also by analyzing aesthetic elements such as movements, costumes, music, and symbolic meanings contained in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aesthetic Elements of Sunan Kalijaga Dance

The world of dance, like the art world in general, recognizes the existence of aesthetic terms. The meaning of aesthetics is the beauty that is revealed and felt by the listener or appreciator after appreciating or living a work of dance art. Dance aesthetics is also understood as a pleasant experience with three conditions, namely perfection of flawless state, proportion and harmony, and brilliance or clarity. To understand the aesthetics of dance, it must be by revealing the elements of the form of the dance work (Widyastutieningrum, 2002).

The elements of dance as a medium of expressing aesthetic value consist of elements of movement, accompaniment, makeup and property (Y Nurhaeni, AT Permanasari, 2022). All of these elements are interrelated and contribute to creating an overall aesthetic in a dance performance. The combination of beautiful movements, the right musical rhythm, and eye-catching makeup can create a visual and auditory experience for the audience. A further explanation of the unity of all aesthetic elements in dance is as follows:

1. Motion

Movement is the main element in dance. The movements performed by the dancer involve the use of the entire body, including the hands, feet, head, and facial expressions. Movements in dance can include steps, body postures, hand movements, and other variations. These movements can be set according to the theme, or style, and emotion that are then visually conveyed by the dancer.

2. Accompaniment

Accompaniment in dance refers to music, songs, or other sounds that accompany a dance performance. This accompaniment can be in the form of musical instruments such as percussion instruments, string instruments, or wind instruments, or they can also be vocals or natural sounds. Musical accompaniment in dance has an important role, because it can be a means of creating an atmosphere and also influencing the dancers' movements.

3. Makeup-Up

Makeup in dance involves the selection of costumes, makeup, and accessories worn by

the dancers. Makeup in the dance world is designed to reinforce the visual message that is intended to be conveyed through dance. Costumes and makeup on dancers' images can reflect the culture, historical period, character, or theme of the dance being performed.

4. Properties

Property in dance refers to objects or objects used in dance performances to enrich artistic expression, tell stories, or create a certain atmosphere. A property can be a physical object, fixture, or attribute used by a dancer or in a stage setting.

The Sunan Kalijaga dance as part of the Javanese dance also has aesthetic elements such as movement, accompaniment, makeup and property. These elements of dance are also a medium of expression about the beauty or aesthetics of the dance. The unity of all these elements is also part of the beauty of dance, because the relationship between one element and another has a beautiful relationship as well. A further explanation of what and how the four elements of the Sunan Kalijaga Dance are described as in the following explanation:

1. Motion

The movement in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance uses Javanese dance movement idioms. The use of Javanese dance idioms was initially seen from the structure of beksan, namely maju beksan, beksan and mundur beksan. While *vocabulate* motion also uses a variety of *Squirt* Javanese dance. However, in addition to the variety *Squirt* Javanese dance, in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance is also used movements that refer more to Islamic religiosity. Among them are the movement of people doing the adhan, or also the movement when a Muslim is doing dhikr to Allah SWT.



Figure 1. Adhan movement in Sunan Kalijaga Dance (Source: Janggan Mustika Jati, 2025)



Figure 2. Dhikr movement in Sunan Kalijaga Dance (Source: Janggan Mustika Jati, 2025)

A more detailed explanation of the arrangement of movements in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance is as follows:

Table 1: Sunan Kalijaga Dance Movement Arrangement.

Sections	Motion
Part 1	Advance with the usual path to the central goal. Sitting Trap Silantaya
Part 2	The movement begins with hand movements, namely the worship, the worship of the soft barrel of worship on the nose and then down on the chest, ngembat, both hands are directed to the floor, then the position of the right hand is the forehead trap while the position of the left hand is the chest trap, the two hands, the ukel karna, the middle udhar rikma. With both hands on the side, guess weakly, or guess the floor, ukel karna, udhar rikma right, repeat again from the two hands on the side, guess weakly, or guess the floor, ukel karna, then udhar rikma left. Ukel because, facing forward, hands down, precepts with both knees placed on the floor, followed by prostration. Knee jerk or jengkeng with knees placed on the floor, right hand placed on the left chest, left hand placed on thigh.

Part 3	Stand on the right side, the left hand on the forehead, the right hand on the chest trap, the right hand on the chest, the right hand on the right, the left side of the head, the right hand on the right (Right-handed, Ukrainian) 140Ambal was taken to the shallow and then seblak sampur left, forward to the right ukel karno left, tanjak left, seblak sampur right). On the floor of the ukel with both hands glebag 140 front rug140, done 4 times (pat ju pat) The next movement of both hands is to guess and then continue the left hand in the position of smiling above the head while the right hand holds the knee, drags the right foot, stands up and then sampir sampur, hoyog, srimpet, ukel mangling sampur, ukel left mangling sampur, tanjak kiri baang sampur, ukel karna bandhulan.
Ganti Gendhing	On the left side of the screen is the left, and then the left side of the screen is turned to the left, and the left side of the screen is turned to the left.
Ganti Gendhing.	Capengan, jamang, keris ramp, left ramp, attack with the right left hand of the middle of the kebyak, (done four times) the last left hand trap shallow right hand to hold the waist trap, zigzag 4 times, kebyok 2 sampur then kebyak without removing the spur, sparring and attacking (just released the samppur), 140ambal, turn right twice fall.
Ganti Gendhing.	Facing the front jengkeng both hands sedakep, standing facing the front, ukel hands are placed in the ear like a prayer, then a circular road, sambal sings a song of mijil, retreats to the corner to the mountain, then sits on the silantaya trap.
Section 4	Sanders stopped the Democrats from winning the Democrats' four-game winning streak and won the 140Democrats. After that there is a song of ilir ilir from sinden, dancing to play the

mountains, advancing around the mountains is placed.

Section 5	The movement is like a saman dance (patting the right and left chest alternately, followed by the head) until it is finished.
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2. Accompaniment

The work of Sunan Kalijaga dance accompaniment uses a variety of Javanese karawitan drums. However, in the karawitan dressing, Javanese and Islamic elements are also combined. Such as by adding the song Sluku-Sluku Bathok which is presented in Javanese and Arabic, adding the song ilir-ilir, and so on. In fact, the existence of these songs also reveals the value of Islamic religiosity expressed through Javanese culture, in this case through the expression of karawitan art.

A more detailed explanation of the accompaniment used in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance is as follows:

Table 2: Arrangement of the Sunan Kalijaga Dance accompaniment.

Sections	Accompaniment
Part 1	<i>Sendhon Elayana</i> , barrel slendro pathet 9.Vocal from Pengrawit.
Part 2	<i>Sugar Daddy Bintara</i> .
Part 3	<i>Gending Ketawang Kaliling</i> .
Ganti Gendhing	<i>Serendipity of Sleep</i> .
Ganti Gendhing.	<i>Srepegan Thutur Udhar</i> ,
Ganti Gendhing.	Replace <i>the straps</i> .
Section 4	<i>A Song of Love</i> .
Section 5	It began with the <i>stirring of the sekaten bonang</i> followed by <i>the song SlukuSluku Bathok</i> .

3. Makeup

The makeup used in the single version of the Sunan Kalijaga dance is soft makeup. While the dance clothes or costumes use complete Javanese clothing. The Javanese clothing in question consists of: Blangkon for the head covering, black Beskap (shirt), Long necklace, green Sampur, and black Jarik with a slight motif *Düsseldorf* at the bottom.



Figure 3. Sunan Kalijaga Dance dancers in full Javanese clothing. (Source: Janggan Mustika Jati, 2025)

4. Properties

The property used in supporting the Sunan Kalijaga Dance performance is *Gunungan*, one of the puppets in the *Wayang Purwa* (Javanese) tradition. *Gunungan* in the *Wayang Purwa* tradition is also called *Kayon*, which is a symbol in the art of puppet performances that depicts the tree of life. *Kayon*, or also *Gunungan* is usually shaped like a branched tree with various living creatures in it which serves as a background or location marker in the story. The existence of *kayon* not only functions visually, but also has a deep symbolic meaning in the cultural and spiritual context in the culture of the Javanese people.

Javanese Islamic Syncretism in Sunan Kalijaga Dance

Experts give statements about the meaning of syncretism from a variety of different perspectives. Clifford Geertz argues that syncretism in the context of anthropology is the way society responds to social and cultural changes by combining elements from different traditions to create new meanings (Tommy, 2023). Syncretism in the view of Robert Redfield (et al) is also understood as the process by which different elements meet and interact, creating new and complex forms of culture, which reflect changing social realities (Roszi, 2018). Mary Douglas also reveals that syncretism can be seen as a way for people to maintain their identity while facing external influences, by creating new

combinations that remain relevant to the local context (Pradipta, 2019).

On the basis of the opinions of these experts it can be concluded that syncretism is the process of merging elements from different traditions that create new meanings and complex cultural forms, allowing societies to maintain identities while adapting to social and cultural changes. Syncretism usually relates to several contexts, including in religious and cultural contexts.

1. Religion

Syncretism in the context of religion refers to the process of merging or mixing elements from different religious traditions into a new belief system. This phenomenon often appears in societies that have diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. In a religious context, syncretism often occurs when elements of two or more religious traditions are combined.

2. Culture

Syncretism can also be seen in cultures, such as in art, music, and language, where elements from different cultures influence each other. Syncretism in a cultural context refers to the process of merging or mixing elements from different cultures, religions, or traditions. This process often occurs when different groups interact and influence each other, resulting in new forms of cultural, religious, or social practices.

The syncretism in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance reflects the rich cultural blend between Javanese culture and Islamic teachings. This syncretism process can be seen in various aspects of dance, ranging from movement, music, costumes, to the values contained in it. Based on the study of the element of form as a medium of expressing aesthetic values, knowledge was obtained about the expression of Islamic-Javanese religiosity symbols in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance. The findings in question are as described below:

1. Dance Moves

Sunan Kalijaga's movements are heavily influenced by Islamic religiosity such as the *adhan* movement or also the *dhikr* movement. The existence of this movement is also one of the symbols of Islamic-Javanese acculturation in the dance.

2. Fashion

The use of traditional Javanese clothing such as *beskap*, *blankon*, *cloth*, and *sampur* does have a deep meaning and is often related to Javanese religiosity and culture. This outfit not only reflects aesthetics, but also the spiritual and cultural values that are deep in the life of the Javanese people.

3. Accompaniment

Accompaniment or gendhing that incorporates Islamic elements such as the Sluku-sluku Bathok and Ilir-ilir songs. The use of the song is closely related to the religiosity of Javanese Islam. Because the verses of the songs that contain Islam are revealed in the composition of karawitan music which is a product of Javanese culture.

4. Properties

The properties used are kayon. In Javanese culture, kayon is a symbol of religiosity about Godhead. Therefore, the existence of kayon also does not only function visually, but also has a deep symbolic meaning in the spiritual culture of the Javanese people.

CONCLUSION

Islamic-Javanese syncretism in the Sunan Kalijaga Dance is the result of the process of cultural mixing between Islamic culture and Javanese culture. Cultural mixing in Javanese society adopts Islamic teachings, but still maintains local Javanese cultural values. Through this process, elements of Islamic and Javanese culture interact with each other and influence each other, creating a unique and distinctive form of dance. The interaction occurred because the background of the creator was from Java, and had a belief in Islam. Against this background, the Javanese Dance was created, whose ideas and ideas started from the desire to provide a beautiful picture of Islam from a Wahyu Santosa Prabowo who came from the Javanese ethnicity.

The results of the study then revealed the symbols of Islamic-Javanese syncretism contained in the dance, namely: 1) The movement of Javanese tradition (culture) is combined with the movement of the call to prayer and dhikr which is thick with Islamic nuances. 2) The composition of the Javanese karawitan gendhing is combined with the songs of Ilir-ilir and Sluku-sluku Bathok which use Islamic poetry. 3) The use of *Kayon* (puppet) or also *Jawi Jangkep clothing* is combined with an accompaniment with Islamic nuances.

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