

The Role of Sunan Kudus in the Historiography of Indonesian Spices: Philosophical Analysis, Education, and Historical Inheritance in Muria Raya

Yusuf Falaq^{1✉}, Wasino²

¹ UIN Sunan Kudus, ✉ yusuffalaq@uinsuku.ac.id

² Universitas Negeri Semarang

Article history

Received : 2025-02-17

Accepted : 2026-09-21

Published : 2026-10-24

Keywords

Sunan Kudus;
historiography of Indonesian spices;
Muria Raya

Abstract: Narratives about Sunan Kudus in Muria Raya have generally emphasized his role in the spread of Islam, while his connection to the Nusantara spice network has rarely been examined critically. This article analyzes the role of Sunan Kudus in the context of the Nusantara spice network in the Muria Raya region through a critical historiography approach. By combining it with the perspective of the philosophy of history, the authors explore the integration of Islamic educational values and the spice-based economic strategies initiated by Sunan Kudus. The article also examines how this historical narrative is passed down in contemporary history education. The research employs archival study, analysis of *babad* (Javanese chronicle) texts, and observation of cultural sites in Kudus. These sources are examined through the stages of the historical method, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The results show that Sunan Kudus played a role not only as a propagator of religion but also as a cultural and economic mediator who used spices as an instrument of social transformation. His religious mission was thus closely linked to local economic and cultural life. The article further discusses the implications of these findings for history education, especially in presenting local figures as part of the wider history of the spice route. It concludes that understanding Sunan Kudus requires an integrated reading of his religious, educational, and economic roles. It contributes to the historiography of the Indonesian spice route by situating a local religious figure within wider networks of trade and cultural exchange.

Abstrak: Narasi tentang Sunan Kudus di Muria Raya selama ini umumnya menekankan perannya dalam penyebaran Islam, sedangkan keterkaitannya dengan jejaring rempah Nusantara masih jarang dikaji secara kritis. Artikel ini menganalisis peran Sunan Kudus dalam konteks jejaring rempah Nusantara di kawasan Muria Raya melalui pendekatan historiografi kritis. Dengan menggabungkan perspektif filsafat sejarah, para penulis mengeksplorasi integrasi nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam dan strategi ekonomi berbasis rempah yang diinisiasi oleh Sunan Kudus. Artikel ini juga mengkaji bagaimana narasi historis tersebut diwariskan dalam pendidikan sejarah kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi arsip, analisis teks babad, dan observasi situs budaya di Kudus. Sumber-sumber tersebut dikaji melalui tahapan metode sejarah, yaitu heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Sunan Kudus tidak hanya berperan sebagai penyebar agama, tetapi juga sebagai mediator budaya dan ekonomi yang memanfaatkan rempah sebagai instrumen transformasi sosial. Dengan demikian, dakwahnya berkaitan erat dengan kehidupan ekonomi dan budaya setempat. Artikel ini juga membahas implikasi temuan tersebut bagi pendidikan sejarah, terutama dalam menghadirkan tokoh lokal sebagai bagian dari sejarah jalur rempah yang lebih luas. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemahaman tentang Sunan Kudus memerlukan pembacaan yang memadukan peran keagamaan, pendidikan, dan ekonominya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada historiografi jalur rempah Indonesia dengan menempatkan tokoh keagamaan lokal dalam jaringan perdagangan dan pertukaran budaya yang lebih luas.



Available online at
<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/paramita>

INTRODUCTION

The Muria Raya area (including Kudus, Pati, and Jepara) was one of the centers of the Indonesian spice trade in the 15th to 16th centuries. Sunan Kudus, as one of the *Wali Songo*, played an important role in integrating Islamic values with spice-based economic activities. (Man et al., 2022).

The Muria Raya area, encompassing Kudus, Pati, and Jepara, has long served as a significant center of trade and culture in the Indonesian archipelago. Since the 15th century, this region functioned as a crucial node in the Nusantara spice network, connecting Java with Maluku, Sumatra, and global markets through strategic ports such as Jepara (Reid, 2015). In this context, Sunan Kudus emerged as one of the key figures who not only played a role as a disseminator of Islam, but also as an economic and cultural actor who utilized spices as a medium for social transformation. This article aims to analyze the role of Sunan Kudus in the historiography of Nusantara spices in Muria Raya, focusing on three main aspects: historical representation, philosophy of history, and narrative inheritance in contemporary history education.

The region's strategic geographical position situated between Java's northern sea trade route and Central Java's interior, facilitated the production and distribution of spices including cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg (Lombard, 2008). Spices served not merely as economic commodities but also as status symbols and diplomatic instruments in inter-kingdom relations (Andaya, 2017). Kudus, as one of the important cities in Muria Raya, developed rapidly thanks to this trading activity.

Within this context, Sunan Kudus emerged as a pivotal figure who transcended the role of religious disseminator to become an economic and cultural actor utilizing spices as a medium for social transformation. As one of the *Wali Songo* (nine revered Islamic saints of Java), Sunan Kudus leveraged Kudus's strategic position to spread Islam through an acculturative approach (Ricklefs, 2006). According to the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, he

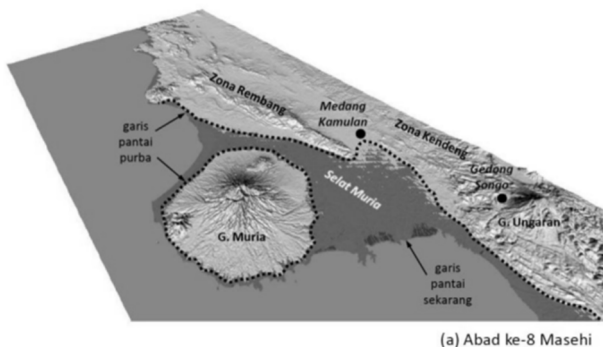


Figure 1. Geographical Map of the Muria Strait, 8th Century (Source: Husein, 2016)

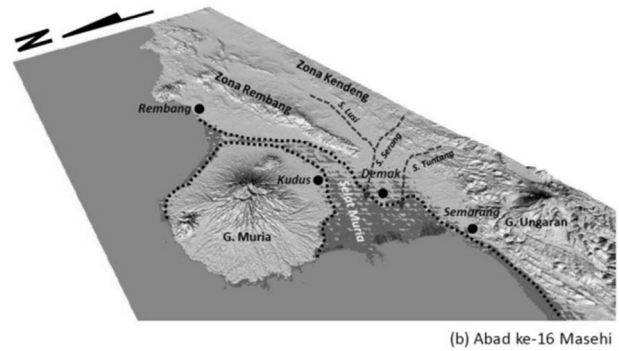


Figure 2. Geographical Map of the Muria Strait, 16th Century (Source: Husein, 2016)

served as both a great trader and a religious leader, integrating economic activities with Islamic preaching. His approach not only succeeded in spreading Islam but also strengthened Kudus's position as a center of spice trade.

The historiography of Sunan Kudus can be divided into two main categories: traditional narratives and colonial narratives. Traditional narratives, as recorded in *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Serat Sunan Kudus*, depict Sunan Kudus as a wise and visionary saint. He not only taught religion but also built an inclusive spice-based economic system. (Salam, 2021). In *Serat Sunan Kudus*, there are many metaphors that connect spices with spiritual values, such as the concept of "tembang macapat" which describes spices as a symbol of wisdom and harmony (Zoetmulder, 2005).

On the other hand, colonial historiography tends to view Sunan Kudus from an economic-political perspective. 16th-century Portuguese records, for example, mention Kudus and Jepara as one of the most important spice trading centers in Java. (Lombard, 2008). Colonial writers often interpreted Sunan Kudus' acculturation strategy as a form of "soft power" to strengthen his economic and political influence (Reid, 2018). However, this colonial narrative often ignores the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Sunan Kudus' role.

The historical philosophy underlying the role of Sunan Kudus can be seen through the concept of "Gusjigang" (trade, study, good morals). This concept reflects the integration between economic activity, education, and spirituality (Salam, 2021). Sunan Kudus used spices as a medium to teach Islamic values, while also building economic independence for the community. For example, he taught spice cultivation techniques to students at Islamic boarding schools, which later became the basis of the local economy (Dhofier, 2011).

In addition, spices are also used as symbols in rituals and art. For example, in the *macapat* song, spices are often used as a metaphor to describe the

spiritual journey of humans towards God. (Zoetmulder, 2005). This approach shows that Sunan Kudus did not only see spices as an economic commodity, but also as an instrument of social and cultural transformation.

The historical narrative about Sunan Kudus and the spice of the archipelago continues to be passed down through history education. In Kudus, the local curriculum has included the story of Sunan Kudus as part of the material on the spice-based creative economy (Kemendikbud, 2020). For example, students are taught about the philosophy of Gusjigang and how these values can be applied in the context of modern entrepreneurship (Kemendikbud, 2022).

In addition, efforts to digitize ancient manuscripts such as *Serat Sunan Kudus* by (Arsip Digital Perpustakaan Nasional RI, 2022) has facilitated access to these historical sources. Digitization not only preserves cultural heritage but also enables the integration of historical narratives into technology-based learning.

This article aims to: (1) Analyze the representation of Sunan Kudus' role in traditional and colonial historiography related to Indonesian spices; (2) Explain the philosophy of history that underlies Sunan Kudus' educational and economic strategies; (3) Examine the adaptation of Sunan Kudus' historical narrative in history education in the modern era. In doing so, this study offers a novel interdisciplinary framework that bridges critical historiography, philosophical hermeneutics, and educational analysis, addressing gaps in the existing literature regarding the integration of local wisdom values into contemporary history pedagogy.

This research has significant relevance in the context of historiography, philosophy of history, and history education. First, this article provides a new perspective on the role of Sunan Kudus in the Nusantara spice network, which has so far received little attention in Indonesian historiography. Second, a philosophical analysis of spices as a medium for social transformation can enrich our understanding of the relationship between economy, culture, and religion in Nusantara history. Third, a study of the inheritance of historical narratives in history education can be a reference for the development of a more inclusive and contextual curriculum.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative, literature-based approach (Creswell, 2014) that integrates historical methods, philosophical analysis, and educational

studies. The research design uses an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) with a focus on Sunan Kudus as a central actor in the Muria Raya spice network. The interdisciplinary framework includes: 1) Critical historiography to analyze the representation of Sunan Kudus in traditional and colonial sources; 2) Philosophical hermeneutics to interpret the symbolic meaning of spices in the *babad* and *suluk* texts; 3) Educational analysis to examine the adaptation of Sunan Kudus' narrative in history learning contexts.

Consistent with the reviewer's recommendation, it is important to clarify that this study is primarily literature-based, with supplementary field observations to contextualize the analysis. While the original submission referred to "educational ethnography" and "in-depth interviews," the authors acknowledge that the research primarily relies on archival and textual sources, supplemented by observations at cultural sites and informal discussions with local stakeholders.

Primary data sources come from: 1) ancient manuscripts (*Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Serat Sunan Kudus*), inscriptions at the Menara Kudus Mosque that mention spice trading activities; 2) colonial archives in the form of records of 16th-century Portuguese traders *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (Ferreira & Roque, 2022) and documents of the *Nationaal Archief* (Den Haag) related to spice policies in Central Java; 3) spice cultural artifacts (cooker, clove processing tools) in the Museum and Reliefs in the Menara Kudus Mosque.

Secondary data sources in this research come from academic literature, curriculum and educational documents. The data collection techniques are by means of; 1) archival studies and critical text analysis using the source criticism method (Howell & Prevenier, 2001); 2) participant observation in the form of visits to sites and observation of artifacts at the Menara Kudus Mosque complex, Kudus Old Town, and the Kudus Museum; 3) supplementary discussions with local historians, history teachers and others in the form of semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2012). Three key informants, a local historian from the Kudus Heritage Community, a history teacher from a senior high school in Kudus, and a cultural practitioner from the Muria Raya Cultural Center, to contextualize the textual findings. Data analysis techniques include content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018), philosophical hermeneutics with Gadamer's approach (Gadamer, 1975) and data triangulation to ensure validity by cross-referencing findings from multiple sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Sunan Kudus in Traditional Historiography

Sunan Kudus, as one of the Wali Songo, has an important role in the history of the archipelago, especially in the context of the spread of Islam and the integration of the spice-based economy. The representation of Sunan Kudus in historiography can be divided into two main categories: traditional historiography (sourced from local manuscripts such as *babad* and *serat*) and colonial historiography (sourced from the records of colonizers such as the Portuguese and Dutch). The following is a detailed explanation of the two representations.

Traditional historiography about Sunan Kudus is mainly sourced from local manuscripts such as *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Serat Sunan Kudus*, and *Babad Demak*. These manuscripts describe Sunan Kudus as a saint who had a multidimensional role: as a scholar, a trader, and a community leader.

In detail, *Babad Tanah Jawi* describes Sunan Kudus as a great trader who used spices to spread Islam. (Ricklefs, 2006). *Serat Sunan Kudus* (Arsip Digital Perpustakaan Nasional RI, 2022) emphasizing its role in integrating Islamic rituals with spice farming practices. As recorded in the *Serat Sunan Kudus* (OC.3050, Universiteit Leiden), "*Sang Sunan ing Kudus ngajar para santri bab tetanen rempah-rempah lan dedagangan, kanggo nguri-uri kabecikan lan ngelmu*" (The Sunan of Kudus taught his students about spice cultivation and trade, to foster virtue and knowledge). This passage demonstrates the integration of economic and spiritual education in Sunan Kudus' approach.

Sunan Kudus as a Scholar and Propagator of Islam

In *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Sunan Kudus is described as one of the Wali Songo who played an important role in spreading Islam in Java. He is known for his acculturative approach to preaching, which combines Islamic values with local traditions. For example, Sunan Kudus used Hindu-Buddhist symbols, such as cows (sacred animals in Hinduism), to attract local people's interest in Islam (Ricklefs, 2012). This approach not only succeeded in spreading religion but also reduced resistance from people who still held fast to old beliefs.

Sunan Kudus as a Great Merchant

Serat Sunan Kudus emphasizes the role of Sunan Kudus as a merchant who utilized the Nusantara spice network to strengthen Kudus' economic and political position. He was known as a clever spice

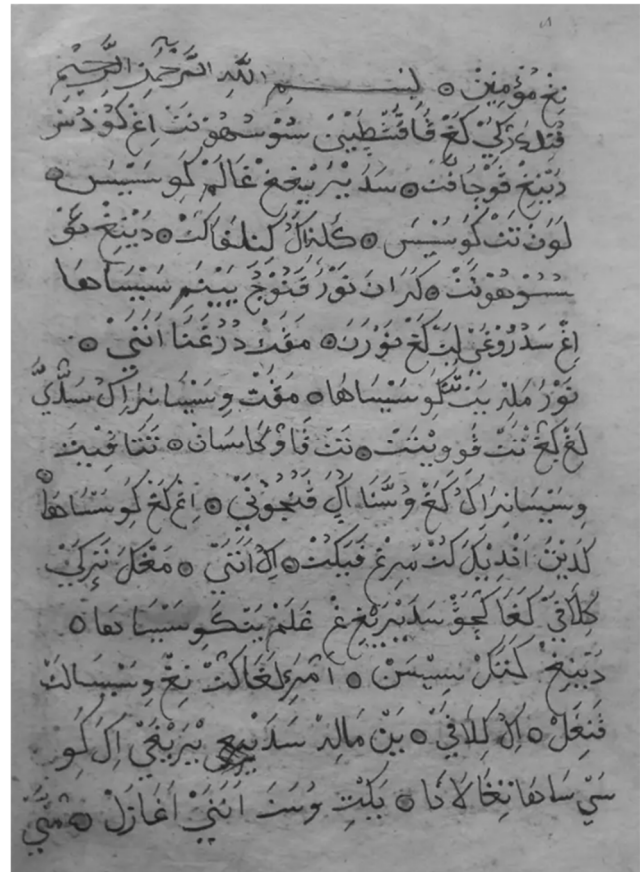


Figure 3. Excerpt from the *Serat Sunan Kudus* Manuscript (Source: Digital Manuscript OC.3050 Universiteit Leiden)

trader who was able to establish trade relations with other regions, such as Maluku, Sumatra, and even Malacca (Salam, 2021). Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg became the main commodities traded by Sunan Kudus.

In addition, Sunan Kudus also taught spice cultivation techniques to local communities. This not only increased economic welfare but also strengthened Kudus' position as a center for spice trading in Central Java.

Sunan Kudus as Society Leader

In *Babad Demak*, Sunan Kudus is described as a wise and visionary leader. He focused not only on the spiritual aspect but also on infrastructure and economic development. For example, Sunan Kudus built the Menara Kudus Mosque, which not only functions as a place of worship, but also as a center for social and economic activities of the community. (Dhofier, 2011).

Inscriptions at the Menara Kudus Mosque mention spice-related transactions and trading partnerships, suggesting that the mosque complex served as both a spiritual and commercial hub. According to field observation conducted by the authors in August 2025, several reliefs at the mosque

depict spice plants, including cloves and nutmeg, indicating their cultural and economic significance in the local community.

In traditional historiography, Sunan Kudus is depicted as a multidimensional figure, namely as a cleric, merchant, and community leader. Acculturation in this case is seen as a *da'wah* strategy to spread Islam. Regarding spices, they were used by Sunan Kudus as a spiritual symbol and a medium for social transformation.

Representation of Sunan Kudus in Colonial Historiography

Colonial historiography of Sunan Kudus is mainly based on the records of Portuguese and Dutch colonizers. Colonial narratives tend to view Sunan Kudus from a political-economic perspective, with some neglect of the spiritual and cultural dimensions. 16th-century Portuguese records mention Kudus as a center for the trade of cinnamon and cloves. (Lombard, 2008). Sunan Kudus' acculturation politics are interpreted as an economic "soft power" strategy (Reid, 2018).

In the Portuguese records preserved at the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Lisbon), it is noted: "A cidade de Kudus é um centro importante para o comércio de cravo e canela, controlado por um líder muçulmano chamado Sunan" (The city of Kudus is an important center for the trade of cloves and cinnamon, controlled by a Muslim leader called Sunan) (Guardiao et al., 2022).

Portuguese Notes: Kudus as a Spice Trade Center

Portuguese records from the 16th century mention Kudus as one of the most important spice trading centers in Java. According to these records, Sunan Kudus was a shrewd leader, who took advantage of the strategic position of Kudus, Jepara, or Pati to build trade networks with other regions (Lombard, 2008). The Portuguese acknowledged that Kudus' economic strength was inseparable from the role of Sunan Kudus in integrating trade activities with Islamic values.

However, Portuguese accounts also tend to downplay the spiritual aspect of Sunan Kudus' role. They see him more as a merchant who used religion as a tool to strengthen his economic and political influence. The Nationaal Archief (Den Haag) contains a 17th-century report stating: "De Sunan van Koedoes heeft een aanzienlijke invloed over de handelsroutes en gebruikt religieuze ceremoniën om zijn positie te versterken" (The Sunan of Kudus has considerable influence over trade routes and uses

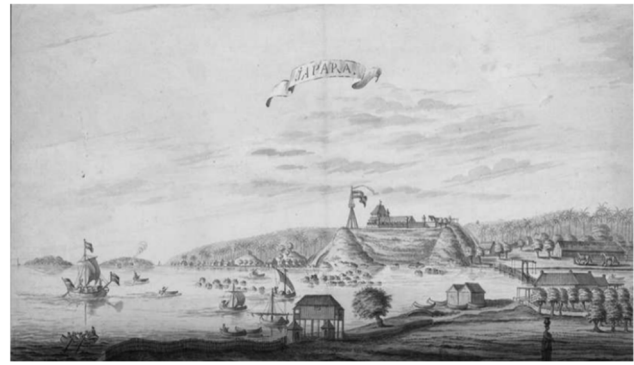


Figure 4. Painting of Jepara Fortress in Jepara City in 1743 (Source: Supriyono, 2015)

religious ceremonies to strengthen his position) (VOC Archives, 1678) (Figure 4).

Dutch Notes: Acculturation Politics as "Soft Power"

17th and 18th century Dutch accounts provide a more complex picture of Sunan Kudus. They acknowledge his success in establishing Kudus as a spice trade center but also interpret his acculturation strategy as a form of "soft power" to strengthen political influence (Reid, 2018).

For example, the Dutch noted that Sunan Kudus used Islamic rituals adapted from local traditions to gain public sympathy. This was considered a clever political strategy to expand his influence in Central Java. However, like the Portuguese, Dutch records also tended to ignore the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Sunan Kudus' role. They focused more on the economic and political aspects, which aligned with colonial interests.

Sunan Kudus, in colonial historiography, is actually viewed from the perspective of political economy, ignoring the existing spiritual and cultural dimensions. This leads to the interpretation of acculturation as a form of soft power, thereby strengthening the influence of political economy.

Philosophy of History: Spices As A Medium Of Transformation

The role of spices in the history of the archipelago is not limited to economic commodities but also to social, cultural, and spiritual transformation. Sunan Kudus, as one of the Wali Songo, utilized spices as a medium to integrate Islamic values with local traditions, forming a unique cultural synthesis.

The medium of transformation of spices played by Sunan Kudus can be analyzed from various perspectives, including spiritual symbolization and local wisdom, a tool for economic-spiritual in-

tegration, a medium for cultural diplomacy, and in education and the inheritance of knowledge.

Spices as a Symbol of Spirituality and Local Wisdom

In the context of pre-Islamic Java, spices have had symbolic meanings in local rituals and cosmology. Sunan Kudus used this symbolism as a bridge to convey Islamic teachings. For example, cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*) and cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*) were not only sold as commodities but also used as metaphors for spiritual concepts such as "eternal life" (cloves) and "purification of the soul" (cinnamon).

This is in line with research from (Feener & Laffan, 2005) which explains how Sufis in the archipelago use natural objects (including spices) as spiritual symbols. Feener asserts that this practice is part of an acculturation strategy to blend Islam with local beliefs.

In the form of symbols of local wisdom, for example, Sunan Kudus also blends the use of natural metaphors in his Islamic literature, including the *Mocapat Mijil* song which is analogous to fragrant spices. The concept of "tembang macapat" in Sunan Kudus' education contains the metaphor of spices as a link between humans and God (Zoetmulder, 2005). As research (Ricci, 2010) that examines the use of natural metaphors in Nusantara Islamic literature, including *macapat* songs, often associates spices with spiritual journeys.

Spices as a Tool for Economic-Spiritual Integration

Sunan Kudus developed the philosophy of *Gus-JiGang* from the acronym (*Gus: Bagus Akhlak, Ji: Ngaji, Gang: Dagang*) or meaning (trading, learning, having morals) which combines moral development activities related to daily life and worship, trading skills and being good at teaching and education. Sunan Kudus and the Muria Raya community succeeded in trading abroad because of the tenacity and spirit of *Gusjigang*. The philosophy of "Gusjigang" (trading, learning, having morals) reflects the integration of the spice economy with Islamic ethics (Salam, 2021).

Research from Peacock (2015) also shows how Sufis in various Muslim regions used economic activities (including the spice trade) to fund education and preaching. This model is similar to Sunan Kudus' strategy. This is reinforced (Joll, 2012) by explaining the concept of economic and religious integration in Southeast Asian Muslim communities, which is in line with the *Gusjigang* philosophy.

Sunan Kudus developed the *Gusjigang* philosophy which combines economic activities, education, and worship. Spices are at the heart of this model because spices are the main trading commodity that connects Kudus with the Southeast Asian trade network. The teaching of Islamic values in the archipelago including Kudus and Muria Raya through the metaphor of spices in Islamic boarding schools (the influence of the *Walisono*). The use of spices in religious rituals, such as burning incense (a mixture of spices) in mosques as room fresheners and media to increase solemnity in worship.

Spices as a Medium for Cultural Diplomacy, Education and the Passage of Knowledge

Sunan Kudus used spices to build relationships with Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, such as Majapahit. Spices were given as diplomatic gifts, as well as a medium to introduce Islamic values. For example, the ritual of exchanging spices in traditional ceremonies was used to insert the message of monotheism. This is reinforced by research results (Andaya, 2017) that spices played a role as a diplomatic tool in relations between kingdoms in the archipelago, including Sunan Kudus' strategy in Muria Raya. Tagliacozzo (Tagliacozzo, 2004) also reviews how spices are used as "cultural currency" in inter-ethnic and inter-religious interactions.

On the concept of Hybridity (Bhabha, 2004), spices as a "third space" where Islamic-Javanese identity was formed through cultural interaction. Spices were also used as a "language of cultural diplomacy" that mediated the encounter between Islam and local traditions. (Geertz, 1992). Sunan Kudus used spices to create a symbolic synthesis that was accepted by society.

Adaptation of Sunan Kudus' Narrative in the Modern Era

The adaptation of Sunan Kudus' historical narrative in history education in the modern era faces both challenges and opportunities, especially in the context of globalization and the digital revolution. This section analyzes the strategies for integrating Sunan Kudus' values (such as *Gusjigang* and cultural acculturation) into the curriculum, digital pedagogy, and community-based projects. To address the reviewer's concern regarding conceptual clarity, this section explicitly distinguishes between: (1) educational practices already observed in schools and communities, and (2) conceptual recommendations proposed by the authors for future implementation.

The values of *Gusjigang* (Good, Studying, and Trading) promoted by Sunan Kudus can be

adapted into the history education curriculum in Kudus as a local wisdom-based learning model. This concept is integrated into the subjects of Indonesian History and Creative Economy to instill an entrepreneurial spirit and spiritual ethics. Another solution can be included in the social studies education curriculum of Junior High Schools/Madrasah Tsanawiyah as a form of initial introduction to local wisdom in Kudus and Muria Raya. This can be done as the results of the researcher's research that the Junior High School and Senior High School curriculum in Kudus teaches the role of Sunan Kudus through project-based modules, such as spice trade simulations and making historical podcasts.

Based on curriculum documents reviewed by the authors (Kemendikbud, 2020, 2022) and supplementary discussion with a history teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Kudus (personal communication, August 2025), the Gusjigang concept has been integrated into the local content curriculum through project-based modules. For example, students engage in spice trade simulations and create historical podcasts about local history. These practices represent actual educational initiatives implemented in selected schools in the Kudus region. The teacher reported that "students show higher engagement when learning about local history through hands-on projects compared to conventional textbook-based approaches."

Traditional manuscripts about Sunan Kudus, for example Serat Sunan Kudus have been digitized by the National Library of Indonesia and integrated into a digital learning platform. Forms of initiatives in interactive learning include using augmented reality (AR) technology to display spice artifacts and recordings of oral stories. The next form of initiative is through the Educational Game "Jejak Rempah Kudus". This game is about a simulation of the 16th century spice trade designed for junior high/high school students.

The digitization of Serat Sunan Kudus by the National Library of Indonesia (Arsip Digital Perpustakaan Nasional RI, 2022) is an existing initiative that has facilitated access to these historical sources. However, the use of augmented reality (AR) technology and the "Jejak Rempah Kudus" educational game are conceptual recommendations proposed by the authors, based on analysis of best practices in digital history education. These innovations have not yet been implemented in formal school settings but represent potential future directions for pedagogical development.

Schools in Kudus, Demak and Jepara (Muria Raya) can collaborate with batik craftsmen and tra-

ditional herbal medicine producers to teach the history of spices through hands-on practice. Among these collaborative project initiatives are batik motif designs inspired by the spice symbols in Sunan Kudus's text. The next collaborative step can form a "Rempah Nusantara startup" community to revive spice-based micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by adopting the principles of Gusjigang Sunan Kudus.

Existing collaborations between schools in Kudus and local batik craftsmen have been observed, in which students learn about the history of spices through batik motif design. A cultural practitioner from the Muria Raya Cultural Center (personal communication, August 2025) confirmed that "some schools have initiated projects with local artisans to create batik inspired by spice symbols from Sunan Kudus's texts." However, the establishment of a "Rempah Nusantara startup" community remains a conceptual recommendation proposed by the authors to further develop spice-based MSMEs based on Gusjigang principles.

CONCLUSION

The representation of Sunan Kudus in traditional historiography emphasizes his role as a scholar, trader, and community leader who used spices as a medium for preaching and economy. Meanwhile, the colonial narrative (Portuguese/Dutch records) tends to be reductive, viewing him as a mere economic-political actor. This difference reflects biased interests but complements each other in understanding the complexity of local history. Spices are not only economic commodities, but instruments of socio-spiritual transformation. Through the philosophy of Gusjigang, Sunan Kudus built sustainable economic-religious integration. This concept is in line with Clifford Geertz's acculturation theory and Homi Bhabha's hybridity, where spices become a "cultural language" that mediates the Islamization of Java.

Adaptation of Sunan Kudus' narrative in the digital era and curriculum (such as AR, gamification, and the spice batik project) has proven effective in increasing the historical literacy of the younger generation. However, challenges such as limited access to ancient manuscripts and national curriculum bias still hinder the optimization of learning. Therefore, this research recommends intensive digitization of ancient manuscripts and the development of history modules based on local wisdom. In addition to this, teacher training in digital pedagogical content and curriculum revision to provide more space for local history as a blueprint

for sustainable development based on local wisdom in facing the challenges of the creative economy and historical literacy in the global era.

This study contributes a novel interdisciplinary framework that integrates critical historiography, philosophical hermeneutics, and educational analysis to reveal the multifaceted role of Sunan Kudus in the Nusantara spice network. By demonstrating how local wisdom values such as Gusjigang can be adapted for contemporary history education, the research provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of local historiography, Islamic cultural studies, and pedagogical innovation.

REFERENCES

- Peacock, A. C. S. (2015). Sufism and the Economy in the Muslim World: A Historical Perspective. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 58(5), 634–669.
- Andaya, L. Y. (2017). The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 45(132), 1–20.
- Arsip Digital Perpustakaan Nasional RI. (2022). *Koleksi Naskah Kuno Serat Sunan Kudus*. Arsip Digital Perpustakaan Nasional RI.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage.
- Dhofier, Z. (2011). *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*. LP3ES.
- Feener, R. M., & Laffan, M. F. (2005). Sufi Scents Across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni Hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam. *Archipel*, 70(1), 185–208. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2005.3978>
- Ferreira, J., & Roque, R. (2022). Overseas Historical Archive. In *Guardião, A., Jerónimo, MG, Peixoto, P. (Orgs.) Colonial Echoes: Stories, Heritage and Memories*. Indian ink.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and Method*. The Seabury Press.
- Geertz, C. (1992). *Tafsir Kebudayaan*. Kanisius Press.
- Howell, M., & Prevenier, W. (2001). *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Cornell University Press.
- Husein, S. (2016). *Fieldtrip geology: Cekungan Jawa Timur Utara*.
- Joll, C. M. (2012). *Muslim Merit-making in Thailand's Far-South*. Springer Netherlands. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2485-3>
- Kemendikbud. (2020). *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*. Pusat Kurikulum.
- Kemendikbud. (2022). *Laporan Evaluasi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka: Perspektif Sejarah Lokal*.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Sage.
- Lombard, D. (2008). *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Man, N. M., Chi, N. T. P., Wasino, W., & Hartatik, E. S. (2022). Ports, Maritime Networks, and Its Effect on the Development of the Ancient Kingdom of Southeast Asia. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 32(2), 202–211. <https://doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v32i2.37833>
- Reid, A. (2015). *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga 1450–1680*. Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Reid, A. (2018). Islamization and Christianization in Southeast Asia: The Critical Phase, 1550–1650. In *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era* (pp. 151–179). Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501732171-010>
- Ricci, R. (2010). Islamic Literary Networks in South and Southeast Asia. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 21(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etp084>
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2006). *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries*. East Bridgege.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2012). *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java*. NUS Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv3fh>
- Salam, A. (2021). *Gusjigang: Etos Kewirausahaan Santri Kudus*. Pustaka Marwa.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage.
- Supriyono, A. (2015). Tinjauan Historis Benteng VOC di Jepara. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v25i1.3419>
- Tagliacozzo, E. (2004). A Necklace of Fins: Marine Goods Trading In Maritime Southeast Asia, 1780–1860. *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 1(1), 23–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S147959140400004X>
- Zoetmulder, P. J. (2005). *Pantheisme dan Monisme dalam Sastra Suluk Jawa*. Gramedia.