

## Transformation of Local Wisdom Values in the Song "Damar Asih Caruban Nagari"

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the transformation of local wisdom values embodied in the song Damar Asih Caruban Nagari, also known as the Gunung Jati song, as a representation of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Caruban Nagari (Cirebon) community. The study aims to explore the meanings embedded in the song and to analyze how its local wisdom values have been transmitted and implemented within the socio-cultural life of the Cirebon community. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews and document analysis and subsequently analyzed using an interpretive framework. The findings reveal that Damar Asih Caruban Nagari embodies four interconnected dimensions of local wisdom: cultural, moral, religious, and social values. The song contains ethical guidance and authentic Islamic teachings inherited from ancestors and Islamic saints (Wali) of Caruban Nagari, reflecting a harmonious integration of Islamic principles with indigenous cultural traditions. These values continue to function as moral and spiritual guidance for the community while reinforcing collective cultural identity. Consequently, Damar Asih Caruban Nagari represents not only a musical composition but also an enduring symbol of Cirebon's cultural and spiritual heritage, demonstrating the dynamic transformation and continuity of local wisdom across generations.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom refers to a community's worldview concerning the natural environment in which it lives and interacts (Kemendikdasmen, 2016). In international scholarship, local wisdom is commonly conceptualized as local wisdom, local knowledge, or indigenous intelligence, encompassing various forms of knowledge, values, and community-based management practices developed to preserve cultural heritage (Taufan et al., 2023:2).

The manifestation of local wisdom can be observed in traditions that are transmitted across generations and play a significant role in shaping the character and cultural identity of a community (Hamdani & Kumalasari, 2025:102). As emphasized by Taufan et al. (2023:45), the exploration, development, and preservation of local wisdom are essential in responding to socio-cultural transformation and the challenges of modernization (Taufan et al., 2023:45). Culture and society are inherently interconnected. Culture encompasses collectively learned, accepted, and shared social values, beliefs, norms, customs, artistic expressions, knowledge systems, regulations, and experiences acquired by individuals as members of a particular society (Aririguzoh, 2022:2). Customs, in this context, are socially reinforced patterns of behavior that become institutionalized through repeated practice and communal acceptance (Sartini, 2004:112).

Local wisdom constitutes a distinctive cultural characteristic of a particular region. It may take the form of ideas, practices, or social behaviors that regulate relationships among individuals, between humans and nature, and between communities and their systems of belief (Jumriani et al., 2021:104). Cultural traditions that evolve through habitual practices and eventually become regional identities are often reflected in traditional songs, which preserve literary expressions, moral teachings, laments, and collective celebrations of a community (Hidayatullah, 2020:38).

Cultural diversity represents a valuable source of intellectual and cultural wealth and forms an integral part of cultural heritage that must be preserved (Njatrijani, 2018:16). Cultural heritage establishes a continuous connection between the past, present, and future of a society (Praditha & Wibisana, 2024:208). As a social inheritance, cultural heritage links historical realities with contemporary life through values and traditions that have been consciously preserved and transmitted across generations (González-Herrera et al., 2023:2).

Indonesia possesses a rich variety of musical and poetic cultural heritage, one of which is the *kidung*. Based on an interview with the philologist KRT Manu J. Widyaseputra, *kidung* is defined as a form of traditional song or chant that functions as a medium for conveying knowledge through the recitation of Javanese poetry (Satatagama, 2025:5). Sugiyarto et al. (2022:2) further describe *kidung* as a literary work composed of poetic verses performed as songs that embody philosophical meanings and moral guidance for Javanese society. Beyond its aesthetic function, *kidung* also serves as a spiritual medium for prayer, devotion, and religious expression. As an integral component of Javanese culture, *kidung* played a substantial role during the early dissemination of Islam in Java (Cahyadi et al., 2025:128). Similar to other forms of

traditional poetry, such as *geguritan*, *kidung* possesses distinctive literary structures and stylistic elements (Aryanto, 2021:43). The creation of *kidung* is often shaped by prevailing social conditions and represents a literary response to societal phenomena (Yahya & Handayani, 2023:96).

One important regional tradition is the Cirebon *kidung*, a distinctive form of traditional song closely related to *pupuh* and *geguritan*. Cirebon *kidung* is characterized by profound philosophical meanings and is commonly performed during nighttime cultural performances, including traditional theater and puppet performances, as well as ritual, customary, and sacred ceremonies. Performed primarily by *sinden* (traditional female vocalists), these songs function as oral traditions, religious media, and expressions of prayers for protection and divine blessings. Consequently, Cirebon *kidung* has become a distinctive feature of Cirebon's classical musical tradition and an important element of the cultural identity of the Indonesian archipelago.

Among these traditions, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*, also known as the *Gunung Jati* song, represents one of the most significant examples of Cirebon *kidung*. The song portrays the beauty of nature while conveying profound spiritual symbolism that represents the unity of faith, hope for salvation, and supplications for divine blessings and sacred illumination. It reflects the aspirations of the Cirebon community to live harmoniously under divine guidance while preserving their cultural and religious identity. Accordingly, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* serves as the focus of the present study. This research aims to examine how the local wisdom values of the Cirebon community are transformed and represented within the *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* (*Gunung Jati*) song, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between cultural heritage, religious values, and musical tradition.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore meaning from the perspectives of individuals who constituted the focus of the investigation. A qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding and interpreting the meanings of phenomena within their natural contexts through inductive analysis of systematically collected data (Niam et al., 2024:2). This approach generates descriptive data presented in the form of narrative accounts of the phenomenon under investigation (Sahir, 2022:6). The study focused on the transformation of local wisdom values embodied in the *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* song, more widely known as the *Gunung Jati* song.

Data were collected through interviews and document analysis. The interviews were conducted in several locations throughout Cirebon Regency, including the Pringgadhing Art Studio in Plumbon District, the residence of an informant in Gegesik District, and the residence of another informant in Gebang District. The participants consisted of Ki Dalang Drs. Purjadi, leader of the Sanggar Seni Wayang Purwa Pangreksa Budhi and a *kidung* performer; Sinden Nyi Eli Marfuah, the composer of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* (*Gunung Jati*); and Ki Dadung Caryudi, a Cirebon cultural practitioner. The interviews were conducted informally by combining

structured interviews based on a predetermined interview guide with unstructured follow-up questions that evolved according to the participants' responses. This combination of interview techniques enabled the researchers to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information regarding the transformation of local wisdom values embodied in the *kidung*.



**Figure 1.** Interview Conducted at Pringgadhing Art Studio, Plumbon, Cirebon  
(Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026)

In addition to interviews, document analysis was employed as a complementary data collection method. Document analysis serves as a systematic means of collecting and examining written and audiovisual materials as objective forms of documented communication (Rukhmana et al., 2022:164). The documents analyzed included the lyrics of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* as well as audiovisual recordings of the song performed by Sinden Nyi Eli Marfuah and published on YouTube. These materials were examined to strengthen the interpretation of the cultural content and the transformation of local wisdom values represented in the *kidung*.

The data obtained from the interviews and document analysis were analyzed qualitatively through a continuous process that began during data collection and continued until all data had been compiled. The analytical process involved systematically exploring, organizing, and interpreting the data to achieve a deeper understanding of the research focus and the issues under investigation (Pahleviannur et al., 2022:137). The findings of the analysis were subsequently used to identify and interpret the forms of transformation of local wisdom values embodied in the *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* (*Gunung Jati*) song.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of *Kidung* and Its Functions in Javanese Tradition, Particularly in Cirebon

According to Ki Dalang Purjadi (March 14, 2026), a *kidung* is a prayer expressed in the form of a song. In Cirebon, the *kidung* tradition is rooted in the *macapat* singing tradition. *Macapat* consists of various types of *pupuh*, each characterized by specific compositional rules, including *guru lagu* (rhyme or end-sound pattern), *guru gatra* (number of lines), and *guru wilangan* (number

of syllables).



**Figure 2.** Interview with Ki Dalang Drs. Purjadi at Pringgadhing Art Studio, Plumbon, Cirebon  
(Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026)

According to Ki Dadung Caryudi (May 19, 2026), a *kidung* is a type of *geguritan* that conveys profound meanings and is traditionally performed at night by poets or by mothers while offering moral guidance (*wejangan*) to their children and grandchildren.



**Figure 3.** Interview with Ki Dadung Caryudi in Gebang, Cirebon  
(Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026)

Furthermore, Ki Dalang Purjadi explained that the function of *kidung* differs from that of *macapat*, *suluk*, and *Kerta Wara*, although all four are forms of traditional vocal compositions. *Kidung* is generally performed in the context of sacred ceremonies and contains prayers, such as the *Memitu kidung*, which is performed during the ritual for the safety of a seven-month pregnancy. In addition, *kidung* is frequently used in *ruwatan* ceremonies and various other rituals seeking protection and well-being.

Meanwhile, *macapat* primarily functions as a medium for conveying stories or historical narratives. In the past, *macapat* texts were written on palm-leaf manuscripts (*lontar*) and contained legends, historical accounts, and moral values. The selection of a particular *pupuh* was adapted to



the narrative context; for example, *Dhandhanggula* was used to depict the spirit of struggle, *Sinom* to express sadness, and *Pangkur* or *Durma* to portray conflict or disorder.

In contrast, *suluk* refers to songs performed by the *dalang* (puppeteer) during *wayang* performances to establish atmosphere and convey particular emotions or events. *Suluk* functions similarly to a narrative, yet it is delivered through distinctive musical expression. For instance, in scenes depicting Gatotkaca preparing for battle, the *dalang* traditionally performs a *suluk* to build the dramatic atmosphere before the battle scene begins. *Suluk* is relatively flexible because it is not restricted to fixed lyrics and generally employs short songs (*tembang alit*).

*Kerta Wara*, also known as *Merta Wara*, is a form of traditional song that narrates stories while adhering to the rules of *guru lagu*. In *wayang* performances, *Kerta Wara* is typically performed alternately by the *dalang* and the *sinden* (female vocalist). The *dalang* begins by narrating the story through singing (*melaras*), and at certain points, usually before the *gongan* (the concluding phrase marked by the gong), the *sinden* continues the performance, after which the *dalang* resumes the narration.

### The Flexibility of Lyrics in *Kidung*

Ki Dalang Purjadi further emphasized that the lyrics of a *kidung* are flexible and may be modified according to specific needs. This flexibility allows artists to adapt the content of a *kidung* to the theme of a performance or the message they intend to convey. For example, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* is a composition based on the *Sinom pupuh*. However, its lyrics have been further developed and adapted to meet the particular requirements of a performance.

### The Origin and History of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari (Gunung Jati) Kidung*

*Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* is a *kidung* that emerged from the socio-cultural context of the Cirebon community in 2013. Based on an interview with Sinden Nyi Eli Marfuah (April 23, 2026), the *kidung* was composed during the candidacy of Pangeran Raja Adipati Arief Natadiningrat (Prince Arief of Cirebon) and Djakaria Machmud as candidates for Regent and Vice Regent of Cirebon. At that time, the pair contested the local election under the campaign name Damar, an acronym derived from Djakaria Machmud and Arief Natadiningrat. The term *Damar* was subsequently immortalized in the lyrics of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*, establishing a close connection between the composition and this historical moment. The *kidung* contains moral advice and authentic Islamic teachings inherited from the ancestors and the *Wali* (Islamic saints) of Caruban Nagari.



**Figure 4.** Interview with Sinden Nyi Eli Marfuah in Gegesik, Cirebon  
(Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026)

Caruban Nagari has strong historical roots in the regional identity of Cirebon. The name *Cirebon* possesses a historical background that embodies the community's spiritual identity and collective agreement (Juwono et al., 2017:69). Cirebon is one of the principal cities connecting several major urban centers on the island of Java and, through its historical, political, social, and cultural development, has become an important subject of scholarly inquiry (Firmanto, 2015:32).

The word *Caruban* means "mixture," reflecting the integration of different cultural traditions, particularly Sundanese and Javanese cultures. Meanwhile, *Nagari* refers to a large territory or principal state. In the tradition of the indigenous people of Cirebon, their homeland was historically referred to as *Nagari Gede*, meaning "the great state."

Furthermore, as documented in *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* (West Java Museum Development Project, 1986:25), the name *Cirebon* originated from the word *Caruban*. The name subsequently evolved from *Carbon* to *Cerbon*, before finally becoming *Cirebon*, as it is known today. This historical development further reinforces the notion that Cirebon is a region formed through the convergence of diverse cultural elements.

This cultural synthesis is also reflected in the musical arrangement of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*. Its musical accompaniment adopts the stylistic characteristics of the *kecap*, an instrument strongly associated with the Sundanese musical tradition, and adapts them to the guitar. Within the cultural context of Cirebon, the guitar occupies a significant position as a principal instrument in *tarling* music, a musical genre whose name is derived from the words *gitar* (guitar) and *suling* (bamboo flute). Through this musical approach, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* presents a harmonious musical expression that symbolizes Cirebon's cultural identity as a meeting point between Sundanese and Javanese traditions. Consequently, the *kidung* functions not only as a work of art but also as a representation of the historical, philosophical, and cultural values of the Cirebon community.

#### **Meaning of the Lyrics of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* or *Gunung Jati***

*Duuuuu... Liwang Liwang Rangdu Kurung Gunung Sembung*

*Gunung Jati Gunung Amparan*  
*Kang Sejatine Sejajare Lawang Sanga kang njageni*  
*Duuuuu.....Tamengana Pasangan Damar Panggon ning linggih dateng Kursi Gading Gilang Kencana*  
*Milet sayembara pilihan Bupati sareng Wakil Bupati ing Caruban Nagari*  
*Sangue Syahadat Iman Tekene Syahadat Sejati*  
*Anjembaraken wyar Byar Suminar Cahyaning Damar andadia Pepadang ing Caruban Nagari*  
*Cukup aub ora nana papa ya hu ora nana papa*

*Liwang Liwung Rangdu Kurung* refers to an inner state that exists on the threshold between ordinary consciousness and the unseen spiritual realm, yet remains enclosed or protected. It describes a condition of meditation or deep spiritual concentration that is undisturbed by external influences. *Gunung Sembung Gunung Jati Gunung Amparan* symbolizes the body's axis or energy center connecting human beings and nature, representing harmony between oneself and the natural world. *Kang Sejatine Sejajare Lawang Sanga Kang Njageni* refers to the nine openings of the human body: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, one genital opening, and one anal opening. This expression conveys an important teaching on self-control and vigilance, representing the inner awareness that governs all sensory gateways. Everything one sees, hears, speaks, and breathes should be carefully guarded so that negative energies cannot enter. *Duuuuu.....Tamengana Pasangan Damar* expresses the central meaning of the song as a prayer for divine protection over the *Damar* couple from slander, disturbances, ego, wrongful actions, and inappropriate speech.

*Panggon ning linggih dateng Kursi Gading Gilang Kencana* means occupying a glorious and noble seat of authority, symbolizing an honorable throne and position of leadership. *Milet sayembara pilihan Bupati sareng Wakil Bupati ing Caruban Nagari* refers to the electoral contest to select the Regent and Vice Regent of *Caruban Nagari* (Cirebon). *Sangue Syahadat Iman Tekene Syahadat Sejati* signifies faith as spiritual provision that leads from outward belief toward genuine inner realization grounded in sincerity. Therefore, a good leader should not merely seek political power but should also possess profound spiritual awareness.

*Anjembaraken Wyar Byar Suminar Cahyaning Damar* means spreading the illuminating light of the *Damar* couple, symbolizing the hope that they will bring enlightenment and hope to *Caruban Nagari* (Cirebon). *Andadia Pepadang ing Caruban Nagari* means becoming a guiding light for *Caruban Nagari* (Cirebon). *Cukup aub ora nana papa ya hu ora nana papa* literally means, "Enough, nothing is wrong." The expressions *aub* and *hu* are mystical utterances used to express inner spiritual feelings or *ngelmu rasa* (the knowledge of inner spiritual perception).

*Duuuuuu... Duuuuuuh... Aduh Gusti Nuhun Nuhun Mugiya Pasangan Damar angsal siraman Banyu Suci*  
*Suci ing Banyu saking Gaib ing Pangeran*



*Mugi dipun paringi Barokah Slamet Lahir Batin Dunia Wal Akherat Amin ya Robbal Alamin.*

*Duuuuuu... Duuuuuuh... Aduh Gusti Nuhun Nuhun Mugiya Pasangan Damar angsal siraman Banyu Suci* is an emotional expression of gratitude to God, accompanied by a prayer that the Damar couple may receive spiritual purification and inner cleansing through divine assistance. It conveys thanksgiving while asking for blessings, peace, and spiritual purification throughout their lives. *Suci ing Banyu saking Gaib ing Pangeran* means that the sacred water originates from the unseen power of God. It symbolizes purification that comes from God's invisible yet personally experienced spiritual will and power. *Mugi dipun paringi Barokah Slamet Lahir Batin Dunia Wal Akherat Amin ya Robbal Alamin* is a prayer asking for blessings and safety, both physically and spiritually, in this world and the hereafter. It expresses a sincere hope for a life filled with divine blessings, physical and spiritual peace, protection throughout life's journey, and eternal salvation, concluding with a supplication to Allah, the Lord of all creation, to grant these prayers.

*Semergen ing Gunung Jati Kumpulane Para Wali Kang Sejati*

*Kine sebut Negri Puser Bumi Kawentar keceluk inggih nami Cerbon Puniki*

*Wit suci kang dinapur Bismillah purwaning dingin*

*Ingsun titip Tajug lan Fakir Miskin*

*Iku dawuhe saking Kanjeng Syekh Jati*

*Sumangga Angger Pasangan Damar Tine rusa lampahira sing bijaksana*

*Niatana tumindak Ati kang Ikhlas Tekad kang nyata dadia Pangayoman Rakyat*

*Kajurung dening Pangestu Uga do'a kairing Puji Rahayu*

*Andadia Sinatria Pinayungan ingkang mayungi ing Negri Puser Bumi*

*Tan tugel talining karsa Luhuring budi adil ing titi wicara*

*Luhuring Ilmu mamrih Santosa ing Budi Membuka Gapura ning Praja Dawuh Wong Tua*

*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo Ing Madyo Mangun Karso Tut Wuri Handayani*

*Iku minangka dadia Panutan Diri.*

*Semergen ing Gunung Jati* refers to the atmosphere of *Gunung Jati*, the sacred site associated with *Sunan Gunung Jati*, which possesses profound historical and spiritual significance as one of the centers for the spread of Islam. *Kumpulane Para Wali Kang Sejati* means the gathering place of the true *wali*, the revered Islamic saints who propagated Islam. *Kine sebut Negri Puser Bumi* refers to the ancestral homeland regarded as the center of civilization and sacred ritual. *Kawentar keceluk inggih nami Cerbon Puniki* refers to the renowned city of Cirebon, emphasizing its reputation as a place endowed with spiritual influence, sacred power, and historical prestige. *Wit suci kang dinapur Bismillah* means being sanctified through the recitation of *Bismillah*. Every action should begin by purifying oneself and invoking the name of God, entrusting all intentions to the Almighty. *Purwaning dingin* signifies inner tranquility that originates from within oneself rather

than from external sources.

*Ingsun titip Tajug lan Fakir Miskin* means, "I entrust the *tajug* (small mosque or prayer hall) and the poor." It symbolizes the responsibility to preserve places of worship while caring for the underprivileged with compassion. *Iku dawuhe saking Kanjeng Syekh Jati* refers to the testament or command of *Kanjeng Syekh Jati* (Sunan Gunung Jati), representing guidance originating from a revered spiritual master. *Sumangga Angger Pasangan Damar Tine rusa lampahira sing bijaksana* invites the *Damar* couple to continue their journey with wisdom, noble character, and the ability to become a source of light amid darkness. It teaches that a leader should possess a pure heart, wisdom, sincerity, and integrity in order to become the protector and guardian of the people. *Niatana tumindak Ati kang Ikhlas* means that every action should arise from a sincere and selfless heart rather than from personal ambition.

*Tekad kang nyata dadia Pangayoman Rakyat* emphasizes that a leader must possess a genuine commitment to serving and protecting the people rather than merely pursuing power. *Kajurung dening Pangestu uga do'a kairing Puji Rahayu* means being accompanied by blessings, prayers, safety, and well-being. It expresses the hope that one's life will continually receive divine grace, protection, and prosperity. *Andadia Sinatria Pinayungan ingkang mayungi ing Negri Puser Bumi* means becoming a protected knight who, in turn, protects the people in the sacred homeland. It symbolizes an ideal leader who is divinely protected and capable of wisely safeguarding society. *Tan tugel talining karsa Luhuring Budi Adil ing titi wicara* teaches the importance of breaking attachment to worldly desires while cultivating noble character, moral excellence, justice, and wisdom in speech and decision-making. It is not merely advice on proper behavior but a profound teaching on how human beings should shape their own character.

*Luhuring Ilmu mamrih Santosa ing Budi* encourages the pursuit of knowledge to the highest level in order to become spiritually strong, virtuous, and noble in character. Knowledge should be used to cultivate inner strength and moral excellence rather than merely intellectual achievement. *Membuka Gapura ning Praja* means opening pathways for society and the nation. It teaches that the noblest life is one that creates opportunities for others and contributes to the welfare of the country. *Dawuh Wong Tua: Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani* refers to the leadership philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, which teaches that genuine leadership is not about power but about setting an example, inspiring others, serving society, and guiding people with wisdom. *Iku minangka dadia Panutan Diri* means that all these teachings should become personal examples and guiding principles so that one lives with purpose, moral integrity, and noble character.

### Macapat Notation of Damar Asih Caruban Nagari or Gunung Jati

[illegible]

**Figure 5.** Damar Chant Notation  
(Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026)

### Video Documentation of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* or *Gunung Jati*

<https://youtu.be/pOE7eDFq0rw?si=DJihmsoelsAtOEOW>

### Transformation of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* or *Gunung Jati*

The chant *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*, more widely known among the people as *Gunung Jati*, is a traditional oral literary heritage that plays a significant role in the cultural history and the development of Islam in the Cirebon region. This work serves not only as a literary composition with religious overtones but also as a medium for disseminating the spiritual, moral, social, and Sufi teachings inherited from Sunan Gunung Jati and passed down to his descendants and the surrounding community. Within the Cirebon tradition, this chant functions as a reminder (*pepeling*) containing guidance on how human beings should live, maintain their relationship with the Creator, and preserve harmonious social relations in accordance with Islamic law and the values taught by the *wali* during the Islamization of Java. Consequently, the existence of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* is closely connected with the historical context of the spread of Islam, which was carried out through cultural approaches, arts, and local traditions as effective and socially acceptable media of *da'wah*.

Substantively, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* contains moral teachings that emphasize values such as piety, sincerity, patience, humility, and the obligation for human beings to remember God in every aspect of life. These values are conveyed through poetic and symbolic verses, allowing the chant to function not only as an aesthetically appealing literary work but also as an educational and spiritual medium.

Within the cultural context, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* symbolizes the cultural identity of the Cirebon people by harmoniously integrating local traditions with Islamic teachings. This demonstrates that Sunan Gunung Jati propagated Islam not through confrontation but through a cultural approach that accommodated existing local traditions, thereby making Islamic teachings more readily accepted by the community.

With the passage of time and changes in the socio-cultural conditions of society, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* has evolved beyond its original role as a medium for *da'wah* and spiritual instruction to serve broader socio-cultural purposes. This phenomenon illustrates that traditional literature is dynamic and capable of adapting to social and cultural transformations without losing its inherent cultural identity.

One of the most prominent transformations occurred when Prince Raja Adipati Arief Natadiningrat, recognized as one of the descendants of Sunan Gunung Jati, employed *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* as a medium of communication during a regional head election. The chant, with its strong spiritual messages and moral teachings, was strategically utilized to establish an emotional connection with the people of Cirebon, who historically and culturally maintain close ties to the traditional symbols and cultural heritage of Sunan Gunung Jati. By drawing upon this historical affinity, the chant came to be viewed not merely as a cultural heritage and a medium

for *da'wah*, but also as a means of political communication capable of generating symbolic legitimacy within the community.

Therefore, the transformation of this chant can be understood as a form of cultural adaptation to contemporary developments, in which traditional heritage is preserved through adjustments to the socio-cultural needs of modern society without abandoning the fundamental values that constitute its core.

### Local Wisdom Values in *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* or *Gunung Jati*

*Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*, also known as *Gunung Jati*, embodies a rich system of local wisdom that reflects the philosophical worldview, cultural identity, and spiritual values of the Cirebon community. Local wisdom (*local wisdom*) refers to a body of knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices that are collectively developed by a community through continuous interaction with its historical, cultural, religious, and ecological environment (Geertz, 1973; Sibarani, 2012). As a form of traditional oral literature, this *kidung* functions not merely as an artistic expression but also as a cultural text that preserves collective memory, transmits ethical principles, and reinforces social cohesion across generations. The meanings embedded within its lyrics demonstrate that the *kidung* serves as a medium for cultural education, spiritual reflection, and moral guidance, integrating Islamic teachings with indigenous Cirebon traditions. The analysis of the lyrics reveals four interrelated dimensions of local wisdom, namely cultural values, moral values, religious and spiritual values, and social values.

#### 1. Cultural Values

The cultural values contained in *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* emphasize the importance of sacred places, collective historical memory, and the preservation of cultural identity. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), cultural values represent fundamental conceptions held by a society regarding what is considered valuable, meaningful, and worthy of preservation. In this respect, the *kidung* constructs *Gunung Sembung* and *Gunung Jati* not merely as geographical locations but as sacred cultural landscapes that embody the historical process of Islamization in Java. This symbolic representation appears in the verse *Gunung Sembung Gunung Jati Gunung Amparan*, which portrays these locations as the spiritual and cultural foundations of *Caruban Nagari* (Cirebon).

Furthermore, the verse *Semeran ing Gunung Jati Kumpulane Para Wali Kang Sejatine Kine Sepuh Negri Puser Bumi Kawentar Keceluk Inggih Nami Cerbon Puniki* positions *Gunung Jati* as the gathering place of the *wali*, the ancestral homeland, and the center of civilization and sacred rituals. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, such symbolic spaces function as *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), preserving collective identity and reinforcing cultural continuity (Nora, 1989). Therefore, the *kidung* functions as an instrument of cultural preservation by continuously reaffirming the historical significance of Cirebon as a center of Islamic civilization while maintaining the integration of local traditions and religious values.



## 2. Moral Values

The moral values conveyed in *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* emphasize sincerity, responsibility toward society, justice, wisdom, noble character, and ethical leadership. Moral values in traditional literature serve as ethical guidelines that shape individual character and regulate harmonious social relationships (Lickona, 1991). Rather than presenting morality as abstract principles, the *kidung* articulates these virtues through poetic expressions that encourage self-reflection and ethical conduct.

The verse *Niatana tumindak Ati kang Ikhlas Tekad kang nyata dadia Pangayoman Rakyat* emphasizes that every action should originate from a sincere heart and genuine commitment to serving society. This reflects the principle of servant leadership, in which leadership is fundamentally understood as service rather than domination (Greenleaf, 1977). Likewise, the verse *Tan tugel talining karsa Luhuring Budi Adil ing titi wicara* advocates self-control, noble character, justice, and prudence in speech and decision-making, illustrating that moral integrity is achieved through mastery over personal desires and ethical responsibility.

Wisdom is further emphasized in the verse *Sumangga Angger Pasangan Damar Tine rusa lampahira sing bijaksana*, which encourages leaders to exercise discernment and thoughtful judgment. Responsible leadership is also represented in the verses *Uga do'a kairing Puji Rahayu Andadia Sinatria Pinayungan ingkang mayungi ing Negri Puser Bumi* and *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani*. The latter reflects Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of leadership, which emphasizes exemplary conduct, inspiration, and empowerment as the essential characteristics of ethical leadership. Consequently, the *kidung* presents leadership as a moral responsibility grounded in integrity, compassion, and public service rather than political authority alone.

## 3. Religious and Spiritual Values

Religious and spiritual values constitute the dominant thematic foundation of *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*. The *kidung* integrates Islamic teachings with local cultural expressions, illustrating the acculturation process through which Islam spread in Cirebon by adapting to indigenous traditions rather than replacing them. Geertz (1960) argues that religion functions as a cultural system through which communities interpret reality and organize their moral lives. Accordingly, the *kidung* becomes both a devotional text and a pedagogical medium that communicates Islamic spirituality within the cultural framework of Cirebon society.

The verse *Tamengana Pasangan Damar* expresses a prayer seeking divine protection from slander, temptation, ego, wrongful actions, and harmful speech, highlighting the Islamic principle of *tawakkul* (trust in God). Spiritual maturity is further represented in the verse *Sangue Syahadat Iman Tekene Syahadat Sejati*, which describes faith as a gradual process leading from formal religious confession toward genuine spiritual consciousness rooted in sincerity.

Religious practice is reinforced through the verse *Ingsun Titip Tajug lan Fakir Miskin*, where *tajug* symbolizes the obligation to preserve places of worship and maintain the practice of the five

daily *shalat*. Simultaneously, concern for the poor demonstrates that worship should be accompanied by social responsibility. Gratitude and spiritual purification are expressed in the verse *Aduh Gusti Nuhun Nuhun Mugiya Pasangan Damar angsal siraman Banyu Suci*, while the verse *Mugi dipun paringi Barokah Slamet Lahir Batin Dunia Wal Akherat* reflects prayers for blessings, protection, and well-being in both worldly and eternal life. Finally, the verse *Wit suci kang dinapur Bismillah* emphasizes that every action should begin with purification and remembrance of God, illustrating the Islamic principle that all human activities should be initiated with sincere intentions (*niyyah*) and the invocation of *Bismillah*. Collectively, these spiritual messages demonstrate that the *kidung* functions as both religious instruction and a means of cultivating spiritual consciousness.

#### 4. Social Values

The social values embodied in *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* highlight solidarity, mutual responsibility, social justice, exemplary leadership, and communal harmony. According to Durkheim (1912), shared moral values and collective beliefs constitute the foundation of social cohesion. In this regard, the *kidung* reinforces communal relationships by encouraging cooperation, compassion, and collective responsibility among members of society.

The verse *Ingsun Titip Tajug lan Fakir Miskin* represents one of the strongest expressions of social solidarity within the *kidung*. The phrase *fakir miskin* symbolizes compassion toward marginalized members of society and reflects the ethical obligation of the wealthy to assist the poor and the strong to protect the weak. This message illustrates that religious devotion should always be accompanied by humanitarian concern and social justice.

Responsible leadership is further emphasized in the verse *Uga do'a kairing Puji Rahayu Andadia Sinatria Pinayungan ingkang mayungi ing Negri Puser Bumi*, where leaders are portrayed as protectors entrusted with ensuring the welfare of society rather than merely exercising authority. Similarly, the leadership philosophy expressed in *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani* reinforces the ideal that leaders should serve as role models, inspire collective participation, and empower communities. These principles closely align with contemporary concepts of transformational leadership, which emphasize vision, inspiration, ethical influence, and the empowerment of followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Consequently, the social values embedded within *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* extend beyond interpersonal ethics to promote a comprehensive vision of community life founded upon mutual care, justice, collective responsibility, and sustainable social harmony.

## CONCLUSION

*Cirebon* chants represent an important form of local wisdom that preserves the cultural identity, spiritual heritage, and collective values of the *Cirebon* community. Among them, *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari*, also known as *Gunung Jati*, reflects the integration of local tradition and Islamic teachings through poetic lyrics that function as both cultural expression and moral

guidance. Originally composed in 2013 within the socio-political context of the Cirebon regional election, the chant has evolved beyond its political background into a cultural heritage that continues to convey enduring ethical and spiritual messages. Performed in the *Sundanese Pelog* tuning system and commonly accompanied by *kecapi suling*, *tarling*, or *gamelan*, the chant preserves the distinctive musical identity of Cirebon.

The findings demonstrate that *Damar Asih Caruban Nagari* embodies four major dimensions of local wisdom: cultural, moral, religious/spiritual, and social values. These include respect for sacred cultural heritage, sincerity and ethical leadership, devotion to God through faith and worship, and the promotion of solidarity, responsibility, and exemplary leadership within society. Consequently, the chant functions not only as a traditional musical composition but also as a medium for transmitting local wisdom and strengthening the cultural and spiritual identity of the Cirebon community across generations.

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