

Practice and ethics of religious tourism in solo raya: a qualitative analysis based on islam nusantara

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ABSTRACT

Religious tourism in Indonesia is a *socio-religious phenomenon* that integrates Islamic spiritual values with local cultural traditions. In the context of Islam Nusantara, pilgrimage practices and religious rituals function as a means of cultural preservation as well as the formation of public ethics. The development of modern tourism then presented ethical challenges, such as the commercialization of religious sites and shifts in spiritual meaning. This research aims to analyze the form of religious tourism practices in Solo Raya, examine the principles of Islamic ethics implemented in pilgrimage and religious activities, and formulate a contextual and sustainable framework for Islamic religious tourism in the Nusantara. The research uses a qualitative approach through participatory observation, interviews, and document analysis. The research locations include five main sites: the Tomb of Sunan Pandanaran (Klaten), the Tomb of Mbah Sirodj (Solo), the Tomb of Yosodipuro (Boyolali), the Riyadh Mosque Tomb Complex (Surakarta), and the tradition of the Alms of the Cengklik Reservoir (Boyolali). The analysis was carried out with the framework of classical Islamic ethics (Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih) and the concept of Nusantara Islam which emphasizes harmony between religious teachings and local wisdom. The results of the study show that the practice of religious tourism in Solo Raya reflects three main layers of ethics: (1) spiritual ethics that emphasize sincerity and respect for sacred spaces, (2) social ethics that emphasize communal manners and responsibility, and (3) cultural ethics that display the integration of Islamic values and Javanese traditions. This research emphasizes that religious tourism is not only a spiritual activity, but also a means of character formation and strengthening social harmony. The recommendations are directed at the preparation of ethical guidelines for religious tourism based on Islamic values and local culture as the basis for sustainable religious tourism policies.

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Introduction

Religious tourism in Indonesia has grown rapidly in the last two decades as a form of spiritual-based tourism that combines religious dimensions with local culture (Lintong, 2025). Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a diverse range of traditions, including pilgrimages to the tombs of the saints and other spiritual activities that show the close relationship between Islam and culture such as alms of produce (Mujib, 2021). In addition to enriching religious treasures in the community, this phenomenon opens up new

opportunities for social, economic, and spiritual interaction within the Indonesian cultural framework. Solo Raya, which covers the areas of Surakarta, Boyolali, Klaten, Sukoharjo, Karanganyar, Sragen, and Wonogiri, is one of the areas that stands out in the development of religious tourism (Kusumastuti & Nadjamuddin, 2024). Various religious sites can be found in this area, including the Yosodipuro Tomb, the Riyadh Mosque Tomb Complex, the Sunan Pandanaran Tomb, the Mbah Sirodj Tomb, as well as traditional ones such as the "Sedekah Waduk Cengklik". Each location has a deep spiritual and historical significance and is a forum for people to deepen their religious identity. However, as the number of visitors increases, a number of ethical problems in religious tourism activities arise, such as the commercialization of holy places, visitors' indifference to the sanctity of the place, and the reduction of the spiritual value of these activities (Mahadi & Raya, 2022).

This phenomenon illustrates the conflict between spirituality and materialism. Sacred principles are often a simple spectacle when religious places focus solely on profit (Ilman dkk., 2025). This encourages the importance of developing religious tourism ethics that take into account long-standing local wisdom, in addition to formal religious rules so that the idea of Islam in the archipelago becomes relevant in this situation. Islam Nusantara is a cultural approach to understanding Islamic teachings that emphasizes human values, wisdom, and balance in the local environment (Harahap dkk., 2025).

The spiritual aspect of religious tourism has been emphasized in a number of previous studies, including Zahid's research (Zahid, 2025) on the effectiveness of religious tourism on increasing the spirituality of the times and research by Ihsani & Mufidah (Ihsani & Mufidah, 2024) On the Spiritual Experience of Pilgrims' Neuroscience on Religious Tourism. However, these studies have not addressed the moral principles and ethical foundations of pilgrimage practices, but rather they focus on the descriptive aspects of pilgrimage activities and their spiritual impact. From an Islamic point of view, ethics (*akhlak*) is the fundamental foundation that governs how humans relate to God (*hablun minallah*), fellow humans (*hablun minannas*), and the universe (*hablun minal 'alam*) (Almutawallid dkk., 2024). Related to this, Ibn Miskawaih's ideas in *Tahdzib al-Akhlak* explain that ethics is a system of social character formation that focuses on moral perfection as well as a guideline for individual behavior (Miskawaih, 1943). These moral principles interact dialectically with regional customs throughout Indonesia, such as the values of *unggah-ungguh*, *andhap asor*, *rukun*, and *tepa selira*, all of which show the application of Islamic principles in Javanese culture.

Based on this framework, this study aims to explore the practice and ethics of religious tourism in Solo Raya with a qualitative approach based on Islam Nusantara. The main focus of this research is: identifying the forms of religious tourism practices that are developing in Solo Raya, analyzing how Islamic ethical principles are understood and applied in these practices, examining the challenges of values and morals in the context of modern religious tourism, and formulating a framework of religious tourism ethics based on Islamic values and archipelago culture. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic ethics, as well as offer a practical foundation for the sustainable and civilized management of religious tourism. Thus, the results of this research not only enrich academic discourse on Islam and culture, but can also be a reference for policy makers, tourist destination managers, and the community in maintaining the sanctity and purity of the spiritual meaning of religious tourism in Indonesia.

1. Islamic Ethics: The Moral Foundations in Social Activity

In Islam, ethics play a crucial role so that humans are able to develop personalities and behave well in social situations. According to Al-Ghazali, ethics (*akhlaq*) in classical Islam refers to a system of principles that governs how humans relate to God, fellow humans, and nature (Gufron & Hambali, 2022)(Musrifah, 2019). These values include *sincerity (ikhlas)*, *politeness (adab)*, *Balance ('adl)*, *ihsan*, dan *Social Responsibility (mas'uliyah)* (Syuhada dkk., 2025). Ibn Miskawaih, a prominent figure in the classical Islamic tradition emphasized that

ethics is the study of how humans achieve spiritual perfection by practicing righteous deeds. He views morality as the result of habitual behavior that brings happiness (Putra, 2021)(Nizar, 2018). This perspective is relevant to Thomas Lickona's theory, which identifies three aspects of character development: moral knowing, moral feelings, and moral action (Lickona, 1991)(Lickona, 1997). Both points of view emphasize how important it is to internalize values through awareness and their application in the real world. Islamic ethics function as a moral guideline that directs the behavior of tourists in the context of religious tourism so that they do not focus on the point of view of entertainment or material satisfaction alone, but also focus on spiritual improvement and social responsibility. Values such as pilgrimage manners, respect for holy places, and simplicity are manifestations of Islamic morals that must be maintained in religious tourism practices.

2. Islam Nusantara and Local Cultural Acculturation

Islam in Indonesia interacts dynamically with local culture without losing its core teachings, and this is understood as Islam Nusantara (Hidayatullah, 2019). Islam Nusantara emphasizes aspects of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *tawassuth* (moderation), which reject a single interpretation of Islam (Sholihah dkk., 2025). From an anthropological point of view, Islam Nusantara shows how Islamic principles are transformed into unique cultural manifestations, such as *tahlilan*, *selamatan*, *nyadran*, and pilgrimage of wali. This cultural practice serves as an instrument for the development of a collective morality that strengthens social unity. Islam Nusantara is a normative integrative model of religion and cultural historicity (Umam & Nabila, 2025). In other words, the practice of Islam in Java is not a form of theological compromise, but a cultural strategy in maintaining the universal values of Islam so that it remains relevant to the context of the archipelago's plural society and rooted in tradition.

3. Religious Tourism: Social, Economic, and Spiritual Space

Religious tourism is a complex phenomenon that combines spiritual, social, and economic aspects (Aji dkk., 2023)(Mukhirto dkk., 2022). In the Indonesian context, pilgrimage to the graves of guardians and religious leaders is an important part of the religious system of the community. In addition to strengthening the cultural and Islamic identity of the community, this practice also fosters a spiritual experience. However, as this tourism has developed, there have been concerns about the issue of excessive commercialization. Several studies show the importance of an Islamic ethical approach in the management of religious tourism (Ritonga & Ritonga, 2025)(Napiha & Zuwardi, 2025). Therefore, an ethical framework is needed that can maintain a balance between spiritual goals and the commercialization of religious tourism. Various studies show how important it is to manage religious tourism within the framework of Islamic ethics. For example, Ritonga's research shows that the rapid growth in the halal tourism industry indicates the need for Islamic values in tourism practices (Ritonga & Ritonga, 2025). This implies that the continuity of spiritual tourism is directly influenced by religious principles. This argument leads to the conclusion that the majority of studies on religious tourism in Indonesia still focus on social, economic, and historical elements, but still lack an in-depth study of the characteristics of Islamic ethics and local culture as a value system.

Method

This research is a field research with a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the research is not only to describe the phenomenon, but also to understand the meaning behind the practices and ethical values that live in society (Creswell, 2014). This research is descriptive-analytical, meaning that it not only focuses on exposure to field facts, but also analyzes how Islamic ethical values and archipelago culture shape religious

tourism practices. The research was carried out in the Solo Raya area, namely: Sunan Pandanaran Tomb (Klaten), Mbah Sirodj Tomb (Surakarta), Riyadh Mosque Tomb Complex (Surakarta), Yosodipuro Tomb (Boyolali), and “Sedekah Waduk Cengklik” Tradition (Boyolali). The research subjects consist of religious site managers, tourism actors, and the surrounding community. The selection of subjects was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is to select informants who are considered to have the best understanding of the practices and ethical values at each site (Sugiyono, 2009). Data diperoleh melalui tiga metode utama: Observasi Partisipatif, Wawancara, dan Analisis Dokumen. Analisis data dilakukan mengikuti model Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, yang meliputi tiga tahapan utama: Reduksi Data, Penyajian Data, Penarikan Kesimpulan/Verifikasi (Miles dkk., 2014).

Result

Table 1.1: Findings of Religious Tourism Fields in Solo Raya

Religious Sites	Main Practice Forms	Visible Islamic Ethical Values	Local Cultural Aspects	Ethical Issues or Challenges
Tomb of Sunan Pandanaran (Klaten)	Pilgrimage and <i>spiritual practice</i> seven days in a row	<i>Tawadhu'</i> , <i>ikhlas</i> , Respect for the sacred space	Removing footwear as a symbol of respect	Potential for excessive mystical practice
Tomb of Mbah Sirodj (Solo)	<i>Tawasul, wirid</i> , Prayer together during Haul	<i>Adab</i> , Order, <i>ukhuwah Islamiyah</i>	Tradition of Haul and annual congregational prayers	Crowds and potential decline in solemnity
Makam Yosodipuro (Boyolali)	<i>The Sanggaran ceremony</i> every Friday Pahing with a janur written in Arabic letters	<i>Ikhlas, syukur, Social Responsibility</i>	Symbolic acculturation of <i>hijaiyah</i> and janur Javanese letters	Potential misinterpretation of religious symbols
Kompleks Makam Masjid Riyadh (Surakarta)	<i>Tawasul</i> , Prayers, pilgrimages in the area of mosques and the tombs of scholars	<i>Discipline, trust, cleanliness</i> , respect for the worship space	Structured management	The challenge of maintaining a balance between sanctity and public access
Sedekah Waduk Cengklik (Boyolali)	Rites <i>sedekah bumi</i> and prayers together with mountains of produce	<i>Syukur, Balance, Social Responsibility</i>	Community communal traditions	The risk of commercialization and the shift of spiritual meaning into a mere cultural festival

Discussion

The results of the study show that religious tourism activities in Solo Raya are a dialectical space between the manifestation of local culture and Islamic spiritual values. This phenomenon supports the idea that Islam in the archipelago is a religion that dialogues with local culture, and not as a new force that rejects tradition. Within the framework of Islamic ethics, religious rituals such as the tradition of the “Sedekah Waduk Cengklik” and pilgrimages to places such as the Tomb of Sunan Pandanaran, Mbah Sirodj, Yosodipuro, and the Riyadh Mosque Complex are tangible examples of how Islamic moral principles have been integrated into the social and cultural practices of Javanese society.

These results theoretically support Al-Ghazali's argument that ethics (*morality*) is a reflection of moral and behavioral awareness that indicates the existence of cleanliness of the heart (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) (Musrifah, 2019). The absorption of ethical values as a form of spiritual awareness is shown by religious tourism actors who maintain order and politeness in the tomb area. Meanwhile, Islamic morality teachings that focus on the perfection of the soul (*sa'adah*), as stated by Ibn Miskawaih is reflected in the values of sincerity and humility that are evident in the seven-day spiritual behavior at the Tomb of Sunan Pandanaran (Wawan, 2025). In this case, pilgrimage functions as a religious ritual as well as a character development process that leads humans to social virtue.

Figure 1: Sedekah Waduk Cengklik



Religious practices such as Haul Mbah Sirodj and “Sedekah Waduk Cengklik” highlighting the role of religious tourism as a forum for collective reproduction of moral values. The community can strengthen social solidarity and a sense of collective responsibility for the environment while also respecting the commemoration ceremony of spiritual figures. These results support the understanding of Islam Nusantara put forward by Sholihah et al, who state that Islam in Indonesia upholds its universal principles through a cultural approach (Sholihah dkk., 2025). Ethics that emerge in society are the result of a negotiation process between religious principles and traditions. This can be seen in the form of the symbolic syncretism of janur inscribed with hijaiyah letters in the Tomb of Yosodipuro, which is a form of cultural adaptation to Islamic symbols without losing the meaning of monotheism (Sancoyo, 2025).

Figure 2: The Meaning of Sanggaran at Yosodipuro Tomb



The study's conclusions also point to the existence of "ethical tensions" caused by increased commercialization and shifts in spiritual orientation toward excessive commercial focus. This situation is in line with Syahidaturrahma's warning that spirituality turns into a formal ritual when religious rituals lose their ethical component (Syahidaturrahma dkk., 2025). If the pilgrimage activity is only motivated by worldly goals and abandons the intention of worship (*qasd al-taqarrub ila Allah*), The meaning of spirituality in the context of religious tourism can decrease. Therefore, creating an ethical framework that balances spirituality and cultural values is essential for religious tourism in Indonesia.

The framework that emerged from this study shows that three main levels of values in the form of spirituality, social, and culture are the foundations of religious tourism ethics in Solo Raya. Through the attitude of sincerity, respect, and order in worship, the spiritual value of human relationships with God can be increased. Mutual cooperation, good manners, and an attitude of responsibility are examples of how the social layer regulates human relationships with others. Meanwhile, the cultural layer, which upholds the values of harmony and respect for sacred spaces, places man in relation to customs and nature. The three come together to provide a special integrative ethical framework that is both normative and useful in everyday life. Philosophically, the Javanese conception of *rukun*, *andhap asor*, and *tepa selira* intersect with this value system. According to Al Ghazali, this ideal supports the idea of morality, which is the understanding of one's position and obligations before God, fellow humans, and nature. Therefore, religious tourism in Solo Raya can be seen as an actualization of Islamic ethics that revives the spirit of "*ihsan*" or doing good in community life.

These results show that religious tourism can be a useful forum for ethical learning. The community gained a unique new perspective on building piety through the interaction of Islamic spirituality with local culture, both in terms of individual worship and social activities. Therefore, the strengthening of ethical values in religious tourism needs to be directed not only through formal rules, but through cultural education, social example, and management oriented to spiritual awareness. In this way, religious tourism can function as a means to achieve a civilized society based on the principles of Islam and the culture of the archipelago, in addition to being an economic activity or customs alone.

Conclusion

This study shows that the practice of religious tourism in Solo Raya is a form of integration between Islamic values and local culture that gives birth to a typical ethical system of the archipelago. Through a study of the main sites such as the Tomb of Sunan Pandanaran, Mbah Sirodj, Yosodipuro, the Riyadh Mosque, and the tradition of the "Sedekah Waduk Cengklik", it was found that religious tourism not only functions as a spiritual activity, but also as a space for collective moral formation and cultural preservation. Emerging ethical values include respect for sacred places, social responsibility, communal solidarity, and a balance between spirituality and commodification. Based on these findings, this study formulates a *framework of ethics for Islamic religious tourism in the archipelago* which emphasizes four main pillars: The foundation of monotheism and cultural manners, the internalization of values

through spiritual experience, the application of the principles of manners and social responsibility, and orientation to cultural sustainability. Thus, this research contributes to the development of contextual Islamic ethics and provides a practical basis for the management of religious tourism that is civilized, sustainable, and rooted in Islamic values and the culture of the Nusantara.

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