

The Educational Revolution Of Sunan Bonang Through Transformative Islamic-Javanese Syncretism

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the philosophical contributions of Sunan Bonang in the development of Islamic education that is integrated with Javanese culture through a religious-cultural syncretism approach. The purpose of this study is to identify the foundational principles of Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy, to analyze the methods of transmitting Islamic values within the context of Javanese culture, and to evaluate the relevance of his thoughts to character formation in contemporary Islamic education. The research questions include: (1) What is Sunan Bonang's philosophical conception of harmonizing Islamic teachings with Javanese tradition? (2) What pedagogical strategies did Sunan Bonang employ to transform Islamic values through the medium of local culture? (3) To what extent is Sunan Bonang's religious-cultural syncretism relevant to character formation in the context of modern Islamic education? The methodology employed in this research utilizes a historical-philosophical approach with hermeneutical analysis of primary texts, including Suluk Wujil and Bonang, historical manuscripts from the Walisongo period, as well as observations of contemporary cultural practices that still uphold elements of Sunan Bonang's teachings. The findings of the study indicate that: (1) Sunan Bonang developed a tawhid-based educational philosophy manifested through symbols and narratives of Javanese culture; (2) His pedagogical strategies are multilayered, integrating the traditions of gamelan, tembang, and wayang as media for the transmission of Islamic values; (3) Sunan Bonang's syncretic approach demonstrates effectiveness in the contextualization of Islamic teachings without compromising theological essence; (4) The character formation model rooted in sufistic values combined with local wisdom creates a distinctive foundation for the identity of Nusantara Islam. The results of this study provide an alternative philosophical framework for the development of contemporary Islamic education that is responsive to cultural diversity and the challenges of globalization.

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Introduction

The process of Islamization in the Archipelago, particularly on the island of Java during the 15th and 16th centuries, represents a unique phenomenon in the history of global Islamic

dissemination. Unlike several other regions in the world that experienced Islamization through military or political means, Java underwent a relatively peaceful religious transformation through cultural approaches (Azra, 2004; Ricklefs, 2006). In this context, the Walisongo—nine revered saints acknowledged as pioneers of Islam's spread in Java—played a central role in developing a method of preaching that was adaptive to the socio-cultural realities of the local community (Woodward, 2010). Among the figures of Walisongo, Sunan Bonang (Makhdum Ibrahim, 1465-1525) stands out as an individual who cultivated a distinctive philosophical-pedagogical approach to transmit Islamic values through the medium of Javanese culture, which had been influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions for centuries.

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding Walisongo and their contributions to the Islamization of Java from various perspectives. Works such as those by (Srimulyani, 2010) and (Laffan, 2011) explore the historical dimensions of Islamic dissemination in Java, while research by (Burhanudin, 2007) and (Hefner, 2011) analyzes the socio-political dimensions of this Islamization process. In the field of Islamic education, studies like those by (Dhofier, 2011) regarding the pesantren tradition and (Lukens-Bull, 2005) addressing the negotiation of modernity within traditional Islamic education have notably contributed to the understanding of educational transformation in Indonesia. However, the literature lacks studies that specifically elaborate on the philosophical dimensions of Islamic education developed by Sunan Bonang and his contributions to character development through a religious-cultural syncretism approach.

Significant gaps exist within the current literature. Firstly, the majority of studies on Sunan Bonang tend to be descriptive-historical in nature (Sunyoto, 2012; Tjandrasasmita, 2009) without an in-depth analysis of the philosophical-pedagogical dimensions of his preaching methods. Secondly, while studies on Islamic-Javanese syncretism, such as those by (Geertz, 1976) and (Beatty, 1999), exist, there has been insufficient attention to how Sunan Bonang conceptualized and implemented the blending of Islamic values with Javanese cultural elements within the context of character education. Thirdly, the relevance of Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy in the contemporary landscape of Islamic education—confronted with challenges of globalization, extremism, and identity crises—has not been comprehensively explored.

This research aims to develop a theoretical framework that integrates knowledge transmission theories within the Islamic tradition (Al-Attas, 1980; Nasr, 2006) with cultural transformation theories (Bourdieu, 1990; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) and contemporary character education approaches (Lickona, 1992; Noddings, 2002). This theoretical integration enables a profound analysis of the philosophical, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions of Sunan Bonang's contributions to the development of an Islamic education model grounded in religious-cultural syncretism. Additionally, this framework provides a new perspective on understanding how universal Islamic values are transmitted and internalized through local cultural mediums without compromising their theological essence.

The novelty of this research lies in four primary aspects. First, it offers a comprehensive articulation of Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy that transcends the dominant historical-descriptive narratives found in previous studies. Second, it includes an in-depth analysis of Sunan Bonang's pedagogical methods in integrating Islamic values with Javanese cultural elements such as *tembang*, *gamelan*, and *wayang*. Third, it reconstructs the concept of religious-cultural syncretism as exemplified by Sunan Bonang as a model for character education that is responsive

to local contexts. Finally, it elaborates on the relevance of Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy in the development of contemporary Islamic education, particularly in addressing multicultural challenges and globalization.

The contributions of this research are significant across several dimensions. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic educational philosophy by providing a perspective rooted in the intellectual traditions of the Nusantara region. Methodologically, it offers an integrative approach to analyzing the philosophical, historical, and cultural dimensions of traditional Islamic educational practices. Practically, this research lays a conceptual foundation for the development of contemporary Islamic education models that are responsive to cultural diversity and global challenges, while steadfastly adhering to the fundamental principles of Islam.

In a broader context, this research also contributes to the dialogue between the intellectual heritage of Nusantara Islam and the global discourse on multicultural education and character development. By analyzing the philosophical and pedagogical contributions of Sunan Bonang in the development of education based on religious and cultural syncretism, this study not only fills a gap in the academic literature but also offers alternative perspectives for conceptualizing inclusive, contextual, and transformative Islamic education. In an era where character education is increasingly vital as a response to a crisis of values and identity, the intellectual legacy of Sunan Bonang provides valuable inspiration and insights on how Islamic values can be transmitted and internalized through approaches that respect cultural diversity and local traditions.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach utilizing library research methods that concentrate on a philosophical, historical, and cultural exploration of Sunan Bonang's contributions to character education rooted in Islamic principles and Javanese culture (Conway & Stanley, 2006). This approach has been selected due to the conceptual and interpretative nature of the topic under examination, emphasizing a profound understanding of classical texts, traditional manuscripts, and cultural heritage that reflect the educational philosophies and practices of Sunan Bonang. Furthermore, this method enables the researcher to uncover elements of syncretism in the form of values, symbols, and socio-religious practices that are prevalent within Javanese society (Conway & Stanley, 2006).

The primary data sources for this research consist of manuscripts of suluk songs, serat texts, and classical works historically associated with Sunan Bonang, such as *Suluk Wujil*, *Suluk Bonang*, and records concerning the missionary activities of Wali Songo as documented in local chronicles and manuscripts. Secondary data is obtained from various scholarly literature related to Islamic education, Javanese philosophy, cultural studies, and journal articles discussing syncretism and character in the context of Islam in the archipelago. Data collection is conducted through intensive exploration of literary works in national libraries, digital libraries, and reputable academic sources (Togia & Malliari, 2017).

The data analysis techniques employed include hermeneutic analysis and content analysis (Brennen, 2021). The hermeneutic analysis is utilized to interpret the symbolic and metaphorical meanings within traditional texts, particularly in the context of educational teachings and character development. In contrast, content analysis is employed to identify patterns of values, educational principles, and elements of religious-cultural syncretism contained within Sunan

Bonang's works. This analysis is conducted by correlating literary findings with the conceptual framework of character education in Islam and Javanese cultural philosophy (Wertz, 2011).

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, triangulation of sources and theories is undertaken by comparing interpretations from various literature and theoretical approaches such as Islamic education, moral philosophy, and cultural anthropology (Flick, 2018). Additionally, the researcher's interpretations are subjected to rigorous examination through scholarly discussions with experts in Javanese culture and Islamic education, ensuring that the interpretations of both texts and cultural contexts are not merely subjective, but are grounded in authentic and academic cultural understanding.

Result and Discussion

1. Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Education in the Thought of Sunan Bonang

The findings regarding the philosophical foundations of Islamic education developed by Sunan Bonang, a prominent figure among the Walisongo deeply involved in the propagation of Islam in Java, reveal significant insights. Through a comprehensive analysis of his primary texts, this research identifies that Sunan Bonang has formulated a philosophical education system that integrates Islamic values with Javanese local wisdom.

Table 1. Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Education in the Thought of Sunan Bonang

Research Aspect	Findings
Data Sources	Primary manuscripts attributed to Sunan Bonang: <i>Suluk Wujil</i> and Bonang manuscripts
Philosophical Foundation	Rooted in the concept of <i>tawhīd</i> (the oneness of God), manifested through a complex metaphysical system.
Adaptation of Sufi Concepts	Develops <i>manunggaling kawula-Gusti</i> (the union of servant and Lord) from Ibn 'Arabī's concept of <i>wahdat al-wujūd</i> , reconstructed to avoid pantheistic interpretation
Philosophical Proposition 1	<i>Kawruh sangkan-paran</i> (knowledge of origin and destination): True knowledge stems from a deep understanding of human origin from, and return to, God
Philosophical Proposition 2	<i>Maqām ma'rifah</i> as the peak of education: The highest aim of education is achieving <i>ma'rifah</i> (gnosis), transcending rational knowledge into intuitive-experiential insight
Philosophical Proposition 3	<i>Kasampurnan sejati</i> (true perfection): Human perfection lies in harmonizing the external (<i>sharī'ah</i>) and internal (<i>ḥaqīqah</i>) dimensions of life
Philosophical Proposition 4	<i>Manunggaling kawula-Gusti</i> as a pedagogical metaphor: Understood not ontologically but metaphorically, to represent spiritual transformation
Epistemological System	Integrates rational knowledge (<i>ngelmu</i>), spiritual insight (<i>ma'rifah</i>), and cultural wisdom (<i>kawruh</i>) within a hierarchically interconnected framework

Tradition Synthesis	Represents a creative synthesis between Islamic Sufi tradition (especially Ghazalian) and Javanese knowledge traditions shaped by Hindu-Buddhist influences
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This indicates that Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy possesses significant philosophical depth and relevance to contemporary Islamic education. The philosophical foundations he developed reflect a holistic and integrative educational model that emphasizes the balance between external and internal dimensions of the educational process. Sunan Bonang's approach, which incorporates Sufi concepts aligned with Javanese local wisdom, exemplifies a successful model of Islamic indigenization that maintains the principle of Tawhid as its primary foundation (Ryan, 2003).

The findings of this study provide new insights into how Islamic values can be integrated with local wisdom without losing their essence. This holds important implications for the development of contextual and responsive Islamic education that addresses the diverse needs of Indonesian society. The philosophical educational model of Sunan Bonang can serve as an inspiration for efforts aimed at reformulating Islamic education to be more adaptive and transformative in the contemporary era (Alatas, 2016).

The philosophical conception of Islamic education articulated by Sunan Bonang exhibits distinctive characteristics when compared to the classical Islamic educational thought of Muslim philosophers such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun (Ashimi, 2023). Whereas classical Muslim philosophers tend to develop universal philosophical systems that are relatively detached from local cultural contexts, Sunan Bonang effectively established a philosophical system that is intrinsically linked to the Javanese cultural context. This approach reflects a profound understanding of the principle of *urf* (local customs/traditions) within Islamic legal methodology, acknowledging the validity of local traditions so long as they do not contradict the fundamental principles of Islam (Hassan, 2024).

Sunan Bonang's educational philosophy, which emphasizes the integration of Sharia and reality, aligns with the thoughts of Al-Ghazali, albeit with significant differences in contextualization. While Al-Ghazali employs metaphors and terminology rooted in Arab-Persian tradition, Sunan Bonang utilizes metaphors and symbols derived from Javanese culture (Aljunied, 2025). This illustrates that Sunan Bonang did not merely transplant Islamic educational philosophy from the Middle East to Java; rather, he engaged in a creative reconstruction that responded to the social and cultural realities of the local community.

Sunan Bonang's contextual approach to Islamic education demonstrates a profound understanding of the principle of *dakwah bil hikmah* (invitation to Islam with wisdom) as emphasized in the Qur'an. Through this strategy, Sunan Bonang successfully created an educational model that is not only relevant to the spiritual needs of Javanese society but also reinforces their cultural identity.

The philosophical significance of Sunan Bonang's approach lies in its capacity to address the dualism between universality and particularity in Islamic educational thought. He illustrates that the universal principles of Islam can be expressed through particular cultural forms without losing their essence. This philosophical model offers a valuable conceptual framework for the development of contemporary Islamic education that seeks to balance fidelity to Islamic tradition with responsiveness to local contexts (Mulyo, 2023).

The relevance of Sunan Bonang's philosophical conception in the context of contemporary Islamic education lies in its ability to offer a model for integrating universal Islamic values with local wisdom, thus avoiding the traditional dichotomy between traditionalism and modernism. This approach serves as an alternative to Islamic education models that are overly puritanical and dismissive of cultural dimensions, as well as models that are excessively accommodating to modernity at the expense of losing their Islamic identity roots.

2. The Pedagogical Strategy of Sunan Bonang in the Transmission of Islamic Values through the Medium of Javanese Culture

Sunan Bonang is recognized as one of the influential figures among the Walisongo, playing a significant role in the dissemination of Islam throughout the island of Java. The success of his missionary endeavors can largely be attributed to the cultural approach he developed, which involved the adaptation of various elements of Javanese culture as a medium for the transmission of Islamic values. Through an analysis of literary works, historical records, and ongoing cultural practices, this research reveals the multilayered pedagogical strategies employed by Sunan Bonang.

Table 2. The Pedagogical Strategy of Sunan Bonang in the Transmission of Islamic Values through the Medium of Javanese Culture

Pedagogical Strategy	Description and Findings
Transformation of <i>Tembang</i> and <i>Suluk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Modification of <i>macapat</i> Javanese poetic forms by integrating Islamic concepts (<i>tawhīd</i>, <i>ma'rifah</i>, ethics) b. Systematic use of specific <i>tembang</i> meters based on themes: <i>Asmaradana</i> for divine love, <i>Durma</i> for spiritual struggle c. Adaptation of emotional characteristics of each meter to enhance da'wah messages
Transformation of <i>Gamelan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction of the <i>bonang</i> gamelan instrument (associated with the name of Sunan Bonang himself) b. Modification of Javanese <i>gending</i> compositions to convey Islamic teachings c. Use of musical structures that reflect Islamic cosmological concepts d. <i>Gending</i> cycles represent the spiritual journey of the human soul (<i>maqāmāt</i>)
Adaptation of <i>Wayang</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Narrative and character modifications in <i>wayang</i> performances to integrate Islamic values b. Systematic transformation of the <i>Dewa Ruci</i> play from a Hindu tale about Bhima into a Sufi allegory of the quest for <i>ma'rifah</i>
Development of Dialogical-Experiential Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implementation of dialogical pedagogical methods between teacher (<i>murshid</i>) and student, as in <i>Suluk Wujil</i> b. Emphasis on direct spiritual experience rather than mere verbal transmission of knowledge
Institutionalization of Learning Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Development of pesantren-based learning models b. Integration of Sufi elements with the traditional Javanese knowledge transmission system

The pedagogical strategies of Sunan Bonang reflect a creative and effective model of the indigenization of Islam, wherein universal Islamic values are articulated through local cultural expressions without compromising the essence of the teachings. This approach demonstrates a profound cultural sensitivity and an in-depth understanding of the psychological dynamics of the Javanese society during his time (Afandi, 2023). In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the pedagogical model developed by Sunan Bonang provides valuable inspiration for the development of contextual and responsive Islamic education that addresses the needs of a multicultural society. The integration of art, dialogue, and spiritual experiences in the learning process represents an intriguing alternative to the textual-normative models of Islamic education, which tend to overlook aesthetic and cultural dimensions.

Sunan Bonang's pedagogical strategies embody a transformative educational approach that transcends conventional knowledge transmission models. Rather than relying solely on verbal indoctrination of doctrinal beliefs, Sunan Bonang utilized cultural mediums to create aesthetic-spiritual experiences that facilitate the organic internalization of Islamic values. This method aligns with the principle of "*al-hikmah wa al-mau'idzah al-Hashanah*" (wisdom and good counsel) emphasized in the Qur'an as an effective method of preaching, as highlighted in Surah An-Nahl, verse 125:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is rightly guided." (Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl [16]: 125)

The philosophy of transformative education is manifested in the Gambuh poetry composed by Sunan Bonang, which continues to be preserved to this day.

Table 3. The moral message of Tembang Gambuh and its translation.

Tembang Gambuh	Translation
<i>Sekar Gambuh ping catur,</i>	In the fourth stanza of the Gambuh verse,
<i>Kang cinatur polah kang kalantur,</i>	Describes behavior that has gone astray,
<i>Tanpa tutur katula-tula katali,</i>	Without guidance, blindly imitating others, ensnared in confusion,
<i>Kadaluwarsa katutuh,</i>	Life becomes outdated and directionless,
<i>Kapatuh pan dadi awon.</i>	As a result, it leads to ruin and moral decay.

In this stanza, Sunan Bonang articulates the significance of guidance and spiritual advice in shaping noble behavior, resonating with the concept of mau'idzah hasanah found in the Qur'an.

Compared to the pedagogical strategies formulated by other notable figures of the Walisongo, Sunan Bonang's approach places a stronger emphasis on the aesthetic-musical dimension as a medium for education. This reflects his intuitive understanding of the Javanese

cultural tendency to highly value artistic expression and aesthetic experiences as manifestations of spirituality. In this context, Sunan Bonang not only employs cultural media as a strategic instrument but also acknowledges the intrinsic spiritual dimensions present in these cultural expressions (Afandi, 2023).

The relevance of Sunan Bonang's pedagogical strategy within the realm of contemporary Islamic education lies in its ability to propose an educational model that transcends the dichotomies of rational-intuitive, cognitive-affective, and verbal-experiential dimensions. In an era where formal education primarily emphasizes cognitive and rational aspects, Sunan Bonang's approach provides an alternative perspective that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions into a holistic learning process (Zarkasi, 2019).

This approach is particularly pertinent within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, which often finds itself polarized between education oriented towards classical traditions and that focused on modernity. An educational model inspired by Sunan Bonang can bridge this gap by offering a creative synthesis of traditional values and contemporary needs.

By adapting Sunan Bonang's strategies, contemporary Islamic education can develop methodologies that are more responsive to the diverse learning styles of students and more effective in internalizing Islamic values through meaningful experiences that engage various dimensions of humanity.

3. Comparative Analysis of Character Concepts in Islamic and Javanese Traditions: The Syncretic Model of Sunan Bonang

The character development model proposed by Sunan Bonang exemplifies how Islamic values can be seamlessly integrated into the established cultural framework of Java through a structured and strategic syncretic approach. The following analysis highlights key aspects of this model.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Character Concepts within Islamic and Javanese Traditions: The Syncretic Model of Sunan Bonang

Aspect	Islamic Tradition (Akhlaq)	Javanese Tradition (Budi Pekerti)	Sunan Bonang's Model of Syncretism
Philosophical Foundation	Tawhid (Oneness of God)	Unity of microcosm and macrocosm	Tawhid is the organizing principle with adaptation to Javanese cosmology
Spiritual Dimension	Formal worship and vertical relationship with God	Spiritual practice and the pursuit of inner perfection	Integration of Islamic worship with transformed Javanese spiritual practices
Core Values	Sincerity (Ikhlas), patience (Sabr), humility (Tawadhu), justice (Adl)	Selflessness (<i>Sepi ing pamrih</i>), diligence (<i>Rame ing gawe</i>), harmony (<i>Memayu hayuning bawana</i>)	Reinterpretation of Javanese values within an Islamic framework
Social Expression	Brotherhood (<i>Ukhuwah</i>), social	Empathy (<i>Tepa selira</i>), mutual cooperation	Adaptation of Javanese communal traditions

	ties (<i>Silaturahmi</i>), charity (<i>Sadaqah</i>)	(<i>Gotong royong</i>), social harmony (<i>Rukun</i>)	with Islamic brotherhood values
Teaching Methodology	Instruction (<i>Talqin</i>), education (<i>Tarbiyah</i>), exemplary role model (<i>Uswah Hasanah</i>)	Advice (<i>Pitutur</i>), teaching (<i>Piwulang</i>), songs (<i>Tembang</i>), allegories (<i>Sanepa</i>)	Use of Javanese cultural media (songs, wayang) to convey Islamic teachings
Process of Transformation	Spiritual struggle (<i>Mujahadah</i>), discipline (<i>Riyadhah</i>), stages of purification (<i>Takhalli-Tahalli- Tajalli</i>)	Control of desires, refinement of feelings (<i>Olah rasa</i>), and holistic worship (<i>Sembah raga- cipta-jiwa-rasa</i>)	Synthesis of character formation processes with emphasis on the inner dimension.

Sunan Bonang's syncretic approach demonstrates expertise in bridging two significant traditions without diminishing the essence of either. He successfully accommodated fundamental Islamic values within the established Javanese cultural paradigm, creating a meaningful and contextual synthesis (Brakel, 2004). This method not only facilitated the acceptance of Islamic teachings among the Javanese populace but also enriched both traditions.

An essential aspect of this model is its ability to identify points of convergence between Islamic values and Javanese wisdom. Rather than imposing a singular interpretation, Sunan Bonang fostered a dialogue between the traditions that engendered a deeper understanding of universal concepts, such as virtue, spiritual balance, and social responsibility.

This syncretic strategy entails the transformation of local symbols, the adaptation of educational methodologies, and the reinterpretation of cultural narratives to communicate Islamic teachings. Consequently, Islamic values do not emerge as foreign entities that threaten local cultural identity; instead, they are presented as an enhancement of the existing wisdom within the Javanese tradition (Pamungkas, Hastangka, Raharjo, Sudigdo, & Agung, 2023).

Sunan Bonang's syncretic model showcases a "selective inculturation" method that preserves the essence of Islam while adopting various Javanese cultural forms. This approach has proven effective in creating a coherent and integrated value system, rather than a mere eclectic mix lacking a solid foundation. The model's success lies in Sunan Bonang's ability to balance steadfast adherence to Islamic principles with methodological flexibility, allowing for the adaptation of Javanese cultural expressions. The process of symbolic transformation plays a crucial role in grounding Islamic concepts within the local cultural context without compromising the fundamental values of Islam (Mahmudhassan, 2024).

The religious-cultural syncretism developed by Sunan Bonang presents an alternative perspective in contemporary character education discourse. In contrast to universalistic approaches that often overlook cultural dimensions or relativistic strategies that blur fundamental values, Sunan Bonang's model offers a contextual approach (Suroso & Rohmadi, 2023). This approach acknowledges the universality of core Islamic values while also appreciating the diversity of their cultural expressions.

Furthermore, the religious-cultural syncretism articulated by Sunan Bonang fundamentally differs from forms of syncretism criticized by Puritan theologians. While the criticized syncretism often leads to doctrinal compromises that undermine the principle of tauhid (the oneness of God), the syncretism embodied in Sunan Bonang's teachings strengthens this principle by making it more accessible and relatable through culturally familiar mediums for the Javanese society. This illustrates that the dichotomy of "pure Islam" versus "syncretic Islam" frequently debated in

contemporary discourse is insufficient to grasp the complexities of the cultural dynamics surrounding Islam as fostered by Sunan Bonang (Nourse, 1994).

In the context of contemporary character education, Sunan Bonang's model offers a conceptual framework for navigating the tensions between Islamic identity and cultural identity. This approach is particularly relevant against the backdrop of globalization, which tends to produce two extreme responses: cultural homogenization that undermines diversity, or identity fragmentation that leads to conflict. The model proposed by Sunan Bonang demonstrates that an authentic Islamic identity does not necessitate a total rejection of local cultural expressions and that an appreciation for local wisdom does not require the sacrifice of fundamental Islamic principles.

4. Intellectual Genealogy and Academic Network of Sunan Bonang: The Architect of Nusantara Islamic Tradition

The study of Sunan Bonang reveals that his intellectual influence serves as a confluence of various scholarly traditions that interact in a dynamic manner. His position as an active agent in the synthesis of knowledge designates him as one of the principal architects of a distinctly Nusantara Islamic identity.

Table 5. Intellectual Genealogy and Academic Network of Sunan Bonang: The Architect of Nusantara Islamic Tradition

Intellectual Tradition	Source of Influence	Manifestation in Sunan Bonang's Thought	Pedagogical Implications
Sunni Sufism	Al-Ghazali (<i>Ihya Ulumuddin</i>)	Emphasis on the balance between Sharia and Haqiqa; the concept of <i>Tazkiyatun Nafs</i>	Gradual character education (<i>Takhalli-Tahalli-Tajalli</i>); integration of spirituality into daily life
Philosophical Sufism	Ibn Arabi (<i>Wahdat al-Wujud</i>)	Interpretation of <i>Manunggaling Kawula-Gusti</i> within the framework of <i>Tawhid</i>	Metaphorical approach in explaining complex concepts; use of local symbolism for metaphysical ideas
Shafi'i Jurisprudence	Networks of scholars from the Middle East and Gujarat	Flexibility in applying Islamic law by considering ' <i>Urf</i> (local customs)	Gradual introduction of Islamic practices; ritual adaptation while maintaining core substance
Javanese-Hindu Philosophy	Texts such as <i>Arjunawiwaha</i> and <i>Nagarakretagama</i>	Reinterpretation of concepts of perfection and cosmic unity	Use of cultural mediums (wayang, tembang) for value transmission; selective appropriation of local symbols
Walisongo Network	Sunan Ampel (father), Sunan Kalijaga (disciple)	Fusion of normative and adaptive approaches;	Community-based educational model; integration of

development of cultural-based <i>dakwah</i> (Islamic propagation)	pesantren with the social life of the community
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The intellectual genealogy of Sunan Bonang illustrates that the transmission of Islamic knowledge to the Nusantara was not a unidirectional process; rather, it involved a complex interplay characterized by reception, transformation, and creative contextualization (Alatas, 2016). Sunan Bonang played an active role in synthesizing diverse intellectual influences into a pedagogical framework that was relevant to the socio-cultural context of Java. Consequently, the educational model he developed offers a structure that remains faithful to universal Islamic principles while being responsive to local wisdom. This approach subsequently emerged as a blueprint for the development of Islamic educational institutions in the Nusantara, which integrated spiritual, intellectual, and cultural dimensions within a cohesive and continuous system (Afandi, 2023).

The intellectual genealogy of Sunan Bonang reflects the complexity of the dynamics of Islamization in the Nusantara, which cannot be understood through a simplistic diffusion model. Instead of merely adopting and adapting Islamic intellectual traditions from the centers of Islamic civilization in the Middle East, Sunan Bonang executed a creative reconstruction that resulted in an articulation of Islam that is organically linked to the Nusantara context (Kersten, 2017). This underscores the importance of understanding the Islamization of the Nusantara as a process of vernacularization involving local agents such as Sunan Bonang, rather than being perceived merely as a passive diffusion from center to periphery.

This perspective offers significant contributions toward deconstructing the colonial narrative regarding Javanese Islam as a form of "syncretic" belief system that is implicitly considered less authentic compared to the "pure" Islam of the Middle East. As demonstrated by (Hodgson, Capriles, & Fenlon, 1977) and (Azra, 2006), the dichotomy between "normative Islam" versus "historical Islam" or "textual Islam" versus "contextual Islam" often reflects an Orientalist bias that fails to appreciate the internal dynamics within Islamic traditions. The intellectual genealogy of Sunan Bonang demonstrates that the process of contextualizing Islam in Java is not a marginal phenomenon; rather, it is a manifestation of the vitality of Islamic traditions that can adapt to various socio-cultural contexts without forfeiting their fundamental principles.

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, understanding the intellectual lineage of Sunan Bonang provides a conceptual framework for developing Islamic education that is rooted in local traditions, and liberated from the constraints of cultural essentialism. This model is particularly relevant in addressing the challenges of globalization, which tends to create tensions between local and global identities.

Moreover, this approach is crucial in light of the emergence of Puritan movements advocating for the homogenization of Islamic practices without taking into account the diversity of cultural contexts. An understanding of Sunan Bonang's intellectual heritage can serve as a foundation for the development of Islamic education that is both inclusive and responsive to local wisdom.

5. The Relevance of Sunan Bonang's Educational Model in the Context of Contemporary Islamic Education

The educational model proposed by Sunan Bonang five centuries ago exhibits an astonishing relevance to the challenges faced by contemporary Islamic education. This integrative approach, which values local contexts while upholding universal Islamic principles, provides valuable insights for addressing various issues in modern Islamic education.

Table 6. Relevance of Sunan Bonang's Educational Model in the Context of Contemporary Islamic Education

Dimension of Relevance	Sunan Bonang's Model	Contemporary Challenges	Potential Applications
Value-Based Education	Integration of Islamic values with local wisdom; use of cultural mediums for internalization of values	Character crisis; formalism in religious education; the gap between knowledge and practice	Development of character education models that transcend indoctrination approaches; revitalization of arts and culture as mediums for value transmission
Religious Moderation	Inclusive approach that appreciates cultural diversity; contextual interpretation of Islam	Religious extremism; social polarization; identity conflicts	Development of counter-narratives against extremism; models for intercultural dialogue based on shared values
Multiculturalism	Religious-cultural syncretism integrating Islamic elements with local traditions.	Social segregation; intolerance; politicization of identity	Development of multicultural education that recognizes unique identities while bridging differences
Integral Spirituality	Holistic education integrating rational, emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions	Spiritual alienation; science-religion dichotomy; materialism	Development of educational models that address spiritual needs without compromising rationality
Decolonization of Knowledge	Development of a distinctive Nusantara Islamic intellectual tradition	Epistemological hegemony; Arab-centrism; marginalization of local knowledge	Reconstruction of Islamic education curricula that appreciate the diversity of Islamic intellectual traditions

The framework established by Sunan Bonang presents an alternative paradigm that can effectively tackle an array of contemporary Islamic educational challenges. Its capacity to respect cultural diversity while maintaining the authenticity of Islamic values offers a significant perspective for the development of Islamic education that is responsive to the global-local context.

This approach demonstrates that Islamic education need not be characterized by a dichotomy between "modernity" and "tradition," or between "global" and "local." Instead, it can

be developed as a creative synthesis that responds to contemporary challenges while remaining rooted in authentic spiritual and intellectual traditions (Rahman, 2017). Therefore, Sunan Bonang's model provides a conceptual foundation for developing transformative, contextual, and sustainable Islamic education within the multicultural society of the 21st century.

The relevance of Sunan Bonang's thoughts in the realm of contemporary Islamic education lies in its capability to offer a model of integration between tradition and modernity that avoids simplistic dichotomies. Unlike traditionalist approaches that tend to be reactive towards modernity, or modernist frameworks that often adopt modernity uncritically, Sunan Bonang's model offers a dialogical approach that facilitates the recontextualization of Islamic values in responding to contemporary challenges (Abbas, Fatimah, Rochmawan, & Wafa, 2023).

In addressing issues of extremism and fundamentalism, Sunan Bonang's approach, which fosters an inclusive understanding of Islam that appreciates cultural diversity, presents a more effective alternative compared to repressive or confrontational strategies. Research on radicalization indicates that one of the contributing factors to susceptibility to extremist ideologies is the alienation from cultural identity and identity crises. Sunan Bonang's approach, which integrates Islamic identity with cultural identity, lays the groundwork for the development of a holistic identity that is resilient against extremist narratives.

The practical implications of this research encompass the development of an Islamic education curriculum that integrates universal Islamic values with local wisdom; the revitalization of pedagogical methods that utilize cultural media as a means of transmitting values; and the establishment of a character education model that emphasizes the internalization of values through meaningful experiences rather than mere verbal indoctrination (Sanjani, Zain, & Mustofa, 2024). This model can be implemented across various educational contexts, including formal institutions (schools and madrasahs), non-formal sites (Islamic boarding schools and religious assemblies), and informal environments (families and communities) (Hasib, 2024).

On a broader scale, this research contributes to the dialogue between the intellectual heritage of Nusantara Islam and the global discourse on multicultural education, character formation, and contemporary spirituality. By reconstructing the thoughts of Sunan Bonang as a representation of the intellectual tradition of Nusantara Islam, this study illustrates that peripheral regions are not merely passive recipients of intellectual traditions developed in central areas; rather, they are active participants in fostering interpretations of Islam that are responsive to local contexts and global challenges (Sidi, 2020).

The educational approach inspired by the thoughts of Sunan Bonang offers an alternative that bridges the tension between universalism and particularism within Islam. This model recognizes that universal Islamic values can be expressed through diverse cultural forms without losing their essence. Consequently, Islamic education rooted in local traditions yet open to global developments can serve as an effective bulwark against two extremes: unfiltered Westernization and puritanism that rejects local wisdom (Chuanchen & Zaini, 2023).

Furthermore, this research provides a theoretical and historical foundation for the development of an educational model that encourages students to become authentic Muslims while also being inclusive global citizens. In the pluralistic context of Indonesia, this approach is highly relevant for fostering a robust religious identity that still respects diversity (Hutabarat, 2023). The education model based on the thoughts of Sunan Bonang may also serve as a source of

inspiration for other Muslim countries facing similar challenges in balancing tradition with the demands of modernity.

By revisiting the intellectual heritage of Nusantara scholars such as Sunan Bonang, this research also plays a role in the decolonization of knowledge and in strengthening Islamic identity grounded in the richness of local traditions while maintaining critical engagement with global intellectual developments.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research reveals that the religious-cultural syncretism developed by Sunan Bonang is not a superficial syncretism that results in hybridization devoid of structure; rather, it can be characterized as a "transformative syncretism" that maintains monotheism (tauhid) as its primary organizational principle. In the educational model he developed, Sunan Bonang integrates Islamic values with Javanese traditions through five interrelated dimensions of syncretism: philosophical (reconceptualization of tauhid through Javanese metaphors), symbolic (transformation of cultural symbols as a medium for the transmission of values), methodological (a multilayered approach that combines both the manifest and the spiritual dimensions), praxis (integration of rituals and social practices), and ethical (harmonization of Islamic morals with Javanese virtues). Through a systematic process of "selective inculturation," elements of Javanese tradition are not merely passively adopted but are creatively transformed to express Islamic values in a manner that resonates with the local cultural context.

The significant contribution of Sunan Bonang's model of transformative syncretism lies in its ability to transcend the dichotomy between dogmatic universalism and cultural relativism, which often dominates contemporary Islamic educational discourse. The pedagogical strategies he developed exemplify a multilayered and multidimensional approach that employs cultural mediums such as *tembang*, *gamelan*, and *wayang* not merely as strategic instruments, but as cultural expressions imbued with inherent spiritual dimensions. This model acknowledges that the universality of Islamic values can be manifested through diverse cultural expressions and asserts that the contextualization of Islamic teachings is not a form of doctrinal compromise, but rather a manifestation of the vitality of Islamic traditions that is adept at adapting to various socio-cultural contexts without losing its theological essence.

The contemporary relevance of Sunan Bonang's model of transformative syncretism resides in its capacity to offer a conceptual framework for developing Islamic education that is responsive to local contexts while simultaneously being able to integrate religious identity with cultural identity in the face of globalization and extremism. This model provides a foundation for revitalizing value-based education, developing pedagogical approaches that respond to extremism, cultivating multicultural education, fostering integral spirituality, and decolonizing the Islamic education curriculum. By reconstructing Sunan Bonang's thought as a representation of the intellectual tradition within the Nusantara Islamic heritage, this research demonstrates that the scholarly traditions that have evolved in the "periphery" of the Islamic world are not merely passive recipients, but actively contribute to the development of contextual and transformative interpretations of Islam.

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