

Cultural da'wah approach to environmental conservation on the local wisdom of Javanese communities, Indonesia

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Abstract. Chandrasari N, Izdiyar RS, Risyafa ZA. 2025. *Cultural da'wah approach to environmental conservation on the local wisdom of Javanese communities, Indonesia. Dakwah & Islamic Outreach 1*: 26-37. This study investigates the integration of Javanese cultural wisdom into Islamic da'wah as a contextual and strategic approach to promoting environmental conservation. Rooted in an interpretive and thematic analysis, the research explores how indigenous practices such as rituals, symbols, oral proverbs, sacred sites, and artistic expressions encode ecological values that resonate with key Islamic principles, including *khilāfah* (stewardship), *mīzān* (cosmic balance), and *shukr* (gratitude). Cultural elements like *sedekah bumi*, *nyadran*, ancestral forests, and batik patterns are examined not merely as folklore but as vehicles of moral and ecological meaning, capable of being reinterpreted through Islamic ethical frameworks. The study highlights how such traditions, when engaged respectfully and theologically, can serve as effective platforms for da'wah that is both spiritually grounded and environmentally responsive. While acknowledging the dialectical tensions between faith and tradition—such as issues of syncretism, doctrinal rigidity, and generational shifts the findings suggest that cultural da'wah fosters a participatory and empathetic model of Islamic outreach. This model promotes ethical reflection, strengthens community cohesion, and revitalizes environmental stewardship in ways that align with both local cosmologies and Qur'anic teachings. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic environmentalism by emphasizing the relevance of cultural resilience and local wisdom in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable, and spiritually rooted approach to ecological ethics and da'wah praxis.

Keywords: Cultural da'wah; Javanese wisdom; Islamic environmental ethics; ecological conservation; symbolic tradition

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in ethnic, cultural, and ecological diversity, with over 1,300 recognized ethnic groups (Badan Pusat Statistik 2015). Among these, the Javanese represent the largest ethnic group, accounting for approximately 41% of the national population (Naim and Syahputra 2011). The Javanese culture is well-known for its deeply rooted traditions, refined language, spiritual worldview, and communal values, many of which have significant implications for environmental ethics and natural resource management.

Traditional societies in Indonesia, including Javanese communities, have long practiced forms of environmental conservation that predate modern environmental movements or state regulations (Atmaja and Mutia 2024). These practices are often embedded in local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*), manifested through oral traditions, symbolic rituals, taboos, philosophical teachings, and material culture. Such cultural expressions reflect a holistic understanding of the interdependence between humans and nature, rooted in spiritual values and ancestral guidance (Siswanto 2010; Brata 2016).

From a da'wah perspective, engaging with local wisdom offers a strategic entry point for conveying Islamic teachings in ways that resonate with the lived experiences and worldview of indigenous communities. Cultural

da'wah, or *dakwah kultural*, recognizes that local traditions can serve as a medium for promoting Islamic ethical values, including environmental stewardship (*khilafah fil-ardh*) and the obligation to avoid corruption and destruction on Earth (QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56; Al-Baqarah [2]:11-12). Therefore, harmonizing Islamic messages with Javanese cultural frameworks is not only contextually appropriate but also essential for the development of culturally sensitive and ecologically conscious da'wah models (Roqib 2007).

One notable aspect of Javanese environmental wisdom lies in myth-based conservation. Sacred narratives such as those surrounding Mount Merapi or the Southern Sea (*Segoro Kidul*) are used to instill respect for nature and maintain ecological balance (Endraswara 2016; Ichsan and Hanafiah 2020). Rituals such as *labuhan*, *sedekah bumi*, and *ruwahan* are communal expressions of gratitude, humility, and environmental awareness values which align with the Qur'anic command to be grateful stewards of God's creation (QS. Ibrahim [14]:7; Al-Baqarah [2]:205).

Additionally, the Javanese philosophy of *Memayu Hayuning Bawana*, which translates to *beautifying the beauty of the world*, emphasizes the ethical responsibility of humans to maintain harmony with their environment. This worldview parallels the Islamic concept of *maslahah* (public good) and the prophetic mission of spreading mercy to all of creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) (Nugroho and Elviandri 2018; Widodo et al. 2017).

In the face of rapid modernization and environmental degradation, these indigenous cultural practices are at risk of erosion. Yet they remain valuable cultural capital for promoting sustainable development and ethical environmental behavior. Therefore, understanding and integrating Javanese local wisdom into contemporary Islamic da'wah efforts is crucial for fostering ecological awareness that is both religiously grounded and culturally rooted (Puspayadi and Faujiyah 2024).

This paper aims to explore the forms of environmental conservation practiced by Javanese communities through the lens of cultural da'wah. It highlights how myths, oral traditions, and symbolic rituals function not only as cultural heritage but also as potential media for instilling Islamic ecological ethics within society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Theoretical framework

Concept of cultural da'wah

Cultural da'wah (*dakwah kultural*) refers to a strategy of Islamic propagation that engages with local culture as both a medium and a message for communicating Islamic values. Rather than opposing or rejecting indigenous traditions outright, cultural da'wah seeks to contextualize religious teachings within the framework of local customs, aesthetics, symbols, and wisdoms that are meaningful to the targeted community (Roqib 2007). This approach acknowledges that the success of da'wah does not solely depend on textual or doctrinal authority, but also on the ability of *da'i* to speak the *cultural language* of the people.

Cultural da'wah emphasizes a soft, dialogical, and persuasive method (*bi al-hikmah wa al-mau'izhah al-hasanah*), in line with Qur'anic injunctions such as QS. An-Nahl [16]:125, which calls Muslims to invite others to the path of God with wisdom and good instruction. In multicultural societies like Indonesia, this strategy becomes essential, as religion and culture are deeply interwoven and cannot be separated without creating resistance or social dislocation (Mauliza 2020).

According to Abdullah (2013), cultural da'wah involves the transformation and revitalization of cultural expressions so that they reflect Islamic ethics without erasing the identity of the local community. It does not aim to homogenize culture under a singular religious identity, but to integrate Islamic values in a way that reinforces cultural dignity. This integration allows for continuity between ancestral knowledge and modern Islamic consciousness, making da'wah not only relevant but also empowering.

In the context of Java, this means recognizing that myths, symbols, rituals, and traditional philosophies such as *Memayu Hayuning Bawana* or *Pitutur Luhur* can serve as bridges toward ecological da'wah. Rather than dismissing these traditions as superstition or syncretism, cultural da'wah practitioners are called to reinterpret and redirect their moral content to align with Islamic ecological ethics. As Guest (2016) argues, the cultural memory of a society holds spiritual and moral capital that can be harnessed for religious transformation.

Moreover, cultural da'wah operates within a hermeneutic framework interpreting local beliefs and practices in light of Islamic values, while also interpreting Islam through the cultural experiences of the people (Syabibi 2020). This mutual translation fosters deeper acceptance and spiritual resonance, especially in matters of social ethics such as environmental conservation, communal harmony, and respect for life (*hifz al-nafs* and *hifz al-bi'ah*) (Mu'ti 2019). Therefore, cultural da'wah is not merely an adaptation technique, but a comprehensive methodology for ensuring that Islamic messages are delivered with cultural sensitivity, historical awareness, and ecological relevance.

Environmental ethics in Islam

Islamic teachings provide a robust ethical foundation for environmental conservation, grounded in the principles of *tawhid* (unity of God), *khilafah* (stewardship), and *amanah* (trust) (Zuhdi and Bilhaq 2024). The environment is not only a physical resource for human benefit but also a manifestation of divine creation that reflects the attributes of Allah (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:164; Ar-Rahman [55]:1-13). Human beings, as *khalifah fi al-ardh* (vicegerents on Earth), are entrusted with the responsibility to manage natural resources wisely and to avoid corruption and destruction (QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56; QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11-12).

Islam prohibits exploitative behavior that causes harm to the environment, known as *fasad fi al-ardh*, and commands believers to act justly towards all of God's creation (Masturi 2023). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the sanctity of nature through numerous hadiths, such as *The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you as His stewards over it* (Sahih Muslim), and *Do not waste water, even if you perform ablution on the bank of a running river* (Sunan Ibn Majah). These teachings underscore a profound ethic of moderation, care, and accountability in environmental interactions.

The Islamic worldview recognizes nature (*alam*) as a *sign (ayah)* of divine wisdom. Trees, rivers, animals, and even the stars are mentioned as part of the cosmos that glorifies Allah (QS. Al-Isra' [17]:44). This metaphysical perspective encourages Muslims to develop a spiritual relationship with nature, which fosters an ecological consciousness rooted in devotion rather than utility alone (Nasr 1996).

Islamic ethics also stresses the interconnectedness between environmental degradation and social injustice. Destruction of natural ecosystems often leads to poverty, displacement, and conflict, especially in vulnerable communities. Thus, preserving the environment is not only an act of worship but also a means to achieve social justice (*adl*) and public welfare (*maslahah*). As highlighted by Norman and Ruhullah (2024), the *maqasid al-shari'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) include preservation of life, intellect, lineage, wealth, and religion all of which are impacted by environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, environmental ethics in Islam is dynamic and context-sensitive. While the foundational principles

remain constant, their application must adapt to contemporary ecological challenges such as climate change, deforestation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss. This is where Islamic environmentalism must intersect with local cultural wisdom to form practical, accepted, and holistic conservation strategies (Karman et al. 2023).

In the context of Javanese society, these Islamic ethical principles can find resonance within existing cultural values that emphasize balance, harmony, and respect for nature (Daryono and Syukur 2023). The integration of Islamic environmental ethics into cultural da'wah not only strengthens conservation efforts but also enhances the spiritual legitimacy and social impact of Islamic preaching in the local context.

Local wisdom as a medium of da'wah

Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) represents a form of collective knowledge and ethical guidance developed through the lived experiences of a community in specific ecological, social, and spiritual contexts. For centuries, such wisdom has served as a moral compass for communities in managing natural resources, resolving conflicts, and maintaining social harmony. In Javanese society, local wisdom is expressed through oral traditions, proverbs (*Pitutur Luhur*), myths, rituals, and symbolic art forms that encode ecological values and spiritual insights (Mardikantoro 2013; Widodo et al. 2017).

From the perspective of Islamic communication, local wisdom functions as a valuable cultural idiom through which da'wah can be contextualized and grounded. Rather than imposing abstract religious teachings in ways that alienate local audiences, *da'i* can translate Islamic messages into familiar cultural expressions, allowing the community to internalize them more naturally. As noted by Roqib (2007), da'wah that recognizes and respects indigenous cultural frameworks is more likely to be persuasive, sustainable, and transformative.

For instance, the Javanese concept of *Memayu Hayuning Bawana* to beautify and sustain the harmony of the world shares intrinsic similarities with the Islamic concept of *islah* (reform and restoration). Similarly, the reverence for sacred natural sites (such as mountains, trees, and springs) within Javanese cosmology reflects a deep ecological consciousness that can be aligned with the Islamic principle of *hifz al-bi'ah* (protection of the environment) (Munir 2019). By identifying such shared values, cultural da'wah can act as a bridge between ancestral tradition and Islamic theology, fostering continuity rather than rupture in religious-cultural identity.

Moreover, local wisdom offers practical frameworks for conservation. Traditional agricultural calendars like *Pranoto Mongso* (Octafia 2019), sacred restrictions around water sources, and taboos against tree-cutting or animal harm serve as *de facto* environmental laws. These practices may lack formal legal codification but are deeply respected and socially enforced making them powerful tools for ethical behavior. When integrated with Islamic norms, these local traditions can form a dual-legitimacy system: spiritual-cultural and religious-normative.

The success of da'wah, particularly in rural or traditional communities, often hinges on the ability of da'i and institutions to appreciate and collaborate with local culture rather than opposing it. As Brata (2016) emphasizes, local wisdom is not a rival to religious orthodoxy but a resource for cultural diplomacy and ethical negotiation. This approach not only preserves the dignity of local communities but also supports the overarching Islamic goal of promoting justice, balance (*mizan*), and mercy (*rahmah*) in human-nature relationships.

In summary, when properly understood and engaged, local wisdom can serve as a fertile ground for cultural da'wah, especially in promoting ecological awareness, sustainability, and a spiritually grounded relationship with the environment (Affandi et al. 2022). This synergy opens pathways for Islam to be perceived not merely as a religion of rituals, but as a living guidance (*hudan*) that affirms and enhances the values already present in the local culture.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design with an ethnographic orientation to explore the integration of Javanese local wisdom into cultural da'wah strategies for environmental conservation. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth, nuance, and contextual meaning of symbolic practices, rituals, oral traditions, and environmental values embedded in Javanese culture. Such a design is appropriate for examining how cultural expressions become vehicles for ethical teachings and how they can be aligned with Islamic da'wah principles (Creswell 2013).

Ethnographic elements were included to understand local practices and beliefs from the perspective of community members, particularly those living in rural and semi-urban Javanese settings where cultural rituals related to nature are still preserved (Subandi et al. 2021). The research seeks to reveal not only observable practices, such as *Labuhan* or *Sedekah Bumi*, but also the philosophical and religious meanings attributed to them by local actors (Achmad 2017). Through this approach, the study analyzes both the cultural logic of local wisdom and its potential convergence with Islamic environmental ethics.

This study is also informed by a phenomenological perspective, recognizing that environmental behaviors and religious expressions are shaped by lived experiences, social memory, and inherited traditions. As such, the study avoids imposing external normative judgments and instead focuses on how local actors interpret and practice their environmental ethics in ways that reflect a synthesis between cultural heritage and spiritual values.

The research design thus emphasizes a contextual understanding of Javanese beliefs, myths, and philosophies related to nature; the exploration of da'wah opportunities within those cultural frameworks; and critical reflection on the adaptability and alignment of local traditions with Islamic ecological teachings. In doing so, this study contributes to the broader discourse on culturally grounded Islamic da'wah and demonstrates the relevance of local

wisdom in advancing environmental stewardship within an Islamic ethical framework.

Data sources and collection techniques

The data in this study were obtained from a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through direct observation and semi-structured interviews with cultural practitioners, local community leaders, and Islamic preachers (*da'i*) in selected Javanese communities, particularly in areas where traditions such as *Labuhan*, *Sedekah Laut*, and *Ruwahan* are still actively practiced. These informants were chosen based on their active roles in preserving local customs or in integrating Islamic teachings into communal rituals and environmental practices. Observations focused on symbolic elements within cultural ceremonies, community behaviors around sacred natural sites, and the use of oral expressions like *pitutur luhur* in everyday life.

To complement field data, secondary sources were consulted, including journal articles, historical texts, ethnographic reports, and classical Javanese and Islamic literature related to environmental ethics and cultural traditions. Archival materials from local cultural institutions and religious foundations were also reviewed to trace the evolution of ritual meanings and their relation to Islamic values.

Data collection techniques included field visits, note-taking, photo documentation, and audio recordings of ritual events and interviews. In order to maintain the authenticity of local expressions, vernacular terms were preserved and later interpreted contextually during analysis. The interviews were conducted in Javanese or Indonesian depending on the informant's preference, and later translated into English for academic reporting.

By triangulating multiple sources and techniques, the study ensured the validity of its findings and allowed for a deeper understanding of how environmental ethics are embedded within Javanese cultural life and how these can be transformed into meaningful platforms for da'wah. The approach also helped identify emerging practices that blend traditional wisdom with contemporary Islamic consciousness, especially in the context of ecological challenges faced by the community.

Analytical approach

The analytical approach employed in this study is interpretative and thematic, combining cultural hermeneutics with Islamic ethical reflection. Data analysis was conducted through a multi-layered process that involved identifying key themes, symbols, and values expressed in local cultural practices, and then interpreting them within the framework of Islamic teachings on da'wah and environmental stewardship.

Thematic coding was used to classify the data into major categories such as myth-based conservation, ritualized respect for nature, oral ethical teachings (*Pitutur Luhur*), and symbolic representation of cosmology in material culture. These categories were then examined to reveal how local wisdom functions as an ecological ethic and how it aligns or potentially converges with Qur'anic

principles, prophetic traditions, and the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), particularly in relation to environmental protection (*hifz al-bi'ah*), preservation of life (*hifz al-nafs*), and promotion of public welfare (*maslahah*).

Cultural hermeneutics was employed to interpret rituals, myths, and proverbs not as literal or doctrinal statements but as symbolic forms of moral reasoning, shaped by historical context, communal experience, and worldview. Through this lens, practices such as *labuhan*, *nyadran*, or the veneration of sacred trees and mountains were read as forms of ecological consciousness embedded in spiritual language.

Islamic ethical reflection was used to assess how these cultural expressions may serve as entry points for da'wah. This involved mapping correspondences between local moral values (e.g., harmony with nature, sacredness of life, gratitude to unseen forces) and Islamic principles (e.g., *tawhid*, *shukr*, *adl*). Where tensions existed such as in mythologies that border on syncretism the analysis considered the potential for reinterpretation or reorientation through dialogical da'wah.

This approach allows for a nuanced reading that respects cultural specificity while advancing Islamic normative frameworks. It is also intended to inform a practical da'wah model that is culturally sensitive, environmentally responsible, and theologically grounded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of environmental conservation in Javanese local wisdom

Myth and ritual as ecological communication

In Javanese society, myth and ritual play a central role in shaping collective behavior toward nature. Far from being mere superstition, these elements function as ecological communication tools transmitting values, norms, and taboos that govern how people relate to the natural world. Through symbolic narratives and ceremonial acts, communities are reminded of the sacredness of their environment and are guided to live in harmony with it.

One of the most prominent examples is the myth of *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul*, the Queen of the Southern Sea. Her story is deeply embedded in the collective memory of coastal communities in Central and East Java, particularly in Yogyakarta and Parangtritis. She is believed to be the guardian of the southern ocean and is honored through the *Labuhan* ritual, where offerings are sent to the sea to ensure safety, fertility, and spiritual balance (Jalil 2015). While this belief has mystical overtones, it effectively functions as a mechanism of environmental respect discouraging exploitation and preserving sacred coastal spaces (Endraswara 2012; Ichsan and Hanafiah 2020).

Similarly, the ritual of *sedekah laut* (sea offering), conducted annually in many fishing villages, serves as both a religious and ecological event. On the surface, it appears as a traditional festival with prayers and offerings to the sea. However, it also operates as a communal reinforcement of the sea's ecological limits, expressing

gratitude while symbolically reminding the community not to overexploit marine resources. It aligns with Islamic values of *shukr* (gratitude) and stewardship (*khalifah*), illustrating that sacred narratives can coexist with Islamic ecological ethics when approached with wisdom and contextual understanding (Simanjuntak et al. 2019).

In mountainous regions, similar beliefs are attached to sacred peaks such as Mount Merapi, where eruptions are interpreted not only as natural phenomena but also as signs of cosmic imbalance. The term *Merapi Nduwe Gawe* (Merapi is holding an event) reflects the perception that natural disasters are part of a larger spiritual order, deserving of ritual response and moral reflection. The annual *Larangan* or offering to Merapi's crater is less about controlling nature and more about recognizing one's vulnerability and dependence on it. This ritual reinforces humility and ethical restraint qualities emphasized in Islamic teachings about human position as *abd* (servant) and *khalifah* (guardian) of the Earth (Saptutyingsih 2011; Napsiah 2016).

Other examples include the veneration of sacred trees particularly banyan trees (*Ficus benjamina* L.) which are believed to host spiritual beings (Wilson and Wilson 2013). While some of these beliefs may raise theological questions from an Islamic perspective, the practical implication is ecological namely sacred trees are not cut down, which contributes to biodiversity preservation, soil protection, and water retention. This indirectly supports the Qur'anic instruction to maintain balance (*mizan*) and avoid corruption on Earth (QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:7-9).

Thus, in the Javanese context, myth and ritual are not irrational remnants of a pre-Islamic worldview but rather cultural vehicles for conveying environmental wisdom (Woodward 2004). For da'wah actors, these traditions represent opportunities not threats for promoting Islamic values of sustainability, especially when they are interpreted symbolically and ethically. Rather than erasing them, da'wah should engage with these practices critically and constructively, guiding them toward meanings that affirm tauhid, stewardship, and the sanctity of creation.

Pitutor luhur and environmental ethics

Javanese oral traditions are rich with *Pitutor Luhur*, or noble sayings, which serve as ethical guidance inherited across generations (Kanzunnudin 2017). These expressions, often poetic and metaphorical, reflect deep philosophical insights into the relationship between humans and their surroundings. In the context of environmental behavior, *Pitutor Luhur* acts as a moral compass, reinforcing values such as balance, harmony, moderation, and reverence for the natural world.

One of the most prominent examples is the expression *Memayu Hayuning Bawana*, which literally means *to beautify the beauty of the world*. This phrase encapsulates the Javanese vision of ecological harmony, in which humans are called not only to maintain the existing balance of nature but to actively enhance it through thoughtful actions. The concept encourages restraint from destructive behavior and motivates individuals to become agents of peace and restoration. From an Islamic perspective, this

aligns closely with the principle of *islah* (reform) and the role of humans as *khalifah fi al-ardh*, mandated to nurture rather than corrupt the Earth (QS. Hud [11]:61; Al-A'raf [7]:56).

The wisdom of *Pitutor Luhur* also extends to specific environmental components. For instance, *Hamemayu Hayuning Wono* (to preserve the beauty of the forest) teaches the importance of maintaining forest ecosystems as a source of life and sustainability. Forests are revered not only for their economic value but also for their spiritual and ecological functions. Similarly, *Hamemayu Hayuning Tirta* (to protect the purity of water) underscores water's sacred and communal nature. It implies a collective responsibility to safeguard rivers, springs, and lakes from pollution and overuse (Arrosyid 2015). These values are deeply resonant with Islamic injunctions on resource justice and purity, such as the emphasis on clean water for ablution and the sinfulness of wasting it (Sunan Ibn Majah).

Beyond environmental elements, *Pitutor Luhur* frames a comprehensive worldview in which nature, culture, and human character are intertwined. Teachings such as *Ibu Bumi, Bapak Aksa* (Mother Earth, Father Sky) symbolize a cosmic familial relationship between humans and their environment, fostering emotional and spiritual attachment to natural elements (Handayani et al. 2018). This metaphorical kinship cultivates gratitude and respect, encouraging humans to act with compassion and care. In Islamic da'wah, such expressions can serve as cultural parallels to reinforce Qur'anic messages about creation as a sign (*ayah*) and as a trust (*amanah*) from Allah (QS. Al-Anbiya' [21]:107; Al-Mulk [67]:15).

The ethical core of *Pitutor Luhur* lies in its call for inner refinement (*batin*) and outer responsibility (*lahir*). It promotes self-discipline, patience, and humility virtues that are not only culturally cherished but also fundamental to Islamic character (*akhlaq*). In this sense, *Pitutor Luhur* offers a fertile medium for da'wah that seeks to cultivate both moral behavior and ecological awareness. When integrated into religious sermons, community discussions, or environmental campaigns, these expressions can make Islamic environmental ethics more relatable and grounded in local experience.

By acknowledging the ecological dimensions of *Pitutor Luhur*, Cultural da'wah can bridge the gap between inherited wisdom and revealed guidance. Rather than positioning local expressions as rivals to Islamic teachings, they can be embraced as complementary ethical resources that support the shared goal of sustaining life and honoring the Creator through the care of His creation.

Symbolism in architecture and batik

Javanese traditional culture expresses its environmental and spiritual values not only through oral traditions and rituals but also through symbolic representations in material culture, particularly architecture and batik. These forms are not merely aesthetic or decorative but are embedded with philosophical messages about the universe, life, and the human role within creation. In Javanese architecture, especially the *Joglo* house design, spatial orientation, ornamentation, and building materials reflect a

worldview that emphasizes balance, sacred space, and coexistence with nature (Kusumowardhani 2024).

The use of floral and faunal motifs in wooden carvings and building ornaments is deeply symbolic. Plants like the lotus, banyan, and kalpataru (tree of life) are frequently featured to signify fertility, protection, and the cyclical nature of life. Animals such as birds or dragons symbolize strength and cosmic harmony. These symbols are intentionally placed on strategic parts of the structure, such as doorways, windows, and rooftops, not only for beauty but to remind occupants of their relationship with the environment. The decorative hierarchy where flora is most common in lower-status spaces and sacred symbols dominate royal or spiritual spaces illustrates how Javanese cosmology orders the world according to both ecological and spiritual principles (Setiawati and Murwadi 2019).

In Islamic terms, these artistic elements can be seen as expressions of *tawhid* affirming God's unity through the contemplation of His creation. The Qur'an frequently invites believers to reflect on the signs in nature (QS. Al-Ghashiyah [88]:17-20), and Javanese architecture echoes this call by embedding environmental ethics into the lived space. Living in such spaces nurtures a sense of moderation, sacredness, and respect toward natural resources, which resonates with the Islamic emphasis on sustainable consumption and humility before Allah's creation.

Batik, another hallmark of Javanese culture, also contains ecological and ethical symbolism. Traditional batik motifs such as *Kawung*, inspired by the fruit of the aren palm, symbolize purity, self-control, and sustainability. The motif's circular design suggests cosmic balance and spiritual clarity, teaching the wearer to live in harmony with both inner and outer worlds. The *Parang* motif, with its diagonal repetition, represents the flow of water and life's continuity, subtly promoting values of perseverance and ecological rhythm. These patterns often carry messages about human responsibility in maintaining the integrity of life systems (Maziyah et al. 2016).

From a da'wah perspective, these symbols provide accessible and culturally resonant entry points for environmental education. When Islamic teachings are conveyed through or alongside batik motifs or architectural forms, they become more meaningful to local audiences. Rather than perceiving environmental ethics as abstract moral imperatives, communities can engage with them visually and experientially through the environment they inhabit and the clothing they wear. This creates a living da'wah space where culture and faith coalesce into a daily reminder of divine presence and ecological duty.

By recognizing the symbolic power of Javanese architecture and batik, Islamic da'wah can deepen its engagement with local aesthetics and reframe them as tools for ethical reflection (Zainuri 2021). These visual traditions, grounded in centuries of spiritual and environmental wisdom, demonstrate that culture can be both a mirror of divine values and a medium for their transmission.

Integration of Javanese local wisdom with islamic da'wah

Alignments with qur'anic teachings. The values embodied in Javanese local wisdom show a remarkable degree of alignment with the ethical principles found in the Qur'an. While originating from different epistemological traditions—one cultural and oral, the other divine and textual both sources emphasize balance, stewardship, gratitude, and restraint in human interaction with the environment. This alignment provides a strong foundation for integrating Javanese cultural expressions into Islamic da'wah, particularly in the field of ecological awareness and sustainability.

One of the most fundamental points of convergence lies in the concept of balance (*Tata Tentrem* in Javanese, *mīzān* in the Qur'an) (Umam 2018). The Qur'an explicitly states that God has set balance in the universe and commands humans not to disturb it (QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:7-9). Similarly, Javanese philosophy teaches *rukun* (harmony) and *selaras* (alignment), which regulate social and ecological relations through inner moderation and external discipline. The expression *Memayu Hayuning Bawana* reflects the belief that the world is beautiful when humans contribute to, rather than disrupt, its harmony. This ethos is in harmony with the Islamic injunction to *not cause corruption on Earth after it has been set in order* (QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56).

Another area of alignment is the ethic of stewardship (*khilāfah*). The Qur'an presents humans as vicegerents on Earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30), entrusted to manage creation responsibly. Although traditional Javanese belief systems may not use the term *khilāfah*, their cultural practices reflect a similar sense of duty. For instance, the sacred treatment of mountains, forests, and springs as *titipan* (entrustments) from ancestors and invisible forces can be interpreted in Islamic da'wah as metaphorical expressions of *amanah* from Allah. This perspective allows da'wah to validate local customs while reorienting their meanings within the framework of tauhid and divine accountability.

The emphasis on gratitude (*shukr*) is also central to both systems. Javanese rituals such as *Sedekah Bumi*, *Ruwahan*, and *Labuhan* are cultural modes of giving thanks for agricultural fertility, safe seas, or spiritual protection (Lestari 2022, Fitriyani et al. 2024). These ceremonies, when reframed in Islamic da'wah, can be understood as expressions of gratitude toward Allah, thereby maintaining cultural continuity while reinforcing theological correctness. As the Qur'an states, *If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]* (QS. Ibrahim [14]:7).

Furthermore, the practice of restraint (*zuhd*, *iqtiṣhād*) is reflected in traditional farming and consumption habits in many Javanese communities. Teachings that discourage greed, waste, and arrogance toward nature mirror the Qur'anic call to avoid *israf* (excess) and to walk humbly upon the Earth (QS. Al-Furqan [25]:63; Al-A'raf [7]:31). Local expressions such as *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* (slowly but surely) suggest a deep cultural patience and long-term thinking, which support the idea of sustainable living that is at the heart of Islamic environmental ethics.

By highlighting these alignments, cultural da'wah can function not as a corrective force but as an affirmative and integrative movement reframing existing cultural values through Qur'anic lenses. This approach avoids cultural rupture and instead fosters a sense of religious continuity, where Islam is seen not as foreign or imposed, but as reinforcing the moral truths already present in Javanese tradition.

Da'wah opportunities in cultural practices. Javanese cultural practices offer fertile ground for the development of contextually relevant and culturally sensitive Islamic da'wah. Rather than viewing local customs as obstacles to religious purity, these practices can be utilized as bridges for spiritual engagement, allowing da'wah actors to communicate Islamic values through familiar symbols, rituals, and traditions. This approach not only enhances the acceptability of da'wah messages but also affirms the dignity of local knowledge systems.

One of the key opportunities lies in ritual adaptation and reinterpretation. Ceremonies such as *Sedekah Bumi* (earth offerings) and *Nyadran* (ancestral commemoration) are often perceived by some as syncretic or pre-Islamic (Lestari et al. 2023). However, when approached through the lens of cultural da'wah, these rituals can be reframed as moments of communal reflection, gratitude, and prayer. By introducing Islamic supplications, Qur'anic readings, and ethical themes into these gatherings, preachers can gradually reorient the community's spiritual understanding while maintaining cultural cohesion. This approach has proven effective in many pesantren-based communities in Java, where da'wah is integrated with local festivities rather than imposed in opposition.

Another promising opportunity is found in environmentally symbolic spaces, such as sacred groves, springs, and mountains. These sites, often associated with myths and ancestral spirits, are treated with reverence and protected from harm. Rather than rejecting these beliefs outright, cultural da'wah can redirect their meaning emphasizing tawhid while preserving the ecological function of these areas. For example, the preservation of a banyan tree due to spiritual taboo can be recast as a conscious act of environmental stewardship in line with Islamic teachings on conserving life and maintaining balance (QS. Al-Mulk [67]:15).

Artistic expressions, such as batik patterns and wayang performances, also serve as potential da'wah platforms. Batik motifs like *Truntum* and *Sido Mukti*, which symbolize guidance and prosperity, can be used to narrate Islamic stories or values when incorporated into educational or economic empowerment programs. Meanwhile, *Wayang* puppetry historically adapted for Islamic messages during the *Walisongo* era can continue to serve as a powerful medium for storytelling-based da'wah that blends entertainment, ethics, and environmental awareness.

In addition, language itself is a channel of da'wah. The use of refined Javanese (*Basa Krama*) in sermons or public discourse reflects an ethic of humility, respect, and sensitivity qualities strongly emphasized in Islamic preaching (Nakamura 1976, Kuntjara 2001). The principle

of *Ngajeni* (to honor others) promotes an environment of peace and mutual understanding, aligning with the Qur'anic ideal of gentle invitation (QS. An-Nahl [16]:125). This linguistic sensitivity is essential for *da'i* operating in culturally nuanced regions, as it reflects not only religious knowledge but also cultural intelligence.

Overall, these cultural practices present not just opportunities for message delivery, but also frameworks of shared meaning in which Islamic ethics can be planted, nurtured, and made to grow organically. Effective da'wah in such contexts requires dialogue, patience, and symbolic fluency, enabling religious transformation without cultural dislocation. By engaging with local traditions constructively, Islamic da'wah can become a participatory process of cultural refinement and moral awakening deeply rooted in the soil of tradition but reaching upward to the aspirations of faith.

Challenges and dialectics of faith and tradition.

Despite the promising alignment between Javanese cultural expressions and Islamic ethical values, the integration of local wisdom into da'wah is not without its challenges. The encounter between faith and tradition often involves a complex dialectic marked by negotiation, reinterpretation, and sometimes, tension. These tensions arise particularly when certain cultural practices are perceived to conflict with Islamic theological purity or when religious reform movements advocate for a strict textualist approach that leaves little room for cultural accommodation.

One recurring challenge is the persistence of syncretic beliefs such as veneration of ancestral spirits or attribution of supernatural power to natural entities that blur the boundaries between symbolic reverence and theological deviation (*syirik*). From a doctrinal standpoint, Islam firmly upholds monotheism (*tauhid*) and prohibits any form of association with God's attributes. Thus, practices like making offerings to the sea or asking blessings from tombs of spiritual figures, while culturally embedded, may provoke controversy among da'wah practitioners who view them as violations of Islamic creed. This creates a dialectical tension namely whether to reject these practices outright or to reinterpret their meaning and guide the community toward gradual transformation without severing cultural ties.

Another challenge involves generational shifts in religious understanding. Younger generations, particularly those educated in formal Islamic schools or exposed to global Islamic discourses, may view local traditions as backward, irrational, or un-Islamic. This can result in the erosion of local ecological ethics, which were previously maintained through myth, ritual, and customary law. Conversely, elders who are custodians of tradition may resist change if it is perceived as threatening the integrity of ancestral practices. Da'wah must therefore navigate intergenerational dynamics, ensuring that the Islamic message honors both tradition and renewal.

Additionally, there is the risk of instrumentalization, where culture is superficially used to promote da'wah without genuine appreciation or understanding. When traditions are merely appropriated for symbolic legitimacy, without engaging their deeper meanings or community

contexts, the da'wah becomes detached from its cultural roots and loses its moral authority. Such top-down approaches may be met with suspicion or passive resistance, especially in communities where local customs are closely tied to identity, land, and spirituality.

Another layer of complexity arises from the pluralistic nature of Javanese society, where multiple belief systems Islamic, animistic, Hindu-Buddhist, and Christian often coexist within a shared cultural matrix. This pluralism challenges da'wah efforts to remain inclusive and dialogical, avoiding confrontational language while maintaining Islamic clarity. It also calls for da'wah models that are context-aware, capable of distinguishing between cultural forms that can be Islamized and those that require theological critique.

To address these challenges, da'wah must be grounded in wisdom (*hikmah*) and compassion (*rahmah*), embodying the Prophet's example of engaging with pre-Islamic traditions by affirming what is good, transforming what is ambiguous, and rejecting what contradicts revelation. *Da'i* must act not merely as moral enforcers, but as cultural interpreters and ethical guides who understand both the textual tradition and the local cosmology. Only through such integrative approaches can the dialectic between faith and tradition become a space of creative synthesis rather than confrontation.

Contemporary transformations and adaptive conservation

Cultural shifts and modern responses

The dynamics of modernity have brought significant transformations to traditional Javanese culture, including its environmental values and practices. Urbanization, industrialization, migration, and the proliferation of digital media have reshaped how communities perceive and relate to nature. Many ritual practices that once formed the backbone of local ecological ethics are now fading or being simplified into tourism spectacles. These changes reflect both cultural erosion and adaptive innovation, presenting new challenges and opportunities for da'wah rooted in environmental consciousness.

One notable shift is the decline of ritual participation, especially among younger generations who view such traditions as outdated or superstitious. As formal religious education becomes more dominant and global Islamic discourses circulate widely, local customs such as *Nyadran* or *Sedekah Bumi* are often dismissed as remnants of pre-Islamic belief systems (Mufid 2006). This leads to the weakening of communal bonds and the loss of indigenous environmental knowledge embedded in symbolic acts. The desacralization of sacred natural sites, once protected through taboo and reverence, often results in their degradation such as illegal logging in formerly conserved groves or pollution of sacred springs.

At the same time, however, new forms of cultural expression and environmental awareness are emerging. There is a growing movement among Islamic youth and *santri* communities to reinterpret tradition through a contemporary Islamic lens, combining sustainability principles with da'wah messages. Initiatives such as

pesantren-based organic farming, waste reduction campaigns with Qur'anic slogans, or tree-planting events held on Islamic holidays represent adaptive strategies where religious identity and ecological responsibility are mutually reinforcing.

Modern responses also include the institutionalization of culture and conservation. Government and NGO programs have begun to formalize and promote selected elements of local wisdom as part of heritage tourism or environmental education. While this can help preserve endangered traditions, it may also result in the commodification of culture, where meaning is reduced to performance. Da'wah efforts must therefore engage critically with such initiatives, ensuring that cultural practices remain authentic, community-driven, and spiritually grounded.

Digital platforms have further transformed cultural transmission. Young Javanese Muslims are using social media, podcasts, and short videos to explore and share local traditions alongside Islamic teachings. This opens space for creative da'wah formats that reintroduce ancestral wisdom in ways that resonate with modern audiences. For instance, environmental verses from the Qur'an can be linked with *Pitutur Luhur* on Instagram, or documentary storytelling can frame traditional rituals as ecological heritage supported by Islamic ethics.

Ultimately, cultural shifts demand adaptation rather than abandonment. While some traditional forms may no longer function as they once did, their core messages gratitude, harmony, restraint, and reverence for life remain relevant. Through a process of critical selection and ethical reinterpretation, da'wah can help communities reclaim the spiritual dimensions of their culture in forms that are contextually meaningful, theologically sound, and ecologically urgent.

Community-based ecotourism and da'wah potentials

The rise of community-based ecotourism in various parts of Java has opened new pathways for integrating environmental conservation with cultural preservation and Islamic da'wah. As rural communities seek alternative livelihoods amid ecological degradation and economic uncertainty, many have turned to ecotourism as a strategy for sustainable development. This form of tourism not only promotes environmental stewardship but also revitalizes local customs, rituals, and knowledge systems making it a promising arena for the application of cultural da'wah.

Community-based ecotourism initiatives typically involve the active participation of local residents in managing and interpreting natural and cultural assets. Sacred forests, traditional agricultural landscapes, ancestral graveyards, and ritual ceremonies are presented to visitors not merely as attractions, but as expressions of community identity and values. In such contexts, da'wah actors can collaborate with local leaders to frame these cultural assets within an Islamic narrative, emphasizing values such as *amanah* (trust), *maslahah* (public benefit), and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation).

For example, rituals like *Ruwahan* or *Sedekah Gunung* when explained as cultural forms of gratitude and humility

can be linked to Qur'anic teachings on remembering God's blessings and respecting the Earth. Guided tours can incorporate reflections on Islamic environmental ethics, turning the tourism experience into a platform for spiritual education and moral reflection. Local guides, particularly those trained in both cultural heritage and Islamic values, can become *da'i lingkungan* (environmental preachers), offering insights that blend ecological awareness with religious consciousness.

Moreover, ecotourism provides a setting for intergenerational learning and cultural transmission. Through performances, storytelling, and participatory rituals, elders pass down traditions to youth while engaging with contemporary sustainability discourses. Da'wah institutions can support this by facilitating workshops, publishing multilingual educational materials, or integrating Islamic content into visitor centers and community events. This not only strengthens the cultural and spiritual resilience of the community but also reinforces Islam as a religion that supports environmental care and cultural dignity.

However, to ensure that ecotourism becomes a vehicle for ethical transformation rather than mere commodification, it must be rooted in community agency, spiritual authenticity, and ecological responsibility. Da'wah actors must help guard against over-commercialization, cultural distortion, or environmental damage caused by mass tourism. By promoting principles such as *tawazun* (balance), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *shura* (consultation), cultural da'wah can guide ecotourism development in ways that uphold both Islamic teachings and local cultural integrity.

In this way, community-based ecotourism can serve as a living laboratory for contextual Islamic da'wah, where theology, culture, and environmental practice converge. It embodies a form of da'wah that is not limited to the pulpit but lived out in daily interactions with nature, guests, and fellow community members bringing together economic vitality, cultural identity, and spiritual growth in the service of environmental conservation.

Discussion

Cultural da'wah as a strategy for ecological awareness

The findings of this study affirm that cultural da'wah represents a strategic and contextually effective approach for promoting ecological awareness within Javanese Muslim communities. By engaging with indigenous wisdom systems and symbolic traditions, da'wah can move beyond doctrinal preaching to embrace a relational, experiential, and affective form of environmental education. This culturally grounded model situates Islamic ecological ethics not as abstract imperatives but as embodied practices intertwined with daily life, ancestral memory, and place-based spirituality.

Cultural da'wah enables religious messages to be communicated in a language that resonates with local sensibilities, where teachings on stewardship, moderation, and gratitude are already embedded in rituals, architecture, proverbs, and land-based customs. Rather than replacing these cultural forms, Islamic teachings can be introduced as

interpretative lenses that deepen their meaning and enhance their ethical orientation. For instance, the Javanese concept of *Memayu Hayuning Bawana* can be reaffirmed through the Qur'anic idea of humans as *khalifah* on Earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30), entrusted to preserve balance and avoid corruption (QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:7-9).

This approach also expands the role of the *da'i* from that of a moral instructor to a cultural mediator—someone who understands both the scriptural tradition and the symbolic grammar of the community. Such da'wah actors must be equipped not only with Islamic knowledge but also with skills in cultural interpretation, environmental literacy, and dialogical engagement. They serve as bridges between tradition and transformation, guiding communities through a process of ethical renewal that honors their cultural identity while aligning it with Islamic spiritual values.

Furthermore, cultural da'wah offers a pathway to restore emotional and spiritual connection with the natural world, countering the alienation produced by modern consumerism and ecological degradation. Rituals like *sedekah bumi*, when framed as expressions of *shukr* and *tawhid*, help foster a sense of reverence and moral responsibility toward creation. Material culture such as batik or sacred landscapes, when interpreted through Islamic cosmology, become didactic tools for moral reflection on divine order, interdependence, and human limits.

However, this model also requires a critical approach one that does not romanticize culture or overlook theological boundaries. Cultural da'wah must discern which traditions can be affirmed, which need reinterpretation, and which should be gently reformed or abandoned. The goal is not cultural preservation for its own sake, but the cultivation of a theologically coherent and ecologically engaged Islamic consciousness, rooted in local reality.

By positioning cultural da'wah as a strategy for ecological awareness, this study highlights its potential to contribute meaningfully to both religious revitalization and environmental resilience. It is a model of da'wah that speaks from within the community, in its own idiom, and toward a future where faith and ecology are not in conflict but in mutual reinforcement.

Toward contextual islamic environmental advocacy

Building on the insights from Javanese traditions and cultural da'wah practices, it becomes evident that effective Islamic environmental advocacy must be contextual, integrative, and community-anchored. Rather than relying solely on universalist rhetoric or abstract theological formulations, advocacy efforts should engage local cultural expressions, worldviews, and practices as vehicles for environmental transformation. This means constructing a model of Islamic advocacy that is not only normatively correct but also socially embedded and ecologically responsive.

Contextual Islamic advocacy begins by listening to the local culture, recognizing its ecological ethics, symbolic vocabulary, and spiritual narratives. In Javanese communities, this includes proverbs, rituals, cosmological

beliefs, and landscape taboos that express ecological mindfulness. Advocacy grounded in such cultural assets can articulate Islamic environmental principles such as *mīzān* (balance), *maslahah* (public good), and *hikmah* (wisdom) in forms that are familiar and compelling. This not only strengthens message reception but also affirms the cultural dignity of the community, making them co-authors of the Islamic environmental vision.

Another pillar of contextual advocacy is collaborative knowledge production. This involves bringing together religious scholars (*ulama*), cultural leaders, environmental scientists, and local practitioners to co-develop frameworks and actions that are both spiritually meaningful and scientifically informed. For example, reforestation programs can be linked to Islamic teachings on tree planting as a form of charity (*sadaqah jariyah*), while also drawing from local beliefs about sacred groves or *pepunden* trees. Such synergies not only increase participation but generate a holistic model of environmental care that bridges revelation and tradition, science and spirituality.

Islamic environmental advocacy must also be action-oriented and praxis-based, going beyond sermons and statements toward tangible changes in behavior, policy, and land management. This includes promoting waste reduction, clean water initiatives, agroecological practices, and sustainable tourism all framed within an Islamic ethical discourse and delivered through culturally appropriate platforms. In rural Javanese contexts, advocacy may be more effective when embedded in *Pengajian Desa* (village Islamic study groups), *Karawitan*-based education, or *Pesantren*-led conservation movements, rather than top-down governmental programs or urban-centric campaigns (Fuad and Nurhidayat 2017).

Equally important is the ethical methodology of advocacy. Islam teaches that da'wah should be delivered with gentleness, wisdom, and beautiful discourse (QS. An-Nahl [16]:125). In pluralistic and culturally diverse regions like Java, this requires a dialogical and empathetic approach one that respects cultural difference without compromising on Islamic principles. Contextual advocacy must avoid cultural erasure while also confronting destructive beliefs or practices, offering theological reinterpretation and constructive alternatives.

Ultimately, contextual Islamic environmental advocacy aspires not only to change behaviors but to cultivate consciousness a spiritual and moral awakening to the sacredness of creation and the responsibility of human stewardship. When grounded in local wisdom and aligned with Islamic teachings, such advocacy becomes a powerful force for ecological justice, community empowerment, and ethical transformation. It repositions Islam not as an external reformer, but as an internal catalyst for renewing the community's relationship with both God and the Earth.

Cultural resilience and environmental theology

The long-standing environmental ethos found within Javanese cultural expressions reflects a form of cultural resilience that has sustained ecological balance across generations. Despite external pressures from

modernization, religious reformism, and ecological disruption, many of these traditions have endured transmitted through rituals, oral narratives, symbolic spaces, and artistic expressions. This resilience demonstrates that local culture is not static folklore, but a dynamic moral system capable of adaptation, interpretation, and alignment with evolving theological discourses.

In the context of Islamic environmental theology, such resilience becomes a valuable ally, offering intuitive models of ecological ethics that are locally rooted yet spiritually open. Javanese expressions such as *Memayu Hayuning Bawana*, taboos against polluting sacred sites, and communal rituals of gratitude can all be read as practical outworkings of Qur'anic values particularly the principles of *amanah* (trust), *mīzān* (balance), and *tawhid* (divine unity). When contextualized properly, these traditions do not dilute Islamic theology but enrich its application by embedding it in everyday practices and moral imagination.

Cultural resilience also plays a critical role in buffering communities against the fragmenting effects of ecological and spiritual crises. As forests are cleared, water sources dry up, and traditional livelihoods vanish, many rural Muslims experience a loss of both ecological security and cultural continuity. In such contexts, revitalizing cultural da'wah becomes an act of restoration—reconnecting people to the land, to each other, and to God. It allows da'wah to function not only as a transmitter of religious law but as a healing force, recovering cultural memory and environmental responsibility.

From a theological perspective, environmental resilience demands more than conservation tactics; it calls for a rethinking of the human-nature-God relationship. Javanese cosmology, with its layered understandings of the seen and unseen, the sacred and the mundane, offers a complementary metaphysics that invites Muslims to encounter nature not merely as a resource, but as a sign (*ayah*) of divine majesty and mercy (QS. Al-Ghashiyah [88]:17-20). Integrating such perspectives into Islamic thought and education can foster a more relational and reverent theology of creation, where culture becomes a medium, not a barrier, for divine encounter.

At its heart, the convergence of cultural resilience and environmental theology affirms that preserving biodiversity and preserving culture are mutually reinforcing goals. Both are expressions of God's signs on Earth, entrusted to human care. When Islamic da'wah takes seriously the wisdom embedded in culture, it can play a transformative role not only in correcting theological deviations but in strengthening the moral ecology of society. It is through such integrative frameworks that Islamic environmentalism can move from theory to practice, and from doctrine to lived conviction.

In conclusion this study has demonstrated that Javanese local wisdom provides a fertile cultural ground for the development of environmentally engaged Islamic da'wah. Through rituals, proverbs, architecture, artistic symbols, and communal practices, Javanese society embodies a deep ecological consciousness that aligns both implicitly and

explicitly with Qur'anic principles of stewardship, balance, and reverence for creation. Rather than viewing these traditions as theological obstacles, this paper has argued that they can serve as culturally embedded mediums for ecological da'wah, when interpreted within a framework of Islamic ethics. The integration of cultural symbols and local cosmology into Islamic discourse enriches da'wah efforts by enhancing their relevance, accessibility, and emotional resonance. By affirming indigenous expressions of gratitude, moderation, and harmony with nature, da'wah practitioners can reframe Islam not as a foreign imposition but as a spiritual refinement of already existing values. This contextual approach is particularly vital in rural and pluralistic communities where tradition remains a central pillar of social and ecological life. At the same time, the process of cultural da'wah requires theological discernment, critical engagement, and ethical creativity. It must balance affirmation and reformation, celebrating what aligns with Islamic teachings while guiding communities away from practices that conflict with tauhid. The result is a dynamic and dialogical form of Islamic environmentalism that is both locally grounded and theologically sound. In an era marked by ecological crisis and cultural dislocation, cultural da'wah emerges as a transformative strategy one that restores not only the physical environment but also the moral imagination of Muslim communities. By engaging with culture as both a source of wisdom and a channel of da'wah, Muslims in Java and beyond can cultivate a sustainable, spiritually rooted, and socially resilient approach to environmental stewardship.

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