

Gusjigang as Cultural Da'wah Memory: Rethinking Sunan Kudus Local Legacy

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Abstract

Gusjigang is widely known as a local philosophy of Kudus that integrates three core values: *bagus* (good moral character), *ngaji* (Islamic learning), and *dagang* (trade or entrepreneurship). In many academic, popular, and institutional narratives, Gusjigang is commonly attributed to Sunan Kudus and presented as part of his da'wah legacy. However, this attribution raises an important academic issue, particularly because the literal origin of the term Gusjigang has not been sufficiently supported by primary historical evidence from the period of Sunan Kudus. This article aims to examine Gusjigang not as a term that must be proven to have originated directly from Sunan Kudus, but as a form of cultural da'wah memory that lives within Kudus society. Using a qualitative-critical approach based on literature study and discourse analysis, this article explores how Gusjigang has been constructed, reproduced, institutionalized, and symbolically linked to Sunan Kudus. The findings show that Gusjigang functions as a collective memory that connects morality, Islamic knowledge, and economic ethos with the symbolic authority of Sunan Kudus. This article argues that the significance of Gusjigang lies not merely in the certainty of its terminological origin, but in its social capacity to shape the moral, religious, and economic identity of Kudus society. Therefore, Gusjigang should be understood as a living cultural da'wah memory rather than simply as a literal historical expression attributed to Sunan Kudus.

Keywords

Gusjigang; Sunan Kudus; Cultural Memory; Cultural Da'Wah; Local Islam.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gusjigang is one of the most prominent local philosophies associated with the cultural identity of Kudus, Central Java. The term is generally understood as an acronym of *bagus*, *ngaji*, and *dagang*. *Bagus* refers to good character, ethical conduct, and moral refinement; *ngaji* refers to Islamic learning, Qur'anic recitation, religious education, and the broader tradition of Islamic knowledge; while *dagang* refers to trade, entrepreneurship, economic independence, and the mercantile ethos historically associated with Kudus society. These three elements form an integrated moral-cultural ideal: a good Muslim is expected not only to possess proper religious knowledge, but also to embody noble character and participate productively in social-economic life.



In the social imagination of Kudus, Gusjigang is more than a local expression. It has become a marker of collective identity that connects morality, religiosity, and economic productivity. Kudus is often represented as a city of santri, a city of trade, and a city of Islamic heritage. This representation is closely related to the memory of Sunan Kudus, one of the Walisongo figures who is widely remembered as an important agent of Islamization in Java. In many academic and popular narratives, Gusjigang is frequently described as a philosophy, teaching, or legacy of Sunan Kudus. Through this attribution, Gusjigang gains not only social meaning but also religious and symbolic legitimacy.

Previous studies have discussed Gusjigang from various perspectives. Nawali (2018) examines Gusjigang as a philosophy of life attributed to Sunan Kudus and highlights its Islamic educational values, especially in shaping morality, religious learning, and trading practices among the people of Kauman, Kudus. Rahmawati et al. (2021) read Gusjigang as local wisdom that can be used as a source for character education, particularly because it contains values of religiosity, honesty, hard work, independence, and entrepreneurship. In a similar direction, Maharromiyati and Suyahmo (2016) show that Gusjigang can function as social capital in pesantren-based entrepreneurial education, especially in forming students who are religious, independent, and economically productive.

Other studies place Gusjigang in relation to the socio-economic character of Kudus society. Mustaqim and Bahruddin (2015) discuss the spirit of Gusjigang in facing the challenges of economic globalization, while Ihsan (2017) explains Gusjigang as a character of independence among Kudus society in the context of industrialization. These studies are important because they show that Gusjigang is not merely a moral slogan, but also a cultural value that shapes economic behavior, work ethic, and social resilience. Nur Said also places Gusjigang within the continuity of Sunan Kudus' cultural legacy and relates it to Islamic education based on local genius (Said, 2013). More recent work by Zahro et al. (2025) continues this tendency by reading Gusjigang as a tradition containing Islamic educational values that remain relevant for contemporary Muslim society.

The existing literature demonstrates that Gusjigang has been widely accepted as a meaningful local value. However, most studies tend to treat the connection between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus as an established premise. Gusjigang is often introduced as the teaching, philosophy, or legacy of Sunan Kudus without sufficient critical discussion of the historical basis of that attribution. In many cases, the relationship between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus is supported by oral tradition, local narratives, contemporary interpretation, or secondary literature rather than by primary historical evidence showing that the term "Gusjigang" was literally used by Sunan Kudus or appeared in sources from his period. This does not mean that the cultural relationship between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus should be rejected, but it does require careful academic treatment.

This article therefore departs from a critical yet appreciative position. It does not aim to deny Gusjigang as part of the cultural-religious heritage of Kudus. At the same time, it does not simply accept the claim that Gusjigang is a literal term directly originating from Sunan Kudus without adequate historical verification. The central argument of this article is that Gusjigang is better understood as a form of cultural da'wah memory: a living collective memory that links moral conduct, Islamic learning, and economic ethos to the symbolic figure of Sunan Kudus. In this framework, the importance of Gusjigang lies not merely in the certainty of its terminological origin, but in its ability to survive, be reproduced, institutionalized, and used as a source of moral, religious, and cultural identity among the people of Kudus.

The concept of collective memory is useful for explaining this phenomenon. Halbwachs (1992) argues that memory is never purely individual; it is shaped within social frameworks. Communities remember the past not only to preserve what happened, but also to construct identity, maintain continuity, and provide meaning for the present. In the case of Gusjigang, the people of Kudus remember Sunan Kudus not only as a historical figure, but also as a symbolic source of moral and religious values. Gusjigang becomes one of the ways through which Kudus society connects its present identity with the remembered past of Islamic da'wah.

This perspective can be strengthened through Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory. Assmann (2008) distinguishes communicative memory from cultural memory. Communicative memory lives in everyday interaction and intergenerational communication, while cultural memory lasts longer because it is objectified through texts, symbols, rituals, monuments, institutions, education, and repeated social practices. Gusjigang can be read as cultural memory because it does not live only in oral narratives. It has also been reproduced through academic writings, pesantren education, local government discourse, popular media, and institutional symbols such as academic journals and educational programs. Through these channels, Gusjigang moves from local expression to institutionalized cultural memory.

The notion of cultural da'wah is also relevant to this article. Da'wah is not limited to sermons, religious speeches, or formal Islamic instruction. It can also take the form of cultural transmission, moral formation, social practice, and symbolic communication. In the history of Islam in Java, the Walisongo are often remembered as figures who spread Islam through cultural sensitivity and adaptation. Sunan Kudus, in particular, is frequently associated with a model of da'wah that negotiated Islamic values with local culture. In this sense, Gusjigang can be understood as a cultural expression of da'wah because it translates Islamic moral and social ideals into a local vocabulary: *bagus* as ethical refinement, *ngaji* as religious learning, and *dagang* as economic productivity.

The attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus therefore needs to be understood not only as a question of historical origin but also as a process of symbolic legitimation. When a local value is linked to a respected wali, it gains moral authority and religious depth. Sunan Kudus functions as a symbolic anchor that gives Gusjigang a place within the broader memory of Islamic da'wah in Kudus. However, symbolic legitimation is not the same as literal historical proof. A tradition may have strong cultural truth and social significance even when its terminological origin remains historically uncertain. This distinction is important so that academic analysis does not reduce living tradition either to unquestioned historical fact or to mere invention.

Based on this background, this article addresses three main questions. First, how has Gusjigang been constructed in academic, popular, and institutional discourse as a local philosophy of Kudus? Second, how does the attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus operate as a mechanism of cultural and religious legitimation? Third, why is Gusjigang better understood as cultural da'wah memory rather than merely as a literal term that must be proven to have originated directly from Sunan Kudus?

By answering these questions, this article contributes to the study of Islamic da'wah, local Islam, and cultural memory in Indonesia. It shifts the discussion of Gusjigang from a purely normative appreciation of local wisdom toward a critical analysis of memory, attribution, and institutional reproduction. The article argues that Gusjigang remains important not because its literal origin has been conclusively proven, but because it continues to function as a living memory that shapes the moral, religious, and economic identity of Kudus society. This approach allows Gusjigang to be appreciated as a meaningful cultural heritage while maintaining academic caution regarding historical claims about its direct origin from Sunan Kudus.

2. METHOD

This article uses a qualitative-critical approach with a literature study and discourse analysis design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because this study does not seek to measure Gusjigang quantitatively, but to understand how its meaning is constructed, narrated, reproduced, and legitimized within the cultural and religious discourse of Kudus society. Qualitative research is concerned with meaning, context, interpretation, and the social construction of reality (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2017). The critical dimension of this study is used to examine the relationship between historical claims, local narratives, and the symbolic attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus.

The main focus of this article is not to prove philologically whether the term Gusjigang was directly formulated by Sunan Kudus. Rather, it seeks to analyze how Gusjigang has been constructed as a local philosophy, reproduced in academic and popular discourse, institutionalized through educational and social institutions, and linked to Sunan Kudus as a source of symbolic legitimacy.

Therefore, this article treats Gusjigang as a socio-cultural phenomenon located at the intersection of local Islam, cultural da'wah, collective memory, and identity formation.

The data in this study were collected through library research. Library research enables the researcher to examine written sources in order to identify the development of ideas, previous scholarly positions, conceptual debates, and research gaps (Zed, 2008; Snyder, 2019). The data consist of four main categories. First, academic articles and books discussing Gusjigang in relation to Islamic education, character education, entrepreneurship, pesantren education, local wisdom, and Kudus society. Second, popular Islamic writings and media narratives that reproduce Gusjigang as part of Sunan Kudus' da'wah legacy. Third, institutional publications, including academic journal profiles, local government discourse, and educational narratives that use Gusjigang as a marker of local identity. Fourth, theoretical literature on collective memory, cultural memory, cultural da'wah, and local Islam.

The sources were selected purposively. Purposive selection is commonly used in qualitative research because the emphasis is not on statistical representation, but on relevance, depth, and the ability of data to illuminate the research problem (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2019). The selected sources were those that directly discuss Gusjigang, Sunan Kudus, Kudus local culture, cultural da'wah, or cultural memory. In this article, documents are not treated merely as neutral containers of information, but as cultural texts that record, reproduce, and shape social meanings. Document analysis is useful because written sources can reveal the ways in which ideas, values, and institutional discourses are formed and circulated (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis was carried out in three stages. The first stage was discourse mapping. At this stage, the study identified how Gusjigang is represented across different sources: as Islamic educational value, character education, local wisdom, entrepreneurial ethos, pesantren-based social capital, and Sunan Kudus' legacy. This mapping was necessary to understand the dominant patterns in existing narratives and to identify how Gusjigang has been normalized as a cultural-religious philosophy. Discourse analysis is relevant here because discourse does not merely reflect reality; it also constructs social reality through language, categorization, repetition, and institutional authority (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

The second stage was attribution analysis. This stage examined how the relationship between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus is constructed in academic, popular, and institutional narratives. The analysis focused on whether the attribution is supported by primary historical evidence, oral tradition, local belief, contemporary interpretation, or secondary academic sources. This step was important in order to distinguish between literal-historical attribution and cultural-memorial attribution. The aim was not to reject the cultural relationship between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus, but to treat it with methodological caution.

The third stage was cultural memory interpretation. At this stage, Gusjigang was interpreted as a form of cultural da'wah memory. The concept of collective memory from Halbwachs was used to understand how communities remember the past within social frameworks (Halbwachs, 1992). Meanwhile, Assmann's concept of cultural memory was used to explain how a memory can survive across generations through symbols, texts, institutions, education, rituals, and repeated social practices (Assmann, 2008). These concepts were combined with the idea of cultural da'wah, which understands da'wah not only as verbal religious preaching, but also as the transmission of Islamic values through culture, social practice, and local identity (Kuntowijoyo, 2001; Syam, 2005).

The validity of the analysis was maintained through source triangulation. The study compared academic articles, books, popular writings, institutional publications, and theoretical works in order to identify consistency, repetition, variation, and limitation within the discourse on Gusjigang. Triangulation is important in qualitative research because it helps strengthen the credibility of interpretation by comparing data from different sources and perspectives (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, triangulation was used to ensure that the interpretation of Gusjigang as cultural da'wah memory was not based on a single source, but on recurring patterns across different bodies of literature and public discourse.

This study has methodological limitations. It does not conduct a philological study of classical manuscripts from the period of Sunan Kudus. It also does not claim to provide a final historical conclusion regarding the earliest origin of the term Gusjigang. Instead, the article focuses on how Gusjigang is remembered, narrated, reproduced, and institutionalized in contemporary Kudus society. This limitation is consistent with the aim of the article: to understand Gusjigang as a cultural da'wah memory rather than to establish it as a literal historical expression directly originating from Sunan Kudus.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Gusjigang as a Local Philosophy of Kudus

Gusjigang has become one of the most recognizable cultural concepts in Kudus society. It is generally understood as an acronym of *bagus*, *ngaji*, and *dagang*. These three terms form an integrated value system that reflects the ideal character of Kudus society. *Bagus* refers to moral goodness, proper conduct, politeness, honesty, and social responsibility. *Ngaji* refers to Islamic learning, Qur'anic recitation, religious education, and the tradition of respecting religious knowledge and scholars. *Dagang* refers to trade, entrepreneurship, economic independence, and the mercantile ethos that has long been associated with Kudus society.

In previous studies, Gusjigang is often described as a local philosophy that shapes the moral, religious, and economic life of the people of Kudus. Nawali (2018) explains that Gusjigang contains Islamic educational values because it encourages the formation of good character, religious learning, and trading practices. Rahmawati et al. (2021) also place Gusjigang within the framework of character education, arguing that it contains values such as religiosity, honesty, hard work, responsibility, and independence. These studies show that Gusjigang is not merely a cultural slogan, but a normative framework that guides social behavior.

The value of *bagus* represents the ethical dimension of Gusjigang. In this context, being *bagus* does not simply mean being physically good or socially respectable, but being morally refined. A person is expected to behave politely, act honestly, maintain social harmony, and uphold responsibility in everyday life. This ethical dimension is important because Gusjigang does not define the ideal person merely through religious knowledge or economic success. Moral character becomes the foundation of both religious and economic life.

The second value, *ngaji*, represents the religious and intellectual dimension. In Kudus society, *ngaji* is not limited to reading the Qur'an. It also refers to studying Islamic knowledge, attending religious gatherings, learning in pesantren, respecting ulama, and maintaining the continuity of Islamic scholarship. This value reflects the image of Kudus as a city of *santri* and Islamic heritage. Through *ngaji*, economic activity and social behavior are placed within a religious and ethical framework.

The third value, *dagang*, represents the socio-economic dimension. Kudus has long been associated with trade, entrepreneurship, and local industry. The history of Kudus society includes the development of trading networks, the kretek cigarette industry, textile businesses, food production, and various forms of small and medium enterprises. Ihsan (2017) argues that Gusjigang reflects the character of independence among Kudus society in facing industrialization. Mustaqim and Bahruddin (2015) also show that the spirit of Gusjigang remains relevant in responding to the challenges of economic globalization. Thus, *dagang* is not only about economic activity, but also about independence, discipline, creativity, and resilience.

The strength of Gusjigang lies in the integration of these three values. Trade should be guided by moral character and religious awareness. Religious learning should produce ethical conduct and social responsibility. Moral goodness should be embodied not only in ritual piety, but also in productive social and economic life. This integration makes Gusjigang a distinctive local philosophy because it connects individual morality, Islamic knowledge, and economic productivity in a single cultural framework.

From the perspective of cultural da'wah, Gusjigang demonstrates that Islamic values can be transmitted through local cultural vocabulary. The values of *bagus*, *ngaji*, and *dagang* translate Islamic

ideals into practical social ethics. *Bagus* functions as da'wah of morality, *ngaji* as da'wah of knowledge, and *dagang* as da'wah of socio-economic independence. In this sense, Gusjigang does not separate religion from everyday life, but embeds Islamic values in the moral and economic practices of society.

To clarify the analytical position of this article, the values of Gusjigang can be mapped into three interconnected dimensions: moral, religious-intellectual, and socio-economic. These dimensions show that Gusjigang is not a fragmented set of values, but an integrated local philosophy that constructs the ideal image of Kudus society.

Table 1. The Core Values of Gusjigang as a Local Philosophy

Element	Literal Meaning	Cultural Meaning	Da'wah Function
<i>Bagus</i>	Good, proper, beautiful	Moral conduct, politeness, honesty, social responsibility	Forms ethical character and social morality
<i>Ngaji</i>	Reciting or studying religious texts	Islamic learning, pesantren tradition, respect for ulama and religious knowledge	Strengthens religiosity and Islamic intellectual continuity
<i>Dagang</i>	Trade or commerce	Entrepreneurship, independence, work ethic, economic resilience	Connects Islamic values with social-economic productivity
Gusjigang	Integration of <i>bagus</i> , <i>ngaji</i> , and <i>dagang</i>	Ideal identity of Kudus society	Cultural da'wah through morality, knowledge, and economy

This table shows that the three values of Gusjigang are mutually reinforcing. *Bagus* provides the ethical foundation, *ngaji* provides the religious-intellectual foundation, and *dagang* provides the socio-economic foundation. The three cannot be separated. Trade without morality may lead to greed and exploitation; religious learning without social ethics may become formalistic; and morality without social productivity may remain abstract. Therefore, Gusjigang should be read as an integrated framework of local Islamic ethics.

3.2. The Attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus

One of the most important issues in the study of Gusjigang is its strong attribution to Sunan Kudus. In many academic, popular, and institutional narratives, Gusjigang is described as a teaching, philosophy, or legacy of Sunan Kudus. This attribution gives Gusjigang symbolic authority because Sunan Kudus occupies a central position in the Islamic memory of Kudus society. He is remembered not only as one of the Walisongo, but also as an ulama, preacher, and cultural figure who played an important role in the Islamization of Java.

Culturally, the attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus is understandable. The three values of Gusjigang correspond to the remembered image of Sunan Kudus. *Bagus* corresponds to Islamic moral formation; *ngaji* corresponds to his image as a religious scholar and preacher; and *dagang* corresponds

to the mercantile character of Kudus society. Because of this value correspondence, Gusjigang is easily linked to Sunan Kudus as a symbolic source of moral and religious legitimacy.

However, an academic problem emerges when this cultural attribution is treated as a literal historical fact without sufficient verification. Many studies refer to Gusjigang as the philosophy of Sunan Kudus, but they do not always provide primary historical evidence showing that the term “Gusjigang” was directly used by Sunan Kudus or appeared in sources from his period. The connection between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus is often based on oral tradition, local narratives, contemporary interpretation, and secondary literature (Nawali, 2018; Rahmawati et al., 2021). This does not mean that the connection is meaningless. Rather, it indicates that the connection should be understood carefully.

The distinction between historical-literal attribution and cultural-memorial attribution is important. Historical-literal attribution requires strong evidence, such as early texts, manuscripts, archival documents, or other primary sources that explicitly mention Gusjigang in relation to Sunan Kudus. Cultural-memorial attribution, on the other hand, operates through collective memory, oral tradition, repeated narratives, institutional reproduction, and social acceptance. In the case of Gusjigang, the available evidence suggests that it is more appropriate to understand the attribution to Sunan Kudus as cultural-memorial rather than strictly historical-literal.

This interpretation is consistent with Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory. Halbwachs (1992) explains that communities remember the past within social frameworks. Memory is not simply a neutral record of what happened; it is shaped by the needs, values, and identity of the group that remembers. In Kudus society, Sunan Kudus functions as a central figure through whom moral, religious, and cultural values are remembered. Gusjigang becomes one of the ways in which the community constructs continuity between the present and the remembered Islamic past.

Assmann’s concept of cultural memory further explains how such attribution becomes durable. Cultural memory survives through symbols, texts, rituals, institutions, education, and repeated social practices (Assmann, 2008). The attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus has been reproduced through academic writing, pesantren education, popular media, institutional discourse, and local identity narratives. Through these processes, Gusjigang gains stability as a cultural memory even when its literal historical origin remains uncertain.

Therefore, the attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus should not be understood only as a claim about origin. It should also be read as a mechanism of symbolic legitimation. When Gusjigang is associated with Sunan Kudus, it gains moral and religious authority. It becomes more than local advice; it becomes part of the remembered da’wah legacy of a wali. This symbolic legitimacy is crucial for understanding why Gusjigang continues to be meaningful for Kudus society.

The attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus can also be analyzed through two different levels: historical-literal attribution and cultural-memorial attribution. This distinction is important because many studies mention Gusjigang as Sunan Kudus' teaching, but do not always provide primary historical evidence for the literal origin of the term.

Table 2. Two Levels of Attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus

Level of Attribution	Main Characteristic	Required Evidence	Analytical Implication
Historical-literal attribution	Assumes that the term Gusjigang was directly coined or used by Sunan Kudus	Primary sources, early manuscripts, archival records, or historical texts from the relevant period	Requires careful historical and philological verification
Cultural-memorial attribution	Understands Gusjigang as a value system linked to Sunan Kudus through collective memory	Oral tradition, repeated narratives, academic interpretation, institutional reproduction, and social acceptance	Can be analyzed through cultural memory and symbolic legitimation
Position of this article	Does not reject the connection between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus, but treats it as cultural da'wah memory	Combination of literature, discourse, and memory analysis	Maintains academic caution while appreciating local tradition

The distinction above allows this article to avoid two extremes. On the one hand, it avoids accepting the claim of origin without sufficient verification. On the other hand, it also avoids dismissing Gusjigang as meaningless simply because its literal origin remains uncertain. The cultural significance of Gusjigang lies in the way it has been remembered, narrated, and institutionalized by Kudus society.

3.3. The Reproduction and Institutionalization of Gusjigang

The strength of Gusjigang as a local philosophy is also evident in the way it has been reproduced and institutionalized in contemporary discourse. Gusjigang does not remain only in oral tradition or informal community memory. It has entered educational discourse, pesantren practice, academic publication, popular media, and local government narratives. This process demonstrates that Gusjigang has moved from a local expression into a broader cultural memory.

Education is one of the main spaces for the reproduction of Gusjigang. Studies on Gusjigang frequently emphasize its relevance for Islamic education and character formation. Nawali (2018) highlights the Islamic educational values of Gusjigang, while Rahmawati et al. (2021) show its potential as a source of character education. In this context, education becomes a medium through which Gusjigang is transmitted to younger generations. The values of morality, religious learning, and entrepreneurship are not only described, but also recommended as educational ideals.

Pesantren also plays an important role in institutionalizing Gusjigang. Maharromiyati and Suyahmo (2016) show that the philosophy of Gusjigang is inherited as social capital in Pesantren

Entrepreneur Al-Mawaddah Kudus. In this context, Gusjigang is internalized through religious education, habituation, and entrepreneurial practice. This indicates that Gusjigang is not merely remembered as a cultural value, but also practiced as a model of religious and economic formation.

Academic institutions further contribute to the institutionalization of Gusjigang. The existence of *Jurnal Konseling Gusjigang* at Universitas Muria Kudus shows that Gusjigang has become an academic symbol. The use of Gusjigang as the name of a journal indicates that the concept has moved from community memory into institutional academic identity. It becomes part of the production and circulation of knowledge, especially in education, counseling, and character formation.

Popular media and local government discourse also reproduce Gusjigang. In popular Islamic writing, Gusjigang is often presented as a philosophy of life inherited from Sunan Kudus. In local government discourse, Gusjigang is frequently used as a symbolic language for community empowerment, entrepreneurship, and local economic development. These forms of reproduction expand the reach of Gusjigang beyond traditional community settings. It becomes a language of identity, policy, and public morality.

This process of reproduction and institutionalization is significant because it shows how memory becomes durable. As Assmann (2008) argues, cultural memory survives when it is objectified in institutions, symbols, texts, and repeated practices. Gusjigang is reproduced through multiple channels: education, pesantren, academia, media, government, and everyday social practice. These channels ensure that Gusjigang remains recognizable and meaningful across generations.

At the same time, this institutionalization also strengthens the attribution to Sunan Kudus. Each time Gusjigang is taught, written, published, or used in public discourse as Sunan Kudus' legacy, the symbolic link between Gusjigang and Sunan Kudus becomes stronger. However, institutional repetition should not be confused with historical proof. Repetition can strengthen cultural acceptance, but it does not automatically prove literal origin. This is why Gusjigang should be read as a cultural da'wah memory: a socially powerful memory that is continuously reproduced and legitimized.

The reproduction of Gusjigang in contemporary discourse also demonstrates that it has moved beyond oral tradition. It has entered various institutional spaces, including education, pesantren, academic publication, popular media, and local government discourse. This institutionalization is one of the reasons why Gusjigang continues to survive as a living cultural memory.

Table 3. The Reproduction and Institutionalization of Gusjigang

Space of Reproduction	Form of Institutionalization	Social Function
Education	Character education, Islamic education materials, local wisdom-based learning	Transmits moral, religious, and entrepreneurial values to younger generations
Pesantren	Entrepreneurial pesantren programs, habituation, religious learning, economic training	Forms santri who are religious, independent, and economically productive
Academic institutions	Journal names, academic articles, research topics, campus discourse	Objectifies Gusjigang as a scholarly and institutional identity
Popular media	Articles, online narratives, Islamic media, cultural stories	Expands Gusjigang beyond local communities
Local government	Economic empowerment discourse, UMKM programs, regional identity narratives	Uses Gusjigang as symbolic capital for local development
Local society	Oral tradition, trading practice, religious gatherings, community identity	Maintains Gusjigang as everyday cultural memory

This table indicates that Gusjigang is not merely preserved through memory, but also reproduced through institutions. Education transforms Gusjigang into pedagogical values. Pesantren transforms it into religious and entrepreneurial formation. Academic institutions transform it into scholarly discourse. Popular media transforms it into public narrative. Local government transforms it into symbolic capital for development. These processes confirm Assmann's argument that cultural memory survives when it is objectified in institutions, texts, symbols, and repeated practices (Assmann, 2008).

3.4. Gusjigang as Cultural Da'wah Memory

Based on the discussion above, Gusjigang can be understood as cultural da'wah memory. This concept refers to a collective memory of da'wah values that lives within local culture, is reproduced across generations, is institutionalized through various social channels, and functions as a source of moral and religious identity. Gusjigang is cultural memory because it is remembered, narrated, written, taught, and institutionalized. It is da'wah memory because it links Islamic values to the symbolic figure of Sunan Kudus and functions as a medium of moral, religious, and socio-economic formation.

As cultural da'wah memory, Gusjigang has several elements. First, it contains core values: *bagus*, *ngaji*, and *dagang*. Second, it has a symbolic figure: Sunan Kudus. Third, it has a community of memory: the people of Kudus, including santri communities, traders, pesantren, educational institutions, scholars, and local government. Fourth, it has media of reproduction: oral tradition, education, academic writing, popular media, institutional discourse, and public policy. Fifth, it has social functions: identity formation, moral legitimation, religious education, and economic ethos.

This reading avoids two extremes. The first extreme is to accept Gusjigang uncritically as a literal teaching of Sunan Kudus without historical verification. The second extreme is to dismiss Gusjigang simply because its literal origin is uncertain. The concept of cultural da'wah memory offers a middle position. It recognizes that Gusjigang has cultural truth and social significance even if its terminological origin remains historically uncertain. At the same time, it maintains academic caution by distinguishing symbolic memory from literal historical evidence.

The significance of Gusjigang therefore lies not only in the question of whether Sunan Kudus directly coined the term. Its significance lies in how the people of Kudus have used Gusjigang to remember Sunan Kudus, to define moral ideals, to educate younger generations, to legitimize economic ethics, and to construct local Islamic identity. Gusjigang is powerful because it connects the past and the present, religion and culture, morality and economy, memory and identity.

In this sense, Gusjigang expands the meaning of da'wah. Da'wah is not only a formal act of preaching, but also a cultural process through which Islamic values are embedded in social life. *Bagus* represents da'wah through moral conduct. *Ngaji* represents da'wah through knowledge and religious learning. *Dagang* represents da'wah through economic independence and ethical productivity. Together, these three values show that Islamic da'wah can take the form of a local philosophy that shapes the everyday life of a community.

This interpretation also contributes to the study of local Islam in Indonesia. It shows that local Islamic traditions should not be understood only through the binary of authentic history versus invented tradition. Some traditions may not be fully verifiable in literal historical terms, yet they can still function as meaningful cultural memories. Gusjigang is one such case. It is meaningful because it continues to guide social behavior, shape identity, and connect Kudus society with the remembered legacy of Sunan Kudus.

Thus, Gusjigang remains important as part of the cultural-religious heritage of Kudus. However, its importance should be understood through a careful academic framework. It should not be forced into a literal historical claim that cannot yet be sufficiently proven. Instead, it should be appreciated as a living cultural da'wah memory that expresses the moral, religious, and economic ideals of Kudus society.

Based on these findings, Gusjigang can be conceptualized as cultural da'wah memory. It is cultural because it is rooted in local values and reproduced through social institutions. It is da'wah because it transmits Islamic moral, religious, and socio-economic ideals. It is memory because it connects present Kudus society with the remembered figure of Sunan Kudus.

Table 4. Gusjigang as Cultural Da'wah Memory

Analytical Dimension	Explanation	Manifestation in Gusjigang
Core values	Values remembered and transmitted by society	<i>Bagus, ngaji, and dagang</i>
Symbolic figure	The figure who anchors moral and religious legitimacy	Sunan Kudus
Community of memory	Social groups that preserve and reproduce the memory	Kudus society, santri, traders, pesantren, schools, universities, local government
Media of reproduction	Channels through which memory survives	Oral tradition, education, academic writing, popular media, local policy
Form of da'wah	Transmission of Islamic values through local culture	Moral conduct, Islamic learning, and ethical entrepreneurship
Social function	Role of Gusjigang in contemporary society	Identity formation, moral legitimation, religious continuity, economic ethos
Academic position	How this article treats the attribution	Cultural-memorial rather than strictly historical-literal

The conceptualization of Gusjigang as cultural da'wah memory shows that the importance of Gusjigang does not depend solely on whether the term can be proven to have originated directly from Sunan Kudus. Its importance lies in how the people of Kudus use Gusjigang to remember Sunan Kudus, construct local Islamic identity, transmit moral values, and legitimize social-economic behavior. Gusjigang is therefore not merely a historical claim, but a living cultural mechanism through which Islamic values are localized, remembered, and institutionalized.

This reading also contributes to the broader study of Islamic da'wah in Indonesia. Da'wah should not be reduced to verbal preaching or formal religious communication. It can also appear as cultural memory, local ethics, and social practice. Gusjigang demonstrates that Islamic da'wah may work through the formation of character, the preservation of religious learning, and the cultivation of economic responsibility. In this sense, Gusjigang expands the meaning of da'wah from message delivery to cultural formation.

Furthermore, this approach allows a more balanced reading of local Islamic traditions. Local traditions are often placed between two opposing views: they are either accepted as authentic heritage or dismissed as invented tradition. The case of Gusjigang suggests a more nuanced position. A tradition may not be fully verifiable as a literal historical expression, yet it can still possess cultural truth, social function, and religious meaning. Gusjigang is meaningful because it continues to shape how Kudus society imagines itself as moral, religious, and economically productive.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This article has examined Gusjigang as a local philosophy of Kudus and critically discussed its attribution to Sunan Kudus. The analysis shows that Gusjigang, which consists of *bagus, ngaji, and*

dagang, represents an integrated moral, religious, and socio-economic ideal. *Bagus* expresses the ethical dimension of social life, *ngaji* represents Islamic learning and religious continuity, while *dagang* reflects entrepreneurship, economic independence, and social productivity. These three values form a distinctive local Islamic ethic that continues to shape the identity of Kudus society.

The main finding of this article is that Gusjigang is better understood as cultural da'wah memory rather than merely as a literal historical expression that must be proven to have originated directly from Sunan Kudus. Many academic, popular, and institutional narratives attribute Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus. However, this attribution should be treated carefully because the available discussions do not always provide primary historical evidence showing that the term Gusjigang was used by Sunan Kudus himself. This article therefore distinguishes between historical-literal attribution and cultural-memorial attribution. The first requires strong philological and historical evidence, while the second operates through collective memory, oral tradition, repeated narratives, institutional reproduction, and social acceptance.

The attribution of Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus should not be dismissed simply because its literal historical origin remains uncertain. Instead, it should be understood as a mechanism of symbolic legitimation. By linking Gusjigang to Sunan Kudus, Kudus society gives the philosophy moral and religious authority. Gusjigang becomes more than a local slogan; it becomes a remembered da'wah legacy that connects contemporary Kudus society with the symbolic figure of Sunan Kudus. In this sense, Gusjigang has cultural truth and social significance even when its terminological origin still requires further historical verification.

This article also shows that Gusjigang survives because it has been reproduced and institutionalized through various social channels. It appears in education, pesantren practice, academic publications, popular media, local government discourse, and everyday social life. These processes demonstrate that Gusjigang is not a passive memory of the past, but an active cultural mechanism that shapes identity, morality, religious learning, and economic ethos. It functions as a form of cultural da'wah because it transmits Islamic values through local cultural language and social practice.

The contribution of this article lies in offering a critical-appreciative framework for studying Gusjigang. It is critical because it does not accept historical claims without methodological caution. It is appreciative because it recognizes the cultural, religious, and social significance of Gusjigang for Kudus society. This approach allows local Islamic traditions to be studied beyond the binary of authentic history versus invented tradition. A tradition may not be fully verifiable as a literal historical expression, yet it can still function as meaningful cultural memory that shapes collective identity.

Future research may develop this study in at least two directions. First, historical and philological research is needed to trace earlier textual sources, manuscripts, archives, or local documents

that may explain the development of the term Gusjigang and its connection to Sunan Kudus. Second, ethnographic fieldwork is needed to examine how contemporary Kudus society understands, practices, and transmits Gusjigang in everyday life. Such studies would enrich the understanding of Gusjigang not only as a concept in academic discourse, but also as a living cultural practice in the community.

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