



Terbangan Menara as a Medium of Local Culture-Based Islamic Education in Kudus

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Abstract

Terbangan Menara Kudus is a traditional art form that combines music, Islamic poetry, and sacred performance conventions. This study aims to analyze the role of Terbang Menara as a medium for Islamic education based on local culture. The research method used a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation techniques, involving performers, managers, and the local community. The findings reveal that Terbang Menara functions not only as a traditional musical performance but also as a medium for transmitting Islamic teachings, moral values, social solidarity, and cultural identity. The lyrics, rhythms, and collective performance practices reflect Islamic values such as togetherness, discipline, cooperation, and spirituality. Furthermore, Terbang Menara demonstrates how Islamic education can be integrated with local wisdom without losing its religious essence. The study concludes that Terbang Menara has significant potential as a model of local culture-based Islamic education that supports cultural preservation and strengthens community identity. Therefore, its preservation and development are important in promoting culturally rooted Islamic educational practices in Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic Educational Media, Islamic Identity in Indonesian, Local Culture, Terbang Menara

A. Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country with vast cultural diversity, where local traditions often blend with religious practices, especially Islam. One of the characteristics of Islam in the Nusantara is its ability to acculturate with local cultures, so that its teachings can be accepted without causing friction with local traditions. This local culture not only functions as an identity but also serves as an effective means of conveying religious messages in a contextual manner (Machali & Suhendro, 2022). Therefore, research on the interaction between local culture and Islamic values is important to conduct in order to understand how cultural traditions can strengthen religious moderation, preserve local wisdom, and maintain social harmony in a multicultural society.

Kudus is a city in Central Java that is famous as the center of the Walisongo Islamic missionary movement. The uniqueness of Kudus is reflected in the architecture of the Menara Kudus Mosque, which combines Hindu-Javanese and Islamic styles, as well as in the various religious traditions that thrive in the community (Azzaki et al., 2021). *Terbangan Menara* is an Islamic musical tradition that developed in the Menara Kudus area and still preserved by subsequent generations.

Terbangan Menara is performed using distinctive instruments consisting of four *terbang* (*kemplong*, *salahan*, *telon*, and *lajer*) and one *jedur*, a small drum-like instrument. Beyond its musical performance, *Terbangan Menara* contains Islamic educational values expressed through shalawat, praises to the Prophet Muhammad, and moral messages embedded in its poetry. These performances function as an informal medium of Islamic education because they teach values such as religious devotion, good character (*akhlak*), togetherness, respect for religious traditions, and love for the Prophet Muhammad. Through repeated performances in religious gatherings, Islamic holiday commemorations, and community celebrations, audiences indirectly internalize Islamic moral and spiritual teachings. Therefore, *Terbangan Menara* serves not merely as entertainment, but also as a cultural medium for da'wah and Islamic character education.

This is in line with the view that Islamic education should incorporate local cultural approaches because communities tend to have strong emotional and psychological attachments to their cultural traditions, making Islamic values easier to understand and internalize (Wadiyo et al., 2022). The internalization of Islamic values can be effectively carried out through cultural approaches that are adaptive to community traditions and local wisdom (Puspadewi et al., 2016). Traditional arts

therefore become an effective bridge between religion, culture, and community-based education. Similarly, Hidayah et al. (2025), explain that rebana art functions not only as religious entertainment, but also as a medium of cultural da'wah, moral education, and the strengthening of Islamic identity in community activities such as religious studies, Islamic holiday commemorations, and walimatul 'urs celebrations.

Previous studies have shown that Islamic traditional arts play an important role in da'wah and social cohesion. Research on *Terbang Papat* in Loram Kudus highlights its aesthetic dimensions and its role in strengthening Maulid Nabi traditions (Relianto, 2015). Similarly, studies on Kentrung art in Jepara examine symbolic interaction and cultural communication within local communities (Harwanto, 2021), while research on Setrek art in Magelang emphasizes the integration of Islamic poetry such as Barzanji into traditional performances (Sutrisno & Wulandari, 2019). However, most of these studies were conducted from perspectives of art, culture, or anthropology, which tend to focus on aesthetic performances, symbolic meanings, and social functions. As a result, the role of traditional Islamic arts as a medium for Islamic education has not been explored comprehensively.

However, most research still focuses on the aesthetic aspects, social functions, or symbolic values of art. Only a few explore the role of traditional art specifically as a medium for Islamic education, especially those based on local culture with distinctive styles such as *Terbangan Menara*. Furthermore, a systematic literature review shows that Islamic education in local communities has a significant impact on strengthening values and identity. *Terbangan Menara* can be positioned as a concrete example of how local traditions remain relevant and aesthetically necessary, and can function in contemporary Islamic education in the era of globalization (Sugiarto & Rohidi, 2021).

Based on the explanation above, studies specifically examining *Terbangan Menara* as a local culture-based Islamic educational medium remain limited. Important aspects such as its educational values, the role of poetry in moral and spiritual learning, community perceptions, and intergenerational preservation have not been widely studied scientifically. Therefore, this study aims to analyze *Terbangan Menara* as a medium for Islamic education based on local culture in Kudus. This research is important for understanding how traditional arts can preserve Islamic values, strengthen local identity, and remain relevant amid the challenges of globalization and cultural transformation.

This study used a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, as its main focus is to understand the meaning, values, and educational practices contained in the *Terbangan Menara* tradition in Kudus. The ethnographic approach was chosen to explore the experiences, narratives, and cultural symbols that exist within the community. Qualitative ethnographic research allows researchers to describe cultural phenomena holistically and in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The research location was in the area of the Menara Kudus Mosque and its surroundings, as this area is the center of *Terbangan Menara* activities. The research subjects included *Terbangan Menara* players across generations, religious leaders, mosque administrators, and the community directly involved in the activity. The selection of subjects was based on the principle of representativeness, namely their involvement, experience, and authority in the tradition (Sugiyono, 2015).

Data was collected through three main techniques: (1) participatory observation of regular performances and celebrations, (2) in-depth interviews with performers and community leaders, and (3) documentation in the form of audio-visual recordings, photographs, and written archives related to *Terbangan Menara*. The use of multiple techniques or triangulation of sources is important to obtain a comprehensive picture and increase data validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed by identifying the main themes related to Islamic educational values, traditional norms, and the social role of *Terbangan Menara*. This analysis was linked to the theoretical framework of Islam-based education rooted in local culture to find academic and practical relevance (Siswati & Ida, 2022).

Data validity was maintained through source, method, and time triangulation techniques, as well as member checking with key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in line with the reality in the field. In addition, researcher reflexivity was maintained so that the research results are not biased, given that ethnographic research is highly dependent on interpretation. Validity in qualitative research is understood as credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017).

B. Results and Discussion

1. *Terbangan Menara* as Local Cultural Heritage of Kudus

Based on observations conducted in the Menara Kudus area, *Terbangan Menara* is still actively performed in various religious and cultural activities, such as Islamic religious commemorations, tahlilan, maulid events, and community gatherings around the Menara Kudus Mosque. The performance uses traditional musical instruments including *kemplong*, *salahan*, *telon*, *lajer*, and *jedur*, which produce rhythmic melodies accompanied by Islamic chants and praises to the Prophet Muhammad. The observations showed that *Terbangan Menara* is not merely entertainment, but is closely connected with religious activities and community interaction within Kudus society.

Interview results with members of the *Terbangan Menara* group revealed that this art form has been inherited from previous generations and continues to be maintained as part of the cultural identity of Kudus. One participant explained that *Terbangan Menara* is considered a cultural medium introduced by Sunan Kudus to spread Islamic teachings through local traditions that are easily accepted by society. The performers also emphasized that the lyrics sung during the performance contain Islamic teachings, moral advice, prayers, and praises to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. This finding indicated that *Terbangan Menara* functions not only as traditional art but also as a medium for transmitting Islamic values to the community, especially younger generations.

In this context, *Terbangan Menara* can be understood as a local culture-based Islamic educational medium. The educational process occurs through artistic performances that integrate religious messages with cultural expressions. Through repeated performances in religious ceremonies and community activities, Islamic values such as togetherness, respect, discipline, spirituality, and social harmony are internalized naturally within society. This condition demonstrates that local culture can become an effective informal educational medium in strengthening religious character and Islamic identity.

The observations further indicated that the Yayasan Masjid Menara dan Makam Sunan Kudus (YM3K) play a central role in preserving *Terbangan Menara* as part of local Islamic cultural heritage. Interview data showed that the foundation actively facilitates religious and cultural events in which *Terbangan Menara* is performed regularly. In addition, the foundation involves local communities and younger generations in cultural activities around the Menara Kudus Mosque

environment. These efforts are intended to ensure the continuity of the tradition amid the rapid influence of modern entertainment culture.

The role of the foundation reflects the importance of institutional support in preserving intangible cultural heritage. The preservation efforts carried out by the foundation include organizing regular performances during Islamic celebrations, maintaining traditional performance practices, encouraging youth participation, and promoting *Terbangan Menara* as part of religious tourism activities in Kudus. These practical efforts strengthen the sustainability of *Terbangan Menara* not only as a cultural performance but also as a medium for Islamic education and character formation in society.

As a cultural heritage, *Terbangan Menara* has experienced development from a tradition that was originally centered in mosque activities into a broader public cultural performance. Observations showed that *Terbangan Menara* is now also presented in regional cultural festivals and religious tourism events both within and outside Kudus. This transformation has strengthened its position as a living tradition that remains relevant to contemporary social life while still maintaining its Islamic spiritual values.

Terbangan Menara also represents intangible cultural heritage as defined by UNESCO, namely practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills recognized by communities as part of their cultural identity. In this case, *Terbangan Menara* contains educational, spiritual, and social values that continue to be transmitted across generations. The collective performance of the musical instruments symbolizes cooperation and social harmony, while the religious chants function as media for da'wah and moral education. Therefore, the preservation of *Terbangan Menara* contributes not only to cultural sustainability but also to strengthening the religious identity of the Kudus community.

The findings of this study are in line with previous studies discussing Islamic traditional arts as educational and cultural media. Tindarika & Ramadhan (2021) explained that *hadrah* performances transformed into cultural traditions preserve Islamic values through community practices. Similarly, Fauzan et al (2017) emphasized that traditional Islamic arts need continuous preservation and innovation to survive amid the influence of modern art and entertainment. In the context of Kudus, *Terbangan Menara* remains sustainable because it successfully integrates Islamic teachings, local wisdom, and community participation into a cultural tradition that continues to function in contemporary society.

Terbang Papat itself refers to both the name of the musical instrument (*terbang*) and the structure of the performance, which involves four types of rebana instruments and a performance duration of four hours. The instruments consist of *kemplong* and *telon* as the main rhythm, accompanied by *salahan* and *lajer* as rhythmic variations, together with one *jidur* (Maftuchah & Fauji, 2020). The collaborative nature of these performances further strengthens the educational meaning of togetherness, discipline, and harmony embedded within the tradition.

2. Transformation of Dakwah through Digital Innovation and Live Streaming

Based on observations conducted during several *Terbangan Menara* performances in Kudus, researchers found that the use of digital technology has become an important part of the dissemination of this traditional art. Performances are no longer limited to direct audiences at the event location, but are also broadcast live through social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram managed by the Menara Kudus Foundation media team. During the observation, the live streaming process involved camera operators, audio systems, and online interaction through audience comments on social media. This indicates that *Terbangan Menara* has adapted to the development of digital communication technology.



Image 1. Live YouTube by the Media Team of the Yayasan Masjid Menara dan Makam Sunan Kudus (YM3K)

The interview results also showed that digital platforms have expanded the audience reach of *Terbangan Menara* performances. One informant from the organizing committee stated that online broadcasts enable audiences from outside

Kudus and even from abroad to watch the performances. According to the informant, many viewers provide responses through comments and social media interactions, indicating that digital media contributes to introducing local Islamic culture to wider communities.

In addition, interviews with several young audiences revealed that they were more familiar with *Terbangan Menara* through social media than through direct performances. Some participants explained that they often watched performance recordings on YouTube because they could replay the Islamic poems and musical performances repeatedly. This accessibility encouraged their interest in learning the lyrics, understanding the religious messages, and recognizing traditional musical instruments used in *Terbangan Menara*.

Observations also found that digital archives of performances are frequently reused for educational and documentation purposes. Several recordings uploaded to YouTube are accessed repeatedly and shared through various social media platforms. This shows that live streaming does not only function as entertainment media, but also as documentation and learning resources related to Islamic arts and local culture.

Furthermore, researchers found that the existence of digital broadcasts indirectly encourages the regeneration process of *Terbangan Menara* performers. Several young community members become interested in participating in the art group after watching online performances. The digital platform therefore serves as a bridge connecting traditional Islamic culture with younger generations who are closely connected to digital media.

The findings demonstrated that digital innovation has transformed *Terbangan Menara* from a local traditional performance into a wider medium of Islamic da'wah and cultural education. Through live streaming and digital archives, the values conveyed in Islamic poems can reach broader audiences beyond geographical limitations. This transformation strengthens the role of *Terbangan Menara* not only as cultural heritage, but also as an adaptive Islamic educational medium relevant to contemporary society. The integration of Islamic values and local culture can create a contextual educational model that strengthens cultural identity and religious understanding simultaneously (Puspita & Lessy, 2021).

The use of YouTube and Instagram in disseminating *Terbangan Menara* aligns with the findings of (Basori et al., 2024), who explained that social media and video-sharing platforms are effective tools for preserving traditional arts in the

modern era. Digital content in the form of performances and tutorials enables younger generations to access and learn traditional arts more easily. In the context of *Terbangan Menara*, digital media creates opportunities for cultural preservation while simultaneously strengthening Islamic values through artistic expression.

The findings are also consistent with (Sahombu, 2025), who argued that live streaming features on YouTube help traditional art groups expand their audience reach and increase public engagement. In this study, online broadcasts of *Terbangan Menara* performances have attracted viewers from various regions, indicating that digital platforms contribute significantly to the sustainability and visibility of local Islamic culture. This wider exposure supports the social development of the community by strengthening cultural identity and increasing appreciation for local traditions.

From a religious perspective, the digitalization of *Terbangan Menara* reflects the transformation of dakwah methods in the digital era. Islamic messages are no longer delivered solely through conventional lectures, but also through artistic performances that combine religious values, music, and local wisdom. Faldiansyah (2020) explained that the internet has become a strategic medium for disseminating Islamic teachings because of its accessibility and rapid distribution of information. The findings of this study support this argument, as audiences can repeatedly access Islamic poems and religious messages through digital archives on social media platforms.

In addition, the integration of digital platforms into *Terbangan Menara* performances demonstrates the ongoing relevance of local Islamic traditions in modern society. Khafidin et al (2025) suggested that the transformation of digital preaching shows that social media and bold platforms are effective means of expanding the reach of religious messages and building interactions with audiences. Younger generations, who are highly engaged with social media, become more interested in traditional arts when they are presented in digital formats. This adaptation not only supports regeneration within the art community but also strengthens social cohesion by connecting cultural heritage with contemporary lifestyles.

The study further revealed that digital archives of *Terbangan Menara* performances have interdisciplinary value. Recorded performances can serve as research materials in the fields of Islamic education, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Researchers may analyze musical structures,

Islamic poetry, audience responses, and patterns of digital interaction surrounding the performances. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that the digitalization of traditional performing arts contributes significantly to cultural preservation and academic documentation in the digital era. Aryandari et al. (2026) explained that digital archives of traditional music function not only as preservation tools but also as important scholarly resources for understanding local cultural heritage. Similarly, Chamami et al. (2025) highlighted that integrating traditional arts with digital technology strengthens cultural sustainability while expanding public access and educational engagement. Therefore, live streaming functions not only as entertainment and dakwah media, but also as an academic resource that enriches studies of Indonesian Islamic culture.

Overall, the transformation of *Terbangan Menara* through digital innovation illustrates how local traditions can survive and develop amidst modernization. The integration of traditional Islamic arts with digital technology creates a model of cultural preservation that is adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable. This model may inspire other Islamic art communities in Indonesia to utilize digital platforms in preserving local wisdom while strengthening religious and social development within society.

3. The Value of Islamic Education in the *Terbangan Menara* Performance

Based on interviews with *Terbangan Menara* performers and community leaders in Kudus, this traditional art form is not only viewed as entertainment, but also as a medium for conveying Islamic teachings. Traditional Islamic performances may function as a form of cultural da'wah, where religious messages are communicated through artistic and cultural expressions that are more easily accepted by society (A'la & A'la, 2023; Miftachurrozaq et al., 2023). Informants explained that the poems and shalawat recited during performances contain messages about faith, devotion to Allah, love for the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and moral values in daily life. One performer stated that audiences often feel spiritually touched because the lyrics remind them of religious teachings in a subtle and culturally acceptable way.

The results of observations during religious events and community celebrations showed that audiences actively participated in the performances by listening attentively, chanting shalawat together, and showing emotional engagement throughout the event. The atmosphere created during the performance reflected a strong religious nuance that encouraged spiritual reflection among

community members. Observations also indicated that *Terbangan Menara* performances are commonly presented during Islamic celebrations such as maulid, tahlilan, and other religious gatherings, which strengthens its role as a medium of da'wah and Islamic education.

Interviews also revealed that the educational values contained in *Terbangan Menara* include values of faith (aqidah), worship (sharia), and morality (akhlaq). In line with Paramita et al (2025), Islamic musical and shalawat traditions contain educational values related to faith, worship, morality, spirituality, and social ethics. The value of faith is reflected in poems emphasizing monotheism and remembrance of Allah. The value of sharia appears in messages encouraging prayer, obedience, and religious discipline. Meanwhile, moral values are conveyed through messages of respect, togetherness, humility, and compassion among community members.

In addition, field observations demonstrated that the collective performance process reflects the value of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood). The performers cooperate harmoniously while playing musical instruments, showing mutual understanding and solidarity. Informants explained that teamwork in the performance symbolizes unity and togetherness in Islamic social life. Collective artistic performances can strengthen ukhuwah Islamiyah through cooperation, discipline, solidarity, and shared cultural participation among performers and audiences (Supriyadi & Fitri, 2025).

The findings showed that *Terbangan Menara* faces challenges from modern entertainment and decreasing youth interest in traditional arts. Limited regeneration also threatens the continuity of performance traditions. To overcome these issues, practitioners have adapted by utilizing social media, digital recordings, and modern stage arrangements while maintaining Islamic and traditional values. Intergenerational learning is carried out informally through regular practice, religious events, and community activities, where senior performers teach musical techniques, shalawat, and philosophical meanings to younger members. These findings indicated that *Terbangan Menara* functions as a culture-based medium of Islamic education that combines entertainment, moral values, and spiritual learning. This supports the concept of experiential learning, where religious values are internalized through direct cultural and emotional experiences (Kistoro et al., 2023; Purwowidodo, 2024).

The results also demonstrated that *Terbangan Menara* embodies comprehensive Islamic educational values, including faith, sharia, and morality.

These values are reflected not only in the lyrical content of the poems but also in the social interactions among performers and audiences. The practice of cooperation and harmony during performances represents the implementation of ukhuwah Islamiyah in everyday life. This finding is consistent with (Ridho, 2017), who emphasized that ukhuwah Islamiyah should be built upon sincere affection and togetherness as guided by Islamic teachings.

The findings further support previous studies regarding Islamic educational values in traditional tambourine arts. Priarni & Wibowo (2021) explained that tambourine performances contain cultural, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic values reflected through shalawat recitations, religious poetry, dress codes, and collective performance practices. Similarly, *Terbangan Menara* demonstrates how Islamic arts can function as a medium for strengthening spiritual awareness and preserving religious culture within society.

The challenges identified in this study also reflect broader issues faced by many traditional cultural performances in the globalization era. Competition with modern entertainment and digital culture has reduced youth interest in traditional arts. Similar challenges are experienced by many traditional Islamic arts in the globalization era, where digital entertainment and popular culture increasingly dominate youth cultural preferences (Salsabiila et al., 2024). This condition creates risks for the continuity of cultural heritage if regeneration processes are not maintained effectively. However, the adaptation strategies undertaken by practitioners such as utilizing social media, digital recordings, and modern stage arrangements demonstrate the resilience and relevance of *Terbangan Menara* in contemporary society.

The intergenerational transfer of knowledge observed in this study is particularly important in preserving cultural heritage. Informal teaching processes through community practices, religious gatherings, and direct mentoring allow younger generations to learn not only technical performance skills but also the philosophical and spiritual meanings embedded within the art form. This process reflects the role of local culture based education in preserving identity, moral values, and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the adaptation of *Terbangan Menara* to contemporary settings indicates that traditional Islamic arts can remain relevant without losing their essential values. The integration of digital media and contemporary performance elements shows that cultural preservation does not necessarily mean resisting modernization, but rather negotiating tradition and modernity in a balanced way.

This finding strengthens the argument that local culture-based Islamic education can contribute significantly to maintaining cultural identity while responding to contemporary social changes.

Therefore, *Terbangan Menara* can be positioned as an important model of local culture-based Islamic education in Indonesia. Its ability to integrate Islamic teachings, local wisdom, aesthetic expression, and social values makes it relevant not only for the people of Kudus but also as a reference for developing culture-based Islamic educational approaches in other regions. This finding is in line with previous research conducted by (Ihsan et al., 2021), which emphasized that local cultural traditions can serve as effective media for transmitting Islamic values and strengthening community identity. Meanwhile Al-Jauhariyah et al (2025), showed that cultural preaching based on local wisdom not only strengthens the relevance of Islamic messages but also provides a down-to-earth, contextual, and environmentally friendly strategy. Thus, the preservation of *Terbangan Menara* is not only important for maintaining cultural heritage but also for supporting the sustainability of culturally rooted Islamic education.

C. Conclusion

This study concludes that *Terbangan Menara* functions not only as a traditional Islamic musical performance but also as an effective medium of local culture based Islamic education in Kudus. Through Islamic poetry, shalawat, collective musical performances, and community participation, *Terbangan Menara* transmits religious values, moral teachings, social solidarity, and cultural identity to society. The tradition reflects the integration of Islamic teachings with local wisdom, making religious messages more contextual and culturally acceptable within the community. In addition, the study reveals that digital innovation and live streaming have transformed *Terbangan Menara* into a wider medium of da'wah and cultural preservation by expanding audience reach and attracting younger generations through social media platforms. Despite challenges posed by modernization and declining youth interest in traditional arts, various adaptation and regeneration efforts demonstrate that *Terbangan Menara* remains relevant in contemporary society. Therefore, *Terbangan Menara* can be positioned as an important model of local culture based Islamic education that contributes to preserving cultural heritage, strengthening Islamic identity, and supporting sustainable cultural and religious education in Indonesia.

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