



The Role of Miliran Village in Positioning Yogyakarta as a Cultural Tourism Hub within the Framework of International Relations: An Analysis through Global City Theory and City Diplomacy

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Abstract. This study examines the role of Miliran Village in strengthening Yogyakarta’s position as a cultural tourism destination through the lens of international relations. Yogyakarta has emerged as one of Indonesia’s leading tourism destinations, attracting both domestic and international visitors. Within this context, Miliran Village represents a significant local actor that has received special funding from the Regional Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta to enhance its cultural tourism initiatives. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, this research relies on primary data obtained through interviews and supporting documents. The analytical framework combines Global City Theory and the concept of City Diplomacy to explore how local communities can contribute to the international visibility of Yogyakarta as a cultural hub. The findings are expected to highlight the ways in which Miliran Village contributes to the development of cultural tourism, particularly by linking local traditions and community-based initiatives with broader strategies of cultural diplomacy and city branding. Overall, the study underscores the importance of community-based initiatives in shaping Yogyakarta’s cultural identity and strengthening its role within the framework of international relations.

Keywords: Miliran Village, Tourism, Cultural Tourism, International Relations

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, international relations have undergone significant transformation, marked by the emergence of issues spanning international, regional, and domestic levels. The dynamics of global affairs are no longer dominated solely by central governments, as sub-state actors—such as provinces, districts, and municipalities—have increasingly contributed to political, economic, social, and cultural development. This shift reflects the broader process of globalization, in which boundaries between regions have become less rigid and interdependence more pronounced. Globalization compels diverse actors to participate in national and international progress, extending beyond economics and politics to encompass culture and tourism within the framework of international relations. The advancement of technology, trade, and telecommunications (3T) has further accelerated this interconnectedness, allowing people, goods, and ideas to move freely across borders. As Mansbach and Rafferty highlight, these dynamics illustrate the profound impact of globalization on shaping contemporary international relations[1]. The consequences of this process of economic globalization have significantly influenced the development of global tourism, which in turn has important implications for the tourism industry in Indonesia [2].

The Special Region of Yogyakarta Province is one of Indonesia’s main destinations for international tourists. This is reinforced by the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARDA DIY) 2012–2025, Article 3, Paragraph 3, which envisions Yogyakarta as a leading culture-based tourism destination in Southeast Asia that is world-class, competitive, sustainable, and capable of driving regional development

for the welfare of its people. In line with this, the vision of the Yogyakarta City Government is to establish Yogyakarta as a premier tourist city that relies on the strength and excellence of local tourism, while simultaneously strengthening cultural identity, providing positive benefits for society, and serving as a locomotive for the city's comprehensive development [3]. One of the villages receiving these special funds is Muja-Muju, which has been designated as a cultural village (kampung budaya) and contributes to diversifying cultural tourism experiences for visitors. Yogyakarta has long been recognized as a major tourism destination (ODTW) for travelers from various regions, offering opportunities for diverse tourism-related activities. In accordance with Yogyakarta City Regulation (Perwal) No. 115 of 2016 on the management of Tourism Villages (Kampung Wisata), the development of community based tourism must be supported by programs and initiatives that highlight local potentials, including natural attractions, social life, arts, culture, traditions, crafts, and culinary heritage. These initiatives reflect the importance of empowering local communities through Tourism Village programs as a means of strengthening Yogyakarta's cultural tourism landscape [4].

In addition to being recognized as a harmonious community, Miliran Village is also active in cultural preservation and the promotion of local literacy. Activities such as the Pawiyatan Aksara Hanacaraka and the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Cultural Carnival demonstrate the community's commitment to safeguarding cultural identity amidst the currents of modernization. As part of its cultural preservation efforts, Miliran has also served as the site for literacy training in Javanese script through the Pawiyatan Aksara program organized by the Yogyakarta City Office of Culture[5].

METHODS

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research method. Bogdan and Taylor [6] define qualitative research as an inquiry that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals, as well as observable behavior. Within qualitative research, data are commonly collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis. The qualitative method in this study was applied to describe and analyze the collected data. The research methodology consisted of three main components: data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The initial stage involved gathering the necessary data for the research. The techniques employed included video recording, note-taking, and interviews. The primary respondents were cultural managers in Muja Muju Subdistrict, who served as the focal subjects of this study. Through this approach, primary data were obtained regarding cultural activities undertaken by the local community. In addition to direct interviews, secondary data were also gathered through literature review and relevant articles concerning the case under investigation.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Following Miles and Huberman, the data analysis process comprised three stages [7]:

a. Data Reduction

In this stage, the collected data were organized and selected based on their relevance to the research theme, followed by summarizing and focusing on the most significant aspects.

b. Data Display

At this stage, the partially processed data were arranged in written form, structured according to a clear thematic framework, to facilitate interpretation.

c. Conclusion

The final stage involved deriving conclusions that directly addressed the research questions. According to Miles and Huberman, this stage is essential for producing analytical insights from the data.

d. Data Analysis Results Presentation Method

The last stage concerned the presentation of data analysis results. In this study, the findings were presented descriptively and supported by explanatory narration. Such an approach was intended to enhance clarity and comprehensibility. The descriptive-explanatory style allowed the research results to be articulated in a manner that facilitated reader understanding of both the data and the analysis conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY ART PERFORMANCES

Cultural and social activities represent integral aspects of community life, particularly in Kampung Miliran. These two dimensions are closely interconnected and inseparable, as reflected in the community's tolerant character and mutual respect among residents. The long-standing relationships that have developed over several decades have fostered strong emotional and social bonds within the community. The sense of kinship embedded in Miliran society facilitates the exploration and realization of local potential through collective activities. The cultural potential of Miliran is often manifested during national celebrations, one of which is the community's participation in carnivals organized by the local government.



Figure 1. Cultural Festival

Herry Santoso Wibowo, the Head of the Committee for the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Cultural Carnival in Kampung Miliran, explained that the event was enlivened by the participation of approximately 800 residents from 16 neighborhood units (RT) and 4 community units (RW) [8]. At the same time, Kampung Miliran is recognized as one of the pioneering members of the Rintisan Kelurahan Budaya (RKB) program in Muja-Muju. The Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Cultural Carnival, organized through a strong spirit of gotong royong (mutual cooperation), serves not only as a source of entertainment for the community but also as an important instrument for promoting and showcasing the cultural diversity of Kampung Miliran. The role of the community, local groups, and the local government is crucial in ensuring the sustainability of cultural activities. The continuity of social and cultural life requires that tourism development not only generate economic benefits but also strengthen the role of the community in safeguarding social order through shared values that form the foundation of identity, culture, and self-reliance [9]. The practices observed in Kampung Miliran provide concrete evidence that the values of Pancasila can be realized in everyday community life beyond the normative sphere. Residents actively engage in cultural practices through a sense of collective awareness and participatory action.



Figure 2.Sanggar Miliran Art (Candra Kinasih)

The development of culture in the present era poses significant challenges, particularly for younger generations, who bear the responsibility of preserving and safeguarding cultural heritage so that it is not forgotten by society. To address this, young people must actively engage in public spaces, serving as a bridge between tradition and modernity. Their involvement is essential in maintaining cultural identity amidst the pressures of globalization and rapid socio-cultural change. The presence of community-based organizations provides important platforms for youth to explore and express artistic and cultural values, particularly within Kampung Miliran. This dynamic has become one of the key factors behind Miliran's success in sustaining its cultural traditions. The village has demonstrated the ability to unite and mobilize residents across generations to participate in cultural activities organized in collaboration with local government initiatives. Such intergenerational participation not only ensures the continuity of cultural practices but also reinforces social cohesion, while positioning Miliran as a model for how local communities can preserve heritage in ways that remain relevant in contemporary society.

2. CULTURAL TRAINING AND WORKSHOP (CULTURAL LITERACY PAWIYATAN AKSARA IN KAMPUNG MILIRAN YOGYAKARTA)

One of the cultural activities in Kampung Miliran aimed at preserving cultural values is the organization of cultural training and workshops on Javanese script writing. The Pawiyatan Aksara program in Kampung Miliran, Yogyakarta City, represents an initiative in cultural literacy, particularly in introducing and promoting the use of Javanese script. Amid the pressures of globalization, the Pawiyatan Aksara serves as a framework to revive and reinvigorate traditional literacy practices within the context of modern society. The implementation of this program involves a wide range of cultural practitioners, academics, and art facilitators. The activities are carried out interactively, combining both theoretical instruction and practical application.



Figure 3. Cultural Literacy Pawiyatan Aksara in Kampung Miliran Yogyakarta

The Javanese script literacy program in Kampung Miliran serves as a platform for communication and interaction across generations, where children and parents can learn together while fostering the transmission of cultural values. The program was held on Saturday and Sunday, March 2–3, 2024, at the Miliran Village Hall under the coordination of Mr. Tri Harummurti, S.Pd., and was attended by 24 participants. Three instructors from the Department of Culture (Kundha Kabudayan) of Yogyakarta City facilitated the sessions, delivering materials and providing institutional support in the form of 30 textbooks, 24 sets of writing tools, and meal provisions, including snacks and lunch. The sessions ran for two hours each day, from 10:00 to 12:00 WIB, in an interactive and enthusiastic atmosphere that encouraged active participation from all attendees [10]. This initiative resonates with the framework proposed by UNESCO, particularly as articulated in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO defines safeguarding as measures aimed at ensuring the viability of intangible cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission—especially through formal and non-formal education—and revitalization of various aspects of heritage [11].

3. FESTIVAL AND COMMEMORATIONS OF IMPORTANT DAYS

a. Nyekar Bareng

Miliran Village in Yogyakarta serves as an example of a community that has successfully preserved and sustained its cultural heritage in the era of globalization. One of the traditions maintained is the Festival Nyekar Bareng, held annually at the end of the year. This tradition involves the community collectively visiting ancestral graves, cleaning the cemetery grounds, and offering prayers. The ritual stands as a testament to the community's respect for their ancestors who struggled and contributed to their heritage. More than a medium for honoring the departed, the tradition also fosters solidarity and togetherness among residents [12]. On the other hand, this agenda functions as a unifying element for the community. Hartoyo notes that the nyekar, or communal pilgrimage to the village cemetery, serves as an invitation for all Miliran residents to re-recognize their shared identity as one village community despite decades of being administratively divided into smaller neighborhood units (RT and RW) [13].



Figure 4. Nyekar Bareng

The Nyekar Bareng ritual can also serve as a medium for cultural education and intergenerational learning, particularly for the younger generation. The active involvement of community members—especially children and adolescents—aims to introduce and instill values of respect toward ancestors. This participation not only strengthens communal bonds but also ensures the continuity of cultural traditions across generations. From an Islamic perspective, ziarah (pilgrimage to graves) is not merely an act of visiting burial sites or knowing where someone has been laid to rest. Rather, it holds a deeper spiritual

meaning: to pray for the deceased and to dedicate merit (pahala) to them through the recitation of Qur'anic verses and virtuous utterances (kalimah-ṭayyibah), such as tahlil, tahmid, tasbih, and shalawat, among others [14].

b. Gunungan

The Festival Gunungan in Kampung Miliran, Yogyakarta, represents one of the enduring forms of local wisdom that continues to be preserved by the community. This cultural activity is interpreted as an expression of gratitude by residents for agricultural abundance and the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The gunungan itself is constructed from harvest products such as vegetables, fruits, and other agricultural yields, which are then paraded through the village and distributed to residents as a symbol of blessing and prosperity.

Beyond its ritual significance, the Gunungan tradition in Kampung Miliran carries substantial educational and cultural values. It introduces especially younger generations to the philosophy of sharing, agrarian sustainability, and the importance of maintaining a balanced relationship with nature. The event also provides space for artistic expression, as participants incorporate traditional dance and musical performances to enhance the aesthetics of the celebration.

At the same time, the festival contributes to the social and economic life of the community. The Gunungan not only strengthens solidarity among residents but also attracts the attention of both domestic and international tourists. As a cultural attraction, it has the potential to draw wider audiences beyond Yogyakarta, thereby contributing to the growth of the creative economy rooted in cultural heritage. The arrival of tourists, in turn, stimulates local economic activity while reinforcing Miliran's position as a cultural village capable of linking tradition with contemporary tourism development.

c. Ruwahan Ngapem Bareng

The tradition of Ruwahan Ngapem Bareng in Kampung Miliran represents a form of local wisdom that continues to be preserved to this day. Ruwahan, held in the period preceding the holy month of Ramadan, embodies both religious and social significance. Central to this tradition is the making of apem cakes, which carry symbolic meaning rooted in Javanese philosophy of life. The apem itself is associated with the act of seeking forgiveness and offering prayers to one's ancestors, serving as a symbol of purification and spiritual readiness to welcome the sacred month of Ramadan.

Moreover, this tradition provides an important avenue for cultural education, particularly for younger generations, by encouraging them to recognize, interpret, and continue ancestral practices. The persistence of Ruwahan in Kampung Miliran highlights how Javanese traditions are not only maintained but also revitalized as a meaningful cultural and spiritual heritage within contemporary urban life [15].



Figure 5. Ruwahan Ngapem Bareng

4. GLOBAL CITY AND CITY DIPLOMACY ANALYSIS OF KAMPUNG MILIRAN IN REALIZING YOGYAKARTA AS A CULTURAL TOURISM HUB WITHIN THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Global City Theory emphasizes the role of cities as pivotal nodes in global networks, not only in the economic domain but also in cultural exchanges [16]. While the concept was initially developed to describe global financial centers such as New York, London, and Tokyo—cities known for their dominance in trade, finance, and international communication networks—its application has expanded to include the cultural dimension as a determinant of urban competitiveness. In this context, Yogyakarta, although not positioned as a global financial hub, has earned recognition at both the national and international levels as a city of culture and education. The city's cultural capital becomes a strategic asset in shaping its international image, with community-based cultural practices serving as a means of sustaining and projecting this identity globally.

From the perspective of City Diplomacy, the role of Kampung Miliran becomes even more apparent. City Diplomacy refers to the various activities and relationships established by cities and subnational entities to pursue political, economic, and cultural objectives across borders [17]. Within this practice, cultural heritage and local traditions serve as instruments of soft power, enabling cities like Yogyakarta to project an image of cultural richness and social harmony. According to Pluijm and Melissen, City Diplomacy can be understood across six dimensions—security, development, economy, culture, cooperation, and representation [18]. Moreover, the active participation of Miliran's community illustrates how local actors contribute to the implementation of City Diplomacy. By maintaining and performing ancestral traditions, Miliran not only strengthens its own communal identity but also indirectly represents Yogyakarta's cultural heritage to external audiences. This demonstrates how sub-state diplomacy can operate effectively at the level of local communities, bridging the gap between local practices and global cultural narratives.

CONSLUSION

Kampung Miliran underscores the critical importance of community-based initiatives in shaping Yogyakarta's identity as a cultural city. By aligning cultural preservation with participatory action and educational tourism, Miliran provides a model of how local heritage can be leveraged to strengthen the international positioning of Yogyakarta. The findings suggest that sustaining and promoting such initiatives will be essential not only for cultural resilience but also for advancing Yogyakarta's role as an internationally recognized hub of cultural tourism.

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