

Indigenous Knowledge of Banyuwangi in the Blambangan Museum Collections

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Abstract

Background: Banyuwangi is widely recognized for its rich cultural heritage and growing cultural tourism sector. Museums play an important role in preserving and disseminating cultural information, including indigenous knowledge embedded within cultural artifacts. The Blambangan Museum houses a variety of historical collections representing the cultural heritage of Banyuwangi and the Osing community. These collections provide an opportunity to explore indigenous knowledge preserved through material culture.

Objective: This study aims to identify and analyze forms of indigenous knowledge represented in the collections of the Blambangan Museum, Banyuwangi

Methods: This study employed a qualitative approach using a museum studies perspective. Data were collected through direct observation of museum collections, analysis of artifact labels, and examination of museum information boards. The analyzed collections included pottery, jewelry, wayang, batik, woven bamboo products, traditional household objects, ritual artifacts, traditional weapons, and information related to the Macan Putih Temple. Data were analyzed through thematic categorization of indigenous knowledge represented in the collections, while relevant literature was used to support interpretation of the findings.

Results: The findings reveal five forms of indigenous knowledge represented in the museum collections: (1) traditional craftsmanship and production knowledge, reflected in pottery, jewelry, wayang, batik, and weaving traditions; (2) environmental and natural resource knowledge, demonstrated through the use of natural materials and local resources; (3) social and cultural knowledge, represented in traditional games, household objects, and cultural practices; (4) spiritual and ritual knowledge, reflected in ceremonial objects, ritual traditions, and performance arts; and (5) traditional technological and architectural knowledge, represented in metalworking traditions, traditional tools, and temple-related heritage.

Conclusion: The collections of the Blambangan Museum function not only as cultural artifacts but also as repositories of indigenous knowledge preserved through material culture. The findings highlight the role of museums as information institutions that support the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of local knowledge. Understanding museum collections from an indigenous knowledge perspective may enrich cultural interpretation, strengthen local identity, and support cultural heritage preservation initiatives.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge; museum collections; cultural heritage; museums as information institutions; Banyuwangi*

INTRODUCTION

Banyuwangi Regency is gaining increasing recognition both nationally and internationally. The local government has undertaken various initiatives to support tourism, one

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of which is the development of cultural tourism. The Banyuwangi Government has implemented several policies and programs aimed at preserving and promoting local culture. Heritage villages have become one of the attractions that support cultural tourism in the region.

The presence of cultural heritage and historical artifacts serves as evidence of local knowledge in Banyuwangi. These artifacts can be found in several museums, including the Museum Blambangan, which preserves collections related to Banyuwangi's history and culture. According to the Banyuwangi Cultural and Tourism Office (2022), museums play an important role in preserving local heritage and supporting educational activities.

The local government has also introduced policies to strengthen cultural preservation. For example, Banyuwangi has designated traditional villages and cultural sites as protected areas. Cultural preservation is further supported through the maintenance of heritage buildings, customs, and local wisdom. These efforts reflect the government's commitment to preserving Banyuwangi's identity while supporting tourism development (Banyuwangi Cultural and Tourism Office, 2022).

The concept of local wisdom is closely linked to culture and history. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), local wisdom refers to values, traditions, and knowledge that guide people's lives in a particular community. These values are often passed down from generation to generation and become an important part of cultural identity. Research has shown that local wisdom is deeply rooted in community life. It is reflected in customs, traditional practices, beliefs, and social norms. Local wisdom often emerges from a community's long-term interaction with its environment and helps people adapt to social and environmental changes. As a result, local wisdom becomes a valuable source of knowledge for future generations.

Brataadmaja et al. (2022) argue that preserving local wisdom is essential because it represents the identity and collective memory of a community. Similarly, Setyaningrum (2018) explains that local wisdom contains knowledge, values, and practices that help communities address social, cultural, and environmental challenges. Therefore, efforts to document and preserve local wisdom are important to ensure its continuity. One institution that contributes to preserving local wisdom is the museum. Museums collect, document, preserve, and exhibit objects that reflect the history and culture of a community. Through these activities, museums help protect cultural heritage and make it accessible to the public. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), museums serve society by safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage and supporting education and research.

The Museum Blambangan plays an important role in preserving Banyuwangi's local wisdom. Its collections include historical objects, traditional tools, cultural artifacts, manuscripts, and other materials that reflect the region's cultural heritage. These collections provide information about the values, traditions, and knowledge systems that have shaped Banyuwangi society over time.

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As repositories of cultural memory, museums contribute not only to heritage preservation but also to knowledge transmission. Through exhibitions, educational programs, and community engagement, museums help visitors understand and appreciate local wisdom. Therefore, studying museum collections can provide valuable insights into how local knowledge is preserved and communicated to society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have explored local knowledge represented in museum collections. One such study was conducted at the Jakarta History Museum. The findings revealed that the collections reflect various forms of local knowledge from the Tarumanagara Kingdom, including the ability to produce natural dyes for batik, craft-making skills, the use of tree materials as writing media, and navigational knowledge for creating ancient maps (Nurislaminingsih & Heriyanto, 2023).

Another study was conducted at the Radya Pustaka Museum. The researchers found that the museum collections represent a wide range of local knowledge, including puppet-making skills (wayang kulit, wayang golek, and blankon), metalworking techniques used to produce writing tools and traditional weapons, the creation of gamelan instruments, knowledge of Javanese astrology (pawukon), architectural expertise in transforming hills into burial sites, and shipbuilding skills (Nurislaminingsih et al., 2024).

According to Bates (2015), local knowledge is embedded in every museum collection. Objects preserved and displayed in museums provide evidence of the knowledge, skills, and practices possessed by the communities that created them. Museums therefore serve as important institutions for preserving and communicating local knowledge across generations. Research by Nurullita (2023) also highlights the importance of museums as cultural resources. Museums preserve historical objects and artifacts that provide insights into the past. The Blambangan Museum, for example, houses a variety of archaeological and historical collections discovered in Banyuwangi. These collections document the region's history during the classical, Hindu-Buddhist, and colonial periods.

The studies discussed above demonstrate that museum collections can reveal valuable local knowledge and cultural practices. However, research on the local knowledge represented in the collections of the Blambangan Museum remains limited. Previous studies have examined local knowledge in the contexts of the Tarumanagara Kingdom (Nurislaminingsih & Heriyanto, 2023) and the Surakarta Sultanate (Nurislaminingsih et al., 2024), but similar investigations have not been conducted extensively in relation to the Blambangan Kingdom.

Although both this study and Nurullita's (2023) research were conducted at the Blambangan Museum, they differ in focus. Nurullita (2023) examined the museum's role as a learning resource, whereas the present study investigates the local knowledge embedded within the museum's collections. By identifying and analyzing this knowledge, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of Banyuwangi's cultural heritage and the role of museums in preserving local wisdom.

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Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the forms of local knowledge represented in the collections of the Blambangan Museum. Through this analysis, the study seeks to demonstrate how museum collections function as repositories of cultural knowledge and local wisdom in Banyuwangi.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using museum studies as its methodological framework. The Blambangan Museum preserves a variety of artifacts that contain information about the local knowledge of Banyuwangi communities. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining social and cultural phenomena reflected in human activities, events, and material objects (Leavy, 2014). According to Tucker (2014), museum studies focus on understanding culture through museum collections and the meanings attached to them. Museum artifacts can therefore be examined as tangible evidence of the knowledge, skills, and cultural practices of past communities.

Data were collected through direct observation of museum collections, analysis of artifacts, examination of information labels accompanying the collections, and review of information boards displayed throughout the museum. The artifacts analyzed included clay objects such as statues, bricks, and jars; beaded jewelry made from precious stones; stone carvings such as dakon stones and mortars; iron artifacts including traditional weapons; wooden objects such as wayang golek puppets, Osing barong figures, Seblang dancer statues, lesung, lumpang, and alu; leather puppets (wayang kulit); paintings and photographs of Janger dancers; batik textiles; traditional mattresses; woven bamboo products; and information boards describing the Macan Putih Temple.

Data analysis was conducted by identifying and grouping forms of local knowledge represented in the collections. Similar types of knowledge were categorized into broader themes and then interpreted in relation to relevant literature. Supporting evidence from scholarly publications was used to strengthen the interpretation of the findings. This approach is consistent with Saldana's (2014) recommendation that qualitative data analysis involves organizing and grouping similar data into themes, which are then described and interpreted narratively.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, external validation was applied. Following Cho and Trent (2014), the identified themes were compared with relevant studies and scholarly sources. This process helped verify the interpretation of the data and provided additional explanations for the forms of local knowledge represented in the museum collections.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the collections, information labels, and information boards at the Blambangan Museum revealed five forms of indigenous knowledge represented in Banyuwangi's cultural heritage: (1) traditional craftsmanship and production knowledge, (2)

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environmental and natural resource knowledge, (3) social and cultural knowledge, (4) spiritual and ritual knowledge, and (5) traditional technological and architectural knowledge.

Traditional Craftsmanship and Production Knowledge

A significant portion of the museum collections reflects indigenous knowledge related to craftsmanship and the production of everyday and cultural objects. The collections include clay artifacts such as statues, bricks, and jars; beaded jewelry made from precious stones; shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*); *Osing batik*; woven bamboo products; and traditional household items. These collections demonstrate the ability of Banyuwangi's ancestors to select raw materials, process them, and transform them into objects with practical, artistic, and cultural functions. Clay artifacts indicate knowledge of pottery production, while beaded jewelry reflects skills in selecting and processing natural materials into decorative objects. Similarly, *wayang kulit* and *batik* collections suggest mastery of artistic production techniques that require specialized skills and cultural knowledge. The museum collections indicate that craftsmanship was an important component of everyday life and cultural expression within Banyuwangi society.

Environmental and Natural Resource Knowledge

Several collections reveal indigenous knowledge concerning the utilization of natural resources. *Batik* collections demonstrate the use of natural materials for textile production, while bamboo weaving reflects the community's ability to transform locally available resources into household products. The collections also show how local communities utilized plants, wood, clay, animal skins, and stone as raw materials for various purposes. Such practices suggest a close relationship between the community and its surrounding environment. Knowledge regarding the selection, processing, and use of natural resources appears to have been transmitted across generations and preserved through material culture. This theme illustrates how environmental knowledge became embedded within daily practices and cultural products.

Social and Cultural Knowledge

The museum collections also represent social values and cultural practices maintained by Banyuwangi communities. Examples include the red-and-black *Osing* mattress, traditional games such as *dakon*, and various cultural objects associated with community life. These collections demonstrate that material objects function not only as physical artifacts but also as carriers of cultural meanings. The *Osing* mattress reflects family values and traditions, while the *dakon* collection represents traditional recreational practices and social interaction among community members. The collections indicate that indigenous knowledge encompasses social norms, cultural identity, and values transmitted through everyday objects and practices.

Spiritual and Ritual Knowledge

Spiritual and ritual knowledge is represented through collections associated with

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traditional ceremonies and religious beliefs. Examples include Barong Osing, Seblang dancer statues, wayang collections, and information relating to ritual traditions within Banyuwangi society. These collections illustrate the important role of belief systems, rituals, and ceremonial practices in community life. They also demonstrate how spiritual values are preserved through cultural objects and performances. The collections suggest that indigenous knowledge includes understandings of relationships between humans, nature, ancestors, and supernatural forces. This theme highlights the role of cultural heritage in preserving spiritual traditions and collective memory.

Traditional Technological and Architectural Knowledge

The museum collections also reflect indigenous technological knowledge. Examples include traditional weapons such as keris and swords, agricultural tools, and information regarding the Macan Putih Temple. These objects demonstrate knowledge of metalworking, tool production, and construction practices. The temple information board further suggests an understanding of spatial organization and architectural planning. Such collections indicate that Banyuwangi communities possessed practical technological knowledge that enabled them to produce durable objects, construct buildings, and support social and religious activities. Overall, these collections demonstrate that indigenous knowledge extended beyond cultural traditions and included technological capabilities necessary for sustaining community life

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the collections of the Blambangan Museum represent more than historical artifacts or cultural objects. They embody diverse forms of indigenous knowledge that were developed, practiced, and transmitted by previous generations of Banyuwangi communities. The identified themes, traditional craftsmanship and production knowledge, environmental and natural resource knowledge, social and cultural knowledge, spiritual and ritual knowledge, and traditional technological and architectural knowledge, illustrate how knowledge can be preserved within material culture. This finding supports the argument that museum collections function not only as physical heritage but also as repositories of knowledge embedded within cultural artifacts.

The study reinforces Bates' (2015) view that museums are information institutions because they preserve records of human knowledge, memory, and cultural experiences. The collections examined in this research contain information about how Banyuwangi communities interacted with their environment, produced material culture, organized social life, and maintained spiritual traditions. From an information perspective, artifacts can be understood as embedded information records that preserve knowledge beyond written documents. Consequently, museum collections should not be interpreted solely through historical narratives but also through the knowledge systems that produced them.

The findings also support previous studies that explored indigenous knowledge through museum collections. Research conducted at the Jakarta History Museum identified evidence of traditional knowledge related to craftsmanship, natural dyes, writing media, and navigation

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(Nurislaminingsih & Heriyanto, 2023). Similarly, research at the Radya Pustaka Museum revealed indigenous knowledge associated with traditional craftsmanship, metallurgy, architecture, and cultural practices (Nurislaminingsih et al., 2024). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that the collections of the Blambangan Museum preserve knowledge associated with Banyuwangi's unique cultural context, particularly the traditions of the Osing community. Although the specific forms of knowledge differ across museums, all three studies indicate that museum collections can serve as valuable sources for understanding indigenous knowledge systems.

One notable finding is the close relationship between indigenous knowledge and the natural environment. Many collections, including batik, bamboo weaving, wooden artifacts, and ritual objects, reflect the community's ability to utilize locally available resources. This suggests that indigenous knowledge is not limited to technical skills but also encompasses practical understandings of environmental conditions and resource management. Such findings are consistent with broader indigenous knowledge literature, which emphasizes the inseparable relationship between communities and their surrounding ecosystems. The preservation of these collections therefore contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to the documentation of environmental knowledge developed over generations.

The findings further highlight the cultural and social dimensions of indigenous knowledge. Objects such as the Osing mattress, traditional games, ritual artifacts, and performance-related collections demonstrate that indigenous knowledge is embedded within social practices, values, and collective identities. These collections reveal how communities transmit cultural meanings through material objects and cultural traditions. As a result, museums play an important role in preserving not only physical artifacts but also the social knowledge and cultural values associated with them. This perspective broadens the understanding of museum collections as carriers of intangible cultural heritage.

The presence of ritual objects and collections associated with Barong Ider Bumi, Seblang, and other cultural traditions further illustrates the importance of spiritual knowledge within Banyuwangi society. These collections suggest that indigenous knowledge includes understandings of relationships among humans, nature, ancestors, and spiritual beliefs. Such knowledge forms an integral part of community identity and cultural continuity. The museum therefore functions as a bridge between contemporary audiences and the belief systems that shaped historical community life.

The findings also have practical implications for museum interpretation and cultural tourism. Museum exhibitions often focus on historical descriptions of artifacts, including their origin, age, and physical characteristics. However, the results of this study suggest that collections can also be interpreted through the knowledge embedded within them. Explaining the craftsmanship, environmental understanding, social values, and cultural meanings associated with museum objects may provide visitors with a richer learning experience. Such an approach aligns with contemporary museum practices that emphasize interpretation, education, and public engagement rather than merely displaying objects.

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From the perspective of library and information science, this study contributes to discussions regarding cultural information and knowledge preservation. Museums, libraries, and archives share a common responsibility in preserving and disseminating knowledge. While libraries often preserve textual knowledge and archives preserve documentary records, museums preserve knowledge embodied in material culture. Understanding museum collections as carriers of indigenous knowledge therefore strengthens the role of museums within the broader information ecosystem.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on artifact observation, museum labels, and information boards. The interpretations presented are based primarily on the available museum collections and supporting literature. Future research could complement these findings through interviews with museum curators, cultural practitioners, community elders, and local historians to gain deeper insights into the meanings and transmission of indigenous knowledge. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how indigenous knowledge is preserved, interpreted, and communicated across generations.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the collections of the Blambangan Museum embody diverse forms of indigenous knowledge preserved within Banyuwangi's cultural heritage. These forms of knowledge include traditional craftsmanship, environmental knowledge, social and cultural values, spiritual and ritual practices, and traditional technological knowledge. Rather than functioning solely as historical objects, museum collections serve as cultural documents that preserve knowledge systems developed by previous generations.

The study demonstrates that museums can play an important role as information institutions by facilitating public access not only to artifacts but also to the indigenous knowledge embedded within them. By interpreting collections from a knowledge perspective, museums may contribute to cultural preservation, knowledge transmission, and the strengthening of local identity.

Future research may explore indigenous knowledge through interviews with cultural practitioners, museum curators, and local communities to provide a deeper understanding of how such knowledge is preserved, interpreted, and transmitted across generations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

[Rizki Nurislaminingsih]: Conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and writing the original draft. [Heriyanto]: Conceptualization and methodology. [Hervina Nurullita]: Data curation and data analysis. [Nuning Kurniasih]: Methodology and writing the original draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest that could influence the results of this research.

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Lentera Pustaka: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Perpustakaan, Informasi dan Kearsipan

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