

# Islamic Values and Local Wisdom in Contemporary Cultural Tourism at the Temple

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## ABSTRACT

The existence of non-Islamic cultural heritage sites within predominantly Muslim communities often raises questions regarding the interaction between religious identity and cultural tourism management. This study aims to examine how Islamic values and local wisdom contribute to the development of inclusive cultural tourism at the Bahal Temple in Portibi District, North Padang Lawas, without diminishing the religious identity of each group. This research employs a qualitative method with an anthropological approach to religion. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving key informants and local community members around the Bahal Temple area. The findings indicate that the local community can harmonize Islamic values with local wisdom in managing cultural tourism. Values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), mutual respect, and social harmony are reflected in practices like *somang do mulia* (respect) and *patik dohot pasu-pasu* (deliberation), which function as social guidelines in maintaining interreligious harmony. This integration creates an inclusive and sustainable tourism model in which cultural preservation and community cohesion mutually reinforce one another. This study offers a new perspective on cultural tourism development by exploring the synergy between Islamic values and pre-Islamic heritage, demonstrating that religious consciousness can serve as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable tourism practices.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islam is not merely a belief system but a comprehensive way of life that encompasses social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Within this framework, Islamic teachings emphasize values such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *ihsan* (kindness), which are fundamental in fostering harmonious relationships in plural societies [1]. As noted by Ivtzan [1], adversity in life is understood in

Islam as a test that strengthens resilience and spiritual awareness. These values position Islam as a religion that promotes peace, coexistence, and mutual respect across religious and cultural boundaries. In this regard, adversity and diversity are understood not as threats, but as opportunities to strengthen resilience and deepen spiritual awareness.

In the contemporary era, the tourism sector has experienced rapid growth and transformation, becoming a key driver of economic development worldwide [2]. Cultural tourism, in particular, plays a dual role: not only contributing to economic growth but also functioning as a medium for cultural preservation and intercultural dialogue (Richards, 2018). Indonesia, as a multicultural and multi-religious country, possesses abundant cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, reflecting long-standing interactions between different civilizations and belief systems [3]. However, the rapid growth of tourism has also posed challenges, including environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and the erosion of local values when not managed sustainably [4], [5]. Therefore, tourism development must align with ethical, cultural, and religious values. According to [6], currently, the crucial factor in upholding the value of Islam for followers of other religions is the development of mutual respect and the strengthening of relations between multi-religious believers in support of cultural tourism, especially in Padang Lawas Utara.



Figure 1. Researchers are in the vicinity of the Bahal or Portibi Temple for Cultural Tourism

Tourism is one of the determinants of national economic growth because it can influence the growth of other sectors of the economy [7] and has grown rapidly in this decade [8]. Culture is the soul of tourism, and tourism is a significant way of cultural development. The core of cultural tourism is creativity, so the cultural tourism industry can be understood as a "creative industry containing life culture created by human factors" [9]. Cultural tourism refers to the process of perceiving, understanding, and appreciating the specific content of human culture through tourism. It refers to tourism for the purpose of appreciating foreign traditional culture, tracing the footsteps of cultural celebrities, or participating in local cultural activities [10]. One of the prominent cultural relics are pre-Islamic religious sites, such as the Bahal Temple in Padang Lawas Utara, North Sumatra. Bahal temple, which was part of the Vajrayana Buddhist bathing complex in the 11th to 13th centuries AD, stands in the midst of a community that is now predominantly Muslim. This condition creates a unique social space, where non-Islamic Cultural Heritage interacts with the Islamic belief system and values that dominate the surrounding community [11].



Figure 2. Bahal Temple or Portibi Temple and Artifacts of the Vajrayana Buddhist Temple Complex in Bahal Village, Padang Bolak district

In the context of religious anthropology, sites such as the Bahal Temple are not only viewed as archaeological objects but also as symbolic spaces imbued with social and spiritual meaning. [12] states that religion is not merely a belief system, but also a system of symbols that gives structure to human experience and the order of their social life. The temple, as a religious site, thus cannot be separated from the process of re-meaning by the people who live around it. When religious sites of the past survive in modern public spaces dominated by Muslim communities, then the question arises as to how Islamic values color the way people interpret, maintain, and manage these sites [13]. On the other hand, the theory of cultural tourism emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional and spiritual values in the development of tourist destinations. According to [14], the development of cultural tourism should go beyond an economic approach and become a means of strengthening local identity and mediating intercultural dialogue. Within this framework, Islamic values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ukhuwah* (Brotherhood), and *ihsan* (kindness) can serve as moral and social foundations in the management of non-Islamic heritage sites such as Candi Bahal.

These values are not only part of the ethics of Muslim life but also have the potential to become an integrative narrative in preserving interfaith culture. Although the study of cultural heritage sites in Indonesia is well developed, especially in history, archaeology, and physical preservation, there is a gap in research linking local Islamic values directly to the management of non-Islamic cultural heritage. The novelty in this study lies in the lack of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate Islamic Studies, the Anthropology of religion, and cultural tourism in understand the dynamics of the management of sites such as the Bahal Temple by the Muslim community. In fact, in practice, local people are not only recipients of preservation policies but also active actors who interpret and care for the site with their own religious values. Furthermore, most studies of cultural heritage tend to focus on the physical aspects of preservation or on historical narratives, and rarely address in depth how a Muslim community establishes symbolic and cultural links with non-Islamic relics. Therefore, it is important to examine how local Islamic values play a role in bridging the relationship between the past and the present, between different religious heritages and the beliefs of contemporary society. The main purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how the Islamic values that live in the community around the Bahal Temple contribute to the preservation, re-meaning, and management of the site in the context of cultural tourism.

The study also aims to demonstrate that local Islamic values are not exclusive or confrontational to non-Islamic cultural heritage, but rather can be a reconciliative force that supports diversity and harmony. Thus, this article contributes to expanding academic understanding of the relationship between religion, culture, and heritage preservation, as well as providing new perspectives for the development of inclusive and sustainable tourism [13].



Figure 3. The area of the Bahal Temple or Portibi Temple and the surrounding environment received less government attention

All-for-one tourism focuses on introducing and developing diversified cultural tourism products, especially functions such as "business, nourishing, learning, leisure, emotion, and novelty", and drives the transformation and upgrading of consumption formats through the development of various tourism elements [15]. This indicates a clear research gap. There is still limited interdisciplinary research that integrates Islamic studies, anthropology of religion, and cultural tourism to understand how Muslim communities interpret, preserve, and manage non-Islamic cultural heritage. Moreover, existing studies rarely explore how Islamic values can function as a reconciliatory force rather than a source of tension in such contexts. To address this gap, this study proposes an analytical approach that examines the role of local Islamic values in the preservation, reinterpretation, and management of the Bahal Temple as a cultural tourism site.

The study aims to demonstrate that Islamic values are not inherently exclusive or oppositional, but instead can contribute to inclusive, sustainable, and culturally sensitive tourism development. This approach reflects an effort to bridge the relationship between religious beliefs and cultural heritage management through a value-based framework. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to analyze how Islamic values are practiced by the local Muslim community in their interactions with Bahal Temple, to examine the role of these values in supporting the preservation and reinterpretation of the site, and to explore how Islamic principles can contribute to the development of inclusive cultural tourism. The expected results of this research are to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of interdisciplinary scholarship by integrating Islamic studies, anthropology of religion, and cultural tourism. In practice, it offers policymakers, local communities, and tourism stakeholders insights in developing culturally sensitive, sustainable tourism models. Furthermore, this research is expected to promote a narrative that positions Islam as a source of harmony and inclusivity in managing cultural diversity, particularly in the context of heritage preservation.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, as proposed by Sugiyono, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena in natural settings through in-depth interpretation [16]. This approach is considered appropriate for examining the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom in cultural tourism, as it allows the researcher to explore meanings, experiences, and social interactions in their contextual contexts. In addition, this study is informed by Fayrus's perspective, which emphasizes interpreting social reality within cultural and historical contexts [17].

The research design used is an ethnographic case study, focusing on the community surrounding the Bahal Temple. The population of this study includes all community members living in Bahal Village, Portibi District, who are directly or indirectly involved in cultural tourism activities. Given the qualitative nature of the research, sampling was purposive, selecting informants with relevant knowledge and experience. A total of 12 key informants participated in this study, including 2 Islamic religious leaders, 2 indigenous/community leaders, and 2 local tourism managers. 3 micro-business actors related to tourism. 3 residents are actively involved in cultural and religious activities. These informants were selected for their active roles and deep understanding of the interaction among Islamic values, local wisdom, and tourism practices [18].

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine daily social interactions, religious practices, and community participation in tourism activities. In-depth interviews aimed to capture the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of informants regarding the coexistence of Islamic values and pre-Islamic heritage. Document analysis included local government policies, historical records, and cultural archives related to the preservation of the Bahal Temple.

The data collection process followed an iterative model, where data from observations, interviews, and documents were continuously compared and refined [16]. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and member checking to enhance credibility. Data analysis was conducted inductively by identifying patterns, categories, and themes emerging from the field, allowing findings to develop naturally in accordance with empirical realities. This method is considered appropriate and easily applicable because it directly engages the community and reflects real social conditions. It also aligns with the research objective of understanding the role of Islamic values and local wisdom in the development of cultural tourism in a specific socio-cultural context [18].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Harmony of Islam and pre-Islamic Cultural Heritage

The people living around the Bahal Temple, specifically in Portibi District, North Padang Lawas Regency, are predominantly Muslim. However, what is interesting about this social reality is the presence of an important archaeological site, the Bahal Temple, dating back to the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition and part of a complex of ancient civilizations that predate Islam's arrival in the region. The Bahal temple is not only a symbol of cultural heritage, but also a marker of religious history that now coexists with strong Islamic

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traditions. The existence of this pre-Islamic heritage does not cause conflict or ideological conflict with the surrounding Muslim community, but rather serves as a clear example of how Islamic values can synergize with and coexist with older cultural values that are still respected as part of the community's historical identity [19].

One indication of this harmonization is that the Muslim community does not consider the Bahal Temple a religious symbol contrary to their creed, but rather a cultural asset with historical, aesthetic, and educational value. They do not feel disturbed by the temple's presence, and they show a strong appreciation for it. This shows a deep understanding among the local people that Islam did not come to erase the past, but is present as a grace that can embrace diversity, including in the context of cultural heritage. This view aligns with the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin*, in which Islam teaches tolerance and respect for values that do not conflict with its principles of monotheism [10].



Figure 4. Researchers are talking to religious and community leaders in the village of Bahal Portibi

People in Portibi practice Islamic values in everyday life, including in the treatment of historical sites such as the Bahal Temple. Practices such as the reading of Yasin, *tahlil*, and joint prayers that are usually carried out at the moment of hauling traditional leaders or village elders, indirectly become a form of spiritualization of Islam in the frame of local culture. This kind of activity is usually carried out around the temple area, not as a form of syncretism or perversion of the creed, but rather as an expression of respect for ancestors and a collective awareness of the history that has shaped their community today. Here, there is an integration between the spiritual dimension of Islam and the historical and cultural dimensions embedded in local traditions. Furthermore, the Muslim community around the Bahal Temple also shows openness to cultural tourism activities involving visitors from various religious and ethnic backgrounds.

They do not feel that tourist visits to the historic site interfere with the sanctity of their territory. On the contrary, the community is actively involved in tourism management and services, including the provision of facilities, halal food, tour guides, and local handicraft products that are sold as souvenirs. This engagement is not only a means of economic empowerment, but also a forum to display Islamic values that are friendly, polite, and friendly to tourists. In this way, the Portibi people indirectly become agents of cultural *da'wah*, introducing Islam not through formal symbols but through social practices that uphold ethics, friendliness, and tolerance [20]. The local Islamic traditions that developed in the region also established a pattern of inclusive social relations.

The local religious leaders do not prohibit Muslims from visiting the temple or engaging in cultural activities held in the area of the site, as long as it does not violate the limits of Sharia. In fact, some madrasahs and boarding schools in the region visit the Bahal Temple as part of their historical and cultural education programs. This shows that the Muslim community there does not rigidly separate religion from history, but rather views both as important elements in building collective consciousness and cultural identity. Islam in this context appears not as a hegemonic power that rejects differences, but rather as a value system capable of wise dialogue with history and culture [21]. Another factor that strengthens the harmony between Islam and pre-Islamic heritage is the continued presence of local wisdom in society.

Traditional values that are passed down from generation to generation, such as the principle of deliberation, mutual assistance, and mutual respect, become a bridge between old traditions and Islamic teachings that come later. In practice, these values do not contradict the teachings of Islam but are enriched by its spirit. For example, the spirit of deliberation carried out in community forums to determine the annual tourism agenda in the temple area is often accompanied by opening prayers led by religious leaders. This reflects that Islam has become an integral part of society's socio-cultural structure, without negating or erasing the legacy of the past. In addition, traditional symbolic, small-scale rituals have been preserved but have undergone Islamization in terms of meaning and practice.

For example, the post-harvest thanksgiving ceremony that once involved offerings to ancestral spirits is now transformed into a prayer, with the recitation of a short surah and remembrance as an expression of gratitude to Allah. This kind of transformation is a concrete example of how society creatively and dynamically blends Islamic values with cultural heritage, without losing the essence of either. The role of religious leaders in guiding people to be wise towards historical sites such as the Bahal Temple is also an important factor in maintaining this harmony. The clerics and imams are not exclusive or strictly prohibit the involvement of the community in local cultural activities, as long as it does not violate the basic principles of the creed.

They also actively convey moral messages in sermons and recitations about the importance of preserving historical heritage as part of civilization's mandate. Thus, the process of internalizing Islamic values in the management of cultural heritage is not confrontational but collaborative and constructive. Overall, the lives of the people around the Bahal temple reflect a model of social harmony that should serve as an example. Integration between Islam and pre-Islamic Cultural Heritage in Portibi occurs not only at the symbolic level but also in social praxis. The Bahal temple, once the center of Buddhist spirituality, is now part of the Muslim community's social space, which lives by the values of tolerance, diversity, and mutual respect. This transformation is not a form of compromise that obscures Islamic identity, but rather a form of creative adaptation to the dynamics of local history and culture. In this way, Islam appears as a force capable of integrating into social reality without losing its principles, and cultural heritage appears as a bridge to strengthen human values within the framework of Islam.

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### 3.2. Local Wisdom in Tourism Management

The life of the Portibi people in Padang Lawas Utara reflects the close fusion of traditional values and religious principles, especially Islam. In the social order of the Batak Angkola people who inhabit this region, one customary value system still strongly survives to this day, namely Dalihan Na Tolu. Literally, Dalihan Na Tolu means “furnace of the three, ” a metaphor that emphasizes the importance of balance in social relations between the three main elements in society: somang (respected party), mora (wife giver), and kahanggi (blood family). This system teaches the principles of mutual respect, deliberation, mutual assistance, and maintaining harmony among community members [22]. In the context of the development of cultural tourism around the Bahal Temple, the principle of Dalihan Na Tolu is not only an internal social norm of the community, but also an ethical basis for joint decision-making. All activities that concern the interests of the wider community, including tourism promotion and the management of heritage-based creative economy, are based on consensus deliberations involving the three elements of the social structure. Thus, there is no unilateral domination, but a collective will built on the principle of mutual understanding and respect.

One aspect that stands out in the application of local wisdom is the inclusiveness presented in every community forum. Religious leaders, both clerics and mosque imams, are always invited to discussions or traditional meetings, especially when discussing tourist activities to be carried out in the Bahal Temple area. The involvement of religious leaders is not only a form of respect for spiritual authority, but also as a strategy to ensure that any activity designed remains in line with Islamic values that are upheld by the majority of citizens. Their presence serves as a normative filter, ensuring that tourism promotion does not deviate from halal principles, politeness, and respect for sacred values, both religious and customary [20]. This synergy between adat and Islam is increasingly evident in the management of the community economic sector, especially in the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that grow around tourist areas.

Traditional food and beverage businesses, handicrafts, and tour guide and homestay services dominate these MSMEs. MSME actors consciously make halal principles the main foundation in production and service. They ensure that all food ingredients used are halal, the production process is clean, and there is no interference with doubtful ingredients or unclear legal status. This practice is not just a trading strategy to attract Muslim tourists, but a manifestation of religious awareness that is embedded in business actors as part of the practice of Islam in everyday life. Service to tourists is also done with ethics that are very thick with Islamic values, especially the principle of ihsan-namely doing good to the maximum, with sincere intentions for Allah.

The food vendors, tour guides, and even innkeepers show a polite, friendly attitude, do not discriminate against visitors' backgrounds, and maintain manners in their interactions. They position tourists not only as consumers but also as guests to be respected, in line with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad on the importance of glorifying guests. This ethic is also in line with traditional Batak values that teach that “ale-ale na ro, anggo dongan do,” or “whoever comes, he is a brother.” This expression becomes a local ethical principle that further strengthens Islam's friendly, open face in the context of cultural tourism [23].

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The application of local and Islamic principles in tourism activities does not stop at the economic level and social interaction, but also touches on aspects of collective spirituality. Some communities even organize activities such as regular recitation or prayer together on weekends that coincide with tourist activities. These activities are held in mosques around the temple site, and are often attended by Muslim tourists who want to experience the local spiritual atmosphere. This becomes a distinctive religious experience, reinforcing Portibi's image as a cultural tourist destination that offers not only historical and archaeological value but also spiritual depth. Strengthening local capacity is also a concern in tourism development strategies based on local wisdom. The community is trained to become tour guides who not only understand the temple's history narratively but can also explain the cultural context and the harmonious relationship between pre-Islamic heritage and Muslim society today. This training involves academics, cultural practitioners, and religious leaders to ensure the narrative is unbiased and scientifically and ethically accurate. Thus, tourists gain a comprehensive understanding: not only of stones and architecture, but also of how society coexists with its history in a wise and civilized way [24].

Local governments also support these local initiatives by adopting regulations that facilitate collaboration among customary institutions, religious institutions, and tourism actors. In some local regulations governing tourism development, some articles emphasize the importance of involving community leaders, including Indigenous and religious leaders, in planning and monitoring tourism activities. This proves that participatory and value-based approaches have not only become discourse, but also real policies consistently implemented on the ground. This condition reflects that local wisdom in Portibi is not a dead heritage displayed only in the cultural museum, but a living value that continues to adapt to the Times.

The pretext of Na Tolu, rooted in ancestral traditions, proved capable of engaging productively with the teachings of Islam and the dynamics of modern tourism. Meanwhile, the Islam adopted by the local community is not a rigid and exclusive Islam, but an Islam that values context, culture, and history. The combination of the two creates a cultural tourism development model that is not only economically sustainable but also socially and spiritually sound. In a world driven by a capitalist economy and cultural exploitation, Portibi Society offers a wise and humanist alternative. They do not exploit cultural heritage solely for material gain, but treat sites like the Bahal Temple as a space of Historical Dialogue, a dignified economic space, and an inclusive spiritual space. Islamic values and Customs meet in one common point: building a harmonious, civilized, and faithful society. From the above, it can be concluded that local wisdom, such as Dalihan Na Tolu, when combined with Islamic values, produces social forces capable of sustaining cultural tourism ethically, sustainably, and contextually. This Model can be replicated in other regions of Indonesia with cultural richness and religious plurality, as long as there is a collective intention to make culture and religion mutually enriching forces in national culture.

### **3.3. Transformation of religious values in the tourist space**

Bahal temple, one of the Vajrayana Buddhist relics in Padang Lawas Utara, not only has high archaeological and historical value but has also been transformed into an open cultural and spiritual education space, especially for the younger generation of Muslims. In

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the midst of the dominance of the Muslim community in Portibi District, the existence of this pre-Islamic heritage site is not seen as a threat to religious identity, but rather as a golden opportunity to strengthen historical awareness and instill an inclusive understanding of the plurality of religions and cultures in Indonesia. This phenomenon becomes interesting when viewed from the perspective of religious anthropology and Islamic education. Usually, historical narratives and religious sites of the past that do not conform to the beliefs of the dominant society are at risk of abandonment, destruction, and even rejection. However, the opposite is true in Portibi. People around the Bahal Temple, including educators and formal Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas and Islamic-based elementary schools, make the temple one of the important educational locations. Educational visits to the site are regularly conducted as part of the curriculum to teach history, culture, and values of religious tolerance.

This educational activity is not only a physical exploration of the temple buildings and architectural structures, but also accompanied by interactive discussions about the origin of the temple, the spiritual values contained in it, as well as how the heritage is a real proof of the dynamics of beliefs that have been present in the archipelago. Teachers and field assistants convey this information with a balanced, constructive narrative, not instilling a suspicious attitude towards the teachings of the past, but guiding tourists to see how history unfolds and how Islam entered into dialogue with cultures that had developed before. More than just a history lesson, a visit to the Bahal Temple serves as a vehicle for instilling the values of multiculturalism and tolerance in accordance with Islamic teachings. In Islam itself, the spirit of respecting differences and maintaining social harmony is strongly emphasized, as reflected in many verses of the Qur'an, such as in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13, which states that God created human tribes and nations to know one another. These values are then translated into educational practices in the field through interreligious dialogue, inclusive historical-narrative training, and the understanding that religious and cultural differences are not to be avoided but rather understood wisely and scientifically.

Tourists who visit the Bahal Temple are not only invited to observe the temple's structure or record its history of establishment, but also to reflect on how their ancestors lived in spiritual diversity and on how Islam was then peacefully present in a society that previously had its own belief system. Through this approach, tourists gain a new perspective: that diversity does not contradict their faith; instead, it becomes a space for dialogue and learning that enriches their understanding of Islam as a tolerant and civilized religion. From the anthropological side, this kind of approach reflects the process of internalizing religious values in a complex socio-cultural context. Islam embraced by the Portibi community is not an exclusive Islam that rejects all forms of relics of the past, but an inclusive and contextual Islam, which can respond wisely to history. This forms the mentality of the younger generation, who are not easily trapped in black-and-white thinking about other religions or relics of the past.

Instead, they are trained to have a broad, open, and humanist view of their own nation's history, as well as the role of religion in shaping civilization. Educational visits to heritage sites such as the Bahal Temple also have an impact on the growth of a sense of responsibility towards cultural preservation. Tourists who may initially be unfamiliar with,

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or even afraid of, different symbols of their religion eventually understand that buildings such as temples are not places that are scary or contrary to the faith, but rather part of a long historical trail that is now a shared responsibility to be guarded and studied [9]. This is where the importance of a value-based approach to education lies—that learning is aimed not only at transferring information, but also at forming a strong moral and social consciousness. Interestingly, there is an attempt by religious teachers in local schools to associate a visit to the Bahal Temple with the values in the *Sira Nabawiyah* (the life history of the Prophet Muhammad). They compared how the Prophet Muhammad once lived side by side with non-Muslims in Medina, and how he guarded covenants and the rights of other communities without compromising his commitment to Islam. This comparison becomes a very effective pedagogical tool for explaining that diversity is not something to be feared, but rather faced with wisdom, as exemplified by the Prophet. Thus, the Bahal Temple became not only a place of cultural tourism but also a kind of "open class" where the values of Islamic education are put into practice in a real context. The existence of this site is able to remove the dichotomous barriers between "us" and "them", between "*Islam*" and "*pre-Islam*", and replace them with a more balanced intercultural perspective.

This is where the important role of Islamic-based multicultural education can be developed contextually, namely, teaching tourists to remain firm in their beliefs while being open to the differences and historical heritage that surround their lives. It is also important to note that support from local governments and site managers plays a role in facilitating this educational activity. Several schools have cooperated with the Center for Cultural Preservation and the Department of Tourism to access educational materials, historical brochures, and reliable speakers who can explain the temple's background scientifically and neutrally. This proves that the synergy between educational institutions, government, and society can create a holistic, critical, and peaceful learning space.

The educational practice of involving sites such as Candi Bahal in local Islamic education demonstrates a model of inclusive, liberating historical learning and forms a young generation able to dialogue with differences wisely. The Bahal temple has become a symbol that cultural heritage is not a barrier to the formation of religious identity, but rather a bridge that expands spiritual and cultural horizons. The younger generation of Muslims in Portibi now has direct access to history that not only enriches their horizons but also strengthens their identity as Muslims who value pluralism and diversity. While green and cultural tourism are booming, problems in the Bahal Temple at Padang Lawas Utara cultural tourism industry are gradually emerging. The theme of cultural tourism is not clear, and the target market is vague. At the present stage, the target group positioning for cultural tourism is very broad and fuzzy. The generalization of the target group unifies the level of cultural tourism, resulting in clear limitations on its nature.

The industrial chain related to cultural tourism is not perfect. Some regions have a low level of integrated development of cultural tourism resources and cannot scientifically plan and develop cultural tourism products and commodities. The dislocation of cultural tourism planning and development, the excessive pursuit of economic benefits, and the weak protection of traditional culture. Due to the good development momentum of cultural tourism, many regions are rushing to develop and utilize cultural tourism resources. In the

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absence of scientific planning, the economic value and benefits of cultural tourism resources are excessively emphasized.

In contrast, the values of culture, spirit, and scientific research are ignored, and the vulnerability and non-renewability of cultural tourism resources are not well understood. Therefore, effective protective measures have not been taken in time, causing serious damage to tourism and cultural resources. The commercialization of scenic spots in various regions is highly repetitive, and the cultural creativity of tourism products is insufficient. Only high cultural creativity can catch consumers' attention. In some regions, cultural tourism practitioners are unable to actively explore the forms, means of display, and marketing channels of cultural creativity. With the development of modern science and technology, consumers have a deeper understanding and experience of culture and product creativity.

The conventional cultural creativity of tourism destinations has been difficult to impress consumers and has not given them a profound experience. In discussions about the relationship between religion and local culture, important questions arise about how Muslims respond to pre-Islamic heritage such as temples and other heritage sites. Are these relics considered a form of shirk that must be avoided, or can they be managed wisely to serve as a medium of Education, Tourism, and a symbol of the nation's cultural diversity? Bahal temple, located in Portibi District, North Padang Lawas regency, North Sumatra, provides an interesting answer to this problem. The Bahal temple is one of the cultural relics of the Hindu-Buddhist period in North Sumatra, which became an important part of the archipelago's history. Although derived from religious traditions outside of Islam, the existence of this temple does not cause resistance from the surrounding Muslim community. On the contrary, the Portibi community showed an open and wise attitude in responding to the site.

They not only maintain and preserve it, but also develop the potential for cultural tourism in the region while maintaining Islamic values in every line of management [25]. The local wisdom of the Portibi people is reflected in the customary principle known as Dalihan Na Tolu, which emphasizes the values of mutual respect (*somang do mulia*), deliberation (*patik dohot pasu-pasu*), and maintaining social harmony. This principle has taken root in people's lives and has become a frame in their social interactions, including in the management of cultural sites such as the Bahal Temple. The principle of Dalihan Na Tolu is not only a cultural identity, but also integrated into the religious ethics of the Muslim community in the region. Thus, the preservation of cultural heritage sites is not seen as a compromise of faith, but rather as a form of Social Responsibility and historical preservation. In practice, these values are applied in real community-based cultural tourism management forums. For example, in every tourism promotion agenda involving the Bahal Temple, Islamic religious figures are always included to provide direction and ensure that the activity does not conflict with Islamic values.

This collaboration is a form of harmony between cultural preservation and the application of religious values [9]. In addition to Tourism Promotion, Islamic principles are also applied in the local economic sector through the management of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by the surrounding community. Food products sold in tourist

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areas, such as snacks and typical souvenirs, are halal, and management is conducted in accordance with Islamic ethics. Service to tourists is also carried out with hospitality, courtesy, and *ihsan* (doing good), thereby reflecting Islamic ethics in the social and commercial spheres [26]. Interestingly, the Bahal Temple is also an educational space for younger Muslims to understand the plurality of religious history in Indonesia. Local schools regularly conduct educational visits to the site in order to learn about the archipelago's cultural heritage. In this activity, religious teachers help guide tourists to understand history not only from an exclusive, normative perspective, but also in the context of multiculturalism.

This is evidence that pre-Islamic heritage sites should not be seen as a threat to the religious identity of Muslims, but rather as a bridge of understanding across cultures and beliefs within the framework of an inclusive Islam. In the context of religious anthropology, religious sites such as the Bahal Temple are seen as symbolic spaces that contain social and spiritual meaning for the surrounding community. [20] states that religion is not merely a belief system, but also a symbolic framework that shapes the meaning and order of people's social life. Therefore, the approach of the Portibi Muslim community to the Bahal Temple can be interpreted as part of an effort to localize Islam, where Islamic universal values interact with local culture without losing religious substance [22]. Such an approach is also emphasized by [27], which examines how Islam, as a global religion, is constantly undergoing adaptation as it enters different socio-cultural spaces. This process is known as indigenization, or localization, of Islam, in which Islamic symbols, practices, and values blend harmoniously with local wisdom.

This phenomenon demonstrates Islam's flexibility in responding to social and cultural contexts without sacrificing its principles of faith [28]. Furthermore, the theory of cultural tourism emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional and spiritual values in the development of tourist destinations [20]. It asserts that cultural tourism is not only oriented toward economic value but also serves as a medium for strengthening local identity and intercultural relations. In this framework, the preservation of cultural sites such as the Bahal Temple is not solely a tourist attraction, but also a medium of cultural communication that unites people from various religious and ethnic backgrounds [9]. In the Islamic perspective, principles such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ukhuwah* (Brotherhood), and *ihsan* (kindness) serve as moral foundations highly relevant in the management of cultural heritage sites. These values serve as a bridge between local cultural heritage and universal Islamic teachings. The Portibi people have proven that Islam can go hand in hand with the preservation of pre-Islamic culture without creating identity conflicts or value conflicts. Thus, the management of the Bahal Temple by the Portibi Muslim community is a clear example of the integration between Islamic values and the preservation of local culture. This approach shows that Islam is not exclusive or confrontational towards different cultures, but rather adaptive and humanistic, upholding human values. This attitude is not only relevant in the local context, but also important as an alternative narrative in the midst of the rise of rigid and intolerant religious understanding.

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#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the interaction between Islamic values and local wisdom can form a coherent socio-cultural foundation for managing cultural tourism in plural contexts. Rather than creating tension, religious identity and non-Islamic cultural heritage can coexist through shared ethical principles that emphasize respect, harmony, and collective responsibility. The case of the Bahal Temple illustrates that local communities play a central role not only as custodians of heritage but also as interpreters who actively construct inclusive meanings around cultural sites. The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of the anthropology of religion in explaining how religious values operate within cultural and tourism contexts, particularly in shaping social practices and symbolic meanings. Practically, it highlights the importance of community-based and value-driven approaches in tourism development, suggesting that policies should move beyond economic orientation toward culturally sensitive and participatory frameworks. However, this study has several limitations. It is geographically limited to the Bahal Temple area in Padang Lawas Utara and primarily focuses on the perspectives of the local Muslim community, which may not fully capture broader stakeholder dynamics, such as tourists, policymakers, or minority groups.

Additionally, the qualitative approach, while rich in depth, limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research is recommended to expand comparative studies across diverse cultural heritage sites with different religious settings, as well as to incorporate mixed-methods approaches to strengthen empirical generalization. Further studies could also examine the role of digital tourism, policy implementation, and cross-cultural visitor perceptions in shaping inclusive tourism practices. Overall, this research contributes to a broader understanding that religious values, particularly within Islam, can serve as a constructive and integrative force in cultural heritage management. For the general public and stakeholders, this study offers an alternative perspective that promotes tolerance, inclusivity, and sustainability in tourism development, while reinforcing the importance of preserving both cultural heritage and social harmony.

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