

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This research was based on the background that the Ampel area in Surabaya is known as one of the centers of Islamic religious tourism that possesses strong diverse cultural values, especially related to the role of Sunan Ampel in the process of spreading Islam in Java. The Ampel Village area at the present time does not only function as a space for worship and pilgrimage, but also as a driver of the economic wheel marked by the widespread production and distribution of souvenirs that display selected objects. The selection of objects to be displayed in Ampel Village souvenirs must meet several criteria; souvenirs that explicitly display Islamic religious symbols or elements with visual imagery typical of Ampel, souvenirs that are mass-produced and sold around the Ampel tourism area, souvenirs that are easy to document and analyze visually (for example T-shirts or tote bags), and souvenirs found around the Ampel tourism area in the year 2025. These conditions raise fundamental questions regarding how the souvenirs displaying these selected designs represent religious and cultural meanings, as well as how those meanings are formed and understood by the community.

Roland Barthes' visual semiotics approach was used to analyze souvenirs as a sign system that works through three levels of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis of the research objects, children's T-shirts and Ampel tote bag, shows that visual elements such as the *gapura* illustration, pastiche typography, the illustration of the Ampel Mosque dome in a stamp design, *becak* illustration, and the heart symbol function as a complex semiotic system with a scope wider than mere aesthetic representation. The research objects do not only function as decorative elements, but also as symbolic devices that build religious meaning and spatial identity.

The research results show that at the denotative level, souvenirs represent visual objects directly related to the Ampel area, such as religious architecture, traditional transportation, and easily recognized graphic symbols. These elements at the connotative level contain deeper cultural meanings, such as representations of the local community's life, pilgrimage travel experiences, and the emotional attachment of visitors toward the place. Souvenirs at the level of myth play a role in naturalizing the idea that Ampel is a religious space, possesses an Islamic

history that is acculturated with Javanese and Hindu cultures, and becomes a part of spiritual identity.

Further findings state that the modern aspect of souvenir production, such as the use of mass production techniques and the purpose of commercialization in the tourism market, also influences the visual form and meaning produced. The fast and efficient production process encourages the use of symbols that are simple, easily recognized, and have high visual appeal. This shows that religious symbols in souvenirs undergo a process of commodification, where spiritual meaning is not only maintained but also adjusted to the needs of tourism consumption.

Pastiche practices in souvenir design, which are the practice of imitating existing works, tend to adopt visual elements associated with Arab culture. The use of certain ornaments, typographic styles, and color choices shows a tendency to build a religious image through visual stereotypes. This condition creates a paradox, because the identity of Islam which is universal and diverse is instead reduced to a visual representation that is narrow and limited to religious meaning. The boundary between Arab culture and Islamic religiosity thus becomes blurred in the interpretation of souvenirs.

Ampel Village is a cultural space that is hybrid in nature. The existence of various cultural elements, such as the *gapura* architecture influenced by Hindu tradition, the shape of the mosque roof adopting the Javanese style, and the existence of *becak* as a symbol of the Archipelago's transportation tool, shows that Ampel's identity is formed through a complex process of cultural mixing. The visual representation on souvenirs also reflects that diversity, although in many cases it still leads toward the reinforcement of Ampel's main identity as an Islamic religious area.

All of these findings lead to the conclusion that Ampel Village souvenirs are a visual media that plays an active role in forming, representing, reproducing, and at the same time reducing religious and cultural meanings. Souvenirs do not only reflect social and cultural realities, but also participate in building the visitors' perspective toward Ampel as an Islamic religious and cultural space. Souvenirs in this context become a meeting point between tradition and modernity, between spiritual values and economic practices, and between local identity and global influence.

Therefore, this research has an important role in understanding that religious meaning in souvenirs is not fixed, but is formed through the interaction between visual signs, cultural context, and consumption practices. This understanding shows that the study of souvenirs needs to be conducted critically and contextually, because within them there are dynamics of cultural

representation that continue to develop. This research thus does not only answer the problems posed, but also affirms the importance of seeing souvenirs as part of the process of meaning construction in the life of today's society. This research is important because it provides critical insights into how religious symbolism is transformed in everyday consumer objects, revealing a broader role for the understanding of religion, identity, and commodification in society.

5.2 Suggestions

5.2.1 Conceptual Suggestions (Based on Research Findings)

This research shows that souvenirs do not only function as economic products, but also as media for the representation of religious and cultural meanings. Souvenir production actors in Ampel Village are suggested to better consider aspects of symbolic meaning in the design process. Souvenir producers should not only focus on visual appeal and production speed, but also pay attention to the depth of cultural and religious meaning contained in every visual element. Souvenirs often considered as ordinary, unimportant, or just a normal part of the tourism industry, in fact, can become educational media capable of conveying historical and spiritual values to visitors.

One of the research results showing the existence of pastiche practices and the tendency of Arab stereotypes in souvenir design indicates the need for a more critical approach in representing religious identity. The other three research results are also felt to limit the interpretation of religious symbolic signs only by displaying the *gapura*, the mosque, and *becak*, whereas deeper exploration allows for the presentation of religious symbolic signs other than the three signs that have been produced. Designers and souvenir producers are suggested to further explore the richness of local Archipelago culture found in Ampel Village, so that visual representation does not get trapped in the simplification of Islam as identical with Arab culture. This effort can strengthen local identity while maintaining cultural diversity in visual representation.

This research affirms the existence of a hybrid culture in Ampel Village. The utilization of diverse cultural elements such as *gapura* architecture, the shape of the mosque, and symbols of local life need to be developed more consciously and purposefully in souvenir design. This approach can produce visual representations that are more authentic and reflect a complex cultural reality.

5.2.2 Practical Suggestions (Involvement for Actors and Managers)

This research provides involvement for business actors and souvenir craftsmen in Ampel Village that the improvement of design quality does not only lie in aesthetic aspects, but also in the strength of the visual narrative. Business actors are suggested to develop souvenir designs that have clear stories or meanings, so that they can increase the selling value as well as the cultural value of the product.

Managers of the Ampel religious tourism area are suggested to increase sign awareness among business actors regarding the importance of cultural representation in souvenir products. Local culture-based design training programs can be one step to improve the quality of the souvenirs produced.

5.2.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This research still has limitations in the focus of visual analysis on souvenir objects. Further research is suggested to develop studies with a broader approach, such as:

1. Examining the perceptions and experiences of tourists toward Ampel Village souvenirs, so that it can be known how the meaning built through visuals is truly received by consumers.
2. Using an ethnographic approach or cultural studies to understand the process of production, distribution, and consumption of souvenirs more deeply.
3. Developing semiotic studies with other approaches to see the relationship between visuals, text, and social context more comprehensively.
4. Conducting comparative studies of Ampel Village souvenirs with souvenirs from other religious tourism areas in Indonesia to see differences and similarities in the representation of religious and cultural meanings.