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Understanding Sunda Wiwitan of Cigugur Kuningan: Between Tradition, Culture, and Adaptation of Communication Technology

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Abstract

Sunda Wiwitan in Cigugur Kuningan maintains respect for the traditions and customs that have become an integral part of their culture. Along with the rapid changes in communication technology, this research aims to understand the development of communication technology in the Sunda Wiwitan community and how they preserve their culture in the modern era. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach, which includes interviews and content analysis to collect data from key informants. The results showed that although the Sunda Wiwitan community quickly adopted modern communication technologies such as the internet and social media, they also needed time to develop appropriate usage guidelines. The research revealed that despite accepting new technologies, this community remains committed to maintaining their cultural values and traditions, including the use of traditional clothing to filter out foreign cultural influences. The implications of this research suggest that technology can be integrated into indigenous communities without erasing their cultural identity. In addition, the results highlight the importance of developing policies that support cultural preservation in the midst of technological advances, as well as the need for education for community members to optimize the use of technology while still respecting and preserving their traditions.

Keywords: Sunda Wiwitan Community, Cultural Preservation, Communication Technology, Cultural Lag Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is an important element in society because it serves as a moral guide and life guide for its people (McKay & Whitehouse, 2015). Each religion has its own rules to govern life, and religious understanding is considered to be the teaching of God that directs people to salvation and prosperity in the hereafter and in this world. In addition, religion also has a role in controlling people's behaviour, affirming the difference between right and wrong, and strengthening moral values, which are also reflected in the family as the most basic unit of society after marriage (Jati, 2016).

Sundanese Wiwitan is a religion that plays a role and functions in Sundanese society in particular. Like other religions, Sunda Wiwitan provides moral direction and life principles for its followers. In addition, Sundanese Wiwitan adherents also provide a deep understanding of the origin and identity of the Sundanese ethnicity, which is an important part of their culture and beliefs. The word "Sundanese Wiwitan" comes from "Sunda", which refers to the Sundanese ethnicity or nation, and "Wiwitan", which means "origin". Briefly, Sunda Wiwitan refers to the origin or authenticity of Sundanese. According to Sundanese Wiwitan beliefs, ancestors have a direct relationship with Adam (the First Man) and the religion they follow. The term Sundanese Wiwitan is used to strengthen the beliefs or belief system of the Sundanese people, who still respect the spiritual teachings of their ancestors. Although this term is not always used by all Sundanese Wiwitan, it is generally attached to Sundanese people who maintain the culture and spiritual beliefs of their ancestors (Indrawardana, 2014).

The presence of a belief system in society is very simple. When humans interact with the universe, they begin to realise their relationship with that nature. Humans are so dependent on the universe that the concept of belief systems evolved from their understanding of the universe. Koentjaraningrat states that the belief system in religion is people's idea of their beliefs and views about the supernatural, the origin of the universe, the afterlife, and supernatural forces (Koentjaraningrat, 1987).

The belief system can play an important role in interpersonal communication, especially in the family. Shared values and beliefs help family members understand each other better, encourage more open and honest communication, and strengthen relationships and communication effectiveness. Communication between nuclear families, for example, between parents and children, between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, and between children, can be classified as interpersonal communication. According to Galvin & Brommel, a family is a group of people who have close relationships, build a sense of togetherness and group identity, with strong bonds in terms of loyalty and emotion, and experience a shared history and plan for the future (Ganiem, 2011).

A way of life that develops and is passed down from generation to generation by a group of people, similar to culture, is an essential part of the human being and is often considered genetically inherited. Communicating with people from different cultures and adjusting to the differences shows that the culture is learned. Therefore, we need to be ready to face the influence of communication technology on all aspects of culture in the life of the nation (Purwasito, 2003).

In the era of rapid technological development revolution, social interaction and cultural change have become the main focus in various parts of society. People from indigenous peoples are feeling the great impact of these changes (Mutaqin & Iryana, 2018); (Widowati & Wijaya, 2014). Indigenous peoples, who have a rich cultural history and traditions, are in the middle between maintaining their cultural heritage and adapting to the influence of digital technology (Telaumbanua et al., 2020).

Digital technology, especially smartphones and the internet, has changed the way people interact, speak, and get information. According to (Ode, 2015), this change can change the social and cultural dynamics in indigenous peoples that have been passed down since time immemorial. The extent to which these changes have an impact on the values, norms, and cultural practices of indigenous peoples still needs further research (Suarsana, 2020).

Advances in communication technology in the digital era require all aspects of communication to adapt to existing developments. Developments in this field can be used as a tool to disseminate information and as a promotional medium (Dedet Erawati et al., 2021).

Social media attracts people's attention because it is considered practical for communicating and sharing information. With just one handful of gadgets, we can communicate with anyone without being limited by time, place, and distance. The presence of social media as a means of communication allows people to share their viewpoints, understandings, experiences, and responses with each other (Agni et al., 2020). The development of communication technology has a huge impact on the pattern of communication behaviour in today's society. Even mass media such as television, newspapers, and books are rarely glanced at by many people because they are fully summarised in one smartphone.

A thorough research of social change and social interaction in indigenous peoples is essential to understanding how communication technologies and the digital age affect their cultural identity. Therefore, thorough research on the consequences of social change in indigenous peoples is very important (Wignjosasono, 2022); (Polnaya et al., 2023).

This research will discuss the Development of Communication Technology in the Sundanese Community of Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan. Although various scientists have different understandings of communication technology, it is undeniable that its development has been very rapid in the last ten years. This happens because the world has entered the era of the information society, where information is the main need and has economic and strategic value. Because of the importance of information, people no longer have to worry about the cost of keeping up with the development of communication technology. The definition of several criteria for the development of communication technology, according to (Webster, 2014), is, first of all, technology; the information society will be highly dependent on the continuous advancement of technology. Second, the economy: the information society consists of five industries: education, communication media, information machines, and information services, as well as other information activities, such as research and social activities. Third, employment: changes in the information society are changing the availability and need for labour in this field. Fourth, spatial information society consists of networks that are connected to locations and have an impact on the regulation of space and time. Fifth, culturally, the information society has undergone changes in daily social and cultural circulation as a result of the many available media channels.

Meanwhile, what is meant by the Sundanese Wiwitan community (Hisyam, 2004), Pengadheent, also known as Sundanese Wiwitan Cigugur adherents, is a local religion whose

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teachings are based on the principles of ancestral traditions. The Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal cultural heritage, which was established in 1840 and is still used for traditional cultural activities of the Sunda Wiwitan faith, shows the history of the origin of Sunda Wiwitan to the present day. The name "Sundanese Javanese religion" refers to the term "outsider", which refers to the teachings of Prince Madras. "Andjawat and Andanswer Spirit of Array—stacking Kang den Tada," which means selecting and filtering the vibrations of the universe that are constantly interacting and impacting human life, is the basis of the teachings of ADS.

In working on this journal, the author uses several journal references as reference materials, including (1) Hesse Jubba, 2021, entitled "Sunda Wiwitan in the Post Era - Truth: Survival Strategies for Local Communities in the Era of Globalization". This research analyses the existence of the Sundanese Wiwitan community in the Cireundeu Traditional Village, which is threatened by significant technological advances. (2) while according to research by Fauzian Ahmad, 2021. The one is entitled "The Symbolic Meaning of Sundanese Wiwitan in the Cireundeu Traditional Tradition". In Cireundeu Village, Leuwigajah Village, South Cimahi District, Cimahi City, the purpose of this research is to find out the process of cultural inheritance that has occurred since ancient times about the very famous Sundanese Wiwitan people. The goal is divided into three components: the way of communication, the communication system, and the act of sharing fantasies carried out by the adherents of the Sundanese Wiwitan faith to spread their culture in a descending manner. Ernest Bormann's Theory of Symbolic Convergence is used as the basis for this research. (3) According to Babul Bahrudin, 2021. In his research entitled "Cultural Dynamics of the Baduy Tribe in Facing Global Development in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar District, Lebak Regency, Banten Province". The purpose of this research is to see how the culture of the Baduy tribe changes along with the development of the world. The location of this research is Kanekes Village, which is located in Leuwidamar District, Lebak Regency, Banten Province. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and arena also underlies the qualitative methodology used in this research. This research focuses on how the Baduy people are facing global changes in terms of knowledge, living utensils, and technology, as well as livelihoods. (4) Research by Tiara Polnaya, 2023. The one is entitled "Cultural Change and Social Interaction in Indigenous Peoples Impact of the Influx of Digital Technology". Getting to know smartphones and the internet has changed the values and habits of families in the indigenous people of Hatusua. Observations, documentation, and in-depth interviews are used to collect research data. Previous studies have shown that the internet and mobile phones can change societal values and norms. This research supports these findings and confirms that with the entry of mobile phones and the internet in this digital era, the people of Hatusua have experienced changes in values and norms. Participants who previously communicated face-to-face are now switching to indirect communication due to the availability of smartphones. This research provides additional insights into how digital technologies affect indigenous peoples, especially in social interactions and conventional values. (5) According to research by Novi Yona Sidratul Munt, 2020. The one is entitled "Analysis of the Impact of

Information and Communication Technology Development in the Field of Education". Information technology is a tool used to process data and obtain information, which greatly affects the community environment with positive and negative impacts depending on its use. The development of information technology began with the advancement of computers, which were originally used to write, graph, and store data but have now developed into a global communication tool. This is inseparable from the need for humans to communicate, which allows interaction between humans around the world. The internet, as a result of the development of information technology, not only opens access to the culture of certain regions but also has an impact on the culture and environment of the community. The rapid development of information and communication technology affects the culture and environment of the community, both beneficial and detrimental, with one of the impacts being a shift in the culture and environment of the community.

Based on these references, the difference between this research and other studies lies in the different theories used. Researchers use the Cultural Lag theory (Ogburn, 1950), which explains that social change does not occur evenly. Material cultural elements such as technology and infrastructure tend to change faster than non-material cultural elements such as values, norms, ideas, and social institutions.

Based on the above background, the purpose of this study is to understand the development of communication technology in the Sunda Wiwitan community and how they preserve their culture in the modern era. This research aims to explore the factors that influence the development of communication technology in this community, as well as the impact of these developments on their cultural values, norms and practices. The benefit of this research is to provide valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policy makers in understanding the dynamics of the interaction between communication technology and local culture. The results are expected to be used as a basis for developing strategies that support cultural preservation in the midst of rapid technological development, as well as providing recommendations for indigenous communities in utilizing technology to strengthen their cultural identity. This research can also serve as a reference for further research related to the impact of technology on indigenous peoples and broader social change.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide a comprehensive picture and explain a social phenomenon or situation in detail (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research uses the Cultural Lag theory (Ogburn, 1950), which explains that social change does not occur evenly. Material cultural elements such as technology and infrastructure tend to change faster than non-material cultural elements such as values, norms, ideas, and social institutions. The techniques used in data collection include interviews, which are conducted directly by asking questions to the resource person through face-to-face or

intermediary media. The informants in this research are (1) Chairman of the Sundanese Wiwitan Traditional Pupuhu P. Gumirat Barna Alam as the Prince of the Sundanese Wiwitan Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal Kingdom, (2) Girang Pangaping Sundanese Customary Pupuhu Wiwitan R. Juwita Jati Putri as the Princess of the Sundanese Wiwitan Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal Kingdom, (3) Girang Pangaping Sunda Wiwitan R. Dewi Kanti Setianingsih as the Princess of the Sundanese Wiwitan Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal Kingdom. As for completing the interview research was carried out by paying attention to the interaction of P. Gumirat Barna Alam in an interview session and content that reviewed the Sundanese Wiwitan Believers community and communication technology on the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal website and social media. Research data was obtained from literature studies through books, scientific journals, online articles, and scientific works relevant to the development of communication technology in the Sunda Wiwitan belief community in Cigugur District.

To ensure reliability and validity, the triangulation method will be used by considering the results of observation, analysis, and interview of documents. In addition, resource persons will be given a session to provide feedback on the results of the analysis. This research is intended to provide in-depth knowledge about cultural changes and social interactions in Indigenous peoples after getting to know communication technology through a qualitative approach that uses phenomenological methods.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Furthermore, based on the results of interviews and observations conducted on informants with the aim of obtaining the information needed in this research, one of which is to find out the development of communication technology in the Sunda Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan community and how they maintain and continue to preserve ancestral customs and culture in the era of communication technology development. Admiration for the past owned by the Sundanese people of Cigugur is admiration for the habits of old culture or customs that have existed for a long time, which sometimes makes it difficult for people to forget them. This is because cultural customs or past customs are considered to have merged with the behaviour and culture of the environment (Ogburn, 1957).

The Sunda Wiwitan community in Cigugur District, Kuningan Regency, utilises modern communication technology to improve communication between individuals, which was previously limited only to receiving and conveying information. These technologies, such as the internet, smartphones, social media, and instant messaging apps, are adopted and used by the Sundanese Wiwitan people while still maintaining their traditions and cultural values. Although new technologies are often adopted quickly, it takes longer for society to develop the social rules and norms that govern their use. This can be seen in the rapid development of the internet and social media, but ethical and legal rules related to privacy, data security, and online ethics are still evolving to keep up. This is in line with the Cultural Lag theory, where the theory states that social

change does not occur evenly. Cultural elements, both material and non-material, will affect the occurrence of change.

The material culture of the Sundanese people of Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan

There are two elements in material culture, namely technology and infrastructure where the Sunda Wiwitan Cigugur community does not blame the existence of communication technology where the era of increasingly sophisticated communication technology, such as social media and instant messaging applications, provides opportunities for the Sunda Wiwitan people to stay connected and maintain traditional and cultural values so that local traditions and wisdom can be inherited and promoted to generations to come without distance and time restrictions. The infrastructure maintained by a cultural heritage is very important to preserve the authenticity and historical value of the site. One of them is the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal building, which ensures that the environment remains functional and well-maintained for future generations because this is a material cultural heritage of the traditional Pupuhu of Sunda Wiwitan and the Sundanese Wiwitan people. As stated by Prince Gumirat Barna Alam in an interview session conducted on March 8, 2024.

"*Since the establishment of Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal in Cigugur District, Kuningan Regency, the Indigenous Pupuhu and the Sundanese Wiwitan community have lived like the community in general. Especially now that they are following the development of communication technology, such as radio, television, mobile phones, and social media platforms, which makes it easier for them to introduce the traditional culture of Sundanese Wiwitan*". (Interview: P. Gumirat Barna Alam, 08/03/2024).

The Cultural Lag Theory according to William F. Ogburn explains the phenomenon of a time gap between technological advances and cultural adaptation or social norms in a society. This gap occurs when technological developments progress faster than society's ability to adapt to change. In the Sundanese Wiwitan community, the development of communication technology goes hand in hand with their customs, culture, and habits. This allows communication technology to be well received by the community and Sundanese Wiwitan, encouraging them to adapt to various technological advances that are increasingly rapid.

Non-material culture of the Sundanese people of Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan

There are four elements in non-material culture, namely values, norms, ideas, and social institutions, in the Sundanese Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan community.

The values upheld by the Sundanese Wiwitan Cigugur community include respect for nature, ancestors, and others. Spiritual values and local wisdom are also very important, directing people's behaviour and outlook on life in interacting with their environment and community.

The norms in the Sundanese Wiwitan Cigugur community include customary rules that govern daily behaviour. This includes procedures in traditional ceremonies, norms of politeness, and rules in social interaction that maintain harmony and order in the community.

The ideas or ideas that underlie Sundanese Wiwitan culture include belief in the spiritual power of nature and ancestors, as well as belief in supernatural entities. The idea of balance and harmony with nature is also central to their ideology, which is reflected in their daily practices and traditional ceremonies.

Social Institutions: Social institutions in Sundanese Wiwitan society include traditional leadership structures, social organisations, and ritual groups. Traditional leaders or elders have an important role in leading traditional ceremonies and maintaining the continuity of traditions. In addition, there are groups that are in charge of various aspects of social life and rituals.

In their daily lives, the Sundanese people of Wiwitan Cigugur Kuningan apply these values and norms consistently, maintain cultural ideas inherited by their ancestors, and rely on social institutions to maintain their cultural identity in the midst of changing times. As stated by Prince Gumirat Barna Alam in an interview session conducted on March 8, 2024.

> "*We do have a filter to filter the absorption of foreign cultures or subcultures of western culture because it will affect or degrade the values and norms of our spiritual culture have limitations and filter them, for example, such as clothes, we always wear traditional Sundanese traditional clothing*" (Interview: P. Gumirat Barna Alam, 08/03/2024).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research provides the results of interviews and observations, this research shows that the development of communication technology in the Sunda Wiwitan community of Cigugur Kuningan goes hand in hand with their efforts to maintain their ancestral customs and culture in the era of modern technology. The Sunda Wiwitan community utilizes modern communication technologies, such as the internet, smartphones, social media, and instant messaging applications, to improve interpersonal communication, while maintaining their traditions and cultural values. Although new technologies are adopted quickly, these communities take time to develop social rules and norms that govern their use. This research confirms the importance of the balance between technology adoption and cultural preservation in the context of indigenous communities. Although the Sunda Wiwitan community adopts modern technology, they still cling to the use of traditional clothing as a way to filter out foreign cultural influences. The contribution of this research can serve as a basis for developing policies that support cultural preservation in the digital era, as well as encouraging further research on the impact of communication technology on social and cultural practices in other indigenous communities.

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