



Local Wisdom in *Maparaji* Tradition: Sundanese Indigenous Birth Knowledge

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Abstract. *Maparaji* tradition is a form of local wisdom that is still maintained by the Sundanese people in Pameungpeuk, Garut, West Java in the current era of medical treatment. This study aims to reveal the local wisdom values in birth indigenous knowledge through *paraji* practice in Garut, West Java. This research method uses an ethnographic method, through observation, interviews and documentation. The results of the study reveal that there is a series of local wisdom in the birth indigenous knowledge in Pameungpeuk, Garut, West Java covering the period of pregnancy, birth process and postnatal care. So it can be concluded that the existence of *paraji* cannot be separated from Indonesian culture, especially in West Java. In the context of local wisdom of birth, *paraji* has an important role in various reproductive medicine traditions including pregnancy test, childbirth, postnatal care, *pamali*, and birth ceremonies such *Opat bulanan* ceremony, *Nujuh bulanan* ceremony, and *Marhaban* ceremony. Traditions and practices carried out by *paraji* are always colored by traditional and religious values.

Keywords: Maparaji tradition · Local wisdom · Sundanese · Birth indigenous knowledge

1 Introduction

Oral tradition is one of the cultural strengths as the noble heritage of Indonesian archipelago. The UNESCO statements states that oral traditions are: “*those traditions which have been transmitted in time and space by the word and act*”, which means traditions transmitted in time and space by speech and action. According to Pudentia, oral traditions are presented not only as a performance of the art and entertainment, but also for the practical benefit of society [1]. Things that are ceremonial, such as the ceremony to call for rain, the ceremony to clean the village, and numerous initiation rites, for example the various practical social interests, are examples of this. According to Wilson, oral traditions share many of the same qualities as ancestral heritage and can be passed down from one generation to the next. These traits include the ability to pass on stories, such as myths, legends, folklore, memories, folk songs, sayings, and proverbs [2].

In addition, Anoegrajekti states that oral tradition is an ecosystem that has the potential to support myths, legends, fairy tales, saga, mantras, poetry, customs, medicines,

genealogical systems, rituals, and knowledge systems [3]. Thus, oral traditions are myths, legends, fairy tales, saga, mantras, poetry, customs, medicines, rituals, and knowledge systems that are transmitted from generation to generation and provide benefits for human life.

In a quote from *Wawacan Panji Walung* written by R.H Muhammad Musa in the 17th century, “*Unggal dukun jeung unggal paraji, pada boga sanggup ka pawarang, jampé piwurungan bobot, sarta boga panuhun, béda-béda unggal paraji*”. (Each shaman and *paraji*, usually have supernatural abilities, efficacious mantras and different traditional advice). The quote reveals that shamans and *paraji* are different characters and are known to have different powers, efficacious mantras and advice. According to Ramadhani, et.al, *paraji* are traditional healers who have the ability to help with childbirth and have the ability to heal with massage techniques [4]. Even though medical services such as hospitals, clinics and public health center already exist, the existence of *paraji* persists in people’s lives and tends to remain in the same community for life [5].

In fact, *paraji* is very important for the people of Cirinten, Lebak, Banten as a respected helper figure in everyday life in the community. *Paraji* is someone who is old enough with an age range of 35–100 years, gaining knowledge as a *paraji* through spiritual experience and direct descent from previous *paraji*. *Paraji* use traditional medical treatment including pregnancy, childbirth (partus) and postnatal care. Then, *paraji* uses massage techniques, mantras, herbs, and certain advices [6]. In the Sundanese cultural concept, the terms of *paraji* means *indung beurang*. In addition, Sidik and Fitriani, Sundanese people believed that “*indung*” or a mother is a role model who has a higher degree in their family tree in order to respect Sundanese women [7]. The role of *paraji* above relates to indigenous knowledge system of childbirth in Sundanese people.

Indigenous knowledge is founded on social, physical, and spiritual understandings that have contributed to the people’s sense of being in the world as well as played a role in the people’s ability to continue existing. According to Rankoana et al., [8] indigenous knowledge has a health potential in primary health services. This includes the knowledge about the causes of disease, the knowledge about native plant medicines given for preventive, protective, and curative care, the consumption of subsystem plants, the knowledge of medical ethnobotany, and the use of medicines. In traditional medical systems all over the world, including China, indigenous knowledge plays an essential part in the delivery of health care.

Every group and tribe in a region has its own unique way of making use of the area’s biological resources to sustain their way of life. The Sundanese are the most populous tribe in West Java, and they have a long history of employing traditional medical practices [9]. The indigenous knowledge system that the Sundanese people have developed is an effort to keep their community’s oral heritage of passing down information from generation to generation alive. The practice of *paraji*, which is an essential component of the birth phase in the life cycle of the Sundanese people, is an example of an indigenous knowledge system for birth that is still practiced today and continues to exist.

This local wisdom is a cultural tradition inherited by previous generation to be carried out in maintaining human’s physical and mental health that can be wisely applied to everyday life. Vicentia states that local wisdom is an entity after crucial long process of evolution will lead to the emergence of a value system that crystallized in the form of

common law, belief and local culture in a society which is faithfully believed and become a reference in their daily life [10]. In addition, Sibarani, et.al said that local wisdom is the cultural values and social norms used to solve problems faced by community today and to prepare the younger generations who are more peaceful and prosperous in the future [11].

Last but not least, local wisdom is the identity or cultural personality of a nation that enables that nation to assimilate and even cultivate the culture of other nations into its own character and capabilities. Local wisdom can be thought of as the cultural personality of a nation. In local communities, ethics and cultural values are characteristics that are passed down from generation to generation, and local wisdom is also a hallmark of these values. As for the defining characteristics of local wisdom, these include the following: (1) it must incorporate knowledge of virtues that educate people on ethical and moral values; (2) it must educate people to love nature rather than destroy it; and (3) it must originate from more experienced members of the community. The term “local wisdom” refers to the fundamental and distinctive knowledge that a community has accumulated over the course of its history and that has been used by its members for generations to achieve a balance of life between humans and the environment [12].

The Pameungpeuk people in Garut, West Java still maintains the tradition of birth with the help of *paraji* in the midst of the era of medical treatment. Based on the background description above, it shows that the Sundanese community utilizes the knowledge of the birth attendants in helping births. From the background of the problem above, the researchers aim to construct the local wisdom of *paraji* ritual practice as the birth indigenous knowledge in Pameungpeuk, Garut, West Java. This study aims to describe local wisdom of *paraji* ritual practice as the birth indigenous knowledge in Pameungpeuk, Garut, West Java.

2 Methods

In this study using a qualitative approach. According to Moleong qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions holistically [13]. Ethnography literally means writing about a group of people. Cresswell & Poth in Tomaszewski, et.al explained that the main purpose of ethnography is to study culture including patterns of social interaction, behavior, beliefs, language, and ideas in a group of people [14]. Therefore, the result of an ethnographic study is a complex and complete picture of the culture of a group focused on how the group functions in relation to the original focus of the study. According to Sugiyono, data collection techniques are the most strategic steps in research, because the main purpose of research is to obtain data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation [15].

3 Results and Discussion

The practice of *paraji* is still found in the southern coastal areas of West Java, especially in Pameungpeuk, Garut, West Java. Geographically, Pameungpeuk sub-district has an area of about 41.04 km², with the following boundaries; Cisompet District; Cibalong

District; Indonesian Ocean and Cikelet District. Pameungpeuk is one of the sub-districts in Garut Regency, West Java Province, which is about 86 km from the center of Garut City to the south. This sub-district consists of 8 villages and most of the residents make a living as fishermen, farmers, traders, and employees. Based on data from Pameungpeuk Public Health Center, it was recorded that there were 28 *paraji* in the Pameungpeuk area and spread across several villages.

3.1 Local Knowledge During Pregnancy in Garut

3.1.1 Paraji Rituals During Pregnancy, Advices and Taboos During Pregnancy

During 2–3 months of pregnancy, the *paraji* will feel the mother's abdomen to determine gestational age. According to *kokolot*, the development of the fetus in the mother's womb during pregnancy will experience phase by phase, including one month of pregnancy called *sabulan herang*, two months of pregnancy called *lumenggang*, three months of pregnancy called *bunghulang*, four months of pregnancy called *mangrupa*, five months of pregnancy called *usik*, six months of pregnancy is called *malik*, seven months of pregnancy is called *kolot*, eight months of pregnancy is called *ngora* and nine months is called *kolot lahir*. The term gestational age expresses the development of the fetus in the mother's womb, for example, at the age of four months, it is believed that the baby already has a form and the spirit is blown. at the age of seven months of pregnancy, it is believed that the age of the baby is old and if it is born it is not too problematic.

The residents of Pameungpeuk are of the opinion that there are certain taboos that husbands are expected to abide by while their wives are carrying a child. The findings of the interview shed light on several of these taboos, including the following: 1) It is against the law for fathers to kill animals that are thought to have negative effects on their children, such as chickens, sheep, snakes, and the like, 2). It is also against the law for fathers to be disrespectful toward their children; this rule is in place to protect both the mother and the child. It is against the law for fathers to go fishing because there is a widespread cultural belief that fishing can harm the unborn child that is being carried by the mother.

Based on the results of interviews with primary sources, namely *paraji*, pregnant women must obey the advice or advice of *paraji* as a form of protection for the mother and fetus. *Paraji* will recommend pregnant women to perform behaviors or habits including 1). Bringing sharp objects such as scissors, safety pins tied to pregnant women's underwear, aims to protect pregnant women and their fetuses from being disturbed by evil spirits or spirits, 2) Pregnant women are encouraged to consume more vegetables and fruit, so that the baby is healthy, and 3) Mothers who are late in pregnancy, are recommended to frequently perform movements, aiming to make the fetus in the womb descend quickly and open the birth canal and make delivery smoothly without any difficulties. Meanwhile, the results of interviews regarding taboos or taboos that mothers must follow during pregnancy in Pameungpeuk District, Garut include 1) being prohibited from sitting in front of the door of the house, 2) prohibited from leaving the house after sunset because they are susceptible to evil spirits, and 3). it is forbidden to carry heavy items because it endangers the condition of the mother and baby.

3.1.2 Ceremony During Pregnancy

Ceremonies known as *Opat bulanan* and *Nujuh bulanan* are typically carried out throughout a woman's pregnancy. It is thought that at this point in the pregnancy, the spirit is breathed into the fetus, which is why the *opat bulanan* ceremony is performed when the woman is four months pregnant. In the meantime, the *Nujuh bulanan* ceremony is held when the pregnant woman is seven months along. Family and other close relatives are invited to the event. In spite of this, both the *Opat bulanan* ceremony and the *Nujuh bulanan* ceremony have been passed down from generation to generation as part of the culture of the Pameungpeuk people. In actuality, however, neither of these ceremonies are obligatory; rather, whether or not a family chooses to participate depends on their financial situation.

3.2 Local Knowledge on Childbirth in Garut

If the mother shows signs of labor, which are typically characterized by heartburn and pain in the abdominal region, the patient's father will contact the *paraji* and have them come to the patient's home. For expectant mothers who are close to the time of delivery, a *paraji* may recommend that the mother consume water flavored with a mixture of palm sugar, Javanese sugar, or chicken egg yolk. These ingredients are thought to increase the mother's energy levels during the labor process, which can help speed up the process of delivering the baby. When assisting with the delivery process, *Paraji* did not wear any sort of unique uniform or other clothing; rather, he wore clothes that were more typical of everyday life.

When assisting with the delivery, the *paraji* will use coconut oil, vegetable oil, eucalyptus oil, or soap, which will be applied to the mother's abdomen and then massaged slowly. The *paraji* will then ask the mother to take a breath and push the baby (*ngeden*), which will assist in the delivery of the baby. Although not all *parajis* still employ the *jangjawokan* (*mantras*), certain prayers and *jangjawokan* (Japanese for "mantras") are recited by the *paraji* during the massage in order to help the delivery process. After the infant is born, the umbilical cord of the newborn is cut. In the past, a *hinis* (a piece of bamboo) was used for this purpose, but nowadays, scissors are more commonly used. The newborn is then wrapped in betel leaves and swaddled. In the meantime, the *bali* or *ari – ari* (the baby's placenta), after being cleaned of blood, is sprinkling with a little salt and kitchen ashes and then placed in a pot made of clay or cans, which is then buried in the patient's family yard. In some cultures, the *bali* or *ari – ari* is referred to as an *ari*.

3.3 Local Knowledge in Postnatal Care in Garut

3.3.1 Maternal Care During Postnatal Care

After the process of giving birth, the mother will then enter the puerperium for a period of forty days. Corn, kidney beans, and other beans are recommended to be consumed by new mothers as part of the recovery process after the process of childbirth. After the delivery of the baby, the *paraji* will take care of the mother by massaging the abdomen in order to improve the position of the baby or the womb after the process of delivery

has been completed. Additionally, the *paraji* will request the mother to apply an iket to her stomach by directing her to do so.

During the puerperium, there are various taboos, including the following: 1) it is forbidden to eat too much but must take little by little so that the stomach is not surprised by the intake of too much food, 2) it is forbidden to eat heavy work during the recovery period, and 4) it is forbidden to eat oranges, ango, and pineapple or those containing sour taste which are believed to make the stomach bloated (*beugah*) because of the sour taste. 3) it is forbidden to eat heavy work during the recovery period. 4) it is forbidden to During the time that you are supposed to be recovering, you are not allowed to do any strenuous walking or to leave the house.

3.3.2 Marhaban Ceremony

The *marhabaan* ceremony is a custom that is carried out after the infant is 40 days old. It is a celebration that is held with invited visitors that include of family, neighbors, and religious authorities. The rationale for this is that by the time the infant is introduced to more people, the mother of the child should have recovered sufficiently from the ordeal of giving birth, and the child himself should be robust enough to handle the situation. This ritual is meant to be a form of thanksgiving to God for everything that he has done. The *marhaban* ceremony is not only a thanksgiving celebration for the birth of a baby, but it also serves as a medium of friendship between relatives and neighbors, and it concludes with alms, which is the offering of gifts to persons in need as a kind of gratitude.

4 Conclusion

The findings of the research indicate that the oral tradition of the maternity *paraji* practice possesses values of conventional knowledge in the community. In the city of Garut, in the province of West Java, there are various local wisdom values that can be investigated in every aspect of the *paraji* practice. Good morals and conduct with regard to God, oneself, one's family, and society at large are values that should be upheld. Along with the calculation of days, recommendations, and advice for mothers and families, the maternity *paraji* practice contains the value of indigenous knowledge in dealing with the human birth cycle, beginning with pregnancy and continuing through childbirth and postpartum. This cycle includes all stages of human birth. In addition to this, the values of local wisdom can be seen in the relationship between humans and God as well as humans with humans through a number of ceremonial traditions. These traditions include the ceremonies of Opat Bulanan, Nujuh Bulanan, and Marhaba, all of which aim to offer a prayer of salvation to God as well as establish friendly relations with neighbors. It is helpful to govern the interaction between humans and God as well as the relationship between humans and other humans in society using the values that are found in local knowledge. The incorporation of values derived from indigenous wisdom helps to improve the character of a nation while also facilitating the organization of its social life.

Authors' Contribution. Mutiarani and M. Yoesoef prepared the observation, interview, and documentation. Mutiarani carried out data collection. Both Mutiarani and M. Yoesoef contributed to the analysis of the data as well as the interpretation of the findings. The bulk of the writing for the manuscript was done by Mutiarani. Every author contributed insightful criticism and played a part in conducting the research and drafting the book.

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