



Preserving Cultural Heritage Through *Pambiwara*: An Analysis of Social Capital in Javanese Wedding Oratory Based on Bourdieu's Theory

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Abstract. This study documents the preservation of cultural heritage within rural Java through the *Pambiwara* tradition, using the social capital theory of Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical underpinning. *Pambiwara*, which is one of the central elements of wedding ceremonies within Javanese life, has big importance in terms of bonding the spirit of cultural identity and social cohesion within a rural community. The paper seeks to explain how cultural capital, trust, and the networking that *Pambiwara* entails contribute to sustainability and cultural practices transmission. The study adopts qualitative methodologies—triangulating in-depth interviews with advanced practitioners from *Sanggar permadani* and participant observation—leading to the statement that *Pambiwara* has a multidimensional impact on culture preservation. The findings show that not only the ceremonial and cultural fabric of the community is maintained but also the sense of identity and continuity is strong among its members. This study underlines the crucial aspect of social capital in the efficient preservation of intangible cultural heritage, providing tools for cultural preservation efforts elsewhere in the world.

Keywords: Social capital, *Pambiwara*, Culture.

1 Introduction

Cultural heritage preservation is becoming an ever more pressing global issue as societies are challenged by modernisation and globalization. The erosion of cultural identity and values due to the overshadowing of traditional practices by modern lifestyles is a global phenomenon. Indonesia is also not left behind. The Javanese are one of its many ethnic groups and have been keeping delicate traditions far back through ceremonial due. The writer shares one such tradition, *Pambiwara*, the role of a ceremonial master of ceremonies in Javanese weddings. A tradition of course not only leads the couple in a wedding ceremony but also strengthens Javanese language and Javanese customs. Reflecting wider values of social order, respect and cultural continuity among Javanese communities, *Pambiwara* is a fairly common aspect within Javanese wedding ceremonies.

Nonetheless, with modernization in Javanese society, *Pambiwara* was in a process of decreasing. What I see it as one of the biggest challenges is that with each new generation, the culture seems to shift more towards modern wedding planners and

simple ceremonies rather than our traditional ways. The younger demographic is another problem as they speak Javanese with poor grammar and unable to use the formal *Krama Inggil* dialect required for *Pambiwara*. The popularity of modern, Western-style weddings also has made *Pambiwara* seem outdated, helping erase it from the scene in both rural and urban areas. The weakening of these ceremonial social practices leads to, not only the deterioration of the cultural heritage of Javanese society, but also the erosion of *mileus* and cultural capital that have been built and maintained in these processes of ceremony [1-4].

Compounding the issue is that there has been no deliberate attempt to actively sustain culture like *Pambiwara*. While a few local cultural organizations and some individual practitioners are working to preserve this art, the general absence of institutional mechanisms dedicated to this discipline, or formal education on the same causes it to lose its relevance. With the grandparents of the *Pambiwara* practitioners reaching retirement or death; often times, it is a struggle for the next generation to keep up with maintaining these practices due to lack of motivation, funding and knowledge of cultural resources. Increasing individualization of society, in which communal activities and cultural ceremonies which used to provide the cement that bound together rural communities, are part of the problem [5-6]. The *Pambiwara*, a tradition that was once an emblem of social cohesion and continuity has now been threatened with extinction.

This study attempts to fill some important gaps through an analysis of the *Pambiwara* tradition in terms of social capital and, theoretically, based on Pierre Bourdieu. In the sociological literature, social capital is a complex theory that Bourdieu describes as pertaining to the networks and relationships of society that individuals and communities can deploy into collective action, like preserving cultural heritage. This is one example of the role social capital plays in *Pambiwara* — being manifested as trust, cultural knowledge and community networks that empowers this tradition. Through a case study analysis of the role played by *Pambiwara* in Javanese wedding ceremonies, this research aims to explore how social capital can be utilized as leverage for safeguarding the renewal and continuity of this symbolic tradition. In this study, we also had an intention of explaining the function of cultural human capital on social solidarity and communication of cultural values between generations [7-10].

Ultimately the research aims to provide an understanding of how the tradition can be maintained within modern life. This research closes with an exploration of the cultural and social capital of the *Pambiwara* tradition in order to provide a model for cultural conservation that could potentially extend to other communities across Java or even further. The conclusions of this study will further be a real support to the general debate on the conservation of intangible cultural heritage, reminding the more proper name — that its being kept depends on community action, cultural awareness and social context in preserving traditional practices. The committee will also offer action-oriented conclusions for cultural institutions, policy-makers and educators on how to support the passing of traditional cultural practices and knowledge to next generations in more meaningful ways.

2 Method

This study takes a qualitative method to examine the conservation of Pambiwara tradition using Bourdieu's social capital theory. When conducting research on cultural practices and social relationships, qualitative methods are particularly suitable as these allow the researchers to gain profound, detailed insights into the elements underpinning the sustainability of Pambiwara intangible cultural heritage. This research design collects endeavour to eliciting rich description from the last remaining stewards and practitioners of Pambiwara. More specifically, a blend of detailed interviews, participant observation and document analysis are requested to maximize the

In the present exploration, the fundamental information gathering device used are in-depth interviews of critical players withinside the Pambiwara lifestyle. One of the reviews conducted with experienced Pambiwara practitioners, cultural leaders, as well as members from Sanggar permadani — a cultural organi that has actively taking in popularising and teaching Pambiwara tradition. The participants were chosen because of their expertise and years of involvement with Pambiwara, allowing for data that is informed by a sophisticated comprehension of the tradition and its cultural import. To maximize in-depth understanding on key themes while retaining critical fidelity to the guiding research questions, semi-structured interview guides were employed. Questions during the interview session centred around their experiences with Pambiwara, it's cultural significance to them and the difficulties they encounter in keeping tradition alive.

In addition to the interviews, participant observation was carried out in Sanggar permadani and while attending various Javanese wedding ceremonies where Pambiwara performances were held. This draws from participant observation not only to describe firsthand experiences of the practices involved in the Pambiwara tradition, but also how it operates as social capital within the community. Through capturing the engagements of the pambiwara and the wedding participants, together with the ceremonial doings, it explained how pambiwara functions as cultural mediator strengthening and reinforcing social relations and cultural values. These observations were transcribed into detailed field notes of the language, ceremony structure, and responses used by the Pambiwara community.

Data generated from interviews, participant observation, and document analysis were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Data analysis commenced by data familiarization where the researcher independently read through interview transcripts, field notes and documents to get an overall feel for the data. Key quotes were inserted and organized into relevant themes, based on the research questions. The findings of this study were triangulated using more than one data source, method or procedure to enhance validity and reliability. Interviews, participant observation, and document analysis complemented the Pambiwara tradition more comprehensively.

3 Results

This results, from research through interview, observation and document research to give an image of the current existing situation of Pambiwara performance tradition and

its relation to Javanese cultural heritage in overall. These results are then presented in terms of several specific angles that are built, such as the existence of non-formal education under *Pambiwar*-supervision from rural communities and how collective organization such *Sanggar permadani* keeps this practice sustainable.

These results imply that the *Pambiwar* tradition is still an important tradition in Javanese wedding ceremony, particularly for rural areas of Java. While many communities are under pressure to modernize, traditions around weddings continue to be observed and *Pambiwar* has been essential in the processions. The interviewees emphasized that the presence of a *Pambiwar* is crucial to conduct rituals properly in accordance with Javanese adat and manners. The use of 'Krama Inggil' (formal Javanese language) by the *Pambiwar* was also noted as a vital element in conserving these ceremonies true to their cultural roots. Likeju, it was also found that the future of *Pambiwar* is heavily reliant on older generations keeping at it, with younger ones somewhat less keen to step into this role.

One of the major problems detected is that awareness among *Pambiwar* young generation to become a *Pambiwar* has been receding. While many *Perunggu* members were under 30, several interviewees said that few young people are willing to learn the skills necessary and required for this role in particular proficiency in *Krama Inggil* — an antiquated form of Javanese not widely spoken or taught in schools nowadays. In addition, according to the informants, most of these young couples prefer contemporary wedding processions that do not hold prayers nor any cultural nuances commonly present in Javanese traditional weddings. In these places, the change of interest means there are fewer opportunities for *Pambiwar* to showcase their skills. And thirdly, they noted that there was no organized systemic way to teach the *Pambiwar* tradition since it has had no mentoring program and corresponding institution where they can pass on what needs to be known.

Furthermore, *Sanggar permadani* contributes significantly in the conservation of Javanese culture traditions through organized trainings and cultural events. One of the numerous efforts to ensure this is called: *Pawiyatan Panatacara tuwin Pamedhar Sabda*, a dedicated course in public speaking, etiquette, and also formal Javanese language for once anyone be a *Pambiwar*. The findings indicate that *Sanggar permadani* draws culturally minded participants from a wide and diverse age-group which includes schoolchildren through to older adults. The program has graduated multiple new *Pambiwar*, some of whom are presently involved in weddings and other cultural events across their communities.

Yet like all other initiatives, *Sanggar permadani* is no stranger to difficulties in maintaining its momentum. Organization interviewees complained of constrained funding, and said the training programs rely heavily on volunteer instructors. Additionally, the program has been shown to be a success in some rural areas, but it needs more distribution among urban populations. Nonetheless, as the lone *Sanggar* in *Pariang*, *Sanggar permadani* emerges as a principal institution in its quest to keep the tradition of *Pambiwar* alive, ensuring its continuity for future generations.

The findings of this study also have social and cultural implications beyond the *Pambiwar* tradition. Wedding Ceremony When wedding ceremonies are held, a *Pambiwar* reinforces cultural identity and community among the attending participants. Formal Javanese language and usage in traditional rituals were recognized to be essential for maintaining the past traditions because it would keep the culture in

continuity. Most participants have immense pride in their culture and underline the need to instil these traditions among younger generations. The role of Pambiwara was also understood as a force helping create social stability, since the Pambiwara not only lead the ceremony but resulted as intermediary between different families and social groups in order to assure that everything developed smoothly and respectfully.

The results may suggest that in some areas where the Pambiwara tradition is still existing, it has also changed to incorporate modern influences. Many of the interviewees stated that Pambiwara performances are now starting to include modern elements, like using sound systems and occasionally doing bilingual presentations for guests who may not understand Javanese that well. Pambiwara have sometimes modified their language to add colloquial terms or descriptions of rituals to cater the ceremonies for children. What these adaptations illustrate is the malleability and renescent charm of tradition in a cultural landscape that continues to evolve.

Ultimately, the results uncovered show that it is pivotal to have a rooted community backing and cultural networks for the continuity of Pambiwara tradition. To keep this practice, the presence of families, local leaders and cultural organizations that support Pambiwara practitioners is very important. A number of Pambiwara practitioners mentioned that they draw strength from their communities to continue their work. Moreover, the organization of cultural events and festivals by local governments as well as cultural institutions are useful platforms which allow Pambiwara to demonstrate their talent that helps to preserve customary rites. Community participation in these activities evinces the shared role of the broader community in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Overall, the findings in this study show that although the Pambiwara tradition is facing immense difficulty as it becomes more modernized and increasingly less popular among younger generations, it continues to be an important part of Javanese culture. It is important for the community to step in to help out cultural organizations like Sanggar permadani who carry a significant task of preserving this tradition. How much flexibility will modern practices allow in adaptations remains to be seen, but at any rate the ancient tradition may revive yet.

4 Discussion

The application of Bourdieu's social capital theory to the Pambiwara tradition reveals the critical role that networks, relationships, and cultural exchanges play in maintaining and preserving this Javanese cultural practice [11-12]. Social capital, in this context, refers to the trust, reciprocity, and community bonds that enable Pambiwara to continue being a vital part of wedding ceremonies. The practitioners of Pambiwara rely on these social networks to pass on their skills and knowledge, ensuring the continuity of the tradition. These relationships are crucial in rural communities, where cultural practices like Pambiwara are still seen as integral to social and cultural identity.

However, Bourdieu's theory also highlights the challenges posed by modernization, which weakens traditional social structures and diminishes the cultural capital needed to sustain Pambiwara. As younger generations drift away from traditional practices, the social networks that once reinforced the transmission of cultural knowledge are gradually eroding [13-16]. The lack of fluency in Krama Inggil and the preference for

modern wedding ceremonies further exacerbate this problem, as these shifts reduce the relevance of *Pambiwara* in the eyes of younger people. This reflects Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, where the shared cultural practices and values that were once ingrained in the community are being reshaped by new social norms [17-18].

To counteract this trend, the preservation of *Pambiwara* requires strengthening social capital through both formal and informal means. Cultural organizations like *Sanggar permadani* serve as vital hubs for maintaining social networks that support *Pambiwara*. However, without broader institutional backing, these efforts may be insufficient. Bourdieu's theory suggests that in order to preserve *Pambiwara*, it is necessary to actively rebuild and maintain the social capital that binds communities together, whether through local government involvement, educational programs, or continued cultural participation at the community level.

5 Conclusion

The *Pambiwara* tradition remains a crucial element of Javanese cultural heritage, serving as both a ceremonial practice and a means of reinforcing social cohesion and cultural identity. Despite its continued significance in rural communities, the tradition faces increasing challenges due to generational shifts, modernization, and the declining use of formal Javanese language. The disconnect between younger generations and traditional cultural practices has weakened the transmission of *Pambiwara*, putting the tradition at risk of being lost.

Cultural organizations like *Sanggar permadani* play a vital role in preserving the *Pambiwara* tradition by offering training programs and promoting its cultural significance. However, their efforts are limited by a lack of institutional support and resources. To ensure the long-term sustainability of *Pambiwara*, there must be greater involvement from local governments, educational institutions, and broader community networks. Strengthening social capital through both formal and informal channels is essential for revitalizing the tradition and ensuring its transmission to future generations.

Ultimately, while *Pambiwara* has adapted to some modern influences, maintaining its core values and cultural integrity is key to its survival. A balanced approach that embraces modernization while preserving the tradition's essence will be crucial for its continued relevance. By fostering social capital and enhancing institutional support, *Pambiwara* can remain a living and dynamic part of Javanese cultural heritage in the face of changing societal norms.

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