



THE ROLE OF *KAMPUNG BUDAYA PIJI WETAN* IN ADVANCING CULTURE IN THE *MURIA* REGION : A STUDY OF ARTS CULTURE AND ECONOMY

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Abstract

The diminishing awareness among younger generations to preserve local arts and cultural heritage in the era of modernization poses a serious threat to the sustainability of traditional values. Local culture embodies the noble values of a nation and thus must be protected and promoted. This study aims to examine the background of the establishment of Kampung Budaya (Cultural Village) Piji Wetan, the efforts made to promote cultural sustainability, its contribution to the local economy, the challenges it faces in development, and the possible solutions. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analysed using Miles and Huberman's model which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan was established as an effort to re-narrate marginalized folklore and respond to the community's growing awareness of preserving cultural values. Its initiatives are grounded in comprehensive and sustainable community empowerment based on local wisdom, inspired by two key teachings of Sunan Muria—Tapa Ngeli and Pager Mangkuk—which serve as philosophical foundations for cultural identity and community welfare. The village has successfully contributed to the local economy by transforming culture and art into a sustainable economic driver and creating a localized, community-based economic ecosystem. Challenges in development include limited active participation, time constraints among members, and sustaining collective enthusiasm over time. The proposed solutions emphasize strengthening personal engagement, fostering open dialogues to encourage participation, providing emotional support, fair task distribution, and sustaining a sense of collective spirit.

Keywords: *Community Economy, Cultural Village, Cultural Values, Local Wisdom*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a pluralistic and multicultural nation, is home to a vast array of cultural diversity, including local stories, traditional sites, ethnic traditions, religious and cultural celebrations, and even the acculturation of both. This diversity is shaped by distinct social dynamics, customs, and regional characters, giving each community its own unique cultural identity based on their worldview and lived experiences.

Culture is a product of human thought and creativity, formed through a process of learning, and unique to human civilization. According to Koentjaraningrat (in Amalia & Agustin, 2022), the rapid development of science and technology in the modern era has led to a gradual decline in the existence of local arts and culture. The younger generation often perceives traditional arts and culture as outdated and restrictive, favouring Western culture which is seen as more practical and modern. This has resulted in a diminishing interest in traditional games, local food, traditional arts, and indigenous wisdom, all of which are increasingly being marginalized due to globalization and secular modern lifestyles.

Local culture, however, must be preserved, as it carries noble values that form the moral foundation and identity of a society. Every community has a way to safeguard its cultural legacy, and efforts to preserve traditional arts and culture must be continuous to ensure their survival amid the pressures of technological advancement. In facing globalization, a cultural development strategy grounded in local identity and wisdom is essential. These strategies must include instilling shared historical and cultural values among community members, revitalizing regional cultures, and reinforcing cultural frameworks with legal protection. Without such protection, local culture risks extinction, dismissed as irrelevant or obsolete (Mubah, 2011).

Law No. 5/2017 on the Advancement of Culture outlines ten cultural objects that can be developed by local governments: oral traditions, manuscripts, customs, rituals, traditional knowledge, traditional technology, arts, language, folk games, and traditional sports. In *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan*, Kudus Regency, efforts to revitalize folklore are carried out through cultural

performances and language festivals that reinterpret local myths and stories. These performances, often presented in traditional theater by local residents using both local dialects and Indonesian, are staged at "*Panggung Ngepringan*"—a communal space that serves as a cultural hub. The space is regularly visited by locals and tourists alike for educational, dialogical, and entertainment purposes (Magfiroh et al., 2021).

The preservation of local culture requires community involvement, as culture is inherently owned by the people. Community-driven efforts, rather than top-down regulations alone, have proven more effective in safeguarding cultural heritage (Wirastari & Suprihardjo, 2012). *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* integrates local wisdom and collective action, guided by the teachings of Sunan Muria, particularly the principles of *Tapa Ngeli* and *Pager Mangkuk*, which emphasize adaptability and communal resilience. This approach not only preserves culture but also fosters intergenerational transmission of values and identity (Aulia et al., 2023).

Since 2015, *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* has consistently organized various cultural activities. In 2020, it earned national recognition by securing second place in the "My Village's Cultural Story" competition organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The community then expanded its programs to reintroduce traditional games, local foods, and other cultural practices that are fading from the collective memory of the younger generation.

Apart from cultural preservation, *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* also contributes to the local economy through initiatives like *Pasar Ampiran*, a traditional market promoting local culinary heritage. At this market, visitors purchase food using wooden tokens, which adds a traditional and experiential element to the economic activity. Foods such as *sego godhong jati*, *sego aking*, and *sego wiwit* are among the traditional dishes offered, reinforcing the economic potential of cultural practices (Aulia et al., 2023).

Local culture plays a central role in community empowerment and can offer sustainable solutions to environmental and resource challenges (Wulandari, 2024). Against this backdrop, *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* serves as a compelling case study for exploring the intersection of art, culture, and

economy. Its holistic approach to preserving cultural heritage and empowering the community represents a model for advancing local culture in the *Sunan Muria* region.

METHODOLOGY

This study, entitled "*The Role of Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan in the Advancement of Culture in the Muria Region: A Study of Art, Culture, and Economy*", employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and the analysis of relevant documents. The research was conducted in Dawe Subdistrict, Kudus Regency. The data analysis technique applied the Miles and Huberman model, which includes four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data in this study refer to information used as raw material in solving problems or revealing a phenomenon. According to Naamy (2022), data are provisional truths under certain conditions that form part of the facts observed in a study. The data collected in this research are qualitative in nature, represented in the form of words to provide descriptive explanations. These qualitative data were obtained through several data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation. The researcher directly visited the site, conducted in-depth interviews, and gathered photographic and written documentation.

Following Lofland as cited in Moelong (2005:4), the primary sources of data in qualitative research are words and actions, while documents and other materials serve as supplementary data. In line with this, the data types in this study are categorized into verbal/written statements, observable actions, and visual documentation such as photographs. The data sources in this research consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly by the researcher through interviews, questionnaires, and surveys to capture social interactions and community cohesion. Specifically, primary data were collected through interviews with the head of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan*, members of the cultural community, and

local residents.

Secondary data refer to information not directly obtained by the researcher but sourced from third parties or pre-existing materials such as documents. In this study, secondary data include materials retrieved from the official social media accounts of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan*, document archives, and photographs.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with three groups of respondents: (1) the community leader of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan*, (2) active community members, and (3) surrounding local residents. To ensure data validity, this research applied multiple strategies, including source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Sugiyono, 2023).

As stated by Luthfiah (2017:11), triangulation does not aim to establish absolute truth but rather to enhance the researcher's understanding of the data and facts obtained. Triangulation is a data validity-checking technique that uses external references to verify or compare the findings. Source triangulation aims to test the credibility of the data by cross-checking information gathered from multiple sources. The collected data were described, categorized based on similarities, differences, and specific viewpoints, and subsequently verified through member checking with the original data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Background of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan's* Establishment

The establishment of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* was driven by the local community's concern over the erosion of cultural values and traditions due to rapid modernization. Cultural preservation is defined as a continuous, structured, and integrated effort to sustain certain values that are enduring yet dynamic, flexible, and selective.

Traditional practices such as *selamatan*, *kenduri*, and other local rituals are gradually fading, especially among the younger generation. This study found a growing concern among the residents of *Piji Wetan* regarding the younger generation's detachment from their cultural roots.

Situated on the slopes of Mount Muria—an area historically linked to the spread of Islam by Sunan Muria—the community began to recognize that the youth were increasingly unaware of the noble values that once shaped local life. This awareness sparked a cultural revitalization movement aiming to restore and reinterpret *budaya Jawi* (Javanese traditions) and local rituals.

The founding inspiration behind *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* was the need to preserve the teachings of *Sunan Muria*, whose wisdom was gradually being forgotten or even misrepresented. For instance, folktales like *Bulusan* and *Bakaran* are often misinterpreted in ways that distort Sunan Muria's image. KBPW thus emerged to provide alternative narratives that honor his values, challenging colonial discourses that previously discredited local folklore.

2. Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan's Efforts in Promoting Community Potential in Arts, Culture, and Economy

Drawing from two core teachings of Sunan Muria—*Tapa Ngeli* and *Pager Mangkuk*—*Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* has implemented a range of programs aimed at strengthening cultural identity and improving community welfare through cultural engagement. Art is understood here not only as aesthetic expression but as a skilled, goal-oriented act grounded in logic and vision. One of KBPW's major efforts has been the revitalization of marginalized traditional arts through inclusive, community-driven activities. The *Panggung Ngepringan* stage, for example, serves as a space for performing both traditional and contemporary art forms, including dance, theatre, *barongan*, and pantomime.

Weekly art classes for children and youth offer informal education in calligraphy, dance, and theatre, fostering cultural regeneration. The *Taman Dolanan*—a space dedicated to traditional games—serves as a medium for instilling character education through cultural play.

Economically, KBPW integrates cultural values into community empowerment, particularly among women. The *Pasar Ampiran*, a weekly local market, promotes traditional culinary and handicraft products, establishing a model of

community-based sustainable economy. KBPW also holds events such as the *Takjil Festival* during Ramadan, combining artistic competitions, local economic activities (e.g., MSME bazaars), and spiritual observance—thus linking Islamic values with economic empowerment.

3. Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan's Contribution to the Local Economy

The empowerment of the local economy is a crucial strategy for addressing limited economic systems, scarce resources, and the scope of local communities' needs in terms of consumption, production, and distribution. Economic empowerment should not be approached solely from a technical perspective; instead, it requires socio-cultural approaches that can stimulate changes in attitudes, behaviour, and work patterns (Rachmayani, 2015). *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* (KBPW) serves as a real-life example of how cultural values can be transformed into creative products with economic value. In line with creative economy theory, which emphasizes the importance of innovation, creativity, and intellectual capital for economic growth, KBPW has built a new value chain involving artisans, artists, and tourism actors. The value chain theory helps analyse how each stage in the production and distribution process contributes to the final product's value.

KBPW represents asset-based community empowerment. The social economy theory underscores social justice, community participation, and sustainable development. In this case, KBPW benefits from strong social capital, represented by social networks and trust among community members. This social capital plays a key role in the success of local economic development. KBPW also has a strong appeal as a unique and authentic cultural tourism destination. According to tourism economics theory, elements such as cultural uniqueness, natural beauty, and accessibility affect the number of visitors and income generated. KBPW has provided positive economic impacts to the surrounding community through increased income, job creation, and the growth of local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

As a tourism village, KBPW draws visitors through theatre performances, art

workshops, and other cultural activities. These tourists contribute to the local economy by spending money on accommodation, food, souvenirs, and services. Furthermore, KBPW encourages residents to produce creative culture-based products, such as handmade crafts, traditional cuisine, and locally themed merchandise. These goods are marketed both offline at the village and online through e-commerce platforms. The growth of *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* has supported the expansion of MSMEs in the area. Locals are no longer solely reliant on agriculture but now have opportunities to venture into creative and economic fields.

Through the development of local arts and cultural potential, KBPW adds economic value to the surrounding community. Its economic model presents a compelling example of how culture can become a source of economic growth. Not only does KBPW serve as a space for preserving culture and traditions, but it also functions as a key driver of local economic activity. Based on interviews and observations, KBPW's economic contributions can be observed through several impactful programs that increase income and promote economic self-sufficiency, particularly among women and micro-entrepreneurs.

One notable example is the *Pasar Ampiran*, a thematic Sunday morning market designed to attract cyclists and local tourists passing through the Muria area. In this market, priority is given to local residents—particularly mothers and the elderly—to sell traditional foods such as *nasi pecel*, *nasi aking*, traditional snacks, and fried foods. This initiative provides meaningful opportunities for community members to earn additional income. The success of the market lies in its use of local potential and cultural wisdom, which is creatively packaged as a culinary and cultural tourism experience. This aligns with the concept of a participatory economy in which residents are not just beneficiaries but active economic agents.

KBPW also supports the economy through arts-based income initiatives. For instance, creative skill training, such as batik-making, allows community members—especially housewives—to produce goods

with high economic value. These artworks are sold through the KBPW Store, which showcases collaborative products from residents and artists. These training sessions go beyond technical skills by including production and distribution strategies, fostering a creative economy rooted in local knowledge.

Additionally, the KBPW Store plays a strategic role in promoting and distributing residents' works to wider markets. Products such as bamboo woven bags, batik, and handmade crafts not only enhance the local economy but also strengthen Piji Wetan's cultural brand as a tourism village. The store's existence demonstrates that KBPW is not solely event-based but is building a sustainable economic system that generates ongoing income through the sale of cultural products.

4. Obstacles and Solutions in the Development of Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan

Running a community-based initiative like *Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan* is not without its challenges. As a cultural community that relies heavily on collective work and public participation, KBPW encounters several internal and external constraints. This section outlines the key obstacles faced by the community and the adaptive and strategic solutions implemented to overcome them.

First, diversity in perspectives and motivations among members sometimes leads to interpersonal friction. However, the community sees this as an opportunity for interpersonal learning. The recognition that diversity is a strength serves as the foundation for fostering empathy and healthy communication. KBPW does not demand instant change but instead nurtures a culture of mutual learning and acceptance.

To address this, the community strengthens personal engagement, expands spaces for dialogue, and involves residents in the planning and implementation of activities. Cultural education, collaborative creation, and inclusive programs help build emotional attachment and a sense of pride among community members. The second challenge lies in maintaining collective spirit and emotional support among members. KBPW addresses this by creating emotional support

ecosystems through informal gatherings, shared reflections, and equitable task-sharing. The community also realizes the importance of leadership regeneration to sustain the spirit and continuity of the movement.

The third challenge relates to time limitations among members. KBPW overcomes this by promoting flexible role distribution, allowing each member to participate based on their capacity. Members are also encouraged to develop time management skills to balance personal interests with community responsibilities. The fourth challenge is maintaining harmony and motivation in a volunteer-based setting. KBPW approaches this with collective patience and a commitment to ongoing mutual learning. The community recognizes that professionalism is not solely measured by technical ability but by awareness, responsibility, and mutual respect. Regular discussions, open reflection, and a shared understanding of roles are key to sustaining team harmony and maintaining long-term participation.

CONCLUSION

Kampung Budaya Piji Wetan (KBPW) stands as a compelling model of culturally grounded community empowerment. Inspired by the teachings of Sunan Muria—*Tapa Ngeli* and *Pager Mangkuk*—KBPW not only preserves cultural values but also fosters the sustainable development of local arts, traditions, and economy.

By creating participatory cultural spaces and involving community members in meaningful ways, KBPW has successfully established a local economic ecosystem rooted in tradition. It addresses challenges through dialogical, flexible, and inclusive strategies that nurture a participatory and supportive community culture. Ultimately, KBPW demonstrates that cultural approaches are not only effective in safeguarding heritage but also serve as catalysts for social resilience, strong local identity, and community well-being.

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