

Navigating Heritage: Challenges and Strategies for Oral Tradition Preservation in Jalawastu Community, Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract: Globalisation and modernisation are often perceived as threats to preserving cultural traditions. This study explores how the Jalawastu community in Brebes, Central Java, Indonesia, maintains its cultural identity through practising and transmitting oral traditions. Despite exposure to external influences—including interpersonal interactions and digital communication technologies—the Jalawastu people demonstrate a dynamic between adaptation and cultural continuity. Their exposure to the outside world, facilitated by interpersonal interactions and communication technologies, has had significant implications for the continuity and transformation of their oral traditions. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. The analysis draws on oral tradition and social change theories, particularly Ogburn's (1922) and Soekanto's (2012) works. The findings reveal a complex interplay between cultural preservation and transformation. Oral traditions are being preserved through their integration into cultural tourism, while shifts occur due to increased interaction with outsiders, especially through employment and intermarriage. These changes have prompted younger generations to leave the village, often due to their inability to conform to traditional norms. The study offers valuable insights for cultural policy, community development, and heritage education programs, particularly in rural and indigenous settings facing similar challenges.

Keywords: Cultural preservation; community identity; Jalawastu; oral tradition; social change

Abstrak: Globalisasi dan modernisasi sering kali dipandang sebagai ancaman terhadap pelestarian tradisi budaya. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana komunitas Jalawastu di Brebes, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia mempertahankan identitas budayanya melalui praktik dan transmisi tradisi lisan. Meskipun terpapar berbagai pengaruh eksternal—termasuk interaksi antarpribadi dan teknologi komunikasi digital—masyarakat Jalawastu menunjukkan dinamika antara adaptasi dan kesinambungan budaya. Paparan terhadap dunia luar, yang difasilitasi oleh interaksi sosial dan teknologi komunikasi, memiliki dampak signifikan terhadap kesinambungan dan transformasi tradisi lisan mereka. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis mengacu pada teori tradisi lisan dan perubahan sosial, khususnya gagasan Ogburn (1922) dan Soekanto (2012). Temuan mengungkapkan adanya keterkaitan yang kompleks antara pelestarian dan transformasi budaya. Tradisi lisan dilestarikan melalui integrasinya dalam pariwisata budaya, sementara perubahan terjadi akibat peningkatan interaksi dengan pihak luar, terutama melalui pekerjaan dan perkawinan antarwilayah. Perubahan ini mendorong generasi muda untuk meninggalkan desa karena ketidakmampuan mereka menyesuaikan diri dengan norma-norma tradisional. Studi ini menawarkan wawasan berharga bagi

kebijakan budaya, pengembangan komunitas, dan program pendidikan warisan budaya, khususnya di lingkungan pedesaan dan masyarakat adat yang menghadapi tantangan serupa.

Kata kunci: Pelestarian budaya; identitas komunitas; Jalawastu; tradisi lisan; perubahan sosial

1. Introduction

The influence of globalisation on tradition and culture is complex, as globalisation can both enrich and threaten, cause homogenisation or hybridisation, and drive resistance or preservation of culture (Appadurai, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999). Several studies on the influence of globalisation on indigenous communities support the opinions, such as the one by Millani, Ramdana, Uzki, & Mulyanudin (2024), revealing that Baduy Luar's openness to globalisation makes their lives easier, but shifts the values that they have adhered to for a long time. It is in line with Setiawan (2023), explaining that Baduy Luar's flexibility to external influence makes it easier to make adaptive adjustments in land cultivation and trading activities, but undermines their obedience to customary rules. Two-sides impact of globalisation on culture was also revealed by Anastasya (2024) showing that despite intergenerational relations and social structure changes due to globalisation, the Sade Traditional Village shows cultural resilience in maintaining its identity, and Sock (2024) stated that despite the commodification of indigenous culture, indigenous communities demonstrate resilience in reclaiming their cultural heritages. Chowdhury (2024) found that globalisation threatened local health traditions among indigenous communities by removing cultural resistance to change. Amid this ongoing debate, the Jalawastu community represents a compelling site to explore these dynamics.

Jalawastu is an indigenous community in the Brebes district of Central Java, known as a cultural tourism village. The Jalawastu community has some traditions, including the Ngasa ceremony recognised as an intangible cultural heritage (Wijanarto, 2018). In addition to Ngasa, the Jalawastu people uphold a rich array of customs, rituals, traditional ceremonies, arts, architecture, and spatial planning that continue to draw the interest of both tourists and scholars. Interactions with tourists and scholars expose the Jalawastu community to diverse cultures. Jalawastu residents also engage in activities outside the village, such as trading, working in other cities, and attending school. Some Jalawastu residents also use communication technology such as mobile phones, further emphasising their openness to globalisation and modernisation. It is the basis for the interest in revealing how the fairly high exposure to globalisation affects the culture and traditions of the Jalawastu community, especially their oral tradition.

Previous research has extensively examined the Ngasa ceremony from cultural, theological, and legal perspectives (Adawiyah, 2022; Aliyah, 2022; 2019; Muhaemin, 2021; Nata, 2023; Permata & Birsyada, 2022; Rokhman, 2020; Sidiq, Budiaman, & Kurniawan, 2023; Yusuf, 2020). Besides, research on the Jalawastu community covers other aspects, such as research by Tunisiawati (2020) examining the implementation of governance in the Jalawastu customary law community, Sakti (2020) examining the spatial system in traditional settlements of the Jalawastu community, Pramudya, Marwanti, & Sundayani (2022) studying the resilience of Jalawastu community toward social change, and Susanto, Nugroho, & Septianingsih (2024) examining the architecture of Jalawastu community buildings over a certain period. Research on the Jalawastu community focused on its oral tradition is still limited. One of the few studies on the oral tradition of the Jalawastu community is Nurzati's (2021), which examines the symbolic meaning of the dayeuh *lemah kaputihan* myth as one of the oral traditions of the Jalawastu community, with a semiotic approach.

Based on the description of the relevant studies presented, it appears that oral tradition, as one of the traditions of the Jalawastu community, has not been studied much and still has many interesting gaps to study. Therefore, this study aims to explore what forms of oral traditions exist in the Jalawastu community and explain how these oral traditions have persisted or transformed in response to globalisation and modernisation. The oral traditions of the Jalawastu community have remained resilient and continue to play a significant role in preserving cultural identity, despite the increasing

influence of external cultures and modernisation. Communities that are open to outside influences and embrace aspects of modernisation and globalisation while actively preserving their traditions are more likely to develop hybrid cultural identities that strengthen community cohesion and foster innovation without significant loss of cultural heritage. This research operates on the assumption that the Jalawastu people's openness to outside influences does not weaken their oral tradition; instead, their interaction with external cultures, particularly through tourism, strengthens it.

This study involved a conceptual background about oral tradition and social change. Pudentia (2017) and Widiarto et.al (2024) defines oral tradition as all spoken discourse, including oral and written or non-written discourse systems, and a message or testimony passed down from one generation to another. The oral tradition includes legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, superstitions, fairy tales, spells, and customs that become traditions in a culture or group, and a means of spreading various cultural traditions, which are, of course, related to orality (Rakavita, 2017). As cited in Khansa (2021), Putra argues that oral tradition can be in songs, performances, and speeches. The way oral traditions are presented varies from performances, games, and ceremonies, to rituals. Brunvand in Sulistyowati (2019) stated that the types of oral traditions include verbal, semi-verbal, and nonverbal oral traditions (material). The three types can be folklore, folktale, folk speech, folk dance, folkgame, folk architecture, and so on. Folk speech is a language used in a particular group of people or a collective. Dananjaja (1994) explained folk speech to include accents or dialects, slang, merchant language (shoptalk), everyday language that deviates from conventional language (colloquial), circumlocution, name giving, nobility titles, speech levels, onomatopoeic words, and name-giving of certain streets or places based on historical legends (onomastic).

The theory of social change used in this study is by William F. Ogburn (1923) and Soekanto (2012). Ogburn's concept of social change (1923) emphasises technological innovation, causing changes in material culture. Changes will follow these changes in non-material culture, but often more slowly, which is popularly known as cultural lag. Ogburn also explained four stages of technological development and social change: invention, accumulation, diffusion, and adjustment. In line with Ogburn's view, Soekanto (2012) also emphasised that social change is a continuous and gradual process. It affects various aspects of life, including traditions, and is driven by internal and external factors. Internal causes include changes in population size, discoveries, social conflicts, and events such as rebellions or revolutions. External causes stem from the physical environment and the influence of other cultures.

Furthermore, several factors can accelerate social change, such as cultural exchange, advanced education systems, tolerance of deviant behaviour, population diversity, public dissatisfaction with certain social conditions, and the aspiration for a higher standard of living. Conversely, some factors can hinder change, including the slow development of science, traditionalist attitudes, entrenched interests, fear of cultural instability, and prejudice against unfamiliar ideas or innovations. Further, "Soekanto also stated that social change can occur when existing conditions are no longer seen as satisfying, or when new factors emerge that better meet the needs and expectations of society, replacing the old ones.

This study employs a qualitative method with a field research approach to explore the dynamics of oral traditions in the Jalawastu community. Data collection was conducted through direct engagement in the field, involving observations of traditional ceremonies and in-depth interviews with selected community members. The primary data consist of oral narratives, performances, and speech patterns observed and recorded during community rituals and everyday interactions. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected through documentation and review of existing literature related to oral traditions, cultural tourism, and local history. Interviews were conducted with the Jalawastu community from two different age groups, namely teenagers (who represent the younger generation and the potential future bearers of these traditions) and elders (who are active in preserving traditions and hold deep cultural knowledge). The informants are described in Table 1:

Table 1. Research Informants

No.	Name	Age (in years)	Role
1.	H	54	Tradition activist
2.	R	52	Tradition activist
3.	E	52	Housewife
4.	K	52	Housewife
5.	P	13	Student
6.	M	12	Student
7.	O	14	Student
8.	I	13	Student
9.	S	30	Village Head
10.	G	38	Former Secretary of Jalawastu Village

Table 1 shows ten informants from the younger and older generations, who typically serve as the agents and recipients of traditional transmission. The collected data were then analysed using Spradley's (1997) data analysis model which includes domain analysis (sorting data in the form of oral traditions from data about traditions that exist in the Jalawastu community), taxonomic analysis (data that falls into the oral tradition category is compared in terms of its existence), and componential analysis (comparing and analysing elements that exist in the presence of the oral tradition to determine the similarities and differences). After the analysis, the researcher compiled a description of the patterns and themes that emerged from the data, which was to be completed by the conclusion.

2. Oral Traditions of the Jalawastu Community

As a community deeply rooted in customary practices, the Jalawastu maintain various oral traditions. Referring to the types of oral tradition mentioned earlier, this study focuses on the two main components: folklore and folk speech. These components not only reflect the community's cultural values and historical memory but also serve as mediums for transmitting moral teachings, social norms, and local identity across generations.

2.1. Folklores

Based on interviews with local informants, three folklores are widely recognised within the Jalawastu community. They are the folklore of *Perang Centong* (Laddle War), *Lemah Kaputihan* (Land of Purity), and *Pagedongan* (a sacred place in Jalawastu village). While all informants were familiar with these tales, the elders provided more detailed accounts.

Perang Centong

Perang Centong is a folk tale about the war between two brothers Gandasari and Gandawangi. According to the story told by the *kokolot*, traditional elders, as well as many references (Haryanto, 2022; Turyati & Azizah, 2023; Turyati & Widyaningrum, 2024), the war was caused by the arrival of Islamic influence in Jalawastu village. Gandawangi was willing to follow Islam, while Gandasari refused. So, there was a dispute that ended in a fight between them. To decide whether the people of Jalawastu will embrace Islam, a magic contest is held between the two brothers; whoever loses must leave Jalawastu. Finally, Gandawangi won the battle, so the loser, Gandasari, had to leave Jalawastu and go to the Baduy area. Since then, Gandawangi and his followers have embraced Islam, but according to Gandasari's request, the people of Jalawastu village must maintain traditional customs despite their conversion to Islam.

Perang Centong is popular among the Jalawastu people because it is frequently featured in several activities, such as the Ngasa ceremony held every year, and also performed in the marriage traditions of the Jalawastu people, when the bride or the groom is the first or the last child of a family. This practice is deeply rooted in local customs and continues to be preserved across generations. One community member described: “For instance, in weddings, there is a tradition where a marriage between the first and the youngest child involves a *Perang Centong* ritual” (H, personal communication March 15, 2023).

This symbolic performance typically involves two men—usually representatives from each family—reenacting *Perang Centong*, often incorporating elements of traditional martial arts (*pencak silat*). When family members are unavailable, skilled performers from the community may be invited to participate. Both elder and younger participants may take part in the performance, especially those trained in martial techniques, ensuring the ritual remains vibrant and meaningful. The dynamic portrayal of this ritual can be seen in Figure 1, which captures a *Perang Centong* performance during a traditional ceremony.



Figure 1. Performance of the *Perang Centong*

Source: Researcher Documentation

Lemah Kaputihan

Lemah kaputihan or the Land of Purity, constitutes a foundational oral tradition that reinforces the concept of *pamali* (taboo) and is transmitted across generations through storytelling. According to accounts from local elders, this tradition requires community members to uphold moral integrity, spiritual purity, and modest conduct. White symbolises purity, and the term *lemah* (weak) is interpreted not as foolishness, but as humility and sincerity. These values are embedded in daily practices and serve as ethical guidelines for social life in Jalawastu. A traditional activist said:

In this village, there is a sacred custom known as *Lemah Kaputihan* (Land of Purity). The people are expected to have gentle hearts, avoid recklessness, and live with honesty and humility. White symbolizes purity, and the mind must remain clean. To be 'weak' here means to have a soft, yielding spirit -not foolishness, but sincerity. Roof tiles and walls are not permitted, as tradition forbids them. Likewise, onions and peanuts may not be grown within the village limits. The area from the river to a certain point marks the boundary, beyond which different rules may apply. Even now, the presence of *Pamali*—taboo—remains strong in this place) (H, personal communications, March 15, 2023).

This tradition has a profound impact on construction practices within the village. Residents strictly avoid the use of modern materials such as tile roofs, cement walls, ceramic floors, or concrete foundations. Field observations confirm the complete absence of these materials, even in newly

constructed bathrooms for visitors. To maintain adherence to tradition, water tubs are not used, and plastic tarpaulins are placed on the floor to prevent muddiness without violating taboos.

The sacred area referred to as *Lemah Kaputihan* forms a specific geographical boundary within the village. A local elder explained that the land's outline resembles the tip of a *keris* (a traditional Javanese dagger), symbolising the human journey towards spiritual cleanliness. "Due to the land of purity, construction is restricted. On a map, the area resembles the tip of a *keris*, symbolising the necessity of spiritual purity" (H, personal communication, March 15, 2023). This symbolic geography further underscores the moral expectations that govern the physical and spiritual spaces of the community.

Taboos associated with *Lemah Kaputihan* also extend to agricultural and livestock practices. Despite Brebes being renowned for onion production, no onions or peanuts are cultivated within the village. The residents also refrain from raising buffaloes and geese, although goat farming is permitted under specific conditions. According to an elder, these prohibitions are grounded in traditional knowledge and are enforced through communal norms rather than formal regulations. "In this village, onions and peanuts may not be planted. Likewise, raising buffaloes and geese is not allowed" (H, personal communication, March 15, 2023).

Pagedongan

Pagedongan is a sacred site in the Jalawastu village, revered by the local community. Situated on elevated ground, it serves as the venue for the traditional Ngasa ceremony. Outside the Ngasa tradition period, *Pagedongan* is open to tourists, but certain rules must be followed. Visitors must not wear leather clothing or accessories, and menstruating women are strictly prohibited from entering the site.

These restrictions reflect the community's belief in the sanctity of the space and the importance of maintaining spiritual purity. All individuals entering *Pagedongan* are expected to display respectful behaviour, speak politely, and maintain a calm and sincere demeanour. The community holds that inappropriate behaviour or impure thoughts may desecrate the sacred atmosphere of the site. This collective belief serves not only as a moral guide but also as a means of cultural preservation.

A common myth associated with *Pagedongan* involves a female figure with a serpent's body who is said to reside in the area. Younger generations often recount stories of this half-snake woman, indicating a fusion of myth and oral transmission within the community's narrative tradition. However, when these accounts were confirmed with elder residents, they firmly denied the existence of such supernatural beings. Instead, they emphasised the presence of *karuhun*, or ancestral spirits, who are venerated as protectors of the sacred land.

R, one of the village elders explained "There are no ghosts or devils here—only *karuhun*, our ancestors. When visiting *Pagedongan*, one must have a peaceful, honest, and calm mind. Menstruating women are not allowed to enter this sacred place" (R, personal communications, March 15, 2023). This perspective illustrates the community's strong emphasis on ancestral veneration over mystical superstition. *Pagedongan*, therefore, not only serves as a physical site of ritual but also reinforces the spiritual and moral framework of Jalawastu society.

2.2. Folk Speech

The oral traditions of the Jalawastu community also manifest through a variety of folk speech forms, which play important roles in social interaction, spiritual practice, and agricultural life. These speech patterns not only reflect the community's cultural identity but also serve to regulate behaviour and sustain collective memory. This section explores four prominent types of folk speech in Jalawastu: circumlocution, naming tradition, agricultural terminology, and nobility titles.

Circumlocution

In Jalawastu village, circumlocution—a form of indirect reference—is commonly used in sacred contexts. For instance, in *Pagedongan*, a sanctified area, residents report frequent sightings of snakes. R, a village elder, recounts an incident in which a resident saw a snake standing upright on the road near Pagedongan. The resident asked him for help to drive the snake back into *Pagedongan*. Then he went to *Pagedongan*, and a snake was standing upright there. Then, he approached the snake and said, “Hey, great-grandmother, people are scared, don’t go near the road”. As if responding to his great-grandmother’s call addressed to him, the snake slowly moved back into the forest.

This incident illustrates how Jalawastu residents use familial and respectful language to refer to animals believed to inhabit sacred spaces. By referring to the snake as a revered ancestor, the speaker acknowledges its spiritual significance. This practice exemplifies circumlocution as a culturally embedded linguistic strategy, demonstrating reverence and maintaining harmony with the unseen world. Such expressions are not arbitrary; they carry cultural weight and reflect a cosmology in which nature and ancestry are interlinked.

Naming Tradition

Among the Jalawastu people, a unique and deeply rooted tradition guides how children are named. Each child receives a name beginning with a specific letter corresponding to the day of the week they were born. Children born on Sunday are given names starting with K, Monday with R, Tuesday with C, Wednesday with T, Thursday again with K, Friday with D, and Saturday with W. The Jalawastu believe that aligning a child’s name with their day of birth brings prosperity and good health. Conversely, a name considered “incompatible” with the child’s birthday is thought to invite illness or misfortune. In such cases, the name may be revoked and replaced. If a child frequently falls ill or encounters repeated misfortunes, it is seen as a sign that the name does not suit them. The parents are then expected to select a new, more fitting name and make it official through community recognition.

This tradition can become challenging for large families. When multiple children are born on the same day, only two may be given names beginning with the designated letter, while the third receives a different one to avoid spiritual disharmony (H, personal communications, March 15, 2023). Additionally, name changes occur after marriage, particularly for men. For example, a male informant originally named with the letter S later adopted a new name beginning with RS, signifying a transition and spiritual blessing. According to interviews with the current village head (S) and a former cultural secretary (G), this post-marital renaming is exclusive to men and does not apply to women.

Farmer Language

Agriculture is central to the Jalawastu way of life, and the community employs specific vocabulary for farming-related activities. The crops produced from the cultivation are used for daily consumption, and some are taken to the market to be sold to earn money. Interestingly, the daily meals are usually served from their cultivation, such as various kinds of vegetables, cassava, sweet potatoes, and coconuts. Vegetables and other agricultural products are also food that must be served during the Ngasa ceremony. The Jalawastu people have some words or terms related to their farming activities, such as *melak* (planting season), *tatangalan* (planting), and *ngalaeupan* (picking grass), as told by E, a housewife.

In addition to general agricultural terminology, Jalawastu residents also retain ceremonial vocabulary tied to specific traditional practices. These include *Tundan*, a ritual to repel rats; *Sedekah Bumi*, an offering of gratitude for the harvest held on *Setu Legi* (a Saturday in the Javanese calendar); *Cako*, a ceremony following rice planting to bless future yields; and *Ngaguyang Kuwu*, a ritual to invoke rain during droughts (Pramudya et al., 2022). These linguistic expressions represent a living tradition that blends agronomy with spirituality, ensuring the sustainability of both the land and cultural identity.

Nobility Titles

Titles in Jalawastu reflect both formal and informal leadership roles within the village's sociocultural structure, either formally or non-formally. Formal titles such as *Bapak Kuwu* (village head) and *Pamong* (village official) denote administrative authority. However, the community also recognises a hierarchy of traditional titles that carry significant cultural weight. At the apex is the *Juru Kunci*, a guardian of sacred traditions, respected for his ancestral lineage and spiritual authority.

Beneath the *Juru Kunci* is the *Kokolot*, an elder who safeguards customary law, advises on ceremonial practices, and oversees the selection of future leaders. Supporting figures include the *Pemangku Adat*, who lead rituals and liaise with external institutions, as well as administrative roles like secretary and treasurer. The *Wanoja*, a group of culturally active women, contribute through culinary arts and traditional performances. Meanwhile, the *Jaga Baya*, composed of youth members, is responsible for maintaining village security. In family settings, parents are addressed respectfully as *Rama* (father) and *Ibu* (mother), reinforcing a cultural emphasis on honour and filial piety (K, personal communication, March 14, 2023).

3. The Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Jalawastu Community: Preservation and Change

The oral tradition of the Jalawastu community reflects a dynamic interplay between preservation and change. Several practices—such as the *Perang Centong* ritual, the folklore about *Pagedongan*, the use of circumlocution, and the mention of noble titles—remain well understood and actively practised. However, other traditions have experienced shifts through a decline in practitioners or evolving interpretations. The folklores of *Pagedongan* show a mixed pattern—some are well-preserved, while others are changing. These dynamics can be categorised into two main themes: the preservation of oral tradition and the changes it undergoes, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.1. Preservation of The Oral Tradition

Oral traditions that remain robust include *Perang Centong*, *Pagedongan*, circumlocution practices, and the use of nobility titles. The *Perang Centong* tradition is a form of oral tradition subject to ongoing preservation efforts. This evidence shows how frequently the Jalawastu community performs it. Its continued popularity and significance within the community further reflect this cultural practice's enduring vitality and sustainability. *Perang Centong* is a traditional performance featured during the annual *Ngasa* ceremony, the heritage hallmark of the Jalawastu community. It is also performed at weddings and other ceremonial events to welcome guests warmly. In addition, the widespread popularity of this tradition among Jalawastu residents highlights its continued relevance. Interviews with younger and older generations reveal a shared understanding of this oral tradition. However, the older generation, particularly the men, can explain in detail the nature of *Perang Centong* and how it is performed. Younger informants, on the other hand, have learned about the *Perang Centong War* through stories passed down by their parents and have frequently witnessed the dance during *Ngasa* ceremonies and local wedding celebrations. This helps pass the tradition down to the next generation, allowing them to understand it well even if they haven't taken part.

The oral tradition surrounding the sacredness of *Pagedongan* remains deeply respected by the Jalawastu community. *Pagedongan* is considered a sacred site, and its access is strictly regulated. Community members do not engage in any activities there except during designated days of worship. Even residents of Jalawastu must obtain permission from the site's caretaker before entering or leaving the area. This commitment to preserving the sanctity of *Pagedongan* also extends to visitors. Specific rules are in place for those wishing to enter the sacred grounds, which are consistently followed. Despite these restrictions, visitors remain drawn to *Pagedongan* and continue to respect the guidelines without deterrence.

Circumlocution, as a form of oral tradition, is still practised in Jalawastu, particularly among the older generation who deeply understand the community's harmonious relationship with nature. This tradition is supported by the daily lives of Jalawastu residents, who maintain a close connection with

the natural environment and uphold strong values of respect toward plants and animals. Another oral tradition that remains preserved is the use of nobility titles. As a traditional village and a cultural tourism destination, Jalawastu resident maintains this practice as part of its cultural identity and tourist appeal. This evidence shows the village's organisational structure, preserved traditional roles and functions following ancestral customs.

3.2. Change in The Oral Tradition

As previously mentioned, the folk tale of *Pagedongan* reflects both efforts at preservation and signs of change over time. The change lies in the difference in understanding the story of the Guardian of *Pagedongan* between the younger and the elder. The younger told about the existence of a half-snake woman in *Pagedongan* but was denied by the elder, who said that *Pagedongan* was a holy place, and there were no half-snake creatures. Upon further investigation, it was found that this difference stems from the older generation's desire to preserve the sanctity of *Pagedongan* by discouraging children from going there. Additionally, they aimed to protect children from accidents, as *Pagedongan* is in a hilly and potentially dangerous area. To achieve this, parents told stories about the guardians of *Pagedongan*, intending to instil fear in children and prevent them from playing there.

Another change in the oral tradition of Jalawastu occurs in the oral tradition of *Lemah Kaputihan*. This folklore includes several prohibitions that remain unchanged over time. However, the number of people practising the tradition is steadily declining. There are some examples of this case. First, the similarity of the architecture of the Jalawastu's houses looks unchanged. The houses are lined up in the same direction and have the same building model. There are no houses with cast or ceramic floors or walls since the *Lemah Kaputihan* prohibits building houses with cement. Despite the growing population of Jalawastu due to marriages and births, the number of houses built according to the *Lemah Kaputihan* custom has not increased. It may be because married adults often build homes outside the Jalawastu village, as they find it difficult to comply with the strict traditional construction rules.

Regarding livelihood, the community upholds traditional prohibitions against farming and livestock raising. It is evident in the continued absence of activities such as shallot cultivation or goat rearing, which are forbidden by the rules of *Lemah Kaputihan*. However, the number of traditional practitioners has declined. As older farmers and ranchers pass away, they are not being replaced by the younger generation. Instead, many young people migrate from Jalawastu to work as traders or labourers elsewhere, moving away from traditional livelihoods.

Naming tradition, part of speech is another form of oral tradition in Jalawastu that has changed. The main change observed in the tradition of changing names after marriage is a noticeable decline in the number of residents who adopt new names. One informant explained that this shift is largely due to the complications name changes cause in official population records, affecting access to government services. For instance, administrative data must be consistent when applying for health insurance or government assistance; discrepancies caused by name changes can make the process more difficult. This change is also seen in mismatches between names provided on birth certificates and identification cards. However, due to the informant's privacy concerns, specific data could not be collected, so interviews were relied upon as the primary source of information. Additionally, traditions such as naming children based on their date of birth could not be confirmed, as most individuals who practised these customs no longer reside in Jalawastu village.

The language of farmers is one example of oral traditions that have changed. Many agricultural oral traditions have declined due to a decreasing number of practitioners. Although several routine agricultural ceremonies are still performed, participation has dwindled. It is mainly because many younger Jalawastu village residents no longer pursue farming and instead seek employment outside the village, often in other cities. Observations and interviews conducted during research confirm this trend—agricultural work is now primarily carried out by the older generation. Residents also confirmed that many youths have migrated for work, leading to a decline in the transmission of farming-related oral traditions.

4. Balancing Tradition and Change: The Role of Tourism, Technology, and Governance in the Dynamics of Jalawastu's Oral Traditions

This study explored the dynamics of oral traditions within the Jalawastu community, highlighting a dual pattern: preservation and change. Core practices—such as the *Perang Centong* ritual, the reverence for *Pagedongan*, circumlocution, and the use of noble titles—remain resilient, actively performed and transmitted across generations. These elements are preserved not only through ritual performance but also through their role in cultural tourism. However, several traditions—particularly naming practices, agricultural oral terms, and aspects of the *Lemah Kaputihan* taboo—have shown signs of erosion. The number of practitioners has declined, especially among the younger generation, due to social, technological, and administrative influences.

The preservation of certain traditions can be attributed to their formal incorporation into tourism-based rituals and their role in community identity. *Perang Centong*, for example, remains relevant due to its integration into the *Ngasa* festival and wedding customs, providing both cultural value and tourism appeal. Conversely, changes in other practices result from generational shifts in occupation, lifestyle, and administrative systems. Many youth migrate for work, and bureaucratic barriers discourage traditional name changes post-marriage. These changes are consistent with Ogburn's theory (1923), which explains that non-material culture often lags behind material changes—in this case, technological and institutional developments—leading to re-evaluation of traditional practices.

The findings are consistent with Soekanto's view (2012) that social change can be driven by external cultural forces and internal resistance due to vested interests. In Jalawastu, oral traditions are preserved not in resistance to change but because they offer tangible benefits—such as attracting tourists and strengthening community pride. Rather than resisting change entirely, the community has become increasingly motivated to preserve and promote their oral traditions. It aligns with research by Alfarisy et al. (2021), who noted a strong bond between oral traditions and tourism village development, particularly in supporting social cohesion and economic sustainability.

Broader studies across Indonesia and Asia similarly illustrate that tourism often plays a dual role in cultural preservation and transformation. In ecotourism destinations in Indonesia and Japan, oral traditions contribute to environmental conservation while sustaining visitor interest (Ratna, Reswari, Alfarisy, & Dewi, 2021). Yet, cultural commodification may also occur, as seen in the transformation of the Hudoq ceremony among the Dayak Bahau (Saha Ghafur, 2024). In Jalawastu, however, such commodification is mitigated by strong internal regulation and community participation, helping preserve authenticity.

Technological influence also mirrors wider patterns. As in the case of Kandri Tourism Village, where English-language oral traditions are developed for tourism but face semantic and cultural translation challenges (Ratna et al., 2021), Jalawastu faces a similar dilemma. While digital tools can promote culture, they can also compete with traditional transmission modes, particularly for younger audiences who find social media and entertainment platforms more engaging. This reflects findings by Pitanatri & Wiarti (2022), who explore the tension between authenticity and digital innovation in Indonesia's cultural events. From the perspective of Ogburn's theory of social change, this reflects a non-material cultural adaptation in the form of a change in thinking in response to material changes, particularly advances in technologies. This form of adaptation contrasts with the research findings of Nururi (2024), concluding that Bugis people migrating to Lampung maintain their oral tradition by transforming it.

The impact of formal governmental systems—such as population administration—also shapes tradition. In Jalawastu, many residents no longer change names after marriage due to administrative complications, a shift that reflects Soekanto's categorisation of externally driven social change. Comparable patterns are seen across Asia, where local customs are increasingly adapted to fit modern governance requirements (Ocón, 2022; Sukardi, Fadli, Puspitawati, Maharani, & Lutfi, 2022).

These findings reinforce the complex and often paradoxical role of globalisation in shaping indigenous cultural life. The interaction between tradition and modernity does not always lead to cultural erosion; it may also prompt creative adaptations. The community of Jalawastu demonstrates

that tradition can serve as a source of resilience and innovation when harnessed within a supportive structure—such as tourism and communal identity.

The juxtaposition of change and preservation reveals that oral traditions are not static but evolve according to socio-cultural context. The transformation of naming practices and decline in farming vocabulary indicate that tradition is negotiated rather than abandoned. Simultaneously, the continued reverence for Pagedongan and the vitality of Perang Centong affirm that oral traditions remain functional and symbolically rich.

A key positive outcome of these dynamics is the promotion of cultural sustainability amid increasing external pressures. Tourism offers a platform for cultural expression and local economic development, thereby granting oral traditions renewed practical relevance. However, this also brings a risk of selective preservation, where only traditions aligned with tourism and market demands are maintained. Traditions that are less performative or lack economic value may become marginalised, threatening the diversity and integrity of the community's cultural heritage.

In parallel, technological and administrative systems—though beneficial in improving efficiency and access to services—can inadvertently marginalise important cultural values. Naming conventions, for instance, which are deeply embedded in the Jalawastu community's identity, are increasingly abandoned due to bureaucratic constraints. Without culturally sensitive policy frameworks, the formal apparatus of the state may function as a homogenising force, eroding local diversity in favour of administrative uniformity. This underscores the need for integrative governance that respects and accommodates indigenous cultural practices.

To address the complex dynamics of preserving and transforming oral traditions in communities like Jalawastu, a set of strategic actions is necessary. First, the digitisation and integration of modern technologies must be prioritised. Digital tools can ensure the sustainable recording, management, and dissemination of oral histories, making them accessible to wider and younger audiences (Kugara & Mokgoatšana, 2022; Sloan, 2014; Zahavi, 2014). Successful examples such as the Mara Cultural Heritage Digital Library highlight how digital heritage projects can blend modern infrastructure with traditional expressions (Merolla & Turin, 2017). Second, community engagement must remain central. Involving stakeholders not only builds trust but also ensures that preservation efforts reflect community values (Kim, Roeschley, & Byun, 2024; Zimu-Biyela, 2022). Promoting inclusivity and equitable access in managing oral history archives helps counteract generational and socio-economic gaps, particularly among youth (Zimu-Biyela, 2022). Third, cultural tourism offers a sustainable mechanism for maintaining oral traditions. When properly managed, tourism can transform local narratives into sources of income while simultaneously promoting cultural awareness (Alfarisy et al., 2021). This economic integration reinforces community identity and incentivises cultural transmission. Fourth, education and training are vital. Raising awareness among stakeholders—such as local leaders, library professionals, and young people—ensures better understanding and documentation of oral practices (Sharma, 2025). The last, ethical and practical considerations must guide all preservation efforts. Responsible access to culturally sensitive material, especially in digital contexts, is crucial to avoid misappropriation or misrepresentation (Devincenzi, 2023; Turin, Wheeler, & Wilkinson, 2013). Interdisciplinary and narrative-based approaches should be encouraged to ensure ethical stewardship and long-term sustainability.

5. Conclusions

This study has revealed that the dynamics of the Jalawastu community's oral traditions are characterised by a tension between cultural preservation and gradual transformation. The main factor sustaining these traditions is their integration into the cultural tourism economy, which not only provides financial benefits but also reinforces collective identity and pride among residents. The community's commitment to maintaining these traditions remains strong, even as some individuals choose to leave the village rather than compromise its cultural norms. This illustrates that while participation may decline, the core values and principles of the traditions endure, adapting to social change without generating internal conflict.

The research contributes to the academic understanding of how indigenous oral traditions survive in modern contexts shaped by tourism, technology, and external administrative pressures. It demonstrates that tourism can serve as a cultural safeguard rather than a threat, especially when local communities are actively involved in defining and managing heritage. Additionally, the study offers insights into how oral traditions remain functional within rural identity frameworks, providing a model for similar communities across Southeast Asia facing cultural sustainability challenges.

Nonetheless, the research is limited by its focus on residents who continue to live within the Jalawastu village. It does not include in-depth analysis of individuals who have migrated out, nor does it quantify the rate of this migration or its specific impact on cultural continuity. Future research should investigate the motivations and cultural disengagement of those who leave the village, as well as explore strategies to engage diasporic community members in preservation efforts. Such research would further enrich our understanding of how oral traditions can evolve across both place and generations.

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