## The Symbolic Power Behind Tradition: The Role of Pambiwara in Preserving Javanese Culture

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#### **Abstract**

This study explores the role of *pambiwara*, traditional masters of ceremony, in preserving Javanese cultural heritage in Surakarta, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach with purposive sampling, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 informants, including students, teachers, and members of *pambiwara* courses from September 2 to 15, 2024. The findings shown that *pambiwara* hold significant cultural authority, which emphasized by the symbolic power which symbolized by the certificate awarded upon course completion. This credential not only affirms mastery of ceremonial practices but elevates its holder's status, allowing them to conduct important ceremonies like mitoni and weddings. Furthermore, based on Bourdieu theory of symbolism, the study reveals that the certificate confers legitimacy and social prestige, positioning *pambiwara* as custodians of Javanese cultural traditions. However, as younger generations show increasing interest, challenges in maintaining this exclusivity emerge, underscoring the need for adaptive training methods and formal recognition to ensure the longevity of this cultural practice.

#### **Keywords**

Bourdieu Theory of Symbolism, Cultural Authority, Indonesia, Javanese Culture, Pambiwara

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the most diversified countries in the world, with 1,300 ethnic groups and more than 700 local languages, reflecting the archipelago's huge geographical extent(Deloitte, 2021). The country's ethnic variety is further reflected in its cultural customs, ranging from the Javanese wayang as traditional puppetry, batik textiles as form of traditional clothing to sajen as Balinese Hindu rites and "rambu solo" as Toraja funeral ceremonies (Diversicare, 2019). Managing Indonesia's vast diversity offers opportunities to strengthen national unity by embracing its rich array of cultures, languages, and traditions. Rather than being a source of division, this diversity enhances the nation through vibrant exchanges that enrich the social fabric. Indonesia's motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika-"Unity in Diversity"—reflects a deep commitment to inclusivity, fostering mutual respect across ethnic groups and regions. The decentralized governance empowers communities to preserve their unique heritage while contributing to the nation's progress, which also powered by multi ethnic symbolic interaction (Yuliarni et al., 2024). Behind Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, shaped by its diverse ethnic groups and traditions, lies a significant challenge shared by many local cultures worldwide: globalization.

Globalization can be described as cultural disruptions by erasing geographical borders, homogenizing languages, and diminishing local behaviours, ultimately giving rise to a "global society" (Ozer & Kamran, 2023). This process leads to the dilution of unique cultural identities and practices, as the influence of dominant global narratives often overshadows localized traditions. The resulting cultural convergence can undermine the richness of diverse cultural expressions, making it increasingly challenging for communities to maintain their distinct heritage in the face of global influences (Kerubo, 2024). This cultural disruption is largely driven by social media, which plays a significant role in diluting local behaviours. This, in turn, has a profound impact on the loss of community identity (Mulyana

et al., 2023). Furthermore, tourism, migration, and cultural assimilation significantly contribute to the formation of a "global citizen", with the "global culture" (Squire, 2023). While globalization offers opportunities for economic growth and international exchange, it also poses a threat to the preservation of local identities, traditions, and languages(Sanmee, 2024). This tension between preserving local heritage and adapting to global trends presents a complex challenge for Indonesia as it strives to maintain its unique cultural identity in an increasingly interconnected world. From this perspective, it can be concluded that the culture of the "global society" is diluting local cultures in various ways, thereby posing challenges to the preservation and continuity of local traditions.

The challenges of cultural preservation are also experienced by one of Indonesia's "cultural capitals," the city of Surakarta, which located in Central Java Province. Despite its rich heritage and strong cultural identity, based on a survey conducted by Purwadhani (2021), Surakarta also faces pressures from modernization and globalization, which threaten to erode its traditional practices and values (Purwardhani, 2018). As a centre of Javanese culture, known for its classical music, dance, and batik production, the city must navigate the delicate balance between maintaining its cultural legacy and embracing the changes brought by an increasingly globalized world (Renggani & Jhosha, 2024). For instance, in Surakarta, where Javanese is the local language, many millennials generation view English and other international languages as more important to learn, considering them as pathways to global opportunities. As a result, local languages like Javanese are seen as less relevant, as they are perceived to provide fewer advantages for future education and career development (Soma, 2018). The challenges of globalization continue to affect long-standing local cultural figures, such as the "pambiwara" who have existed for hundreds of years. These traditional cultural agents, deeply rooted in local customs, now face pressures from modern influences that threaten their roles and significance in the community (Sudarsana et al., 2024).

This study explores how Pambiwara courses help keep Javanese traditions alive by using symbolic power to shape cultural practices. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's idea of symbolic power, it looks at how authority, tradition, and recognition influence the way culture is passed down. Through interviews and Focus Group Discussions, the research examines how these courses create a space where the younger generation can learn and engage with Javanese language and customs. By understanding how symbolic power works in these settings, the study sheds light on the role of tradition in a changing world and offers practical insights for preserving cultural heritage in Surakarta and beyond.

Surakarta, commonly referred to as Solo, stands as a vibrant testament to Javanese culture and history, often hailed as the cultural capital of Java. Nestled in Central Java, Indonesia, Surakarta boasts a rich tapestry of traditions, arts, and historical significance that has evolved over centuries. Surakarta city which established in the 18th century during the fragmentation of the Mataram Sultanate, Surakarta emerged as one of two principalities alongside Yogyakarta (Sutarwinarno et al., 2017). This historical backdrop laid the foundation for Surakarta to become a pivotal center of Javanese civilization, where the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage continue to thrive in contemporary society. The city's strategic location along vital trade routes contributed to its growth, attracting merchants and scholars who enriched the local culture, thus allowing Surakarta to flourish as a melting pot of ideas, traditions, and artistic expressions (Nugraha, 2022).

The cultural identity of Surakarta is profoundly rooted in its artistic expressions, particularly in the realms of music, dance, and visual arts. The city is renowned for its traditional performances, which include wayang kulit (shadow puppetry), gamelan (traditional ensemble music), and various forms of Javanese dance, such as bedhaya and serimpi (Al-Zadjali, 2024). These art forms are

not merely entertainment; they serve as vessels for storytelling, conveying morals, historical narratives, and spiritual beliefs that resonate deeply within the Javanese community (Bayu Samudera & Nuha, 2023). The narratives presented in these performances often draw from ancient epics, such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, bridging the past with the present and instilling a sense of cultural pride among audiences. Additionally, these performances are often imbued with symbolism, where every gesture, costume, and musical note is laden with meaning, reinforcing the connection between art and the cultural values that define the Javanese people (Syam, 2018). As a result, participation in and appreciation for these art forms help foster a strong communal identity, creating bonds among individuals who share a love for their cultural heritage.

In this rich cultural landscape, pambiwara holds a significant place. This traditional form of public speaking and oratory is essential for expressing cultural narratives, community values, and social cohesion. In Surakarta, pambiwara is often employed during various cultural and ceremonial events, serving as a medium to convey stories, moral lessons, and historical accounts (Sudarsana et al., 2024). The pambiwara, or orators, are highly respected figures who possess a deep understanding of Javanese traditions and the intricacies of the Javanese language. Through their speeches, they not only entertain but also educate the audience, reinforcing community bonds and promoting the shared values of Javanese culture. Pambiwara thus acts as a bridge between generations, ensuring that cultural knowledge and wisdom are passed down, while also adapting to contemporary contexts.

A Pambiwara is a traditional Javanese master of ceremonies responsible for orchestrating cultural and ceremonial events, particularly in important life events such as weddings, circumcisions, and other rites of passage (Setyaningrum et al., 2018). Unlike a typical MC, a pambiwara embodies the role of a cultural custodian, ensuring that Javanese traditions are upheld with precision and reverence. Their responsibilities extend

far beyond merely announcing events or guiding participants—they are deeply involved in the preservation of the customs, language, spiritual values, and etiquette that are central to Javanese culture. The pambiwara plays an indispensable role in maintaining the authenticity of these traditions, preventing the dilution of Javanese customs in the face of modernization, and passing on the richness of the culture to future generations (Sudarsana et al., 2024). Pambiwara also serves as a cultural leader in Javanese society, and their leadership role can help the community understand the importance of cultural preservation. This is similar to the efforts of Pakubuwono IX in the 19th century, who raised public awareness about environmental sustainability at the Passangrahan Dalem in Sukoharjo Regency, Indonesia (Prasetya et al., 2024).

The pambiwara's duties begin with the careful planning and execution of Javanese ceremonies, ensuring that each element adheres to the ancient customs that have been practiced for centuries. In traditional Javanese weddings, for instance, the rituals of panggih (the formal meeting of the bride and groom), sungkeman (seeking parental blessings), and kacar kucur (symbolic sharing of prosperity) are deeply meaningful (Indrati, 2018). The pambiwara not only guides the couple and their families through these rituals but also explains the cultural significance of each step to both the participants and guests. This educational role is essential in ensuring that these rituals are not performed as empty gestures but are understood and respected for their deep-rooted cultural meanings (Sanmee, 2024). By providing context and explanation, the pambiwara safeguards the continuity of these practices, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their heritage.

A key aspect of the pambiwara's role in preserving Javanese culture lies in their use of the Javanese language, particularly the refined and formal level known as krama inggil. This is the highest and most respectful form of the language, often reserved for ceremonial occasions and interactions with elders or those of high social status

(Mutiara et al., 2023). By using krama inggil during ceremonies, the pambiwara reinforces the importance of tradition and respect within Javanese culture. The use of such a formal register adds gravity and reverence to the occasion, setting it apart from ordinary life. Moreover, the pambiwara often incorporates traditional sayings, proverbs, and tembang (Javanese poems or songs) into their speeches, which further enhances the cultural depth of the event (Setyaningrum et al., 2018). This careful use of language not only preserves linguistic traditions but also serves to educate younger generations who may not be as familiar with the more formal aspects of the Javanese language.

In addition to their linguistic duties, the pambiwara plays a crucial spiritual role within the ceremony. Many Javanese rituals are deeply intertwined with spiritual beliefs, and it is the pambiwara's responsibility to ensure that these spiritual elements are honoured throughout the event. For instance, in a wedding or other significant life event, the pambiwara may lead prayers or invoke blessings from ancestors and deities, thereby creating a connection between the physical ceremony and the spiritual realm. This invocation of spiritual protection and guidance is essential to Javanese culture, which places great emphasis on the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual worlds (Forshee, 2005). Through these spiritual acts, the pambiwara ensures that the ceremony is not just a social event but also a sacred ritual, imbued with deeper meaning and significance.

The etiquette and decorum upheld during the ceremony are also key responsibilities of the pambiwara. Javanese culture places a strong emphasis on values such as respect, humility, and social harmony, all of which must be reflected in the conduct of participants during traditional ceremonies (Hermawan et al., 2018). The pambiwara carefully instructs participants on the proper gestures, movements, and behaviors required to show respect, particularly in moments of high cultural importance. For example, during the sungkeman ritual, where the bride and groom bow deeply to their parents as

a sign of gratitude and respect, the pambiwara ensures that the gesture is performed correctly, with the appropriate level of humility and grace. These actions reinforce the Javanese values of filial piety and respect for elders, core tenets of Javanese social life that are reflected in ceremonial customs.

In today's modern world, the pambiwara also takes on the role of a cultural educator, helping to bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary society. With modernization and globalization exerting increasing influence on Indonesian life, younger generations are often less familiar with traditional Javanese customs and may not fully understand their significance (II et al., 2023). The pambiwara, through their guidance and explanations, plays an essential role in educating these younger individuals about the cultural roots of the ceremonies they are part of. By explaining the meanings and symbolism behind each ritual, the pambiwara helps to ensure that Javanese traditions are not seen as outdated or irrelevant but as valuable cultural practices that carry profound meaning (Prabowo et al., 2022). This educational aspect is crucial in preventing the erosion of cultural knowledge and in fostering a deeper appreciation for Javanese heritage among modern audiences.

One of the more delicate aspects of the pambiwara's role is the balancing of modern influences with traditional customs. As contemporary elements—such as modern music, fashion, or technology—begin to make their way into traditional Javanese ceremonies, it is the pambiwara's responsibility to ensure that these modern touches do not overshadow the traditional aspects of the event (Putritamara et al., 2023). For example, while a bride and groom may choose to incorporate modern elements into their wedding, such as wearing more contemporary attire or using modern musical performances, the pambiwara ensures that these innovations do not diminish the importance of traditional rituals. Their ability to integrate modern elements while safeguarding the integrity of the ceremony highlights the pambiwara's adaptability and deep understanding of cultural preservation

(Indrati, 2018). By navigating this balance, they play a key role in ensuring that Javanese traditions remain relevant in the modern world without losing their essence.

The social role of the pambiwara is also crucial, as Javanese ceremonies are not just private family events but also community-wide gatherings. A traditional Javanese wedding, for example, may involve the participation of extended family members, neighbors, and other members of the community. The pambiwara, with their command of the ceremony and cultural knowledge, plays a central role in fostering a sense of communal participation (Sudarsana et al., 2024). By guiding the ceremony in a way that includes and engages everyone present, the pambiwara helps to reinforce the sense of gotong royong (mutual cooperation), a key value in Javanese social life (Pheeney, 2016). This sense of togetherness and shared cultural experience strengthens the bonds between individuals and helps maintain the social cohesion that is so important to Javanese communities.

From the above explanation, the pambiwara is not just a ceremonial figure but a vital cultural custodian who plays a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting Javanese traditions. Their responsibilities, ranging from guiding rituals to maintaining decorum and transmitting cultural knowledge, ensure that Javanese culture remains vibrant and relevant in an ever-changing world. Through their linguistic skills, spiritual guidance, and ability to adapt to modern influences, the pambiwara safeguards the integrity of Javanese ceremonies and ensures that they continue to serve as a rich expression of cultural identity for future generations. Their influence extends beyond the events they lead, embedding them as key figures in the continuity and preservation of Javanese heritage.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the symbolic is a pivotal aspect of his broader sociological framework, emphasizing how power operates subtly through cultural symbols, language, and practices to maintain and legitimize social hierarchies (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). At the core of this idea is

symbolic power, which refers to the ability of dominant groups or institutions to shape perceptions and impose meanings on others, thereby controlling how reality is understood without the need for physical coercion (Ningtyas, 2015). This form of power is often exercised through institutions like education, media, and religion, which influence public opinion and establish what is considered legitimate or acceptable knowledge and behavior. A significant aspect of this symbolic domination is what Bourdieu terms symbolic violence, a process by which the values, norms, and worldview of the dominant class are imposed on subordinate groups in ways that are often perceived as natural or consensual. This subtle form of domination perpetuates inequalities by making those in lower social positions accept their marginalization as a given, often without fully recognizing the ways in which they are being subjugated. For example, educational systems may favor the cultural capital of middle-class students, leaving working-class students at a disadvantage by presenting their own backgrounds as inferior or irrelevant. In addition to symbolic power and violence. Bourdieu introduces the concept of symbolic capital, which refers to the status, prestige, or honor individuals accumulate based on their position in social fields, such as education or the arts.

Unlike economic capital, symbolic capital is about social recognition and legitimacy, which can translate into influence or authority in different social contexts (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). For instance, a degree from a prestigious university can act as symbolic capital, granting the holder increased social standing and access to valuable networks. This interplay between symbolic power and symbolic capital functions within Bourdieu's broader notions of habitus—the ingrained dispositions that shape how individuals perceive and react to the world—and fields, which are structured social arenas like politics or academia where individuals compete for resources and status (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Through these ideas, Bourdieu highlights how symbolic systems, while appearing neutral or natural, are in fact critical mechanisms through which social inequalities are both produced and reproduced. Scholars like Swartz (1997) and Grenfell (2008) further emphasize that understanding the role of the symbolic in Bourdieu's theory is essential to unpacking the hidden ways in which power operates in society, especially through the control of meaning, cultural production, and recognition (Grenfell, 2008; Swartz, 1997). Thus, Bourdieu's analysis of the symbolic underscores the pervasive yet often invisible forms of power that shape societal structures, ensuring the perpetuation of dominance by certain social groups.

#### **METHODS**

This research adopts a qualitative approach, which focuses on participants of the *Pambiwara course* organized by Permadani Studio in Surakarta, and the interview has been conducted between April and May 2024. To gather in-depth insights into the motivations, experiences, and outcomes of the course, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 informants. The informants were purposively selected to represent a diverse cross-section of course participants, including 5 members of Permadani Studio, teachers, and students involved in the program.

Data were collected through semistructured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in exploring various aspects of the course while ensuring that the core research questions were addressed. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, and the questions were designed to explore the informants' motivations for joining the course, their experiences during the training, the cultural values imparted, and their perspectives on the role of Pambiwara in preserving local traditions. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at various course venues and the informants homes to ensure comfort and openness during the conversations. The 15 informants were categorized into three groups: 1) Permadani Studio members: These included senior course facilitators and organizers, who provided insights into the goals and structure of the Pambiwara course, as well as the challenges faced in preserving Javanese culture through education; 2) Teachers: These participants provided a unique perspective on how the course complements their role in educational institutions and their efforts to pass on cultural knowledge to younger generations; 3) Students: These participants ranged from young school-aged children to adults who were keen to learn the intricacies of Javanese culture, providing insights into their personal motivations and learning experiences.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher systematically coded the responses to identify recurring themes and patterns. Key themes included cultural preservation, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the role of Pambiwara in shaping community identity. The coding process was iterative, allowing new themes to emerge as more interviews were analyzed. Constant comparison between different informants' responses enabled the identification of similarities and differences in their experiences, which enriched the analysis.

To ensure the validity of the data, member checking was employed, where the preliminary findings were shared with several informants to confirm the accuracy of their statements. Triangulation was also used by comparing data from different groups of informants (members, teachers, and students) to cross-check perspectives and gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, detailed field notes were kept during interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual elements that added depth to the verbal data. This qualitative approach, grounded in the lived experiences of the participants, provides a rich understanding of how the Pambiwara courses contribute to the preservation of Javanese culture and the challenges faced in fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## Understanding the Pambiwara Roles in Javanese Cultural Preservation

The "pambiwara" can be described as traditional Javanese figure who plays an important role in ceremonial events, notably formal or cultural gatherings like weddings and traditional rites (Setyaningrum et al., 2018). The pambiwara serves as master of ceremonies (MC), directing the events with eloquence, grace, and a thorough understanding of Javanese customs and etiquette. They frequently offer speeches in formal Javanese and are responsible for ensuring that cultural norms and protocols are followed during the occasion. As a cultural agent, the pambiwara maintains and communicates old Javanese behaviours to future generations, ensuring that these rituals continue in modern times. In 2016, there were 388 traditional culture studios, which also teaching about the pambiwara courses in Surakarta (Aryono, 2016). However, various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and a waning interest among millennials in local cultural traditions, have led to the closure of more than half of these studios (Suharsih, 2021). This decline is not solely due to diminishing public interest in preserving Javanese culture, but also stems from a shortage of human resources and financial backing, leaving many studios unable to sustain their operations.

Amid the declining presence of art studios in Surakarta, the Persaudaraan Masyarakat Budaya Nasional Indonesia (Permadani) traditional Javanese studio stands as a pivotal force in preserving Javanese culture. This research, titled The Symbolic Power Behind Tradition: The Role of Pambiwara in Preserving Javanese Culture, delves into the interaction patterns, symbolic power, and mechanisms that foster the preservation of Javanese culture through the Pambiwara courses offered by the studio. While much research has focused on the general decline of local cultural traditions in the face of globalization, there is a critical gap in understanding the specific role of symbolic power in cultural regeneration, particularly through the Pambiwara—a traditional orator who plays a central role in Javanese ceremonies. Rather than viewing Pambiwara as a mere performance skill, this study positions it as a vehicle of cultural authority and identity, which empowers both individuals and communities to preserve their heritage amidst modern challenges

The Permadani has established itself as a cornerstone in the preservation of Indonesia's vast cultural legacy, with a particular emphasis on the traditions of Javanese society. One of Permadani's most impactful programs is the Pawiyatan Panotcoro Tuin Pamedar Sapto (Pawiyatan Pambiworo), a ceremonial training course that has been in operation for more than 40 years. This program is intricately connected to the Keraton Solo (the royal palace of Surakarta), which serves as a guardian of Javanese culture and tradition. The course is specifically designed to train participants in the role of pambiwara, or master of ceremonies, a crucial figure in Javanese ceremonial life. The Panotocoro Sapto, a set of seven guiding principles, governs these ceremonies, which are used to mark the major events in an individual's life—from birth and marriage to death. The role of the pambiwara extends beyond merely facilitating these events; it is a position of profound social responsibility. By guiding communities through these sacred rites, the pambiwara ensures that cultural values and social norms are upheld, fostering a sense of continuity and cohesion within Javanese society.

Sumarno, an elder and community leader, expressed his deep concern over the rapid decline in the understanding and practice of traditional Javanese ceremonies. He saw this as an opportunity to not only learn the ceremonial protocols but also to take on a leadership role in ensuring that these customs were preserved for future generations. As summarize from the statement:

"I am inspired by the Indonesian National Cultural Brotherhood (Permadani), which collaborates with the government to realize the Tri Karsa Budaya. This Tri Karsa Budaya encompasses will, culture, and efforts to explore, develop, and preserve local culture. One aspect of these efforts is panotocoro sapto, where life from birth to death is marked by specific events that are turned into ceremonies. Panotocoro plays a strategic role in guiding these events. Therefore, courses such as the Pambiwara course are essential. This course is named Pawiyatan Panotcoro Tuin Pamedar Sapto (Pawiyatan Pambiworo), referring to a course that has been used at the Solo Palace for 40 years. Each participant who graduates from this course receives a different graduation date, so each cohort has its own distinct characteristics. The course is attended by various social groups, with publicity spread across 167 villages and districts and through relevant institutions (Sumarno, 56)"

Nisma, a university student who attended the courses, echoed this concern, observing that in the past, ceremonies like weddings and funerals were community affairs, steeped in tradition and meaning. However, as he had witnessed, these events were increasingly being treated as mere formalities, devoid of the cultural significance they once held. As stated on her interview answer:

"As a fourth-semester Javanese Language and Literature student at Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara Sukoharjo, I've noticed how traditional Javanese ceremonies, like weddings and funerals, which used to be rich in meaning and tradition, are now often treated as mere formalities. This loss of cultural significance motivated me to join the Permadani workshop. I hope to help restore the sacredness of these ceremonies in my community and inspire younger generations, especially women, to embrace and preserve Javanese culture. Personally, I also aim to become a Javanese MC and start a bridal makeup business. Despite challenges like high costs and lack of transparency in the workshop fees, I'm committed to keeping Javanese traditions alive and meaningful in today's society. (Nisma, 19)"

As explained by the informants, the

pambiwara (master of ceremonies) plays a crucial role in preserving Javanese culture by ensuring that traditional ceremonies, such as births, weddings, and funerals, retain their sacredness and cultural significance. Guided by the Panotocoro Sapto (seven principles), the pambiwara orchestrates these rituals with precision, infusing them with spiritual and symbolic meaning that reflects Javanese values. In an era where such ceremonies are often reduced to formalities, the pambiwara acts as a cultural custodian, educating communities and younger generations about the importance of these traditions. Through programs like the Pawiyatan Panotcoro Tuin Pamedar Sapto (Pawiyatan Pambiworo), offered by Permadani in collaboration with the Keraton Solo, individuals are trained to uphold and adapt these practices, ensuring their continuity. By maintaining the integrity of Javanese ceremonies, the pambiwara fosters cultural cohesion, identity, and a deep connection to heritage, safeguarding it for future generations.

# The Certificate: A Symbol of Cultural Mastery and Social Responsibility

Upon the successful completion of the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course, participants are awarded a certificate that symbolizes their mastery of Javanese ceremonial traditions. This certificate is more than just a formal acknowledgment of their education; it carries profound cultural and social significance within Javanese society. In many ways, the certificate serves as a badge of honor, recognizing the participant's readiness to take on the role of pambiwara and lead important community events. In Javanese culture, where respect for tradition and social hierarchy is deeply ingrained, the role of the pambiwara is not just a ceremonial function but also a position of great responsibility. These individuals are seen as custodians of cultural knowledge, entrusted with ensuring that ceremonies are conducted with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Damar Kurniawan, a school teacher, joined Sanggar Permadani to refine his Javanese language skills, particularly krama, for better social etiquette, though it is not

directly required for his job as a Bahasa Indonesia teacher. While the certification is not essential for his career advancement, it could enhance his role in Javanese society, particularly within his school environment, by positioning him as a teacher who preserves Javanese linguistic and cultural traditions. As stated on his interview:

"As a Bahasa Indonesia teacher, my job doesn't directly require me to master Javanese krama, but I joined Sanggar Permadani to improve my speech and etiquette, which are important in daily interactions. Before joining, I had no prior knowledge of Javanese Islamic culture or pambiwara, but now I've learned formal krama vocabulary, some Javanese literary elements, and respectful speech practices. The course, held every Friday and Saturday at places like Gedung PGRI, includes both written (60%) and practical (40%) evaluations, and at the end, we receive a certificate from DPP Pusat Permadani. While this certificate isn't necessary for my career, I believe it will enhance my role in Javanese society, especially at school, where I can help preserve Javanese traditions, mentor students in Javanese etiquette, and contribute to cultural events, ensuring that younger generations appreciate and uphold our heritage."

Furthermore, according to Sugeng, a former village official, the certificate plays a crucial role in enhancing one's status in Javanese society, as it formally recognizes cultural expertise, enabling graduates to take on ceremonial roles, lead community events, and contribute to cultural preservation efforts. As stated on his interview:

"As a former village official, I've seen how important it is to preserve Javanese traditions, and Sanggar Permadani plays a key role in that. The participants come from not only from Java but also from other islands, such as Tuban, Jambi, Madiun, Merangin, Trenggalek, Purworejo, Banyumas, Jepara, Karanganyar and many of them, especially teachers, join because they

want to set an example for their students and communities. Some are drawn by the richness of Javanese culture, while others see it as a way to organize traditional events and strengthen local identity. The course itself includes written and practical evaluations, and at the end, participants receive a certificate from DPP Pusat Permadani. This certificate is not just a piece of paper it's a formal recognition of one's cultural expertise, and in Javanese society, that matters. It allows graduates to take on ceremonial roles, lead community events, and contribute to cultural preservation efforts, making them respected figures in their communities."

The certificate also serves as a social tool, enhancing the status of its holders within their communities. Informant 11, a local business leader, noted that since receiving his certification, he has been invited to lead numerous community events, further increasing his visibility and influence. The certification process, therefore, not only benefits individuals on a personal level but also strengthens the social fabric of their communities by reinforcing the importance of cultural continuity. Beyond the individual recognition it provides, the certification process plays a critical role in fostering a sense of cultural continuity and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. As stated on his interview statement:

> "As a local business leader, I can say that the Sanggar Permadani certificate is more than just proof of learning it's a social tool that enhances one's status in the community. Ever since I received my certification, I have been invited to lead numerous community events, which has significantly increased my visibility and influence. People now see me as someone with cultural authority, and this recognition has opened many opportunities to contribute to traditional ceremonies and local gatherings. The certification process doesn't just benefit individuals; it also helps reinforce the impor

tance of Javanese cultural continuity, ensuring that our traditions remain respected and relevant in today's society."

The Sanggar Permadani certificate holds deep cultural and social significance in Javanese society, symbolizing mastery of ceremonial traditions and granting its holders recognition as cultural authorities. For participants like Damar Kurniawan, the certification enhances their role in preserving Javanese language and etiquette, while for community leaders like Sugeng and Suwandi, it serves as a formal acknowledgment of cultural expertise, enabling them to lead ceremonies and strengthen local identity. Beyond personal achievement, the certification acts as a social tool, increasing visibility, influence, and opportunities to contribute to community events. Ultimately, it plays a crucial role in reinforcing cultural continuity and intergenerational knowledge transmission, ensuring that Javanese traditions remain respected and relevant in modern society.

## Certificate as Symbolic Power in Cultural Preservation

The certificate awarded to participants of the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course serves not merely as a formal acknowledgment of educational achievement but also as a powerful symbol of cultural and social authority within Javanese society. Theoretical frameworks established by Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his notions of cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic power, offer a rich lens through which to explore the multifaceted implications of this certification. Cultural capital, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1986) as cited by Grenfell (2008), refers to the non-financial social assets-such as skills, education, and knowledge—that facilitate social mobility and status within a community (Grenfell, 2008) . In the specific context of the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course, the certificate symbolizes not just the acquisition of knowledge about Javanese ceremonial traditions but also the mastery of practices that are integral to the community's cultural identity. Participants, by mastering these ceremonial protocols, are positioned as guardians and transmitters of their cultural heritage. This role is particularly significant in a rapidly globalizing world, where traditional practices risk being overshadowed or even lost. The transfer of cultural knowledge through such educational endeavors highlights the importance of intergenerational connections in sustaining cultural practices, enabling participants to bridge the gap between past traditions and contemporary expressions of Javanese identity.

Furthermore, the educational journey of obtaining the Pawiyatan Pambiworo certificate has profound implications for individual identity. Participants often describe a transformation in their self-perception; they come to see themselves not just as passive recipients of tradition but as active contributors to its evolution. This engagement with their cultural roots fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their community. By acquiring this certificate, graduates often find themselves called to play more prominent roles in local cultural events and ceremonies, reinforcing their identity as custodians of Javanese heritage. This phenomenon is reflective of Bourdieu's assertion that cultural capital can empower individuals to navigate their social environments more effectively. The process of learning and certification acts as a catalyst for personal growth, encouraging participants to articulate their cultural identity with pride. As graduates engage in cultural leadership roles, they inspire younger generations to appreciate and uphold their heritage, thus ensuring the continued relevance and vitality of Javanese traditions. In this way, the certificate serves as a conduit for personal empowerment and collective cultural resilience (Putnam, 2000).

The certificate also acts as a significant marker of social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1991), which encompasses the networks of relationships among individuals that facilitate collective action and promote social cohesion (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). Graduates of the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course emerge with a renewed sense

of social connectivity, frequently finding themselves at the center of community networks dedicated to preserving and promoting Javanese cultural practices. The course's communal nature fosters deep relationships among participants, creating a support system that extends beyond the classroom. This environment encourages dialogue, collaboration, and mutual encouragement, ultimately strengthening the fabric of the community. As graduates take on leadership roles in cultural events and ceremonies, they not only enhance their social networks but also reinforce the social ties that bind their community together. This process of networking is crucial, particularly in a time when social cohesion is increasingly threatened by modernization and individualism. The ability to draw on a network of supportive relationships allows graduates to leverage their cultural knowledge for the benefit of the community, fostering an environment where cultural practices can thrive (Putnam, 2000). This interaction exemplifies how cultural education contributes to social capital, enabling communities to harness their collective resources in the face of external pressures.

Moreover, the symbolic power of the certificate plays a vital role in legitimizing authority and social status within Javanese society. Bourdieu (1991) articulates that symbolic power operates within social fields, allowing individuals with specific cultural knowledge to exert influence over others (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). The process of certification thus acts as a mechanism of legitimation, conferring upon participants a recognized status that empowers them to engage in culturally significant roles traditionally reserved for those with formal training or acknowledged expertise. In a society steeped in respect for tradition and hierarchical structures, the capacity to navigate complex ceremonial protocols becomes a critical asset. Graduates are often seen as credible figures who can guide their communities in cultural matters, thereby reinforcing their authority. This dynamic illustrates that the certificate embodies more than academic achievement; it signifies a commitment to the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge. As graduates step into their roles as cultural leaders, they are expected to actively participate in and lead traditional practices, thereby reinforcing the essential role of education in maintaining cultural continuity. This interplay of knowledge and authority affirms Bourdieu's view that cultural capital can facilitate power dynamics within social structures, enabling individuals to influence and shape community practices and beliefs (Holt, 1998)

However, the dynamics surrounding the certificate also highlight the complexities of social stratification within Javanese society. While the certification process empowers graduates and elevates their social standing, it also risks reinforcing existing social hierarchies. Bourdieu's theory posits that cultural practices are inextricably linked to prevailing social structures, and the certification process can inadvertently marginalize those who lack access to educational opportunities (Bourdieu, 1984). As cultural knowledge becomes increasingly associated with formal education, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may find themselves excluded from these vital cultural conversations. This aspect raises critical questions about inclusivity within cultural education initiatives like the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course. The growing interest among younger participants indicates a desire for cultural connection and continuity, yet it also emphasizes the need for broader access to such educational opportunities. To address these disparities, initiatives targeting marginalized communities could play a transformative role, allowing for a more inclusive narrative around Javanese traditions. As cultural theorists have pointed out, ensuring that cultural practices are representative of diverse experiences is crucial for their sustainability and vitality (Maziliauske, 2024). By actively involving a wider array of voices in the cultural conversation, the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course can contribute to a richer, more nuanced understanding of Javanese identity that celebrates the diversity within its traditions.

The certificate conferred by the Pa-

wiyatan Pambiworo course encapsulates the intricate interplay of cultural and social capital, legitimizes authority, and reflects the power dynamics present in Javanese society. Through the analytical lens provided by Bourdieu's theories, we gain a deeper appreciation for how this certificate functions not merely as a credential but as a vehicle for negotiating social status and authority in a world characterized by rapid change. The narratives shared by participants reveal the profound personal and communal significance of the course, positioning graduates as crucial stewards of their cultural heritage. As Indonesia grapples with the challenges of modernization and globalization, initiatives like the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course are essential for ensuring the preservation and adaptation of its rich cultural traditions. By fostering an educational environment that values both theoretical understanding and practical application, the course effectively bridges the gap between past and present, contributing to a cultural legacy that can resonate across generations. Ultimately, the certificate emerges as a symbol of resilience, cultural pride, and the ongoing quest for identity amid the tides of change, empowering individuals to reclaim their narrative and assert their rightful place within the broader social fabric.

## CONCLUSION

The pambiwara serves as a vital cultural custodian in Javanese society, ensuring that traditional ceremonial practices are preserved and passed down through generations. As a master of ceremonies, the pambiwara not only leads events such as weddings, mitoni (prenatal ceremonies), and other cultural rituals but also reinforces the linguistic, spiritual, and ethical values embedded in Javanese heritage. The Pawiyatan Pambiworo course plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills to perform these duties, offering structured training in formal Javanese language (krama inggil), ritual protocols, and public speaking. Through this course, participants do not merely learn ceremonial procedures;

they also gain a deeper understanding of Javanese philosophy, hierarchy, and cultural etiquette, which are essential to maintaining the authenticity of traditional events. However, modernization and globalization present significant challenges to the survival of the pambiwara tradition. As younger generations become more influenced by digital culture and global languages, interest in mastering Javanese ceremonial traditions has diminished. Additionally, economic factors contribute to the decline, as many view pambiwara as a low-income profession, making it less attractive for younger individuals to pursue. This study highlights the urgent need for cultural preservation strategies that integrate both traditional knowledge and modern approaches to sustain the relevance of the pambiwara in contemporary society.

A key finding of this study is the symbolic power associated with the certification process granted upon completing the Pawiyatan Pambiworo course. According to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, the certificate serves as both cultural and social capital, granting individuals not only formal recognition of their expertise but also elevated status within Javanese society. Certified pambiwara gain greater legitimacy and authority, allowing them to preside over important cultural events and be recognized as respected figures in their communities. This certification acts as a social tool, enhancing visibility and influence, which can lead to greater professional opportunities, invitations to prestigious ceremonies, and stronger community engagement. Informants in this study confirmed that certification has boosted their credibility, allowing them to take on leadership roles in cultural education and ceremonial planning. Beyond individual benefits, the certificate reinforces cultural continuity, ensuring that the knowledge, values, and customs of Javanese traditions are systematically transferred to future generations. However, while the certification adds symbolic and professional value, there remains a gap in institutional recognition—without governmental or academic accreditation, the pambiwara profession still struggles for wider acceptance, which limits its ability to compete with more modern career paths. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts between cultural institutions, educational organizations, and local governments to formally acknowledge pambiwara training as a legitimate professional qualification.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the pambiwara tradition, proactive efforts must be made to modernize training methods, increase public awareness, and create broader access to cultural education. Expanding the reach of pambiwara training through digital platforms, such as online courses, virtual mentorships, and social media campaigns, could attract younger generations and make the learning process more flexible and engaging. Additionally, integrating pambiwara studies into formal education curricula, particularly in linguistic, historical, and cultural programs, would reinforce its significance in academic and professional settings. Encouraging community-based initiatives—such as apprenticeships, cultural festivals, and collaborative projects with local artists—could also strengthen public participation in preserving these traditions. Furthermore, offering financial incentives, scholarships, or government subsidies for cultural practitioners would help sustain the economic viability of pambiwara as a career. This study emphasizes that preserving Javanese ceremonial traditions is not just about maintaining rituals—it is about safeguarding cultural identity, strengthening community ties, and fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer. By adapting to contemporary challenges while staying rooted in traditional values, the pambiwara can continue to play a pivotal role in Javanese society, ensuring that these rich traditions remain relevant, respected, and actively practiced for generations to come.

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