

TRADITIONAL ORAL AND MANUSCRIPT-BASED PRODUCTS IN BANYUWANGI

(Produk Tradisional Lisan dan Berbasis Naskah di Banyuwangi)

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Abstract: Banyuwangi is a cultural region with a variety of oral traditions and manuscripts that have the potential to become sources for the creation of creative products. The wealth of oral traditions includes *gembrung*, the *Sri Tanjung* folk tale, the *kebo-keboan* ritual, and the sacred *seblang* dance (*Bakungan* and *Olehsari*). Meanwhile, manuscripts in Banyuwangi include the *Sri Tanjung lontar babad*, the *Yusuf mocoan lontar*, the *Tawangalun lontar babad*, and the *Ahmad lontar*. All of these cultural heritages can be revitalised into creative and innovative creations in the form of short stories, poetry, graphic designs for T-shirts, batik, musical poetry, animations (films and children's books) and performing arts. This article reveals the creativity of artists who have created various creative products based on oral traditions and manuscripts. Data collection methods were conducted through interviews and focus group discussions. The issue that arises is how cultural practitioners in Banyuwangi can be innovative in their creativity by drawing on the wealth of oral traditions and manuscripts that exist in their cultural environment. The approach used to discuss this issue is Bourdieu's cultural study, namely the concepts of capital, arena, and habitus related to cultural practitioners who keep oral traditions and manuscripts alive. The first result obtained is that Banyuwangi has a diversity and wealth of traditional cultural capital. Secondly, potential revitalisation practices in the cultural industry include the creation of bamboo puppets based on the story of *Sri Tanjung*, short stories, and poems that highlight traditional idioms in a contemporary context.

Keywords: *Creative Industry; Language; Literacy; Oral Tradition; Society*

A. INTRODUCTION

The creativity of artists has a choice of mediums that can represent their taste in conveying ideas, feelings, and atmospheres that they want to communicate to their art-loving audience. In this regard, one form of the creative process of artists is medium transfer. The concept of medium transfer refers to multidimensional creative results. Their artwork does not only cover one medium, but various genres as its medium (Damono, 2012:3).

A work of poetry is essentially a medium for conveying ideas, feelings, moods, or messages. When poetry (a literary genre) is turned into music (commonly referred to as musicalisation of poetry), it undergoes a transformation into a new work of art, and within it, intermediality occurs. Regarding the transformation of form due to intermediality, Damono (2012) argues that intermediality is a situation that shows a change from one form to another.

In the dynamics of art, the adaptation of literary works into films, for example, is actually common practice in the film industries of America and Europe. In Indonesia, this practice began to flourish in the 1970s with the production of films based on popular literary works or comics. Even long before that, adaptations were common in traditional culture. For example, the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics were adapted into various forms of performing arts, including wayang kulit (leather puppet theatre), wayang orang (human puppet theatre), hikayat (storytelling), and sendratari (dance drama). Similarly, the Panji stories were adapted into various forms, including wayang klitik (stick puppets), wayang beber (scroll puppets), and Topeng Malangan (Malangan mask theatre). Thus, adaptation is essentially inseparable from the intermedia relationships involved. What is noteworthy about the adaptation process is not only the change in form (medium), but also the change in the message that is important in the new format.

Therefore, Budiman (in Damono, 2012: iv) states in the introduction to Damono's book (2012) that the study of adaptation works requires sensitivity to multi- and inter-mediality. This means that a good and broad knowledge and understanding of language, literature, film, and art involved in adaptation works is a basic requirement for adaptation researchers. It is also necessary to have knowledge of the theoretical foundations and concepts related to structure, gender, history, postcolonialism, and the latest critical theories. This is necessary because media adaptation works contain current ideological issues, such as dominant discourse, marginality, and the discourse of power relations related to powerlessness and subalternity.

As mentioned above, in the dynamics of art in Indonesia, one art form takes another art form as its source of creation. The literary arts of the Mahabharata or Ramayana, for example, have been adapted into performing arts. In terms of form, there has been a shift from written text to audio-visual text (shadow puppets, wayang orang, Ramayana dance-drama), while the reliefs at Prambanan Temple depict sequences from the Ramayana story. Poetic text has become musical text (auditory in nature), known as musical poetry performances. On the other hand, in the context of musical art, sounds (which are auditory in nature) can be read after they have been converted into musical notation (pictorial language; notes) as a text (score). In this regard, Damono (2011; 2012: 5) argues that it is the connection between texts that is constructed into meaning by the recipient, namely the reader (of the text) and the audience (of multimedia performing arts).

A programme related to the transfer of vehicles has been carried out in Banyuwangi since June 2025, involving artists from various fields. These artists, consisting of 30 art activists, had previously participated in a workshop on literary writing and creative processes based on oral traditions and manuscripts organised by HISKI with the support of Dana Indonesiana. They were directed to work on and process five themes related to narratives about oral traditions and manuscripts that are alive and spread throughout the Banyuwangi community. The five themes are the folk tales and manuscripts of Sri

Tanjung, the (palm leaf) manuscripts of Babad Tawangalun, the Gembrung art tradition, the Rengganis performance tradition, and the Jaranan Buto tradition.

From this transfer process, it is hoped that the artists will produce results that can be seen through their creativity and innovation. These two elements are important to discuss, considering that the narratives in the five themes are essentially traditional narratives that already exist and live on as living traditions, which also serve as markers of the cultural identity of the Banyuwangi community. Therefore, based on the above and grounded in the creative process and results of these artists, the issue discussed in this article is how does the transfer process produced by artists in Banyuwangi demonstrate innovative creativity?

The discussion of the creative works of these art activists aims to reveal and evaluate the creativity and innovative forms of their creations, both individually and in groups, based on the five types of oral traditions and manuscripts. The stages of creating creative products based on oral traditions and manuscripts are a creative process, starting from developing ideas, producing, and presenting them to the public as performing arts. All of these creative works are presented in the form of a Literary Festival featuring performances and exhibitions of creative products. The festival activities are integrated with the Banyuwangi Festival Calendar, with the event 'Banyuwangi Tempo Doeloe' taking place from 23 to 25 September 2025.

B. METHOD

This article is an exposition on the creativity of artists who transform oral traditions and manuscripts into creative and innovative products. The data discussed in this article was obtained through interviews with artists via focus group discussions (FGD) and workshops conducted in June 2025 in Banyuwangi. The FGD and workshops were attended by artists, cultural observers, academics from universities in Banyuwangi, the Banyuwangi Arts Council, and arts and cultural communities. In addition, a literature search was conducted related to five thematic areas that needed to be elaborated for further discussion.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The five themes used as material for adaptation are traditional cultural treasures that live on among the people of Banyuwangi. The five types are 'Babad Sri Tanjung,' 'Babad Tawangalun,' the "Gembrung" tradition, 'Jaranan Buto,' and 'Rengganis.' The artists involved in the adaptation were divided into five groups. The groups working on the five types of oral traditions and manuscripts were: Mr Ahmad's group, which worked on 'Babad Sri Tanjung'; Mr Muttafaqur's group, which chose 'Babad Tawangalun'; Mrs Yeti Chotimah's group, which based its creation on the 'Gembrung' tradition; Mrs. May

Widiastuti's group chose 'Jaranan Buto,' and Mrs. Nadhira Andalibta's group worked on 'Rengganis.'

Each group worked on their chosen theme through deliberation to reach a consensus so that each member was committed to facing their respective challenges in creating their work. The creative process for each group was carried out over a period of three months (June-August 2025) and was performed on 24 September 2025. The following section provides an overview of the creativity and innovation of each group.

Cultural Diversity in Banyuwangi

Banyuwangi has a variety of oral traditions and manuscripts that have the potential to become innovative creative products. The creation of these creative and innovative products is possible because the cultural actors in Banyuwangi have a national and international reputation. It has been proven that their creative works can increase productivity and have an impact on the welfare of the actors. This is a small part of the dynamic movement of the Banyuwangi Regional Government over the past twenty years, which has succeeded in revitalising oral traditions (arts, rituals, cuisine), particularly among the traditional Osing community, into a socio-cultural-economic force in the context of community development and empowerment in the tourism sector, becoming Banyuwangi's distinctive tourism industry. The annual cultural events organised by the Banyuwangi Regional Government, such as the 'Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival,' have become cultural exhibitions featuring fashion carnivals, art (traditional and modern), and cultural contests within the context of popular culture.

Culturally, Banyuwangi is a melting pot of traditional cultures from the surrounding areas, namely Javanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Osing cultures, which are communities that are not culturally derived from the three dominant cultures. Osing culture has grown stronger and has emerged as a community that represents the indigenous culture of Banyuwangi. The cultural hybridity that has been built through the composition of these three cultures is geographically represented by the term Pandalungan culture, which represents the Tapal Kuda region at the eastern tip of Java: Jember, Banyuwangi, and Probolinggo.

The oral traditions and manuscripts that have developed in this cultural region have their own forms and characteristics, so they cannot escape the hybrid nature of their cultural origins. This can be seen in the traditional Janger Banyuwangi theatre, which was formed from Javanese, Osing, and Balinese cultures. This traditional theatre combines Balinese dance, costumes, and gamelan music with Javanese and Banyuwangi folk tales. The stories commonly performed are entitled 'Damarwulan' or local folk tales, such as Sri Tanjung. In addition, traditional art based on the stories of prophets can be found in Mocoan Lontar Yusuf, which tells the story of the prophet Yusuf. Stories about history (babad) are based on the Tawangalun myth or the character Minakjinggo, who became

an icon of the Blambangan Kingdom. Since 2018, this art form has been designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage (WBTB).

The oral tradition of Gembrung in the cultural region of Banyuwangi developed as a tradition with Islamic nuances. In the artistic heritage derived from Islamic culture (Middle East), gembrung adopted the art of burdah, which consists of praises and sholawat from the Barzanji book. These praises are accompanied by a large tambourine, which in Banyuwangi society is called 'gembrung' (onomatopoeia) from the sound the instrument makes when struck. In Osing society, this art form has been augmented with traditional musical instruments (kendang kempul), resulting in a hybridisation of musical instruments and the function of this art form for preaching. Nowadays, the existence of this art form is increasingly declining and tends to disappear because its practitioners are generally elderly. Therefore, the younger generation is now required to be able to make this art form a source of creative product creation, including short stories, graphic designs for T-shirt ornaments, and innovative performance forms based on the Gembrung tradition.

The intangible cultural heritage of Banyuwangi culture is the Sri Tanjung lontar, which is based on the Sri Tanjung folk tale. The story of Sri Tanjung as an oral tradition of the Banyuwangi people has undergone many transformations, in the form of story versions, dance dramas, songs, janger plays, and fashion themes. In addition to this folk tale, there is also a historical narrative of Banyuwangi in the form of the Babad Tawangalun. This manuscript tells the story of the origins of the kings of Blambangan since the 17th century, beginning with Prince Kedhawung. Apart from being a historical narrative, the manuscript also contains myths about the heroic deeds of Blambangan figures. This manuscript has been translated from Manuscript NB 199 in the National Library collection by Wiwin Indiarti, et al. (2020).

The Jaranan Buto dance for the people of Banyuwangi is an entertaining dance. Behind the expressions of the Jaranan Buto dance lies a narrative about the legendary figure Minak Jinggo, the brave and mighty King of Blambangan, who is represented as a giant (buto). Meanwhile, it is said that the creator of this dance was Mr. Setro Asnawi from the village of Kebondalem, Bangorejo District, Banyuwangi. The dance incorporates elements of Osing and Mataraman culture, particularly in the costumes and braided horses that depict giant-faced horses (jaran buto). The myth of Minak Jinggo has become a belief among the people of Banyuwangi regarding his resistance to Mataram's domination of the Blambangan kingdom.

Rengganis is a traditional theatre from Banyuwangi that combines various elements of performing arts, namely wayang orang, ketoprak, and ludruk. This art form is also known as Praburoro, referring to the character Prabu Roro in the Serat Menak manuscript, which tells the story of Amir Hamzah's heroism as a propagator of Islam (based on the Persian epic, 'Qisaa'l Emir Hamza'). In Malay culture, this story is also found in 'Hikayat Amir

Hamzah.’ In the performing arts tradition of Central Java, it appears in the form of Wayang Kulit Menak. The character Amir Hamzah himself is the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Hikayat Amir Hamzah in Javanese and Malay Arabic script is usually read by soldiers before going into battle. Through these recitations, it is said that the soldiers gained encouragement and courage in battle. As a motivational text, the story of Amir Hamzah was also used to spread Islam in a localised format in Java, namely through wayang performances. The source of the story is generally from Serat Menak, a Javanese-Islamic literary work from the 15th century. The manuscript, which features wayang illuminations to adorn the text, has influenced the creation of performing arts in Java, such as wayang kulit, wayang klitik, and traditional Rengganis theatre.

The story performed in this traditional Rengganis theatre tells of the conquest of a pagan king who was later converted to Islam. As a performing art in Banyuwangi, this traditional theatre is strongly influenced by elements of wayang orang (in terms of costumes), with the characters speaking in Javanese and Osing languages. The diverse traditional arts based on oral traditions and manuscripts in Banyuwangi culture have the potential to be developed into creative products that are relevant to contemporary tastes as expressions of today's culture.

Innovative Creativity of Art Activists in Banyuwangi

The programme for creating literary works and creative products based on oral traditions and manuscripts in Banyuwangi was attended by 30 people who participated in a four-month process (June-September 2025). During this process, there were two categories that participants had to work on. The 30 participants were individually required to create innovative and creative works. In groups (six people per group), they worked together to create works based on the five themes. The creative process in the groups was based on the individual works (with reference to one of the predetermined themes).

In the individual work category, what is interesting is the idea behind the creation of the adaptation. The five themes that the participants must work on are related to Babad Sri Tanjung, Babad Tawang Alun, Jaranan Buto, Seni Rengganis, and Seni Gembrung. Each person chooses one of the five themes and adapts it.

The results of the participants' creative endeavours took the form of poetry, short stories, dance, monologues, drama scripts, paintings, illustrations/drawings (T-shirts), and souvenirs (miniature musical instruments). A total of 21 individual works were collected and presented by the participants. There are still 9 works that have not been identified. However, from the 21 works collected, the numbers can be seen in Table 1 below.

1. Implications and Strengthening Strategies

The findings discussed indicate that the development of creative industries based on oral traditions not only has economic impacts but also social and cultural implications. These

implications can be reviewed in three main aspects: cultural preservation, economic empowerment, and identity strengthening.

In the cultural preservation, language literacy and translation make oral traditions important instruments for maintaining the continuity of cultural values. UNESCO (2018) emphasizes that tangible cultural heritage, including oral traditions, can only endure if it is reproduced and represented in new social contexts. Through systematic documentation and the utilization of digital media, oral traditions are not only preserved but also reintroduced in formats that align with the preferences of younger generations.

From the economic perspective, creative products based on oral traditions provide significant added value. Howkins (2009) states that the creative industry is an economic sector that relies on ideas and creativity as its primary resources. When traditional oral forms such as pantun, folklore, or folktales are repackaged into creative products, their economic value increases without eliminating the cultural values embedded within them. This opens opportunities for local communities to participate in the global creative economy by positioning traditions as the main attraction.

From the identity perspective, creative products based on oral traditions serve as representations of cultural identity that reinforce the sense of belonging within a community. Hall (1997) emphasizes that cultural identity is dynamic and constantly negotiated through practices of representation. Creative products derived from oral traditions illustrate how local values can appear in modern forms while simultaneously becoming symbols of pride that strengthen social cohesion. On a broader scale, such products play a role in cultural diplomacy, introducing local heritage to the international arena, and building a positive national image.

To realize these implications, comprehensive strengthening strategies are required. First, reinforcing language and literacy related to oral traditions must be prioritized, both through formal education and nonformal literacy programs. Strong literacy fosters creative generations capable of transforming languages and traditions into innovative works (UNESCO, 2006; OECD, 2019). Second, the documentation of oral traditions must be carried out systematically and sustainably, including the digitization of cultural archives to ensure broader access for the public. Third, optimizing digital marketing strategies is essential so that creative products can reach global audiences. Florida (2022) stresses that the sustainability of creative industries is closely tied to their ability to connect with global markets.

With a strengthening strategy in place, oral traditions are not only preserved as cultural heritage but also empowered as a sustainable source of economic capital. The synergy of preservation, innovation, and marketing will position oral traditions as the foundation of an adaptive, competitive, and globally relevant creative industry.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that language and oral traditions hold strategic potential as the foundation for developing the creative industry. As a medium of communication and cultural representation, oral traditions serve not only to convey messages but also as symbolic capital that can be converted into economic value through creative processes. Oral traditions, such as pantun, folklore, and folktales, can be reinterpreted and transformed into diverse creative products across various platforms, including print works, performances, and digital content.

The findings further highlight that language literacy is a fundamental element in the advancement of creative industries. Strong literacy enables the creation of high-quality products, fosters creative collaboration, and extends marketing reach to the global level. In addition, the translation and adaptation of oral traditions have proven effective as an innovative strategy for maintaining the relevance of local cultural heritage within the dynamics of globalization. Nevertheless, the development of creative industries based on oral traditions continues to face several challenges, such as low literacy levels, limited documentation of oral traditions, weak digital marketing strategies, and the risk of commodification. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive strengthening strategies.

The implications of this study emphasize the importance of three strategic measures: strengthening literacy through both formal education and nonformal literacy programs, documenting and digitizing oral traditions systematically; and optimizing digital marketing strategies and fostering cross-sector collaboration. The synergy of preservation, innovation, and distribution will ensure that oral traditions function not only as cultural heritage but also as sustainable economic resources. Overall, the development of creative industries based on oral traditions can be regarded as a dual strategy: preserving cultural heritage to keep it alive while simultaneously generating new economic opportunities that are relevant and competitive in the global era.

E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) and the Graduate School of Universitas Negeri Jakarta for their financial support of the community service program under Decree No. SK 9/UN39.5/PKM/PS-UNJ/III/2025. This support has played a crucial role in the implementation of the activities and has been an essential foundation for the writing of this work.

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