



## The Believer in One Almighty God and Digital Technology: Case Study on Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa Pusat Kebumen

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### Abstract

Digital technology has become a core part of daily life, impacting communication, work, and interaction. This shift poses challenges for maintaining spiritual values, especially as it affects how religious beliefs and practices are integrated into modern culture. This is a challenge for believers to be able to accept the development of digital technology by not changing the sacredness of the guidance. This research investigates how members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), a belief organization in Wonokriyo Village in Kebumen, navigate these challenges, exploring the influence of digital technology on their spiritual teachings, their efforts to preserve traditional doctrines like "*maca alam, maca kahanan*," and the limitations they encounter in balancing tradition with modern advancements. This case study was conducted using a qualitative research method. Data collection techniques were carried out by interviewing organization administrators, elders, and the younger generation of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa. The results showed that the guidance of believers in this group is related to the way their members interact with digital technology such as the meaning contained in the guidance of "*maca alam, maca kahanan*" where Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa uses computers to adapt to the times and the sustainability of the organization. In addition, the believers also use mobile phones as a tool of communication to interact with administrators and other members. The believers still maintain guidance in the use of digital technology, which reflects the balance between tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** believers in one almighty God; digital technology; *Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa*; guidance

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country made up of various ethnic groups, races, languages, and beliefs that have developed from Sabang to Merauke. The pluralism and diversity present in Indonesian society have shaped a variety of cultures and life philosophies of the Indonesian people (Dan Peri Agusti, 2019). The diversity of Indonesian society is one of the nation's strengths, firmly upholding the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), ensuring that the sense of unity remains intact.

The believers in One Almighty God in Indonesia refer to individuals or groups who follow traditional, indigenous, or spiritual beliefs that do not fall under the officially recognized religions such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism. These beliefs are officially acknowledged within Indonesia's legal system, as guaranteed by Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which ensures freedom of religion and belief. The diversity in Indonesia presents a challenge in responding to the progress of the digital technology era, especially for believers in one almighty God. This challenge arises from teachings passed down through generations, which serve as the foundation for behavior. As explained by Sri Hartini (2017), "Belief in One Almighty God must be understood and recognized as a resource that is deeply rooted and contains traditional value wisdom, which has the potential to be utilized." Based on this explanation, it is emphasized that believers in one almighty God continue to maintain the sacredness of their teachings within their respective organizations, despite the development of digital technology today.

According to data from the Subdirector of Belief, Directorate of KMA, there are 184 central-level belief organizations spread throughout Indonesia (Belief, 2016). The distribution of belief organizations also supports the diversity of teachings related to believers in one almighty God. In this context, the acceptance of digital technology development varies, depending on the sources and sacredness of each organization's teachings. For example, members of the Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) continue to adhere to their teachings while responding to the advancement of the times, particularly digital technology development. The Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) is one of the belief organizations headquartered in Wonokriyo Village, Gombong District, Kebumen Regency. The development of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) in Indonesia is spread across several regions, including: Central Java (Gombong, Kebumen, Cilacap, Banjarnegara, and Banyumas), West Java (Banjar-Patoman), Lampung

(South Lampung, Pesawaran, Pringsewu, Tanggamus, West Lampung, Mesuji, and Tulang Bawang), and Riau (Rokan Hilir). In 2014, there were 2,321 members affiliated with the Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) (Adhitama, 2022).

Previous research indicates that the digital landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for believers. On one hand, technology can serve as a means for cultural preservation and dissemination, allowing for broader outreach and engagement with younger generations (Mulyana, 2020). On the other hand, there are concerns regarding the potential dilution of traditional values and practices as these communities interact with modern technology (Buchori, 2003). This study seeks to explore the influence of digital technology on their spiritual teachings, their efforts to preserve traditional doctrines like "*maca alam, maca kahanan*", and the challenges they encounter in balancing tradition with modern advancements.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the intersection of digital technology and the practices of the believers in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa Pusat Kebumen. This method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how this specific community navigates the digital landscape while maintaining their traditional beliefs and practices.

### **Research Design**

The research design is a single-case study focusing on Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa Pusat Kebumen. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the organization's unique context, its members' experiences with digital technology, and the impact of digitalization on their spiritual practices and community dynamics.

### **Subject of Research**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide insights into various aspects of the community's engagement with digital technology. Snowball sampling was also employed to reach members who are particularly active in digital spaces.

## **Instruments**

Data collection for this research was conducted using a combination of methods to create a rich and comprehensive dataset. First, semi-structured interviews were held with various participants, including organization leaders, elder members (*sesepuh*), younger members, and those responsible for digital initiatives. In addition to interviews, participant observation was utilized during regular gatherings (*sarasehan*), digital literacy workshops, and any online rituals or meetings that were conducted.

Digital ethnography played a crucial role in this research, involving the observation of the organization's social media presence, analysis of digital communication channels used by members, and examination of any digital archives or online resources maintained by the community. Finally, document analysis was performed on traditional texts and teachings, digital adaptations of these materials, and social media posts or online discussions related to the organization's beliefs and practices. This multifaceted approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of how beliefs in one almighty God interact with digital technology in the context of the Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the following strategies were employed: triangulation of data sources and collection methods, member checking with key informants, peer debriefing with colleagues familiar with digital anthropology and Indonesian spiritual traditions, and maintaining a reflexive journal to account for researcher bias.

This methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how the believers in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa engage with digital technology, balancing tradition with modernization in their spiritual and community practices.

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to process the collected data. The steps are familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes related to digital technology use and its impact on beliefs and practices, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachings of Belief in One Almighty God

In essence, the belief in one almighty God that has developed in Indonesia is based on local wisdom (Tim Direktorat Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa dan Tradisi, 2017). For instance, the Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) has a core teaching called "*wet kodrat hukum adat, urip langgeng dan manunggaling kawula gusti*" (the natural law, eternal life, and unity between the servant and God). This teaching is practiced and serves as a guide for the life of the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB). It is explained that in responding to the development of digital technology, the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa follow the teaching of "*maca alam, maca kahanan*" (reading the environment, reading the situation). The meaning of this teaching is that humans can understand the current circumstances and use that understanding as a basis for action (Hadi, 2023).

The meaning contained in the teaching of "*maca alam, maca kahanan*" expects the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa to adapt without abandoning applicable norms and to use it as a philosophy of life to become virtuous people. Additionally, this teaching is reflected in the mystical literature (*mantram* or prayer for safety) found in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa: "*niat ingsung amurwani salining dina, salining sasi, salining mangso, salining taun, salining windu, salining jaman, salining pernatatan...*" which means "I intend to begin the changing of the day, the changing of the month, the changing of the season, the changing of the year, the changing of the windu, the changing of the era, the changing of the rules..." The meaning of this prayer is related to the fact that humans do not know what will happen in the future, and thus, in living their lives, they must be ready with an intention from their innermost heart to accept whatever happens.

Moreover, members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) follow the principle of *panca bakti* (five devotions) in facing everything. The first is devotion to God, the second is devotion to parents—because humans exist thanks to God and parents, this devotion is directed toward parents. The third is devotion to teachers/ancestors, who are the ones that provide lessons. The fourth is devotion to the government, which ensures the continuity of the state. The fifth is devotion to fellow living beings (Adhitama, 2022). In the fourth point of *panca bakti*, which states "devotion to the government," members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) continue to obey the rules set by the government. This ties in with the development of digital technology, supported by the role of the government (Tjaroko, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a teaching known as *sesanti memayu hayuning bawana*, which means that humans must play a role in enhancing the beauty of the world as it evolves, changes eras, and enters new times. Therefore, members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) continue to follow the progress of the times in accordance with the will of God Almighty (Tjaroko, 2014). Based on various teachings in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), both in general and specifically, the community accepts the development of digital technology (Turimin, 2023). It is undeniable that digital technology is now one of the essential needs for human continuity. In the teachings of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), the community supports and follows this development without abandoning the sacredness of its teachings.

### **Use of Digital Technology**

The relationship between the teachings of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and the development of digital technology is closely intertwined. While the sacredness of the teachings remains central, they are in harmony with the progress of the times. The balance that humans establish in their lives is one of the means to create an atmosphere of peace (*memayu hayuning bawana*) (Sawal, 2023). Some examples of the use of digital technology in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa include:

#### ***Use of Computers***

Computers are electronic devices capable of inputting data, processing it according to the user's needs, and producing outputs in the form of images, audio, video, or audiovisual content (Situmorang and Maudiarti, 2020). Based on the teaching of *maca alam, maca kahanan* (reading the environment, reading the situation), it indirectly encourages members to keep up with the progress of the times. For example, in running the organization, Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa has begun using computers to handle organizational administration, such as correspondence, document/archiving management, and more (Turimin, 2023). This is done not without reason—using computers is one of the actions taken by Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa to maintain the continuity of the organization while keeping up with the times, in line with the meaning of their teachings.

### ***Use of Mobile Phones***

Mobile phones are portable electronic telecommunications devices with basic functions that can easily connect to telephone networks. In the modern era, mobile phones have become one of the necessities of daily life (Nuraliyah et al., 2022). In principle, their use is not much different from that of computers. The members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) continue to adhere to their teachings to preserve the values and philosophy embedded in those teachings (Sawal, 2023).

### ***Use of Social Media***

According to Chris Brogan (2010, in Nandy 2022), social media is a communication tool that enables various new forms of interaction. Based on this definition, the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa use social media to interact with the broader community and with fellow members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa in particular (Turimin, 2023). The social media platforms used by members include WhatsApp Messenger, Facebook, Instagram, and others. Although sometimes focused solely on communication, the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) still use social media apps to facilitate relationships among themselves. The most apparent impact is the ability to send information instantly, such as in the process of sending letters. In the past, before digital technology was as advanced as it is today, sending letters or messages would take a long time (Turimin, 2023). With the development of digital technology, the process of sending correspondence and information can now be done instantly.

These are a few examples of the use of digital technology in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa. It can be concluded that Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) has accepted and used digital technology, although still in relatively simple ways.

### **Limitations on the Use of Digital Technology in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)**

The use of digital technology presents a unique challenge, especially for believers, who must keep up with the times without abandoning the sacred values of their teachings. Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) is no different. Although it embraces the development of digital technology, it imposes limitations on its use to preserve the sacredness and values of its teachings (Turimin, 2023).

Limiting the use of digital technology is aimed at preserving the spiritual values contained in their teachings and sacred places. For example, around the Wonomarto sanggar (community hall) in Wonokriyo Village, Gombong District, Kebumen Regency (the central sanggar), members are not allowed to take pictures indiscriminately. This guideline is based on the belief that the central sanggar is a sacred place for the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB). But how about taking pictures of the central sanggar? It is explained that the meaning of "not allowed indiscriminately" depends on the intention of the person taking the picture. As long as it is for positive purposes and with permission from the caretaker of the sanggar (the family of Ki Bagus Hadi Kusumo, the founder of the teachings), it is permitted (Turimin, 2023).

The elders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) have affirmed that this guideline remains in effect to this day. In addition to being considered a sacred place by the members, the Wonomarto sanggar is believed to contain spiritual energy and philosophies embedded in its carvings and reliefs (Sawal, 2023). It should be noted that the sanggar or place of worship is a space for worshipping the Creator and must be kept pure from negative human intentions.

Another example of limitations on the use of digital technology depends on individual members and their practice of self-reflection in line with Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) teachings. The concept of self-reflection is embedded in a Javanese phrase: "*sapa garwe nganggo, sapa nandur ngunduh*" (whoever creates, uses; whoever plants, harvests), which conveys the idea of reciprocity. Therefore, in using digital technology, members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) are mindful of this concept. As long as its use is positive, it will lead to positive outcomes as well.

### **Perspectives of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) Members on the Development of Digital Technology**

Based on the interviews, the perspectives on the development and use of digital technology can be categorized into three viewpoints:

#### ***Elders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)***

According to the elders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), it is necessary to keep up with the times, including the development of digital technology, in order to maintain harmony with modern advancements. However, it is essential to stay true to the teachings of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and not forget the sacredness of the teachings and the wisdom passed



down by the ancestors. This way, as members, we can find balance. As one of the elders once said, "*dulu keset, menjadi serbet, selanjutnya menjadi kaset*" (from mat to towel, then to cassette), meaning that humans must evolve for the better, allowing us to remain in harmony with the changing times (Sawal, 2023).

The goal of adapting to the times is for the sustainability of the community, but we should not forget our role as spiritual practitioners. We must always uphold Indonesia's local wisdom, especially for the younger generation, and use digital technology wisely to bring about positive outcomes (Sawal, 2023). Based on the elders' perspective, it is clear that they support the younger generation in embracing digital technology, with the condition that they do not abandon the spiritual values of their teachings. In a Javanese expression, the elders apply the principle "*culna ndase gandoli buntute*," meaning to allow the generation to progress while acting as a reminder if they go too far.

### ***Leaders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)***

The opinions of the leaders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) align with those of the elders. They noted that the current development of digital technology has made organizational tasks easier. For example, delivering information can now be done via phone, unlike in the past when letters had to be sent, which took a lot of time, or when one had to visit in person to deliver sensitive or sacred messages. Additionally, documentation and archiving of documents and activities within Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) can be done more easily to ensure that the information is passed on to future generations (Turimin, 2023).

From this explanation, it can be concluded that technological advancements have contributed to organizational activities within Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB). However, the leaders still take care in determining which information can be shared with the community. General information can be shared through technology, but sensitive or sacred information is still conveyed in person. The leaders of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) adhere to the values of their teachings and the norms of communicating with the community. It is emphasized that, as spiritual practitioners in Indonesia, they must uphold the nation's culture.

### ***Youth of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)***

According to the youth of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), the development of digital technology is generally positive. As the younger generation, they must keep up with technological advancements because they

facilitate connectivity, can be used as a learning tool, and provide a platform for self-expression (Esti, 2023). For example, by participating in seminars or workshops for self-development. The implementation of this idea includes using digital technology as a means of connectivity with government agencies or the general public regarding information about believers of the faith. Additionally, they use digital technology to introduce the teachings of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) through videos or journals.

The simplest implementation is maintaining balance between relationships with others and with God. When one is diligent in worship and prayer, they become more emotionally mature, and their actions become more structured. Although we cannot control what is happening, including the development of digital technology and its impacts, we can control ourselves and how we respond to these changes (Rini, 2023). For instance, we can better manage our time to avoid spending too much time on smartphones in unproductive ways. We can also better control our comments, writings, and posts on social media, and naturally, God's guidance will accompany all our actions, preventing us from being easily swayed by the negative impacts of today's digital advancements.

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that all groups—elders, leaders, and the youth of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)—accept the changing times.

## Discussion

The integration of traditional values and digital advancements in Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa aligns with Kozlovsky (2015) concept of *glocalization*, where global influences are adapted without losing local identity. The teachings of *maca alam*, *maca kahanan* reflect cultural pragmatism as described by Sztompka (1993), enabling communities to navigate modern challenges using traditional wisdom as a guide. Similarly, Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions theory highlights how high-context cultures like Indonesia's can balance collective values with modernization. The principle of *panca bakti*, particularly devotion to the government, resonates with Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) findings on cultural modernization, emphasizing institutional roles in technological adaptation. Furthermore, Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa's commitment to preserving sacred teachings while embracing technological progress echoes Turiman et al.'s (2012) study, which found that religious moderation fosters a harmonious coexistence between tradition and innovation. Together, these

theories illustrate how it serves as a model for integrating local wisdom with modernity, offering practical insights into cultural adaptability.

Meanwhile, the use of digital technology into the practices of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa reflects the concept of cultural adaptability, aligning with Sztompka's (1993) theory of cultural pragmatism, where traditional values serve as a guide for navigating technological advancements. The use of computers, mobile phones, and social media within Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa demonstrates a practical application of their teaching *maca alam, maca kahanan* (reading the environment, reading the situation), emphasizing the need to adapt to contemporary changes while preserving core values. Additionally, the use of digital tools for communication and organizational purposes mirrors Turiman et al.'s (2012) findings that communities embracing religious moderation and cultural preservation are more likely to integrate technology without compromising their traditions.

Then, the limitations on digital technology use within Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa reflect a deliberate effort to balance modern advancements with the preservation of spiritual and cultural values. Additionally, the practice of self-reflection in line with the Javanese concept of reciprocity (*sapa garwe nganggo, sapa nandur ngunduh*) aligns with Turiman et al.'s (2012) findings that moral and ethical frameworks are essential in guiding the use of technology within traditional societies. Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa ensures that digital technology is integrated in ways that enhance, rather than compromise, their cultural identity and spiritual beliefs.

In the end, the perspectives of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa members on digital technology reflect a nuanced approach that balances modernization with cultural preservation. The elders emphasize harmony and spiritual grounding, resonating with Geertz's (1960) view of religion as a framework for navigating social changes. Meanwhile, the leaders underscore the pragmatic benefits of technology in organizational efficiency, supporting Turiman et al.'s (2012) findings that digital tools enhance knowledge sharing and administrative processes. The youth's focus on self-expression and learning through technology reflects Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) theory of value change, where younger generations embrace modernization while retaining core values. Together, these insights demonstrate how Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa integrates digital technology into its practices while safeguarding its sacred teachings and cultural identity.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the relationship between the teachings of belief in one almighty God and the development of digital technology must be carefully considered so as not to alter the sacredness of the teachings. Within the Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB), there are several teachings related to the development of digital technology, such as "*maca alam, maca kahanan,*" *mantram do'a selamat, panca bakti, and sesanti*. These teachings serve as guidelines for the members of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) to harmonize themselves with the changing times. In addition, the believers also use mobile phones as a tool of communication to interact with administrators and other members. The believers still maintain guidance in the use of digital technology, which reflects the balance between tradition and modernity. The limitations on the use of digital technology, on the other hand, are rooted in the aim of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) members to preserve the sacred values of their beliefs.

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