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Rethinking the Linearity of DMIS: Hybrid Cultural Traditions and Intercultural Sensitivity in Asian Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The model of intercultural sensitivity development developed by Milton Bennet has been widely used in measuring intercultural sensitivity. This Western model tends to describe a linear process of sensitivity development from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. However, empirical studies conducted in Asia show that they do not always keep up with the development of existing linearity. This article aims to explore how the tradition of branding in North Lombok plays a role in integrating a multicultural society. Using a phenomenological approach, this article offers a new interpretation of how the Memarek tradition became a medium of intercultural communication by negotiating a cultural identity that creates social cohesion and the integration of multi-ethnic communities across religions. The findings suggest that the Memarek tradition not only preserves oral traditions, but also creates an open space for negotiating identities between different ethnic and religious groups. This tradition accommodates symbolic negotiations through ritual adaptation, ensuring acculturation occurs without abandoning the cultural identity that each ethnicity and religion possesses. The ritual practice of the Memarek tradition bridges the growth of people's orientation sensitivity from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, fostering a spirit of tolerance, social solidarity, and intercultural sensitivity. This research contributes to the development of contextual intercultural sensitivity models according to cultural diversity in the Asian Region. Practically, the Memarek Tradition can be a model for developing intercultural sensitivity in the fields of multicultural education, horizontal conflict management training, and multi-community social resolution strategies.

Keywords: Hybrid culture, intercultural communication, intercultural sensitivity, identity negotiations, memarek tradition

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INTRODUCTION

Research on intercultural sensitivity has become an interesting topic in recent decades. In a global context characterised by increased human mobility, accelerated information exchange, and cross-border interaction and global cooperation, this encourages more research on intercultural sensitivity. The model of intercultural sensitivity developed by Milton Bennett describes the six stages of intercultural sensitivity development (Bennet, 1993). This model is widely used in the development of various intercultural training programs, focusing on the management of cultural diversity in different countries (Kirillova et al., 2015). However, the assumption of linearity is less relevant when applied to an Asian context where cultural complexity is very high, with its ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity, a very long cultural history, and many Hybrid cultures formed from cultural acculturation.

Studies (Lee et al., 2020) show the acceptance of foreign cultures involves a complex process of identity negotiation to form a hybrid identity. However, this process is not always linear, and individuals can experience progress, stagnation, or setbacks in intercultural sensibilities and depend on the social context and personal experiences experienced. Western thinking generally prioritises individualism and progressivism, while Asian cultures tend to prioritise collectivism, social harmony, and the flexibility of cultural identity (Jones & Sweeney, 2005). However, in the Asian context marked by pluralism, syncretism and convergence, intercultural experiences are influenced by the complexity of local values that drive the process of adaptation. The question of this research is how the mamarek tradition becomes a medium of intercultural communication and negotiation of the cultural identity of multiethnic interfaith communities in North Lombok. This research proposes a more inclusive, contextual, and relevant approach from an Asian perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The extensive interaction of Asian cultures with a long history of trade, colonialism, and migration has contributed to the emergence of complex hybrid cultural traditions (Ong, 2012) which illustrates that Asian societies have long adopted and integrated diverse norms and values from various traditions, thus creating unique and dynamic cultural identities. Such cultural hybridity arises from the interaction between local traditions and Global influences that lead to the formation of new cultural identities that contribute to the development of hybrid cultures by defying the boundaries of traditional identities (Bivan et al., 2018; Chan, 2019). Identity negotiation is a dynamic process that involves individuals negotiating their meaning, values, and cultural identities with each other during interactions. In the context of hybridity, these negotiations are becoming increasingly complex and do not always follow a linear development path (Bishop & Waring, 2016; Harris, 2008).

METHODS

This study uses a case study approach to investigate the complexity of the Memarek tradition. Informants are determined by purposive sampling techniques with criteria including figures recognised as traditional leaders, religious leaders, and cultural figures who understand deeply and are directly involved in traditions. A total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted, with a focus on personal narratives, cultural meanings, and reflections on local wisdom that integrates pluralistic societies. Observation is carried out through involvement and investigates communicative actions between groups. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is used to explain the results of the research and consistently uses the paradigm of social constructivism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Oral Traditions and Social functions Cultural Traditions

North Lombok Regency is rich in ancestral heritage and has the power to maintain natural balance and social integration. Myths related to the tradition of memarking have been preserved and passed down among Sasak Muslims, Sasak Buddhists and Balinese Hindus for hundreds of years. This collective belief suggests the existence of a system that goes beyond formal cultural identity. Ritual serves as a model of a particular reality (Geertz, 1973). Oral traditions serve as a cultural energy that continues to encourage individuals to stay connected to their traditional roots while adapting to contemporary changes (interview with Mr. Raden Agus Bakri). The tradition of branding is a communicative act in which intercultural communication occurs through various symbolic actions and collective rituals (Hymes, 1972). During the process of traditions, rituals, clothing, food, and the participation of various groups have contributed as symbolic messages that affirm the existence and values of each community are defended and respected, becoming traditional public spaces where discussion, negotiation and consensus take place implicitly (Habermas, 1989). Communities are formed from egalitarian and cohesive shared experiences that are set aside when there are differences in status and social identity (Turner, 2017).

Tradition as a Medium for Negotiation of Identity and Complexity

The tradition of branding plays a role as a medium in negotiating different cultural identities. This emphasises the importance of social space and ritual reverence as a place where interactions between identity groups are carried out, adapted, and change dynamically (Kim, 2005). In this tradition, identity negotiation is embodied as a form of identity preservation in which each group introduces symbols, costumes and cultural attributes or other religious attributes in a ritual. It signifies an effort to maintain each

other's cultural identities while engaging in constructive dialogue, while at the same time the practice of acceptance and adaptation can be seen and embodied in a variety of other practices, such as in ritual sequences or eating together and accommodating things that are considered taboo by each religion (interview with Mr. Rasidep). The negotiation process takes place in a continuous manner in accordance with the collective norms that have been agreed upon; this collective identity emerges as a shared consciousness as an integral part of society.

The Complexity of Identity Negotiation Dynamics

Although it seems peaceful, identity negotiations do not always go smoothly. Various barriers indicate the existence of factors that cause ambiguity and tension between groups, especially when certain symbols or practices are considered too dominant by other groups, but agreements that have been made together provide guidelines for the resolution of verbal and nonverbal conflicts through symbolic compromise and joint ritual adaptation (interview with Mr. Sudirman). The third concept of expressed space (Bhabha, 2012) is that new identities and collective meanings can emerge at various intersections. Social and ritual spaces also serve as dynamic environments for adaptation and transformation of identity (Kim, 2001, 2005). The space for identity negotiation occurs simultaneously through symbols, actions, and non-verbal communication through local dimensions and rituals. Common values are used as a reference for working together in various aspects of life (interview with Mr. Kamardi), encouraging tradition as a social laboratory to develop a more authentic and contextual theory of intercultural communication from an Asian perspective.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of memarek in North Lombok is a reality of multicultural communication that is full of social, ritual, and symbolic meaning. Multi-ethnic collective participation across religions plays an active communicator role, fostering social cohesion and integration between groups. The tradition of memarek has become an active medium for conducting continuous negotiations, not only through formal discourse, but also through collective action, symbol exchange, and ritual adaptation involving all components. The identity negotiation process is flexible and dynamic, based on openness, togetherness and equality without touching the privacy space that is sensitive to differences. Interaction dynamics are managed and integrated into broad social understandings, attitudes, and behaviours. For this reason, the assumption of the linearity of DMIS in the Asian region in its development is influenced by various factors, especially the existence of hybrid

cultural traditions as media, so that the model in its implementation can be more flexible and contextual, accommodating the complexity of cultural diversity in Asia.

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