

Application of Tri Hita Karana (THK) in Harmonizing the Culture of the Hubula Community in Balim Valley

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A B S T R A C T

This article examines the application of Tri Hita Karana (THK) in the culture of the Hubula community of Balim Valley, Papua Highlands, emphasizing harmonious values that parallel those in Balinese Hindu society. The Hubula people incorporate the THK concept—traditionally rooted in Balinese Hindu beliefs—into key aspects of their lives, particularly in rituals related to agriculture (wen), livestock (wam), and leadership or conflict resolution (wim/ab-kain). They believe in a triadic harmony among the Creator (Walkarige), humanity, and nature (o'birige mende), which also includes maintaining balanced relationships among people (ab-kumi inom). This qualitative study explores these relationships, finding that harmony between the Creator, nature, and human society is upheld through this adapted THK framework. Unlike the theological and philosophical approach common in Abrahamic religions, the Hubula community's relationship with the Creator is material and practical, emphasizing an interconnected, tangible approach to spirituality and social values.

Keywords: Tri Hita Karana, Hubula Society, Balim Valley, Wen, Wam, Wim, Awene.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communities worldwide maintain rich cultural frameworks that reflect unique relationships with their environment, society, and spiritual beliefs. These frameworks are embedded within rituals, social norms, and practices that guide community life and emphasize harmonious living (Hodgson, 2019). Such philosophies are vital for preserving the identity and resilience of indigenous cultures, especially amid modernization and environmental challenges (Eriksen, 2018).

One example of a philosophy rooted in harmony is Tri Hita Karana (THK), a well-established concept in Balinese Hinduism. THK, meaning "Three Causes of Wellbeing," advocates for balance across three dimensions: humans' relationship with God (Parahyangan), society (Pawongan), and nature (Palemahan) (Windia et al., 2013). These relationships are seen as interconnected pillars essential for personal and community harmony (Suryawan, 2020). THK encourages adherents to honor the divine, respect others, and preserve the environment as a path to holistic well-being.

While THK is traditionally associated with Balinese Hindu society, elements of this harmony-oriented philosophy are present across many indigenous cultures in Indonesia and beyond. The Hubula people, also known as the Dani, residing in Balim Valley in Papua, Indonesia, exemplify a worldview focused on maintaining harmony among people, the Creator (Walkarige), and nature (o'birige mende) (Alua, 2006). This similar philosophical approach to harmony reflects a deep-seated value in balancing social, spiritual, and ecological relationships.

The Hubula community's lifestyle is based on subsistence farming, and their worldview is shaped by rituals associated with agriculture (wen), livestock (wam), and leadership or conflict resolution (wim) (Medlama, 2022). These domains serve as essential expressions of Hubula spirituality and cultural identity. Rituals in these areas highlight the community's respect for nature and for the unseen spiritual forces they believe influence every aspect of life (Killung, 2013).

By examining these practices, we can see parallels between Hubula beliefs and the THK concept, underscoring the universal appeal of harmony-oriented philosophies. Despite their distinct historical and cultural roots, both THK and Hubula beliefs promote values that are increasingly relevant today as societies seek sustainable ways of living (Santosa et al., 2021). Such parallel philosophies highlight the potential of indigenous wisdom in supporting sustainable development.

This study seeks to explore how the THK philosophy, traditionally part of Balinese Hinduism, resonates within the Hubula culture. By examining rituals and values around agriculture, livestock, and leadership, the study reveals how the Hubula community integrates spiritual beliefs into practical, daily activities. Their unique interpretation of harmony emphasizes a tangible relationship with the Creator, unlike the more abstract theological approach often found in structured religions (Mantovani, 1977; Medlama, 2009).

The material connection between the Hubula people and their spirituality sets their practice apart from other philosophical approaches. In Abrahamic religions, for instance, the relationship with the Creator is often highly theological and abstract (Eliade, 1987). However, the Hubula view this relationship as immediate and material, woven into their daily existence. This practical, tangible approach is evident in how the Hubula people incorporate their beliefs into agricultural practices and community leadership (Alua, 2006).

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze how the Hubula community's practices reflect THK principles, particularly their rituals in farming, livestock care, and leadership. Through interviews and observations, the study gathers insights into how these practices function to maintain harmony within the community, environment, and spiritual domain (Iskandar, 2010). This qualitative design enables a nuanced understanding of how indigenous values shape everyday life in the Hubula community.

By exploring these intersections between THK and Hubula culture, this research adds to the literature on indigenous philosophies and their relevance in promoting sustainable, balanced lifestyles. It also suggests that THK may be adaptable beyond Bali, serving as a bridge across cultures that share a focus on harmony with nature and the divine (Riana, 2011). This adaptability highlights the value of indigenous wisdom in shaping contemporary approaches to environmental and social challenges.

In conclusion, this article aims to provide insights into the Hubula's interpretation of THK and their approach to sustainability, spirituality, and cultural preservation. By

understanding how the Hubula people integrate THK principles into their lives, we gain a broader perspective on the potential for indigenous knowledge systems to inform and enrich global discourses on harmony, sustainability, and resilience (Sahlins, 1999).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, suitable for exploring cultural practices and beliefs that are deeply embedded within a specific community. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth examination of how the Hubula people interpret and apply the principles of Tri Hita Karana (THK) in their daily lives, particularly through agriculture, livestock management, and leadership practices. The qualitative design was chosen to capture the nuances of the Hubula's cultural practices, their material and spiritual significance, and the unique adaptations of THK principles in this indigenous context (Iskandar, 2010).

Data were collected through a combination of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review. Participatory observation involved the researcher's immersion in the community, enabling first-hand observation of rituals, interactions, and practices related to agriculture (wen), livestock (wam), and leadership or conflict resolution (wim). In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants – community leaders, elders, and other knowledgeable members – who provided insights into the significance and symbolic meanings of these practices. To ensure reliability, interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to ask both pre-planned and follow-up questions based on participant responses (Susan Stainback, 1988 in Sugiyono, 2011).

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who have an intimate understanding of Hubula cultural practices and their spiritual significance. Seven key informants from diverse backgrounds within the Hubula community were chosen, ensuring a range of perspectives across different clans and confederations. Informants were selected based on their recognized knowledge of traditional practices, their involvement in community rituals, and referrals from other community members, which helped identify those with in-depth expertise on the research themes (Iskandar, 2010). This selection ensured that the data gathered were rich, diverse, and representative of the community's interpretations of THK principles.

Data analysis means examining phenomena related to the research subject. Related to this, according to Gay (1987) in Kadir (2010:255): "Analysis of data can be investigated by comparing responses on data with responses on other data." Another opinion was expressed by Bogdan and Taylor (1975) in Iskandar (2010:254) that it is a formal data search process to find themes and ideas. Techniques for qualitative data analysis, researchers analyze the problems or issues that arise in the data, understand the intent of the participants, and then can interpret the meaning of the data. Then some important steps in research according to Iskandar (2011:255) are data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions and verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction to Findings

The findings reveal a rich tapestry of cultural practices within the Hubula community that align closely with the principles of Tri Hita Karana (THK). The Hubula people's interpretations of harmony reflect unique adaptations that balance their relationships with the Creator (Walkarige), the community, and nature. This section elaborates on the key findings in areas of agriculture (wen), livestock management (wam), and leadership or conflict resolution (wim), along with their cultural and spiritual significance.

Human-Divine Relationship

One of the pillars of THK is the relationship between humans and the divine, which in Balinese Hinduism is expressed through Parahyangan. For the Hubula, this relationship manifests through respect for Walkarige, or the Creator. The community holds rituals to honor the Creator's role in providing life's essentials, viewing natural resources as sacred gifts. This deep respect for Walkarige reflects a shared value with THK in fostering harmony between humanity and a higher power.

Materialistic Approach to Spirituality

Unlike the theological approach common in organized religions, the Hubula people view their relationship with Walkarige as material and immediate. The Creator's presence is considered essential to the prosperity of agriculture, livestock, and peace within the community. This view aligns with THK's emphasis on a tangible connection to the divine and highlights how Hubula spirituality is grounded in daily, practical life, rather than abstract theology.

Human-Nature Relationship

Another central THK component is Palemahan, or the relationship with nature. The Hubula people embody this principle through their respect for the land, agriculture, and natural resources. Practices around agriculture and resource use show a sustainable approach, emphasizing that the land provides resources that must be cared for to ensure continual blessings from Walkarige. This respect for nature underscores an ecological ethic similar to that of THK, where nature is not exploited but preserved and respected.

Agriculture (Wen) and Sustainable Practices

The Hubula practice sustainable agriculture, or wen, as a means of honoring their connection with the Creator and the land. Before planting crops, community members perform rituals to seek permission from Walkarige, demonstrating their belief that the land's bounty is a sacred responsibility. This ritual practice aligns with THK's concept of Palemahan, where maintaining a balanced relationship with nature is essential for communal well-being.

Livestock (Wam) as Spiritual and Economic Value

Livestock, or wam, holds dual significance in Hubula culture, both as a vital economic asset and a spiritual symbol. The Hubula believe that livestock are gifts from Walkarige, symbolizing abundance and blessing. This belief reinforces a reciprocal relationship with nature, where animals are cared for respectfully, and their roles in rituals underline the material connection with the divine.

Rituals in Livestock Management

Hubula rituals around livestock management reinforce the community's spiritual connection to their animals. Rituals are held to protect livestock, especially in times of disease outbreaks, as community members believe the Creator's blessing safeguards their herds. These practices reflect an adaptation of THK principles, specifically Palemahan, by integrating ecological respect into livestock care.

Human-Human Relationship

In THK, Pawongan represents harmonious relationships between people, an essential value mirrored in Hubula society. The Hubula community prioritizes unity and collective responsibility, maintaining harmonious relationships among members through shared rituals and reciprocal support. This approach highlights how social cohesion is fundamental to their cultural identity and spiritual beliefs.

Leadership (Wim) and Social Harmony

The concept of wim in Hubula society is central to maintaining social order and peace. Leaders, often respected elders, are seen as protectors and mediators who ensure that community needs align with cultural practices. This role is rooted in fostering social harmony, similar to the Pawongan principle in THK, where human relations are balanced to create a stable, unified society.

Conflict Resolution through Ritual

Conflict resolution in Hubula society incorporates rituals that emphasize peace and forgiveness. The Hubula believe that maintaining social harmony ensures community survival and prosperity. This practice reflects the Pawongan principle in THK, where conflict resolution strengthens social bonds and reinforces mutual respect among community members.

Communication through Wene and Awene

The Hubula use wene (communication) and awene (ritual communication) to convey respect and ask for guidance from the spiritual realm. These forms of communication facilitate interactions between the community and Walkarige, particularly during rituals. This practice aligns with THK's relational focus, where communication reinforces connections between the human and spiritual realms.

The Role of Wene in Spiritual Guidance

Wene, or everyday communication, is used by the Hubula to seek guidance in agricultural and social practices. Through this dialogue with the divine, the community gains insights into living harmoniously. This form of communication highlights the material and interactive nature of their spiritual beliefs, contrasting with more abstract forms of prayer in organized religions.

Awene as Ritualized Communication

Awene involves ritualistic forms of communication during specific events, such as harvest or hunting. These rituals are directed towards the Creator, asking for blessings or expressing gratitude. This practice mirrors THK's emphasis on direct communication with the divine, showing how ritual serves as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds.

Adaptation of THK Concepts in Hubula Life

The study shows that while THK originates in Balinese Hinduism, its principles resonate deeply with Hubula beliefs and practices. The alignment of THK's pillars – Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan – with the Hubula's relationship with the divine, community, and nature underscores THK's potential as a cross-cultural framework that supports sustainable living and social harmony.

Sustainability and Ecological Awareness

The Hubula community's practices demonstrate a profound ecological awareness rooted in THK-like principles. Their agriculture and livestock practices aim to maintain a balance with the environment, reflecting a sustainable approach similar to THK's Palemahan. This ecological respect highlights the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into sustainability discussions.

Spirituality in Daily Life

The Hubula's material interpretation of spirituality—seeing the Creator's influence in everyday activities—presents a unique approach to faith. This daily practice of spirituality, reflected in agriculture, livestock care, and community relations, shows a tangible application of THK principles in a different cultural context.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Understanding

These findings suggest that THK principles, while specific to Balinese Hinduism, can be adapted to various indigenous contexts to foster social and environmental harmony. By examining the Hubula community's practices, we gain insights into how similar philosophies can enhance cross-cultural understanding and provide models for sustainable living (Riana, 2011).

Contribution to Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

This research contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge by documenting Hubula practices that align with THK. Such documentation not only strengthens cultural heritage but also offers a framework for applying indigenous philosophies in broader sustainability and social cohesion discussions.

Broader Relevance of THK Principles

The study's findings highlight THK's adaptability beyond Bali, underscoring its relevance in other indigenous settings. By providing a structured approach to harmony, THK principles offer a model that could be applied in other cultures seeking sustainable, harmonious relationships with nature and society.

CONCLUSIONS

The Hubula people's adaptation of THK principles within their cultural practices reveals the universality and flexibility of harmony-based philosophies. Through agricultural rituals, livestock practices, and community leadership, the Hubula uphold values of respect, balance, and unity. These practices demonstrate how indigenous communities can interpret and apply ancient philosophies like THK in a way that is both culturally relevant and universally insightful.

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