

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF SEREN TAUN SACRED VALUES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The Seren Taun tradition, organised by the Sunda Wiwitan indigenous community in Cigugur Village, is one of the traditions facing the challenge of cultural transmission in the digital age. However, studies that systematically integrate the perspectives of the younger generation, education, and digital media within the context of this tradition remain very limited. This study aims to examine how the younger generation interprets the values of the Seren Taun tradition and how digital technology influences the process of cultural meaning-making. A qualitative approach was employed, utilising a scoping review method to map and synthesise relevant research findings. Data were obtained from Scopus and Publish or Perish through a systematic search conducted in January–February 2026, yielding a total of 25 national and international articles that met the inclusion criteria and were analysed using thematic analysis techniques. The results indicate that the younger generation plays an active role in interpreting and negotiating the meaning of tradition, with involvement that is selective in nature and influenced by the context of modern life. Digital technology expands the reach of cultural transmission, but also carries the risk of commodification and the simplification of sacred values if not accompanied by community guidance and direct ritual involvement. This study contributes by presenting the first cross-study synthesis integrating three perspectives tradition, educational, and digital media in understanding the dynamics of the cultural transmission of Seren Taun.

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INTRODUCTION

Tradition is one of the most complex forms of culture in the lives of indigenous communities in Indonesia. These traditions serve not only as ceremonial practices but also as mechanisms for the transmission of values, the strengthening of community bonds, and a means of shaping the character and identity of the younger generation (Murshed et al., 2025). One agrarian tradition that is still preserved to this day is the Seren Taun tradition, held by the Sunda Wiwitan indigenous community in Cigugur Village, Kuningan Regency, West Java. Seren Taun is a ritual expressing gratitude for the harvest, whilst also embodying the values of spirituality, respect for nature, social solidarity, and the cultural identity of the Sundanese people (Yani et al., 2025).

Throughout its history, the Sunda Wiwitan indigenous community has faced social stigma and limited legal recognition, which have hindered the process of cultural transmission to younger generations (Sapatulloh et al., 2024). However, since 2021, this tradition has received government recognition as an intangible cultural heritage, thereby opening up a broader public space for the transmission and promotion of culture (Sutarno, 2023). In its implementation, the involvement of the younger generation plays a crucial role. The participation of the younger generation in Seren Taun is inclusive and forms part of the community's strategy to strengthen the identity and cultural resilience of Sunda Wiwitan (Alfan, 2024; Sutarno, 2023).

Developments in digital technology are transforming how the younger generation interacts with tradition. Young people growing up in the digital age are not merely passive recipients, but actively document, promote, and disseminate cultural content through various social media platforms (Carlson & Frazer, 2021; Dodd, 2020). International studies reinforce these findings: in China, Zhuang ethnic students are creating new content about the traditional Sanyuesan festival through visual narratives and digital videos (Zhang et al., 2025). In the United Arab Emirates, Generation Z is using digital narratives to strengthen cultural identity and intergenerational bonds (Jeljeli et al., 2025). In a study in Indonesia, social media platforms such as YouTube were utilised as a new space to introduce the values of tolerance embedded in the Seren Taun tradition to the younger generation (Syahid et al., 2025), whilst the digitisation of the AKUR community's manuscripts highlights the need to balance technology with respect for sacred values (Permadi, 2024). Thus, digital technology serves not merely as a tool but also as a new space where cultural meanings are negotiated and reconstructed.

Although research on Seren Taun and the Sunda Wiwitan community continues to develop, significant research gaps remain. Firstly, most studies focus solely on the description of specific rituals or institutions, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of how the younger generation actively interprets the values of Seren Taun in their daily lives. Secondly, research employing the scoping review method to identify patterns of findings across various research contexts remains limited. This gap means that our understanding of how the younger generation of Sunda Wiwitan interpret and experience tradition amidst the tide of digitalisation remains incomplete and fragmented.

Therefore, this study employs a scoping review method to map and synthesise findings from relevant studies. This method was chosen as it enables researchers to identify research gaps, map findings across studies, and provide a comprehensive overview of an evolving topic. The aim of this study is to examine how the younger generation of Sunda Wiwitan interpret the values of the *Seren Taun* tradition and to analyse how the development of digital technology influences the process of constructing and negotiating the meaning of this culture. Understanding how the younger generation interacts with traditional heritage in the digital age is crucial, not only for cultural preservation efforts but also for the development of more inclusive, participatory, and ethical approaches to the transmission of indigenous knowledge (Paananen & Hakkila, 2025; Povey et al., 2023; Yani et al., 2025). To understand the general findings of this study, a summary list comprising 10 studies is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Characteristics of Studies Included in the Scoping Review

Author	Year	Country	Type of Tradition	Characteristics of Participants	Research Findings	Implications for Cultural Preservation in the Digital Age
Novianti et al.	2025	Indonesia	Traditional beliefs and religious systems	Traditional leaders, civil society organisations, the younger generation	The younger generation views social media as a means of preservation, education, and resistance to stigma; the older generation is more cautious in preserving the sacredness of traditions.	The continuity of traditions depends on intergenerational cooperation and digital strategies aligned with traditional values.

Author	Year	Country	Type of Tradition	Characteristics of Participants	Research Findings	Implications for Cultural Preservation in the Digital Age
Zhang et al.	2025	China	Sanyuesan Festival (Zhuang ethnic harvest ritual)	Community members, young people, cultural practitioners	Young people are creating new meanings for the festival as a digital cultural identity through visual narratives and videos; there are concerns about the commodification of tradition.	Digitalisation expands the reach of culture, but requires management to ensure it does not diminish the value and authenticity of traditions.
Jeljeli et al.	2025	United Arab Emirates	Family traditions	Generation Z (18–27 years)	Young people interpret traditions through digital storytelling to strengthen identity and intergenerational relationships.	Young people act as agents of cultural value transmission through digital narratives.
Yani et al.	2025	Indonesia	The Satu Sura and Seren Taun rituals	Traditional leaders, elders, the younger generation, members of the digital community	Young people are actively interpreting and contextualising the meaning of traditions to make them relevant to modern life.	Digital documentation can support continuity, but risks diminishing spiritual meaning if not accompanied by direct ritual participation.
Panchal & Mago	2024	India, the Philippines, Nigeria (diaspora)	Intangible traditions (festivals, rituals, cuisine, language)	Community leaders, influencers, members of the diaspora across generations	Younger generations, as digital natives, are more focused on digital mediation than on the meaning of traditions.	Increasing cultural visibility, but at the risk of superficial transmission without a strong community context.
Paramdana & Nugraha	2020	Indonesia	Traditional games in the Seren Taun ritual	Traditional leaders, the younger generation	The younger generation is influenced by gadgets, fuelling individualism and a decline in cultural awareness; traditional games offer a solution for character building.	Traditional games must be integrated into formal education to counteract the erosion of cultural heritage caused by digitalisation.
Murshed et al.	2025	Global	Traditional practices and rituals	Unrestricted (general cultural actors)	The interpretation of tradition is changing as the process of transmission becomes more selective and	Changing traditions challenge the concept of authenticity, but enhance visibility in the digital age.

Author	Year	Country	Type of Tradition	Characteristics of Participants	Research Findings	Implications for Cultural Preservation in the Digital Age
					negotiated between traditional values and the digital context.	
Sapatulloh et al.	2024	Indonesia	Religious traditions and spiritual values of Sunda Wiwitan	Traditional leaders, the Paseban family, community elders	Younger generations view technology as a tool to strengthen, not replace, cultural identity; cultural meaning is preserved through adaptation.	Digital technology can coexist with traditional values if guided by traditional leaders and community-based norms.
Nurapriani et al.	2024	Indonesia	Seren Taun ritual	Traditional elders, indigenous communities, social studies teachers, pupils	Students internalise the values of tolerance, mutual cooperation, and love for the homeland through interfaith field assignments.	The use of digital media (the internet, educational videos) to help package local wisdom in a way that is relevant to the younger generation.
Apriyana et al.	2025	Indonesia	Seren Taun Rituals (Ngajayak, Damar Sewu, Siraman Baleg Kembang)	Elders, young people, participants (dancers), organising committee, community leaders	The involvement of young people in rituals (such as Siraman Baleg Kembang) serves as a symbolic transfer of the 'mandate' from the elders to the next generation.	A digital documentation system is recommended to prevent the loss of 'tacit' knowledge from ageing elders.

Source: Author's data extraction, 2026. PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews.

Based on the table above, six out of ten articles originate from Indonesia, with a primary focus on the Sunda Wiwitan community in Cigugur Village, Kuningan Regency, West Java. The other four studies originate from international contexts (China, the United Arab Emirates, diaspora groups, and a global perspective), providing comparative insights. Overall, this table demonstrates that the younger generation is not passive in the practice of traditions; rather, they play an active role in interpreting, negotiating, and representing culture through both ritual practices and digital media. However, some studies also highlight the risk of simplifying sacred meanings when digitalisation is not balanced by guidance on values from indigenous communities. The diversity of methodological approaches and contexts in these studies underscores the importance of cross-study synthesis to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

METHOD

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach employing a scoping review method. This method is one way of studying and understanding a subject by reviewing various written sources, such as scientific journals and books. The scoping review preparation process involves several stages: (1) Identifying the research question, (2) Finding relevant studies, (3) Selecting the study sources to be used, (4) Mapping data from the selected articles, (5) Compiling, summarising, and reporting the results.

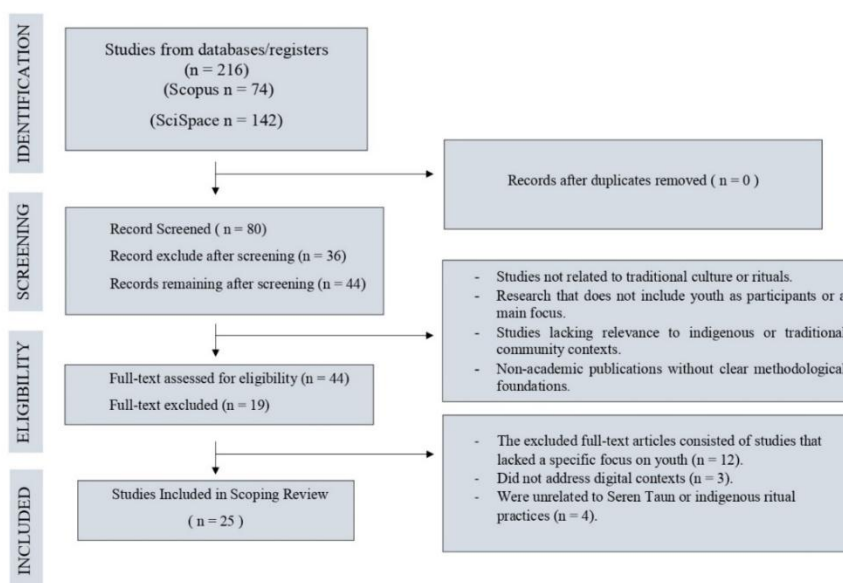
The literature search was conducted using two databases, namely Scopus and Publish or Perish, covering the period from January to February 2026, with a search strategy employing the primary search string 'Seren Taun' AND

‘Sunda Wiwitan’ AND ‘indigenous youth’ AND ‘traditional values’ AND (‘digital era’ OR ‘social media’ OR ‘digitalisation’). In addition to the main search string, supplementary searches were conducted using broader keyword variations to ensure no relevant studies were overlooked, including combinations of “Cigugur”, “cultural transmission”, and “young generation”.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) Studies discussing the traditions, rituals, and cultural values of indigenous communities, (2) Studies focusing on the perceptions, attitudes, or real-life experiences of the younger generation regarding traditions, (3) Studies examining cultural practices within a digital or modern context. Meanwhile, excluded studies included: (1) Research not related to traditional culture or rituals, (2) Research that did not involve the younger generation as the primary focus, (3) Research that was less relevant to the context of indigenous or traditional communities.

A total of 25 national and international scientific articles met all criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The selection process was conducted in four stages, as summarised in Figure 1. Initial identification yielded 216 articles; no duplicates were removed; selection based on titles and abstracts yielded 80 articles; selection continued using inclusion criteria, yielding 44 articles; and following a full-text eligibility assessment, 25 final articles were included in the synthesis. The following figure presents a flowchart of the study selection process, covering identification, selection, assessment of study eligibility, and final inclusion.

Figure 1



Source: Modified PRISMA 2020 flowchart

The research data analysis process utilised thematic analysis, comprising six analytical steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, familiarisation with the data through a review of the 25 articles that met the inclusion criteria. Second, preliminary coding of key findings from each study, such as the concepts of ‘cultural identity’, ‘digital commodification’ and ‘hybridisation of meaning-making’. Third, these codes were grouped into potential themes relevant to young people’s perceptions of digital technology. Fourth, the themes were reviewed to ensure consistency with the entire dataset. Fifth, the researchers identified six main themes to form the structure of the discussion. Sixth, a final synthesis was written to map the relationships between the findings of these studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Identity and Intergenerational Continuity

The most consistent finding across studies is the role of the Seren Taun tradition in shaping and maintaining the cultural identity of the Sunda Wiwitan indigenous community. Studies by Alfian (2024) and Kurniasih et al. (2022) simultaneously demonstrate that this tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial practice, but as a value system that

fosters a collective awareness of the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and God. A similar pattern is found in other indigenous communities, as illustrated by the study by Panchal and Mago (2024), which explains how local traditions function as anchors of identity that maintain cultural continuity across generations, including within diaspora groups.

What distinguishes studies on Seren Taun from those in other contexts is the holistic and experiential nature of the value transmission mechanism. Findings from Wulandari et al. (2019) and Sapatulloh et al. (2024) consistently show that the core values of Pikukuh Tilu in Seren Taun are not taught formally, but are internalised through direct involvement in ritual processions. This pattern aligns with the findings of Balladares-Burgos and Aviles-Salvador (2020) that sacred values among the digital youth generation are more effectively internalised through experiential engagement than through the enforcement of formal rituals. Findings from the realm of formal education (Nurapriani et al., 2024) complement this picture, as when students are involved in tradition-based field assignments, the process of internalising the values of tolerance and mutual cooperation is far more effective. Overall, these studies confirm that the cultural identity of the Sunda Wiwitan community is passed down not only through rituals, but through a system encompassing the family, the community, and educational institutions.

Young People's Engagement with Traditions

Contrary to the assumption that the younger generation either completely abandons traditions or is fully engaged, the analysed studies consistently describe a pattern of selective and contextual involvement. Novianti et al. (2025) and Yani et al. (2025) found that the younger generation selects cultural activities based on personal relevance, social networks, and the rhythm of modern life, rather than merely fulfilling community obligations. Zhang et al. (2025) added that time constraints drive strategies of partial participation, namely attending sessions deemed most meaningful or most worthy of being documented in digital content.

These studies also identify factors that encourage deeper engagement. Wulandari et al. (2019) demonstrate that a social environment that actively practises traditions is a strong predictor of youth engagement. Paramdana and Nugraha (2020) uncovered a significant paradox: on the one hand, social media fosters individualism that erodes cultural awareness; on the other hand, viral content about the traditional game Seren Taun has successfully attracted the interest of a younger generation previously unfamiliar with the tradition. This paradox suggests that digital platform algorithms can indirectly function as a medium for cultural socialisation and as a mechanism that has not yet been extensively explored in the literature on cultural heritage.

The Role of Digital Technology in Cultural Learning

The studies analysed collectively indicate that digital technology opens up new avenues for cultural transmission, albeit in a manner distinct from traditional methods. Apriyana et al. (2025) document how Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp are utilised by the organising committee and the younger generation of Seren Taun as both a repository of the community's collective memory and an educational tool for future generations. In the context of formal education, Lake et al. (2024) and Febrianto et al. (2025) consistently demonstrate that cultural material in digital formats increases student interest, although understanding of the philosophical dimensions tends to remain superficial without the guidance of competent educators.

Cross-contextual comparisons reveal a significant pattern: that digital platforms function not merely as vehicles for information transfer, but as spaces for the formation of emotional and spiritual meaning (Susca, 2023). Zhang et al. (2025) and Pradhan and Goswami (2025) demonstrate that cultural transmission transcends the geographical boundaries of communities via digital platforms; however, this entails the consequence that young people who consume culture solely through digital screens tend to develop weaker emotional bonds compared to those who are directly engaged in rituals (Yani et al., 2025; Sapatulloh et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings confirm that digital cultural learning and experience-based cultural learning are complementary, not substitutive.

Digital Visibility and the Commodification of Culture

The studies analysed indicate that increased digital visibility has an ambivalent impact. On the one hand, Jeljeli et al. (2025) and Pradhan and Goswami (2025) document how cultural content on social media broadens public recognition of local traditions. Permadi (2024) describes in concrete terms how visual documentation of the Seren Taun procession attracts domestic and international tourists, bringing economic benefits to the community.

On the other hand, these studies also identify mechanisms of commodification that warrant caution. Murshed et al. (2025) and Zhang et al. (2025) simultaneously found that visually appealing content is published more frequently than reflective or sacred ritual aspects, thereby creating a selective and potentially misleading representation of culture. Furthermore, Permadi (2024) identifies real pressure on communities to present rituals in a manner more appealing to

tourists, which risks shifting the focus from the sacred to the performative. An adaptive response noted in the literature is a layered knowledge management strategy that distinguishes between information that can be published openly and knowledge that must be kept within the community (Novianti et al., 2025).

Hybridisation and the Formation of Negotiated Meaning

One of the most significant contributions of this body of studies is the documentation of the process of hybridisation of meaning, namely how the younger generation does not merely inherit traditions, but actively negotiates their relevance within the context of their contemporary lives. Praramdana and Nugraha (2020) provide a concrete illustration: in the game of Egrang, some young people reinterpret it as a symbol of resilience in the face of the pressures of modern life—a new interpretation that remains rooted in the core values of Seren Taun. Sapatulloh et al. (2024) theoretically assert that such a process of meaning reconstruction is not an indication of the weakening of tradition, but rather a reflection of the dynamics and strength of the culture itself.

This pattern of negotiation also occurs at the institutional level. Suhaedi and Nurjanah (2023) and Apriyana et al. (2025) document the dynamics between the of elders authority and the creativity of the youth; the elders safeguard core values and sacred aspects, whilst the younger generation is given space to innovate in communication and the management of digital content. Alfian (2024) situates this process within the framework of Javanese-Sundanese cosmology as a natural part of cultural dynamics that continually seek new balances. This finding has significant implications: the sustainability of tradition in a digital context is not about preserving an unchanging form, but about preserving the essence of values amidst digital transformation.

Narrative Construction and Spiritual Personalisation

The final theme that consistently emerges is the role of both digital and oral narratives in fostering emotional engagement among the younger generation with tradition. Lake et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital narratives about Sunda Wiwitan values shared via WhatsApp serve as an initial introduction for young people who have never directly participated in the rituals. Syahid et al. (2025) document how the narrative of Seren Taun presented as a festival of peace and interfaith harmony shared via YouTube reinforces cross-cultural understanding of this tradition. Sutarno (2023) terms this narrative strategy a form of '*survival living*', namely the way the Sunda Wiwitan community builds broader social legitimacy and acceptance by demonstrating that the values they uphold are, in fact, universal.

On the other hand, Cristianingsih et al. (2024) highlight a unique dimension of spiritual personalisation within the Sunda Wiwitan faith. The concept of *the Kitab Hayat* allows individuals to interpret the values of the faith personally through the observation of everyday natural phenomena, without always requiring formal mediation from elders. This flexibility constitutes one of the adaptive strengths of Sunda Wiwitan. However, Sapatulloh et al. (2024) and Panchal and Mago (2024) simultaneously found that bonds formed solely through digital narratives tend to be weaker than those reinforced by direct experience and family stories. These findings highlight the qualitative difference between cultural awareness, knowing about traditions and cultural attachment experiencing traditions as part of one's self. These findings may be relevant for the design of cultural preservation programmes in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study yielded three main findings. Firstly, the younger generation of Sunda Wiwitan act as active agents in the process of cultural transmission. Their involvement is selective, contextual, and involves a negotiation between traditional values and the realities of modern life. Secondly, digital technology plays an ambivalent role in the process of cultural transmission: on the one hand, it expands the reach and regenerates the meaning of tradition; on the other, it carries the risk of commodification, the trivialisation of sacred values, and the formation of superficial cultural attachments if not accompanied by community guidance and direct experience in rituals. Thirdly, the sustainability of the Seren Taun tradition does not depend on the preservation of rigid forms, but rather on the community's ability to uphold the essence of its values amidst the transformation of cultural expression.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in providing the first cross-disciplinary synthesis that systematically integrates perspectives on tradition, education, and digital media in understanding the dynamics of the cultural transmission of Seren Taun, whilst filling a gap in the literature regarding how young people negotiate cultural identity in the digital age. The practical implications of this research point to three strategies: (1) the development of conservation programmes that combine direct ritual participation with digital documentation; (2) the integration of Sunda Wiwitan local wisdom into the formal education curriculum with competent pedagogical guidance; and (3) the development of

cultural knowledge management policies by indigenous communities, distinguishing between cultural content that can be published openly and sacred knowledge that must be safeguarded.

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