

# The Socio-Cultural Capital Role of Mulyoharjo Craftsmen in the Preservation of Jepara Carving Arts, Indonesia

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**Submission date:** 22-Sep-2023 02:06PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 2173438731

**File name:** 9\_The\_Socio-Cultural\_Capital\_Role.pdf (576.51K)

**Word count:** 9272

**Character count:** 51296

# The Socio-Cultural Capital Role of Mulyoharjo Craftsmen in the Preservation of Jepara Carving Arts, Indonesia

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## Abstract

*Jepara carving has existed since the Majapahit Kingdom and experienced rapid developments only in 1549. The emergence of Jepara carving was influenced by acculturation and the socio-cultural conditions of the local people who highly uphold the local wisdom and the traditions. This research examines the role of socio-cultural capital in maintaining the Jepara carving industry. It also identifies the socio-cultural characteristics and creative handicraft products developed in the Mulyoharjo Village.*

*This is interpretive research and used observations and interviews for data collection. The respondents were industry stakeholders and carving art craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara Regency, Central Java. The respondents were selected by purposive sampling.*

*The socio-cultural identity of the Mulyoharjo people is closely related to the Islamic values and social norms adopted to local traditions, resulting in a unique local culture. These socio-cultural conditions impact the activities of the Mulyoharjo community, the majority of whom are carving and sculpture craftsmen. Thus, this cultural wealth has influenced carvers to create creative and highly aesthetic carving products. The existence of the Jepara carving craftsmen and entrepreneur community cannot be separated from the role of socio-cultural capital that has been ingrained since many years ago. Therefore, the existing norms, trust, networks and reciprocity can support the sustainability of the carving industry in the Mulyoharjo Village.*

*The study concludes that the socio-cultural values upheld by the carving craftsmen and entrepreneurs reflect the local identity of the Mulyoharjo people, who are full of honesty, cooperation, and enthusiasm in collaborating with the other elements of the society. It is clear that the existence of socio-cultural capital can provide harmony, opportunity, and continuity in the carving industry.*

**Keywords:** carving arts, crafts, socio-cultural capital, furniture industry, Mulyoharjo Village.

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## Introduction

Jepara has been known as a carving city since the reign of the Majapahit Kingdom (Rohman, Cahyono and Wadiyo, 2021). The carving activity has been known since the 7th century but began to develop only during the reign of the Queen Kalinyamat in 1549 (Marizar, Mutiara and Irawan, 2020). During the reign of Majapahit, the carving style was affected by the Hindu values (Chrisswantra, 2021). However, since the decline of the Majapahit, the influence of the Islamic style began to dominate the Jepara carving style due to the inclusion of Islamic religious values, which started to fuse and turn Jepara into an Islamic Kingdom (Fajarwati, Caroline and Wulandari, 2020). Many Hindu ornaments are found in the ancient buildings in Jepara as a result of acculturation between the Islamic culture and the pre-Islamic culture (Supriyadi *et al.*, 2022). During the transition from the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom to the Islamic Kingdom at that time, the art of Jepara carving has experienced rapid developments in terms of product design and motives (Irsyada, 2022). The most prominent carving heritage of the Kalinyamat Kingdom era is the carved ornaments on the walls of the Mantingan Mosque (Setiawan, 2010). In this era, carvings were also found on the weapons and the musical instruments, such as gamelan. However, the glory of Jepara carving during the Islamic period was not as great as during the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdoms. This is because, in Islam, there is a prohibition against carving and drawing animals and human figures. Therefore, the carving motifs are limited only to plants (Gustami, 2000). The development of the carving art in Jepara is assumed to have taken place since Jepara is the main port on the North Coast of the Java Island (Kusumawati, Waluyo and Widyatwati, 2022). In fact, Jepara used to be a military port for the Demak Kingdom (Rokhman, Yuliana and Zulkarnain, 2016). This situation fostered the confidence of foreign traders such as the Chinese, Gujarati, Malay, Arabic, Portuguese, English, and the Dutch. Thus, the Jepara trading activities increased significantly (Supriyono, 2013). The existence of these foreign traders created an acculturation that merged with the traditions of the indigenous people of Jepara. One form of cultural contact is the emergence of the carving art which later developed into a carving crafts in Jepara (Chrisswantra, 2021; Irsyada, 2022).

The remarkable expansion of the carvings in the Jepara area began only around 1960. There were hardly any furniture carvings produced at the time. They still enjoyed constructing small objects, such as small tables, vases, flowers, lamp holders and so on (Karmadi, *et al.*, 1985). Jepara artisans have created a wide range of furniture and household equipment. Traders have begun to seize this chance to buy items to meet the consumer demand.

The development of Jepara carving art cannot be separated from the role of workers (engravers) (Kartono and Widyastuti, 2020). The engravers' skilled hands can realize various shapes and motifs. As a carving art product, Jepara Carving has spread to multiple regions and the world (Alamsyah, 2018).

The existence of the wood carving craft industry is heavily influenced by the socio-cultural capital rooted in and becoming a tradition in the Jepara carvers community (Satriya *et al.*, 2022). Social capital, human capital, and technology also play essential roles in production (Voydanoff, 2001). In the carving industry, social capital equals other physical capital and can increase productivity and economic efficiency (Marhaeni, Yuliarini and Setiawina, 2019). Higher social capital owned by the individuals or groups can reduce transaction costs; thus, economic activity can run efficiently (Woolcock, 1998). Behind the popularity of Jepara furniture and carvings are issues arising from the lives of entrepreneurs or artisans, such as how to retain, maintain, and grow creativity, as well as efforts to adapt to an ever-changing socio-cultural context and the effects of modernization (Kurniawan and Widyastuti, 2018). Another issue contributing to the loss of the carving artist's profession is that the artisan is interested in the excellent category, as evidenced by a desire to change careers to earn a higher wage than the carver (Muhajirin, 2019). The state of carving art has vastly changed due to the changes in its socio-cultural setting. This is evidenced by the numerous facts indicating that traditional carving culture is declining in diverse locations (Indrahti, 2022).

One of the villages in Jepara has been the center for the development of carving and sculpture since the Dutch colonial era (Riyoko, 2014). The artisan community in Mulyoharjo Village is still thriving in this state. Mulyoharjo Village is located in the sub-district of Jepara.

Mulyoharjo's history is noted for its tiger brackets carving art, which symbolizes the spirit of fighting for life and always coping with the forces of life, which are rapidly degrading components of traditional culture (Aghnia, Lestari and Sunarto, 2022). This demonstrates that the art of carving and sculpture has been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. The inhabitants of Jepara, mainly the craftsmen in the village of Mulyoharjo, have maintained and can deal with the changes that occur in their culture, which is traditional, kind, and simple. However, globalization, which is increasingly eroding tradition, has led to various challenges in reviving the existence of carving and sculpture craftsmen in the Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara. It even affects the capital that builds this creative industry.

Previous research conducted by Marhaeni, Yuliarmi and Setiawina (2019) shows that social capital positively and significantly impacts human resources. It mediates the influence of social capital on empowering the small woodcraft industry in the Bangli Regency, Bali. Other research conducted by Indrayani *et al.* (2022) shows that social capital greatly influences the sustainability of the carving and furniture industry in Jepara which functions as a form of communication between the carvers and various stakeholders to facilitate social relations, co-creation, and communication. Meanwhile, Ocón (2017) has studied the patterns of cultural capital carried out by carvers in Asia and Europe. It is known that some carvers in ASEAN and North Asia often replicate European carving models. However, Asian carvers have motifs that depict their respective regions' traditions.

This research examines the role of socio-cultural capital in the Carving Center of Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara.

In addition, this study also focuses on identifying of the social and cultural characteristics of Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara, as a carving village, along with creative handicraft products developed in Mulyoharjo Village.

## Theoretical Basis and the Literature Review

### Socio-cultural Capital

The study of socio-cultural capital values in the creative industry has been carried out widely by the academic community. Social capital is a type of community involvement and a social life that includes creating relationships, norms, and trust that allows people to work well together (Putnam, 1995). Graugaard (2012) argues that with economic and natural capital, socio-cultural capital is vital in developing resilient creative industries in the rural communities, especially those engaged in the traditional arts. Mayasari and Chandra (2020) examine social capital, which usually appears in the developed world with supportive cultural capital. Still, social capital is currently needed in developing countries within the scope of the creative industry of traditional art products. Social capital represents the value of human relationships and collaboration. It is considered a critical factor in additional knowledge about the social conditions in the rural areas, which encourages the economic wellbeing of the community of carving craftsmen following their prevailing customs and traditions (Cohen and Prusak, 2001).

Marhaeni, Yuliarmi and Setiawina (2019) investigate the role of social capital in empowering small industries, especially wood carving in the Bangli District, Bali, Indonesia. According to them, social capital generates further resources that contribute to the organization of the society and social networking resources. Social capital is the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inherent in the social networks. Indrayani *et al.* (2022) also say that social capital in the Jepara carving community include people responsible for communication and engagement with various stakeholders to facilitate social relations, co-creation, and communication. Social capital arises from multiple characteristics, including trust, rules, and norms governing social action, social interaction, and network resources. Trust is essential in a relationship, not just social or economic. In work relations, immaterial factors such as trust and mutual understanding can also significantly influence work relations (Putra, 2003). Trust between artisans, traders, and consumers in the carving art center in Jepara is essential because trust is a good basis for a working relationship. Trust is built between craftsmen and fellow

craftsmen, between craftspeople and consumers, between craftsmen and traders, or between traders and traders.

Coleman (1994) describes the dimension of social capital and says that it is everything that binds the society together to achieve common goals based on togetherness. It is bound by the values and norms that grow and are adhered to, while being socially inherent in the structure of social relations and social networks in a society that creates various types of social obligations. It generates a climate of mutual trust, brings information channels, and establishes norms, as well as social sanctions for members of the coterie. Claridge (2004) divides the dimensions of social capital into four aspects that include (1) reciprocity, (2) norms, (3) trust, and (4) networks.

Besides, social capital focusing on developing internal networking and utilizing reciprocal cooperation and trust between the employees and the management is essential in establishing cultural capital and achieving organizational performance (Nopus, Setiadi and Soesanto, 2016). Often, the cultural activities in rural community developments tend to focus on heritage or community arts projects (McHenry, 2011). Roberts and Townsend (2016) say that art developments are widely supported for encouraging participation and wellbeing, while promoting a 'sense of place,' and creating a context for interactions among diverse actors. They give each a voice in solutions to local challenges and empower the communities. Duxbury and Campbell (2011) argue that the culture of developing traditional art becomes part of the creative industry, which contributes directly to the economy of the rural communities or the artisans. Similarly, Chen (2013) says that social and cultural capital had become an essential part that cannot be separated from the economic resilience of the people in developing countries because of the existence of the financial sector in a stratum of society. They often follow the existing social norms and cultural traditions so that both capital can collaborate with each other in creating and preserving sustainable cultural products. However, Callaghan and Colton (2007) show that the value of cultural capital is often ignored or underestimated in the social structure of society.

### **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is a social interaction in the society. Pugnale and Sassone (2014) define reciprocity as a structure that has fascinated designers worldwide since the ancient times. Mercado and Mathisen (2022) describe reciprocity as the interpersonal relationships between artists and their art in different ways. This allows them to showcase the artistic creations which are transformative, vulnerable, and of raw nature. Mamassian (2008) argue that most visual artists have a common interest in visual perception, although, in contrast, they rarely communicate with other artists in discussing visual perception. Putra (2003) explains that reciprocity occurs when there is an interaction between the parts of the society that exhibits a typical pattern; a type of normative conduct in which individuals contribute values and norms to the process of social exchange.

Mahendra (2020) says that common conditions the artists obtain could influence the decisions a person initiates. Generally, these conditions are based on the stimuli received from their environment. Muhajirin (2016) argues that the reciprocal responses between the Jepara carving craftsmen and the consumers functions as a cultural mechanism in a market. This cultural mechanism is a form of informal education, which manifests the craftsman's adaptation strategy in maintaining and developing the creative potential of the culture of Jepara woodcarving artisans in their communities across generations. Thus, social capital is formed from the social relations where an individual connects with the others and performs reciprocal ties. Socio-cultural capital that occurs in carving craftsmen groups is always colored by the exchange of kindness between craftsmen and craftsmen or between craftsmen and traders. This mutual exchange of service will strengthen a group when viewed from its social capital.

## The Research Methods

This was an interpretive research which uses observation and interviews for data collection. Interpretive research is a framework and practice within social science research invested in philosophical and methodological ways of understanding social reality (Given, 2008). Interpretive research aims to understand empathy to produce broader meanings in cultural contexts (Denzin, 1984; Darby, Fugate and Murray, 2019). The respondents were stakeholders, traders, and carving art craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara Regency, Central Java.

The respondents were selected by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, a concept, or a phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). The primary criteria of informants include: 1) regional officials with knowledge and authority in the documentation of historical archives on the history and culture of Jepara carving art, and 2) having at least 10 years of work experience as a carving craftsman. The analysis of this study is based on the modification of Haryanto, Mujiyono and Prameswari (2022), who researched a carved motif design development on a Kudus Gebyok Door.

In this research, data were analyzed through three steps, as follows.

1. Identification of social and cultural characteristics in the Mulyoharjo Village.
2. Analysis of creative products of carving art in Mulyoharjo, Jepara.
3. Analysis of the role of socio-cultural capital in the Mulyoharjo's carving art community.

The table below contains informants' demographic data, consisting of craftsmen, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders.

**Table 1:** Informant's demography

Source: Authors

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Hometown	Work Experience
1.	Sumarno	Male	46	Craftman	Jepara	26 years
2.	Karyono	Male	48	Craftman	Jepara	24 years
3.	Jupriono	Male	40	Headman of Mulyoharjo Village	Jepara	4 years
4.	Dwi Agung	Male	45	Craftman	Jepara	26 years

As shown in the table above, the demographic characteristics of the informants in this study include gender, age, occupation, hometown, and work experience. The informants consisted of 4 people, all of whom were men. All informants came from the Jepara Regency. The occupation of each informant consisted of 3 craftsmen and 1 stakeholder. Informants who work as craftsmen generally make carvings based on consumer orders. While stakeholders consist of the local government; in this case it is the Headman of the Mulyoharjo Village which has a network with the Jepara Forestry Police and the Industry Service.

## Findings and the Discussion

### Identification of Social and Cultural Characteristics

The Mulyoharjo Village is one of the villages in the Jepara District, Jepara Regency. According to the Mulyoharjo Village Monograph, in 2019, there were 2,085 household heads in a population of 9,366. The Mulyoharjo Village is also known as a center for sculpture and wood carving. This village is the birthplace of Jepara carving. In ancient times, the famous carving art from the Mulyoharjo Village was the Tiger Kurung statue (Saidah, 2017). The people of Mulyoharjo Village are classified as "Indigenous Islam" because of their customs and communal organizations. Indigenous Islam, or Nusantara Islam, is a blend of Islamic beliefs

that discusses the local community's traditional values, culture, and customs without modifying Islamic law or existing traditions (Amaliyah, 2018).

Javanese customs have grown and developed in Jepara and have a system of values, norms, views, and rules of people's lives, which are still familiar and obeyed and preserved as a noble cultural heritage. Jepara society is known as a religious society. This spiritual nature of the people influences their daily behavior, as the Headman of Mulyoharjo Village, Jupriono, says as below.

*"Jepara society is synonymous with traditions that have been passed down since ancient times. One of them is the Lomban tradition which is still preserved today. Apart from passing down traditions, the people of Jepara also uphold social norms like other Javanese people. Honesty is the main characteristic of individuals, especially in Mulyoharjo Village. Therefore, the phrase "honestly lucky" (honest people will be lucky) often appears. This attitude is the foundation of the people of Mulyoharjo Village in living life and is also applied to carving activities."*

Jupriono, May 2022:personal communication.

According to the observations, there are several traditions in Jepara. For example, on the seventh day of Eid Al-Fitr, the Lomban ceremony is held. This is a ritual offering ceremony performed by the Jepara fishermen. The Lomban celebration begins with a preparation ceremony on the beach, followed by the release of offerings in the shape of a buffalo's head in the middle of the sea (Fig. 1). Following this, multiple fishing boats collect water from the offerings, spraying them into their boats, believing that the ships will be blessed and will catch more fish. Fighting over these contributions is further enlivened by the tradition of a *ketupat* war between boats utilizing *ketupat* to fight over each other. An all-night shadow puppet show is held the night before this event.



**Fig. 1:** *Sesaji Lomban* (Sea Alms)

Source: Aji, 2022

The rituals that exist in the Jepara culture are life-cycle rituals. They are rituals tied to the journey of human existence or that always accompany human life. It is believed that human life, usually accompanied by rituals or ceremonies, represents human prudence in attaining harmonious human interactions with the real world, namely this world, and in harmony with mystical realms or those associated with God. Another tradition still preserved today in Jepara is the *Kenduri* (*selametan*) tradition, which is usually carried out during certain celebrations (Fig. 2). The people of Jepara believe that by holding a feast, they hope to be safe in every activity and to be kept away from danger.



**Fig. 2:** *Kenduri*

Source: Author

In carrying out their tasks as craftsmen, members of the Mulyoharjo community are always directed by the culture passed down from generation to generation and are guided by their predecessors. Thus, the cultural values are agreed-upon principles that exist in the culture, both inside the boundaries of the business and the surroundings, and have taken root and are utilized as a reference for behavior. Cultural values that the community must conserve include the value of honesty, the value of respect, the value of living in harmony, and the value of cooperation.

### **Jepara Mulyoharjo Carving Art: Creative Products of Local Culture**

There are numerous forms or styles of carving, specifically in the Mulyoharjo Village during the "*Macan Kurung*" era, among the diversity of patterns and styles of carving that remain today. Mulyoharjo's carving is a progression of the "tiger brackets" carving, which may be seen in animal forms that are realistic, uncomplicated, and non-anatomical. Such a design is a distinguishing feature of Mulyoharjo's sculptural products as opposed to sculptural products from other places.

Sumamo, as one of the community leaders and a carving entrepreneur, revealed that the design of handicraft products done by carvers in the Mulyoharjo Village are focused on achieving customer satisfaction.

*"...carving designs from here should not be issued in raw form, only in the form of pictures, because there are some consumers who want the design only, Then the work is not finished by our friends here, so it must be finished or semi-finished goods. So that there is no monopoly by certain people."*

Sumamo, 2022:personal communication, 9<sup>th</sup> June.

Mulyoharjo sculptures feature characteristics and qualities primarily seen in the exquisite carving embellishments. Other elements include the composition of Jepara sculptures, which are often symmetrical and have thin concave carvings. There are also animal motifs, such as horses (Fig. 3), which usually include motifs with bird items as part of a supporting composition of plant motifs. Mulyoharjo's crafts are made of wood, including teak, *mahogany*, *trembesi*, and *meh*. The image below exemplifies the type of carving made by the Jepara artisans.



**Fig. 3:** Animal Motif

Source: Author



In addition to the flora and wildlife motifs, Mulyoharjo Village carvings contain carved sculptures that are included in quality items. Carved sculptures are formed by carving the difference in height from the surface; these works are created using manual chip carving techniques, namely sculpting techniques using chisel tools and *gandhen* hammers, except that chip carving techniques are typically applied to large pieces of wood. Carved statues of Buddha, Ganesha, the Virgin Mary, Jesus, God of the Earth Tai San Lose, God of the Sea Sun Te Kong, Goddess Kwan Im, and many other deities are created by the artisans (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4:** Carving Statue  
Source: Author

All of the products in the Mulyoharjo industrial center are superior and represent the center's main attraction. These carvings have frequently been purchased and sought after by visitors within and beyond the city. Some have even begun to enter foreign markets. Most of the products sold are still raw or unfinished, but the surface of the wood has been smoothed with sandpaper to retain the original hues. The image below depicts one of the creative products for this sort of calligraphy carving (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5:** The Process of Making Calligraphy Engraving  
Source: Author

Carving craftsmen in Mulyoharjo have business goals. This activity has continued until now and is used as the primary source of livelihood. In terms of economics, the potential for the carving craft industry in Mulyoharjo Village is enormous. This shows that the art of carving is one potential of the economic sector and as one of the capital or local cultures, this must be preserved.

#### **The Role of Socio-Cultural Capital in the Mulyoharjo Jepara Community**

Jepara has been known as the City of Carving since the Queen Kalinyamat (Iswahyudi, 2017; Rohman, Cahyono and Wadiyo, 2021). It started when the Jepara people produced handicrafts a long time ago, and it was passed down from generation to generation. The title of Jepara as a carving city has become a trademark of the town itself. It shows that the art of

carving is one of the capitals or the potentials of local culture, which is also a symbol of identity for its community (Triyanto, Mujiyono and Sugiarto, 2017). The Jepara carving crafts have given a distinctive color to the diversity of Indonesian cultural treasures. Jepara offers high-quality furniture to the international market and carvings, including the Mulyoharjo Village, which may present carving as a local cultural identity. In addition, Jepara's fame as a Carving City is slightly influenced by the socio-cultural capital in the Jepara region itself.

Social capital is the core of forming Jepara's reputation as a carving city. Forms of social capital in the Jepara carving industry consist of norms, trust, networks, and reciprocity. The role of social capital supports the strategy of the Jepara carving industry. These strategies include production strategies, pricing strategies, and marketing strategies. Norms play a full role in the three strategies, while trust plays a role in the production and price strategies. Network and reciprocity have a role in the production strategy and marketing strategy. The four elements in social capital are interconnected and interrelated in the Jepara carving craft strategy, which belongs to the creative industry sector.

### **Norms**

Social capital norms play a role in developing positive relationships between craftsmen and traders in the carving craft centers in the Jepara Regency. The role of norms in the carving craft centers in Jepara Regency involve:

- (1) The process of obtaining raw materials,
- (2) Gathering craftsmen and the consumers,
- (3) Gathering craftsmen, and traders or between the craftsmen and traders,
- (4) Fair competition between the craftsmen.

The existence of norms in the life of Jepara carving craftsmen makes craftsmen to be careful in the process of obtaining raw materials. The local government stipulates a rule that prohibits the sale of raw materials as they are, outside the Jepara area. This is to avoid a monopoly on the illegal timber trade, which will harm the engravers.

The rules for setting prices are also regulated and well managed between the craftsmen, in setting prices. For example, it is prohibited for craftsmen to argue with each other. They should not set lower prices, but are encouraged to remain competitive instead of bringing down other craftsmen or entrepreneurs. as Karyono says:

*"Every craftsman and entrepreneur must just get along with each other, don't bring each other down, competition is allowed but healthily"*

Karyono, 2022: personal communication, 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Norms in the Mulyoharjo Carving Sentra Association related to carving products' prices are more technical. Norms are more of an appeal to the artisans so that prices in the market do not become chaotic, the community leader Sumarno says:

*"I often discuss this pricing strategy issue with my colleagues at meetings. Sometimes the price difference is influenced by many things, such as materials. Timber obtained from Perhutani and wood obtained from village officials have different prices. If the price of the material is different, then the price of the finished product will also be different. Even so, I always emphasize to all colleagues to make a profit, even a little. So, the amount of goods produced is fine as long as they are profitable. Rather than a lot of crafts in production but detrimental"*

Sumarno, 2022: personal communication, 11<sup>th</sup> June.

For those who violate these rules, the Paguyuban cooperates with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Forestry Service and the Police to take action against anyone who violates.

*"I always recommend to colleagues in this Paguyuban to maintain the existing norms. People can be respected or praised for their actions so they can be trusted."*

*As the saying goes, if you want people to respect you, you must also learn to respect others. If someone violates these norms, the consequences will be facing the government, the Forestry Department, and the mandatory apparatus (Police)."*

Sumarno, 2022: personal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Trust**

The norms made in the Jepara Carving Craft Center Association of Mulyoharjo Village are to maintain trust between the craftsmen, craftsmen and consumers, and craftsmen and traders. Thus, the norms are closely related to trust that has been formed over the years. According to the craftsmen, orders for goods outside the city or abroad are done via the online market. Trust from craftsmen and traders also plays a role in the mutual commitment between the traders, craftsmen, and the customers.

The trust formed in the Jepara Carving Craft Center Association in the Mulyoharjo Village is better known as the "nyalap nyaur" system. This norm occurs among the entrepreneurs who have retail consumers. As Dwi Agung, one of the craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo Jepara Carving Center says:

*"Jepara has a uniqueness in making transactions which become its wealth for the community because it can bind consumers to be loyal for a long time, even forever and for generations, namely the tradition of 'Nyalap Nyaur'. This habituation becomes a norm when transactions between entrepreneurs and retail consumers. Indirect attachment due to this flame can bind even up to seven generations. Although the parties rarely meet due to distance and time. Communication is only done by telephone to complete a transaction"*

Dwi Agung, 2022:personal communication, 29<sup>th</sup> June.

Building consumer trust will positively impact sales activities for carving art products. This was revealed by one of the carving craftsmen, namely Karyono, who believes that consumers can be used as promotional media for craftsmen and entrepreneurs to market their products.

*".....I always try to provide maximum service to consumers by offering attractive prices, and carving products whose quality is maintained. Because if 1 customer is satisfied, it will bring 1 new customer, and vice versa. If 1 customer is disappointed, he will eliminate 1000 consumers. So we position the consumer as king."*

Karyono, 2022: personal communication, 9<sup>th</sup> June.

The responsibility of the craftsmen is manifested in good product quality following the time desired by the trader or customer. This follows what Sumarno says, who has built trust with his customers for several years.

*"I usually sell the carving product by phone. I have a customer from 1997 until now, I have never met the person either, so if he orders an item, he call and choose which model he wants. Then, he transferred some money. After that, I sent the purchased items to his location. Previously, I sent a catalog that was the same as mine. I was also surprised how he could trust me, even though I had never met him, but he trusted me."*

Sumarno, 2022: personal communication, 11<sup>th</sup> June.

The element of trust in socio-cultural capital does not only grow in interactions between fellow craftsmen and traders but between the traders themselves. They also have a trust that has the meaning of helping each other in marketing the carving products of the fellow traders. This has been experienced by one of the informants as follows:

".....I don't have a showroom. I email them directly; they have been my customers for several years and trust each other. The person who ordered never came here. For example, if they make an order, there is a contract between the customer and me. They must write down the agreement letter, sign on the stamp, and drop the deposit by 50%."

Dwi Agung, 2022:personal communication, 9<sup>th</sup> June.

To maintain consumer trust, carvers, and entrepreneurs also try to follow design trends according to the times. Thus, the craftsmen will make handicraft products according to the design requests from the consumers.

"During the development of designs, trends greatly influenced consumer tastes. They were no longer the same as before, where there was no change in consumer tastes, although consumers still liked classical carving. But if you want to exist, you must catch the changing times, Sir. So we also make furniture or statues according to the designs of consumers"

Sumarno,2022: personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Trust between the entrepreneurs and craftsmen is also maintained so that there are no disputes and they are clear in the transactions. For example, the craftsmen will work on the handicraft products and furniture following the orders from the consumer so that the payment for the work is adjusted according to the level of difficulty of the product being worked on. As Mr. Dwi Agung says:

"To start a carving job, I usually buy teak wood pieces first. I usually ask the woodcutters for help. Then I pay them according to the number of pieces of wood. After that, I leave the design and technical work to the craftsmen. Previously, I asked first how much labor is needed to do the work, how much the price is paid, and how long it takes to work on the product. Price agreements have been formed at the beginning before work, but payment is usually made at the end after the product is finished. So that the execution of the order goes smoothly."

Dwi Agung, 2022: personal communication, 29<sup>th</sup> June.

The trust that the carving craftsmen built at the Jepara Carving Craft Center, Mulyoharjo Village, is closely related to the socio-cultural conditions of the Jepara people, who uphold prevailing social norms and customs. Honesty is the main foundation for attracting consumer confidence in Jepara carving handicraft products. Together with the norms, this mutual trust fosters a strong family system between craftsmen and craftsmen, craftsmen and entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs and consumers. Based on the data from HIMKI (Indonesian Furniture and Craft Industry Association), it is seen that in 2020-2021, buyers still believed and tended to increase their market demand (Indrayani *et al.*, 2022). To increase consumer trust, carving craftsmen also innovate to develop new designs that are more attractive to the consumers and also offer carvings for interior design that are more concerned with aesthetic aspects than functional aspects (Latifah, Nada and Herlambang, 2021).

### **Networking**

In the Jepara carving craft center, social networks provide positive benefits and impacts the continuity of the business community comprised of both the craftsmen and the traders. Networks between the craftsmen play a role in the availability of raw materials and orders for each craftsman. Craftsmen can get orders not only from their area but also from outside their areas. This indicates that social networks play a role in the continuity of the existing order flow. Then within the scope of social networks, traders provide benefits as well as a double role, namely having an impact on the availability of handicraft products and related marketing.

This follows what one of the craftsmen said. He admits that sometimes he takes his crafts from other places if the goods requested by the customer are out of stock. For price issues, the two work together, mutually benefiting each other.

*".....for example, as a craftsman, I get a customer, but sometimes the carvings that I have, do not meet the requirements of the consumers, and I will get it from other craftsmen that fulfill the product requirements. When I sell or take carvings, the craftsman who owns the goods easily lets go of the carvings without any worries that the carvings will be lost, copied, or even recognized as mine."*

Sumarno, 2022: personal communication, 12<sup>th</sup> June.

The same thing was also revealed by Mr. Dwi Agung, that there is always good communication regarding carving products that will be traded between the traders.

*"...I am related to the villages around the Mulyoharjo Carving Center, Jepara. This model A carving, the mainstay product at the Mulyoharjo Carving Center, is currently vacant. I have a link with friends outside Mulyoharjo doing the same carving, so I take it there; we call it 'nempil', Sir."*

Dwi Agung, 2022: personal communication, 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

To increase a more comprehensive marketing network, it is necessary to increase knowledge (knowledge sharing) among the fellow carving craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo carving center who have a wider network with information and technology support to the fellow craftsmen who have information and technology limitations, one of the craftsmen said.

*"Information and technology advancements have had a huge impact on networking. Craftsmen who master IT will find it easier to obtain various information and relationships compared to conventional craftsmen who still rely on networks within the national and even local scope."*

Jupriono, 2022: personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Network expansion is significant for the craftsmen and the entrepreneurs in developing their businesses. The Mulyoharjo Village Carving Craft Center Association is trying to maintain its business so that it continues to exist through networking with consumers and other entrepreneurs. Mr. Jupriono also revealed the importance of network expansion in this era as a stakeholder.

*"It is inevitable that in the current era, networking is needed to develop and maintain the existence of both craftsmen and entrepreneurs. Furniture industry players with extensive networks can be said to be safer in maintaining their existence compared to entrepreneurs who do not have a network. Because the network is a medium to meet the needs in this industry"*

Jupriono, 2022, personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> June.

Jepara's people preserve network resources in the furniture industry through the industrial organization, business heritage, and the region-based superior product center. Several associations in Jepara are concerned with developing the furniture industry, such as HIMKI and ASMINDO Komda Jepara. A well-organized social network is a network between the traders, between craftsmen and traders and carving craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo Carving Center, Jepara. This is not only in terms of carving products and product marketing, but as an effective means of conveying information well between the traders or work partners. The aim is to get mutual benefits. This means it is essential to establish a network between the fellow craftsmen, without ruling out establishing a network outside by taking advantage of either the artisan community at the Mulyoharjo carving center or with organizations that are a forum for the artisans. Along

with the conditions of increasingly fierce competition, strength is needed to maintain the networks with many elements of the society so that they are no longer just "*nrimo ing pandum*" (Indrayani *et al.*, 2022). The interaction that exists both within the community and other community organizations will increase the ability and continuity of the carving craftsmen at the Mulyoharjo carving center.

### **Reciprocity**

The Jepara Regency Carving Craft Center is an example of social capital demonstrating a pattern of reciprocity or a reciprocal interaction between the traders in transferring the products. This delivers advantages to both parties who collaborate. This advantage is undeniable in their reliance on one another for items when the desired goods are out of supply. Reciprocity in the case of the items above is likewise non-spontaneous, which means that the responsibility to return the equal is not determined by time or amount. As a result, reciprocity in products at the Carving Centers is of a generic type, with the responsibility for the quantity of return and the period being freely decided. When traders collaborate on commodities, it is not the same as when craftsmen collaborate on a reciprocal process.

Reciprocal relations between the craftsmen occur without a formal legal contract, but it has become a tradition from generation to generation. Reciprocity between the craftsmen is established in exchanging raw materials and finished goods, as one informant stated below.

*"Mutual relations between craftsmen are usually in terms of goods. I currently need item A, which is out of stock so that I will contact other craftsmen. And vice versa, if other craftsmen don't have goods, then they come here to get the goods according to the customer's request. If I run out of raw materials, I will borrow wood from other craftsmen first. Only then was it replaced, and vice versa."*

Sumarno, 2022, personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

The growing social exchange between artisans who work together is not limited to the availability of raw materials, and finished products but also a reciprocal process by exchanging information, both orders, and prices. This is a form of general reciprocity, namely social exchange between craftsmen where the obligation to give or help others does not expect an equivalent or direct return, payment, or compensation. This is in accordance with the statement of one of the following informants.

*"Collaborating with craftsmen in Mulyoharjo is a mandatory thing, Sir. Helping each other is an obligation. Sometimes we also have good cooperation with artisans outside Mulyoharjo; for example, when I get orders but there are too many of them, and I'm afraid of being overwhelmed, I will give these orders to other craftsmen both inside and outside Mulyoharjo Village."*

Karyono, 2022: personal communication, 30<sup>th</sup> May.

Reciprocal relationships between traders and artisans also occur in the case of carving products, following what was conveyed by Mr. Dwi Agung.

*"The reciprocal relationship is usually in terms of products, Sir. It usually occurs by small craftsmen who do not have a market for their products so that they will leave the product in the showroom. Sometimes in the showroom, it is only a sample product. If the customer wants to buy it, the trader will order it from the craftsman. As long as the price is acceptable, we'll ensure there are selling transactions"*

Dwi Agung, 2022: personal communication, 12<sup>th</sup> June.

These associations are among the business actors in the furniture and handicraft sector, in the broadest sense, aware of their responsibility to foster and develop harmonious cooperations, encouraging the equal distribution of business opportunities, and participating in

implementing national development in the economic field (Alamsyah and Arido, 2018). Social-cultural capital and the reciprocal relations also influence the strategy of preserving the social ties among the Jepara people and sustainability of the carving craft business. The strategy for maintaining social ties in the craft center in the Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara, can be seen from a group or individual perspective. From a personal perspective, social relations are established by exchanging information about how to make handicrafts or the materials used. With an increasingly intertwined relationship, the cultural identity created in the Jepara carving craft center community increasingly shows its existence (Verawati, 2012).

## Conclusion

This research found that substantial social capital can increase the role of human capital to improve the empowerment of the small woodcraft industry in the Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara Regency. Socio-cultural capital in Jepara carving plays an essential role in maintaining local traditions and the existence of the carving industry in Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara. As a carving city, Jepara has a variety of social and cultural wealth which is reflected in local traditions that are full of meaning. The existence of this tradition influences the activities of carving art which become an intangible cultural heritage. Jepara people have become a creative society capable of creating innovative carving and sculpture products with high aesthetic value through the existing socio-cultural conditions.

Apart from being a creative society, the Jepara people have good socio-cultural capital. This socio-cultural capital has made carving art activities in Jepara to remain active today. The socio-cultural values upheld by the carving craftsmen and entrepreneurs reflect the local identity of the Jepara people, who cherish honesty, cooperation, and enthusiasm in collaborating with other elements of society. This study concludes that the social capital of Jepara carvers in the Mulyoharjo Village has their respective roles, which help increase the market opportunities and harmony among the carving craftsmen. The existence of socio-cultural capital can provide a balance in the carving activities and maintain the continuity of the Jepara carving industry, which was built hundreds of years ago.

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