

Digitalizing orality: Cultural memory and identity negotiation among the Using community of Banyuwangi, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the transformation of orality within the Using (Osing) community of Banyuwangi, Indonesia, in the context of digital media expansion. Rather than signalling the decline of oral tradition, the digitalization of orality is understood as a process of cultural reconfiguration mediated by contemporary technologies. Drawing on ethnographic and digital-anthropological approaches, this study analyzes how rituals, mantras, myths, narratives, and collective memories are rearticulated through audio-visual formats and platform-based communication. The findings demonstrate that digital orality extends, rather than replaces, the performative, situational, and relational characteristics of traditional orality. Ritual performances and embodied practices remain central as living media of cultural memory, while digital platforms function as new layers of mediation that amplify circulation, visibility, and reinterpretation. At the same time, this process generates arenas of negotiation in which symbolic authority, trauma, myth, and identity are contested within platformed spaces shaped by media logic. Theoretically, this article contributes to three interrelated discussions: the concept of digital orality as a continuation of oral culture, the notion of mediated cultural memory as a dynamic and collective practice, and the negotiation of indigenous identity under conditions of platformization. Empirically, the Using community is positioned as a theoretical case that illuminates broader global patterns of indigenous communities negotiating digital modernity without abandoning local cosmologies and historical frameworks. By situating Using digital practices within global debates on media, memory, and heritage, this study advances the concept of global indigenous digitalities and underscores the importance of culturally grounded perspectives in understanding the relationship between digital media, tradition, and cultural sustainability.

Keywords: Cultural Memory; Digital Orality; Indigenous Communities; Platformization; Using Communities

1. Introduction

Orality is classically understood as a mode of cultural communication that relies on direct presence, collective memory, and social performativity [1], [2], [3]. Within this framework, oral practices cannot be separated from the social context, relations between actors, and narrative repetition that supports the transmission of knowledge across generations [2], [3]. A number of early studies also placed orality in conceptual opposition to literacy, where writing was seen as a technology that brought stability of meaning and abstraction, while orality was associated with social closeness and living memory [1], [2].

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This opposition between orality and writing forms an evolutionary narrative that has been widely influential in cultural studies. In this narrative, orality is positioned as an early stage in the development of communication that was gradually pushed aside by the dominance of written culture and modern rationality [1], [3]. Although this framework is historically important, a number of researchers have pointed out that the approach oversimplifies the dynamics of communication practices and ignores the adaptive nature of oral traditions [2], [3].

The development of digital media in recent decades has increasingly demonstrated the limitations of this linear assumption. Various studies confirm that orality is not disappearing, but rather undergoing transformation through technological mediation [4], [5], [6]. Digital media allows oral practices to be recorded, circulated, and re-consumed, thus transcending the limitations of space and time previously inherent in oral communication [4], [6]. In this context, orality operates within a much more complex and networked media ecosystem.

The transformation marks a shift towards what can be understood as digital orality. Digital orality refers to oral practices that take place in mediated media spaces, where the main characteristics of orality—such as performativity and engagement with an audience—remain, but are intertwined with the logic of digital media [4], [6], [7]. Oral practices in this context are not only spoken, but also produced, edited, and presented in audio-visual formats that can be widely circulated [5], [6].

In contemporary media studies, media are no longer understood as neutral channels, but rather as forces that actively shape social reality. The mediatization perspective asserts that culture, identity, and social relations are increasingly structured by the evolving logic of media [8], [9]. Digital platforms, through algorithms, popularity metrics, and curation mechanisms, play a role in determining which narratives gain visibility and legitimacy [7], [10]. Therefore, the analysis of digital orality cannot be separated from the study of platform logic and symbolic power.

Although the study of orality and cultural memory has grown rapidly, much of the discourse is still dominated by Western experiences and contexts [1], [8]. Classical literature on orality and literacy stems from European and North American history, while digital media studies tend to focus on communication practices in advanced industrial societies [8], [9]. As a result, indigenous communities and non-Western societies are often positioned as marginal ethnographic objects, rather than as equal sources of theoretical reflection [11], [12].

This article attempts to fill this gap by examining the process of digitizing orality within the Using (Osing) community in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. The Using community has a strong oral tradition embodied in rituals, myths, mantras, and cultural narratives as vehicles for transmitting collective memory [11], [12], [13]. In recent years, these practices have begun to emerge and transform in the digital space through audiovisual documentation, social media, and online narratives [11], [13].

Rather than being treated as a mere local case, the Using community in this study is positioned as a theoretical case for understanding the dynamics of digital orality and cultural memory in indigenous communities [4], [5], [11]. This approach allows for a shift in perspective from one that sees indigenous communities as passive recipients of digital modernity to one that positions them as active actors in the process of cultural negotiation [8], [9].

Methodologically, this study combines an ethnographic approach with a digital anthropological perspective to capture the offline and online dimensions of oral practices [14], [15]. This integration allows for an analysis that treats cultural practices as living and dynamic processes, while also positioning digital representations as an integral part of social reality [14], [15]. With this framework, this article contributes conceptually, empirically, and methodologically to the study of orality and cultural memory in the digital age [4], [5], [16], [17], [18].

2. Theoretical framework

Orality has long been conceptually understood as a form of cultural communication that relies on direct presence, collective memory, and social performativity. In classical studies, oral practices are positioned as communication systems dependent on situational context, relationships between actors, and narrative repetition that sustain the transmission of knowledge across generations [1], [2], [3]. Orality thus does not only function as a means of conveying messages, but as a social practice that shapes the structure of thought, social relations, and collective memory of a community [2], [3].

The development of literacy and written technology then gave rise to a conceptual opposition between orality and writing. In this opposition, writing is positioned as a technology that enables stability of meaning, abstraction, and reflective distance, while orality is associated with social closeness and dependence on immediate context [1], [2], [5],

[6]. This framework produces an evolutionary narrative that places orality as an early stage that is gradually pushed aside by the dominance of written culture, a view that is widely influential but not fully able to explain the dynamics of contemporary cultural communication [1], [3].

The emergence of digital media has significantly shaken this linear assumption. Numerous studies have shown that orality is not disappearing, but rather is being recontextualized through various forms of technological mediation [4], [5]. Digital media allows oral practices to be recorded, circulated, and re-accessed repeatedly, thus transcending the limitations of space and time previously inherent in oral communication [4], [6]. In this context, orality no longer relies solely on physical presence, but operates within a complex ecosystem of mediation.

This transformation marks a shift towards what can be understood as digital orality. Digital orality refers to oral practices that take place in mediated media spaces, where the main characteristics of orality—such as performativity, improvisation, and engagement with an audience—remain, but are intertwined with the logic of digital media [4], [6]. Oral practices in this context are not only spoken, but also produced and presented in audio-visual formats that allow for repetition, editing, and wide distribution [5], [6].

Social media, in particular, serves as a new performative space for oral practices. Digital platforms enable the practice of speaking, telling stories, praying, and narrating collective experiences to be carried out before a wider and more heterogeneous audience [4], [6]. In this space, the relationship between speaker and listener undergoes a transformation, where the audience is no longer passive, but can respond, share, and reinterpret the oral practice [6], [8]. This expands the circulation of meaning while changing the dynamics of authority in oral practice [4], [6].

However, digital orality cannot be understood as simply the mechanical reproduction of oral traditions in a new medium. It is a form of cultural practice that has its own logic and demands negotiation with the format, duration, visual aesthetics, and audience expectations dictated by the platform [5], [8]. In this context, digital orality is both reflective and projective: reflective because it refers to existing cultural values and symbols, and projective because it is directed at new audiences and the future of cultural representation [5], [6].

The concept of reflective–projective orality asserts that oral practices in the digital age not only serve to maintain traditions, but also actively reshape cultural identities and meanings in the context of contemporary media [5]. Digital media thus not only provide channels of communication, but also form the framework within which orality acquires new visibility, legitimacy and reach [4], [6].

By positioning digital orality as both a continuation and a transformation of classical orality, this subsection rejects the reductionist view that separates tradition and technology. Instead, orality is understood as a cultural practice that is adaptive, contextual, and constantly negotiating with changing media and social structures [1], [4]. This framework serves as an important theoretical basis for analyzing how indigenous communities, including the Using community, rearticulate their oral traditions in digital media spaces as part of the process of negotiating identity and cultural memory [5], [6].

Cultural memory cannot fundamentally be understood as simply the accumulation of individual memories stored internally in human consciousness. From its inception, memory has been conceptualized as a social practice shaped and maintained through collective frameworks. Individual memory always operates within social frameworks of memory, namely, social structures that enable individuals to collectively remember, interpret, and make meaning of past experiences [19], [20]. Thus, memory is not a direct reflection of the past, but rather a social construction that is always bound to the social context and power relations that surround it [19], [20].

Further conceptual development confirms that cultural memory operates through symbolic and institutional mediums. Memory is not only lived in everyday conversation, but is institutionalized through language, rituals, artifacts, and narratives that serve as vehicles for transmission across generations [4], [17]. Within this framework, cultural memory is performative: it is re-presented through symbolic actions and cultural practices that enable communities to affirm their historical identity and continuity [4], [17]. This performativity explains why cultural memory is never final, but always open to reinterpretation and negotiation of meaning.

The distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory provides a sharper understanding of the dynamics of collective memory. Communicative memory operates within the lived experiences of generations who still interact directly, while cultural memory has a longer temporal reach and is maintained through symbols, rites, and institutionalized narratives [3], [17]. This distinction emphasizes that cultural memory is always mediated and never

directly present. Mediation is a prerequisite for the continuity of memory, because without it, collective memory cannot survive beyond generational boundaries [3], [17], [20].

In modern and contemporary contexts, the role of media in shaping cultural memory is becoming increasingly central. Media not only serve as a means of storing memories, but also as an arena in which memories are produced, selected, and given meaning. An interdisciplinary approach to cultural memory positions media as an active actor in the process of remediation, namely, the process by which past memories are re-presented through different media according to present-day needs and interests [17], [21], [22]. Thus, cultural memory is understood as a dynamic process that moves between continuity and change.

The development of digital media has further intensified this dynamic. Digital media allows collective memories to be recorded, circulated, and retrieved with speed and reach far beyond conventional media [22], [23]. In this condition, memory no longer depends entirely on formal institutions or oral transmission, but also on digital networks that connect various actors, narratives, and events simultaneously [22], [23]. This process gives rise to what is known as connective memory, which is a form of memory that is digitally connected and continuously updated through network interactions [22].

However, the accelerated circulation of memory through digital media is not neutral. Digital media also functions as a selection mechanism that determines which memories gain visibility and legitimacy, and which are marginalized. The logic of media and platforms influences the form of widely circulated narratives, making cultural memory an arena for contestation of meaning influenced by symbolic power [17], [22], [23]. In this context, memory is not only inherited, but also reproduced through representational practices that are fraught with social and cultural interests.

From a narrative perspective, cultural memory is understood as a dialogical process involving multiple voices and perspectives. Collective memory is never singular or homogeneous, but rather is formed through the interaction of competing and negotiating narratives [20]. Digital media expands the space for dialogue by allowing alternative versions of the past to emerge, while simultaneously complicating the relationship between official and popular memory [20], [22]. Thus, cultural memory in the digital age has become a dynamic discursive field open to conflicting interpretations.

The media-memory framework emphasizes that the relationship between media and memory is reciprocal. Media not only store or convey memories, but actively shape how memories are produced, circulated, and interpreted in the public sphere [23]. Changes in media always have implications for changes in the way society remembers, so cultural memory must be understood as a historical and contextual social practice, not as a stable and ahistorical entity [17], [23].

By understanding cultural memory as collective, performative, and always mediated, this subsection provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing the transformation of orality and memory practices in the digital environment. This framework enables a critical reading of the digitization of memory, not merely as a technological process, but as an arena for negotiating meaning involving tradition, media, and symbolic power. In the context of this research, this understanding is key to examining how the Using community's cultural memory is produced, circulated, and negotiated through digital orality practices.

Digital media cannot be understood as a neutral medium in the process of communication and cultural representation. Numerous studies have shown that each medium has its own logic that shapes how messages are produced, circulated, and interpreted by audiences [24], [25]. In the context of digital media, this logic is not only determined by technology, but also by the economic, algorithmic, and institutional interests inherent in the platforms [14], [26], [27]. Therefore, cultural communication practices—including the representation of tradition and identity—always take place within structural boundaries determined by media logic.

The proliferation of digital platforms reinforces a process known as platformization, a trend in which various social and cultural practices increasingly rely on platform infrastructure. Platforms function not simply as online meeting spaces, but as organized systems that regulate interactions through algorithms, popularity metrics, and content curation mechanisms [25], [26]. Within this framework, digital platforms determine the conditions of visibility, regulate the circulation of narratives, and influence the symbolic legitimacy of a cultural practice [14], [26]. Thus, platforms play an active role in shaping the landscape of contemporary cultural meaning.

The concept of social media logic asserts that social media operates through a set of principles such as popularity, connectivity, and datafication. These principles encourage communication practices oriented toward audience engagement, visual appeal, and rapid content circulation [26]. In a cultural context, this logic influences how traditions

and identities are represented. Cultural narratives that align with the platform's logic tend to receive greater attention and recognition, while practices that do not align risk being marginalized [14], [26]. In other words, digital platforms act as symbolic selection mechanisms in the digital public space.

The platform's logic is closely related to the dynamics of symbolic power. Symbolic power refers to the ability to determine what constitutes legitimate, valuable, and worthy of recognition in social reality. Media, in this case, becomes the primary arena where symbolic power is produced and contested [6], [8]. Cultural practices that gain high visibility in digital spaces are often perceived as more authentic or relevant representations, although such legitimacy is the result of complex interactions between cultural actors and media structures [6], [9]. Therefore, visibility on digital platforms cannot be separated from symbolic power relations.

The network media logic approach asserts that cultural communication in the digital era is increasingly structured by networks of interactions involving users, algorithms, and media institutions. In this logic, meaning is not produced linearly by a single actor, but rather through dynamic and layered network relations [25], [28]. Cultural identity, thus, is no longer formed singly, but is continuously negotiated in a communication space that is fragmented but still governed by the logic of the platform [25], [28]. This process reflects a shift from centralized cultural authority to a more fluid, but not entirely egalitarian, arena of negotiation.

Digital platforms also play a crucial role in agenda-building, the process of shaping issues, themes, and narratives deemed important in the public sphere. Through trending mechanisms, algorithmic recommendations, and content curation, platforms contribute to determining which topics receive widespread attention [28], [29]. In a cultural context, this agenda influences how traditions and identities are presented and understood. Cultural practices that receive high exposure tend to be perceived as more representative, although such representations are often the result of simplifications and selections influenced by media logic [28], [29].

Critical studies of platforms also emphasize that digital media actively intervene in social practices. Platforms regulate interactions through interface design, content policies, and algorithms that influence user experiences and the boundaries of cultural expression [14], [26]. These interventions are often not directly visible, but they have a significant impact on the production and distribution of meaning. Thus, digital media can be understood as actors that exercise symbolic power through subtle yet effective technological mechanisms [14], [26].

The framework of symbolic power becomes increasingly relevant when linked to cultural reproduction. Practices of cultural representation in digital spaces do not occur in a vacuum but are influenced by existing social structures. Digital media can reproduce symbolic inequality by granting greater legitimacy to certain actors or narratives, while others remain marginalized [6], [8]. This process demonstrates that the digitalization of culture is not automatically emancipatory, but rather operates within complex and layered power relations.

By understanding media logic, platformization, and symbolic power as interrelated frameworks, this subsection asserts that cultural identities in the digital age are always negotiated within algorithmic logic. Identities are not only expressed but also constructed through mechanisms of visibility, legitimacy, and symbolic reproduction regulated by platforms [25], [26]. This framework serves as an important theoretical foundation for analyzing how indigenous communities, including the Using community, navigate digital spaces in an effort to maintain, negotiate, and rearticulate their cultural identities amidst the opportunities and limitations presented by digital platforms.

Heritage and tradition cannot be understood as neutral, static, or simply passed down naturally from the past to the present. Critical heritage studies emphasize that what is called "cultural heritage" is always the result of a process of selection, interpretation, and legitimation that occurs within specific power relations [30], [31]. In this framework, heritage is not merely an object of preservation, but rather a social and discursive practice that is actively produced for the benefit of the present [31]. Thus, tradition and heritage must be understood as arenas of contestation of meaning, where various actors negotiate to determine which version of the past is considered legitimate and valuable.

The critical heritage studies approach rejects the essentialist view that positions tradition as an authentic entity that needs to be preserved. Instead, heritage is understood as a process (heritage-as-process) that continually changes according to political, economic, and cultural contexts [30], [31]. The concept of authorized heritage discourse shows that the definition and value of heritage are often dominated by certain authorities—such as the state, cultural institutions, or experts—who determine the standards of cultural authenticity and legitimacy [31]. In this process, the voices of local communities do not always receive equal space, so heritage has the potential to reproduce symbolic inequality.

The relationship between heritage and power becomes even more apparent when tradition is positioned within the framework of development and cultural policy. Tradition can serve as a source of collective identity and pride, but also as an instrument of social regulation and political legitimacy [30], [31]. The institutionalization of heritage often standardizes cultural practices that are inherently dynamic and contextual. As a result, living traditions risk being reduced to normative representations that serve the interests of cultural policy and tourism [30].

The development of digital technology has broadened the field of this contestation through the emergence of digital heritage. Digital heritage refers to the practice of documenting, representing, and disseminating cultural heritage through digital media. On the one hand, digitalization opens up significant opportunities for the democratization of heritage, as it enables local communities to document and narrate their own traditions and reach a global audience [12], [30]. Digital media can function as a means of empowerment, expanding participation, and challenging heritage narratives previously monopolized by official institutions [12].

However, digital heritage also carries significant risks of diminishing meaning. The process of digitization often requires the simplification, fragmentation, and visualization of cultural practices that are inherently complex, performative, and contextual [12], [30]. Traditions that are rich with cosmological dimensions, social relations, and embodied experiences have the potential to be represented superficially to suit media formats and audience tastes [12]. This risk is even greater when digital heritage operates within a platform logic that prioritizes visibility, accessibility, and visual appeal [12], [26].

A critical approach to digital heritage emphasizes that technology is not a neutral medium for cultural preservation. Digital technologies shape how heritage is curated, presented, and interpreted through interface design, media formats, and the logic of content circulation [12]. Thus, digital heritage must be understood as a politically charged cultural practice, not simply a technical preservation effort. The questions of who represents tradition, for whom that representation is intended, and within what media logic it operates are crucial in digital heritage analysis [30], [31].

In this context, heritage and tradition function as cultural political terrains where meaning and identity are negotiated. The digitization of heritage can strengthen certain narratives while marginalizing others, depending on access to technologies, platforms, and representational resources [30], [31]. Traditions that are easily visualized and adapted to global tastes tend to gain greater visibility, while practices that are local, esoteric, or based on direct experience risk being marginalized [12], [30].

By understanding heritage as an arena for contestation over meaning and power, and digital heritage as a space that opens up both opportunities and risks for the reduction of meaning, this subsection provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing the transformation of tradition in the digital era. This framework emphasizes that the digitalization of culture cannot be separated from the politics of representation and relations of symbolic power. In the context of this research, this understanding is key to understanding how the traditions and orality of the Using community are represented, negotiated, and maintained in an increasingly platformized digital media ecosystem [12], [30], [31].

3. Materials and method

This research uses a qualitative-ethnographic approach combined with anthropolinguistic and digital anthropological perspectives to analyze the transformation of orality and cultural memory in the context of digital media. A qualitative approach was chosen because orality practices cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measurements alone, but rather require a contextual reading of the meanings, performativity, and social relations that accompany them [32], [33]. In the ethnographic tradition, cultural practices are understood as living processes that can only be captured in depth through the researcher's direct involvement in the social field [32], [33].

Epistemologically, the ethnographic approach starts from the assumption that orality and cultural memory are social practices bound to situational and historical contexts. Oral traditions exist not only as spoken texts, but as performative acts involving the body, space, audience, and cultural symbols [32], [33]. Therefore, this research places oral practices as an object of study that must be observed in its natural context, not reduced to a transcription of text that is detached from the social situation [32].

Data collection was conducted through ethnographic observation of rituals, cultural practices, and social interactions that serve as the primary vehicles for orality in the Using community. These observations included the forms of ritual speech, oral narratives, and cultural performances that serve as a medium for transmitting collective memory [32], [33].

This approach follows the tradition of orality research which emphasizes the importance of performative context and social relations in understanding the meaning of utterances [32], [33].

In addition to offline observations, this study also analyzes digital representations of oral practices present in online spaces. The digital data includes audiovisual documentation, social media posts, and online narratives representing Using rituals, myths, and cultural practices. This analysis aims to understand how oral practices are reconfigured when moving from a live performative space to a digital media space [14], [34]. This approach is in line with the digital anthropology perspective which views online and offline spaces as interconnected and mutually shaping domains [34].

Within an anthropolinguistic framework, analysis focuses on the relationship between language, culture, and social context. This research not only analyzes the content of utterances, but also their function, form, and the situations in which they are used in specific cultural practices [32], [33]. This approach allows for a reading of orality as a dynamic semiotic system, which changes with changes in medium, audience, and social context [32].

A crucial aspect of this research methodology is the application of researcher reflexivity. In ethnographic research, the researcher is never outside the social field being studied. The researcher's social position, academic background, and habitus influence the data collection and interpretation process [9], [20]. Therefore, this research consciously applies reflexivity as a methodological principle, by considering how power relations and cultural proximity influence interactions with informants and readings of cultural practices [9], [20].

Reflexivity is also applied in digital data analysis. Online representations are not treated as objective reflections of cultural reality, but rather as constructions influenced by media logic, user choices, and platform context [14], [34]. With this reflective approach, research attempts to avoid essentialist claims about culture and positions findings as the result of interpretations that are contextual and open to critical dialogue [9], [20].

Overall, the combination of ethnography, anthropolinguistics, and digital anthropology allows this research to capture the complexity of orality practices in contemporary cultural and media contexts. This methodological approach serves not only as a data collection technique but also as an analytical framework aligned with the research objective, namely understanding digital orality as a lived, negotiated, and mediated cultural practice [32], [33], [34]. With this methodology, research is expected to be able to provide a deep and scientifically accountable understanding of the transformation of orality and cultural memory in indigenous communities in the digital era.

4. The Using community as contextual background

The Using (Osing) community is an ethnic group inhabiting the Banyuwangi region and has a unique social and cultural history within the context of eastern East Java. Historically, this community is often understood as a group that maintains cultural practices and language distinct from the dominant Javanese cultural construct, while also demonstrating a long process of identity negotiation in relation to changing political and social powers [2], [30]. Using identity is not formed statically, but rather through historical dynamics, cultural contact, and collective experiences that shape the ethnic and cultural awareness of the community [30], [35].

From a social and economic perspective, the Using people traditionally rely on the agricultural sector and local economic practices that are closely intertwined with ritual cycles and cultural calendars. The social life of the Using community demonstrates a strong connection between economic practices, social structures, and cultural expressions, so that tradition cannot be separated from the material context of everyday life [36], [37]. In recent decades, economic changes and development policies have influenced the social configuration of Using society, including shifts in livelihoods and intensified interactions with markets and tourism [36], [37].

Banyuwangi, as a geographical and administrative region, plays a crucial role as a meeting place for local traditions, state interests, and market logic. From the New Order era to the contemporary period, cultural and regional development policies have helped frame the representation of Using culture in official discourse and tourism programs [36], [37], [38], [39]. This process makes Banyuwangi not just a geographical setting, but an arena where Using identity is negotiated through relations between local communities, state institutions, and economic actors [38].

Using cultural practices showcase diverse forms of oral traditions and rituals that serve as vehicles for transmitting values, knowledge, and collective memory. Rituals, mantras, and oral narratives serve not only as spiritual expressions but also as social mechanisms that strengthen community cohesion and legitimize cultural values [11], [40]. This oral tradition operates within a local cosmological framework that connects humans, ancestors, and nature, so that Using cultural practices have a complex and layered symbolic dimension [40].

A number of ethnographic studies confirm that Using cultural practices are inextricably linked to historical discourses of power and violence. The collective experiences of this community include memories of social conflict, rumors, and violence, which shape cultural memory and how the community interprets threat, authority, and social solidarity [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46]. This collective memory not only lives on in formal historical narratives, but is also maintained through stories, gossip, and oral practices that function as mechanisms for making sense of traumatic experiences [41], [45].

In the contemporary context, Banyuwangi's transformation into a cultural tourism destination has also influenced how Using traditions are represented and practiced. Traditions and rituals that were previously local and situational are now increasingly presented in public performances and media documentation [36], [38]. This process opens up opportunities for the visibility of Using culture, but also raises the risk of reducing the meaning and commodification of tradition [37], [38]. Thus, Using cultural practices are in tension between the preservation of local values and the demands of public representation.

Digitalization further strengthens this dynamic. Using cultural practices and oral traditions are beginning to appear in the digital space through audiovisual documentation, social media, and online narratives produced by both the community and external parties [47], [48]. This digital presence not only broadens the audience but also changes how traditions are interpreted and negotiated. Digital representation allows the Using tradition to be rearticulated as a symbol of identity and a source of cultural legitimacy in a broader context [47], [48], [49].

However, the digital presence of Using traditions does not occur in a neutral space. Cultural representations in digital media operate within a platform logic that influences the visibility, selection, and legitimacy of cultural narratives [47], [48]. Traditions that suit audience preferences and media formats tend to receive greater attention, while practices that are local, contextual, or esoteric risk being marginalized. Therefore, the context of Banyuwangi as a meeting place for tradition, state, market, and digital media is crucial for understanding the dynamics of digital orality within the Using community [36], [38], [47].

By situating the Using community within a complex social, economic, and political context, this section emphasizes that the transformation of orality and cultural memory cannot be separated from the structural context that surrounds it. Banyuwangi is not simply a research location, but rather a social field where Using traditions are continually negotiated in relation to power, development, and the media. This contextual framework provides an important basis for interpreting the research findings and analyzing how the Using community rearticulates their orality and cultural identity in the digital age.

5. Findings and analysis

The results and analysis of this study are formulated into four sections. First, it addresses the issue of the digital transformation of the Using orality. Second, it discusses the relationship and implications between ritual, performance, and embodied cultural memory. Third, it examines the relationship and consequences of trauma, rumor, and the mediation of fear. Fourth, it explores the history and implications of myth, authority, and identity negotiation. These four sections are described below.

5.1. Digital transformation

Research findings indicate that the oral practices of the Using community are no longer confined to local and situational ritual spaces, but are increasingly present in social media and digital platforms. Healing mantras, ritual prayers, and cultural narratives previously conveyed orally in sacred contexts are now documented in video, audio, and visual posts widely circulated on social media [11], [40]. This digitalization marks a fundamental shift in the way orality is produced, stored, and accessed, from practices based on direct presence to mediated and re-consumable representations [47], [50].

Empirically, the presence of Using mantras and prayers in digital media shows a shift from the pattern oral ritual going to oral-visual-digital. Oral practices that were previously tied to specific ritual times and spaces are now packaged in audio-visual formats with durations, shooting angles, and narratives adapted to the characteristics of digital platforms [50]. This transformation shows that orality is not extinct, but is being reconfigured through visual media and recording technology, thus enabling oral practices to reach a wider and more heterogeneous audience [47], [50].

This shift in medium also impacts the social and symbolic context of oral practices. In traditional ritual spaces, mantras and prayers function as sacred practices accessible only to a specific community and under the authority of the ritual

practitioner. As these practices move into digital spaces, the boundaries between sacred and public become more fluid [40], [47]. Mantras and prayers are no longer completely under the control of the ritual performer, but are open to interpretation, commentary, and consumption by audiences who do not always share the same cultural affiliation [50].

From an anthropolinguistic perspective, this shift indicates a shift in the function of ritual language. Oral language, which previously operated as a performative act in sacred contexts, now also functions as a visual and narrative representation in digital spaces [11], [40]. The communicative function of mantras and prayers lies not only in their ritual effectiveness, but also in their ability to build the image of Using culture and identity before a wider audience [40]. In this way, oral practices have expanded their function from ritual acts to become a medium for cultural representation.

This phenomenon is in line with the concept digital orality which emphasizes that oral practices in the digital era are both reflective and projective. Using oral practices reflect established cultural values, cosmologies, and memories, while projecting them into the digital public sphere as part of a cultural sustainability strategy [47], [50]. Within the framework reflective–projective orality, digitalization not only maintains traditions, but also actively reshapes the way those traditions are understood and negotiated [47].

However, this transformation also carries the risk of reducing meaning. Visual formats and the demands of social media accessibility often encourage the simplification of ritual practices that are inherently complex and contextual [50]. Performative elements that depend on atmosphere, social relations, and embodied experiences are potentially reduced when presented as stand-alone digital content [40], [50]. In this way, the digitization of orality opens up the tension between cultural visibility and the depth of ritual meaning.

On the other hand, research findings indicate that some Using cultural practitioners consciously utilize digital media as a space for negotiating cultural authority and legitimacy. By documenting and sharing oral practices, they not only maintain traditions but also claim positions as legitimate guardians and interpreters of that cultural heritage [40], [47]. This practice demonstrates that the Using community is not a passive recipient of digital technology, but rather an active actor navigating the opportunities and limitations of media to strengthen their cultural identity.

Overall, the digital transformation of Using orality shows that oral practices have not been eliminated in the digital media era, but rather have undergone a complex reconfiguration oral ritual going to oral–visual–digital asserts that orality remains an important medium for the transmission of cultural values and memory, although it operates within a different media logic [47], [50]. These findings provide an important foundation for further analysis of how the digitalization of orality affects the cultural memory and identity negotiations of the Using community, which will be discussed in the next subsection.

5.2. Ritual and cultural memory

Research findings indicate that rituals and performative practices in the Using community serve as primary media for storing and activating cultural memory. The Seblang ritual, in particular, is understood not merely as a ceremonial event, but as a social practice that integrates the body, space, music, and spiritual relationships as a vehicle for transmitting collective memory across generations [24], [46]. In this context, cultural memory is not reduced to verbal narratives or textual archives, but is re-presented through repeated ritual actions tied to bodily experience [3], [17].

A number of ethnographic studies confirm that Seblang is a ritual that connects the Using community with ancestors and supernatural powers which are understood as the guardians of the balance of the cosmos and social life [46]. The practice of spirit-mediumism in this ritual allows the dancer's body to become a medium between the human world and the spirit world, so that cultural memory is not stored abstractly, but is activated through the performativity of the body [46]. In this framework, the body is not only a ritual actor, but also a living archive that stores and transmits the collective memory of the community [17], [46].

The performativity of the Seblang ritual demonstrates that cultural memory is both practical and situational. Memory does not exist as a static representation of the past, but as an experience that is repeated, renewed, and negotiated each time the ritual is performed [17], [18]. Through body movements, musical rhythms, and symbolic interactions with the social environment, rituals function as mechanisms for re-embodiment of memory that connect the past, present, and future of the Using community [24], [46]. Thus, ritual becomes the primary means of cultural continuity that goes beyond verbal transmission.

Spirit-medium practices in the Using context also demonstrate how cultural memory operates through affective and sensory relationships. Trance experiences, altered consciousness, and bodily responses in ritual cannot be fully

explained through representational frameworks but must be understood as part of embodied cultural memory [46]. This is in line with the view that cultural memory is not only stored in symbols and texts, but also in bodily practices that are continuously repeated and internalized by the community [3], [17].

In dialogue with cultural memory theory, the Using ritual practices reinforce the idea that collective memory is always mediated by symbolic and performative forms. Cultural memory is maintained through rites, ceremonies, and symbolic acts that enable communities to continuously reproduce meaning and identity [3], [17]. The Seblang ritual, in this case, functions as a site of living memory, where memories are not stored passively, but are continuously activated through social practices [17], [18].

The media memory approach helps explain how ritual and performativity can be understood as memory media on a par with technological media. Before the dominance of digital media, ritual served as the primary infrastructure for storing and transmitting collective memory [22], [23]. In the Using context, ritual performativity acts as a medium that connects ancestral memory with contemporary social life, while maintaining the continuity of cultural meaning in the face of social change [22], [46].

These findings confirm that before Using oral practices underwent digital transformation, cultural memory had long been mediated through the body and ritual performance. Thus, the digitalization of oral practice discussed in the previous subsection cannot be understood as the starting point of memory mediation, but rather as a new layer in a long history of cultural mediation practices [17], [22]. Rituals and bodily performativity provide an important foundation for understanding how Using cultural memory is then rearticulated in digital media spaces.

Overall, this subsection demonstrates that the Seblang ritual and spirit-medium practices function as living memory media that rely on performativity and bodily experience as primary mechanisms of memory storage. Using cultural memory does not exist outside the body or social practices, but rather is embedded in ritual actions that are continually repeated and reinterpreted [24], [46]. This framework serves as an important analytical basis for understanding how embodied memory interacts with the logic of documentation and digital representation at a later stage.

5.3. Trauma and the mediation of fear

Research findings indicate that the Using community's collective memory is shaped not only by affirmative rituals and symbolic practices, but also by traumatic experiences related to violence, rumors of black magic, and collective fear. Memories of the massacre of black magic shamans in the late 1990s, and the atmosphere of fear that accompanied it, still live on in oral narratives, family stories, and the community's social memory [1], [51]. This trauma is not fully archived in official history, but rather survives through fragmentary and affective memory mechanisms [1], [18].

Several ethnographic studies confirm that black magic rumors serve as a primary medium for spreading collective fear in Banyuwangi and the surrounding areas. Rumors not only convey information but also serve as social practices that activate anxiety, suspicion, and fear-based solidarity [41], [45], [46]. In this context, rumors operate as a form of oral communication that has high performative power, capable of mobilizing social action without requiring factual verification [30], [46].

The role of traditional media in amplifying the resonance of fear becomes particularly significant during the escalation of violence. Print and broadcast media contribute to amplifying the circulation of rumors through sensational and ambiguous reporting, blurring the lines between information, gossip, and social panic [45], [52]. These findings suggest that the media not only reflects social fears, but also plays an active role in shaping and expanding them [45], [52], [53].

In subsequent developments, digital media introduced a new layer in mediating collective trauma and fear. Narratives of past violence, rumors of black magic, and the figure of the "ninja" re-emerged in digital spaces through social media posts, online discussions, and the reproduction of old stories in new formats [22], [54]. Digital media allows trauma that was previously local and temporary to acquire broader and more recurrent resonance, so that traumatic memories do not completely subside, but continue to be reactivated in new contexts [22].

From a cultural memory perspective, collective trauma is not remembered as a complete chronological narrative, but rather as fragments of experience recalled through stories, symbols, and emotions. This practice of remembering demonstrates that trauma operates through the mechanism of haunting, where the past continues to "disturb" the present without ever being fully resolved [17], [22]. In the Using community, fear of black magic and violence serves as a layer of memory that shapes how people interpret threats, security, and social relations [41], [55].

The role of rumors in this context also demonstrates how traumatic memories are negotiated through oral communication and the media. Rumors allow communities to express fears that are difficult to articulate directly, while also providing an explanatory framework for events perceived as threatening the social order [30], [46]. Thus, rumors not only perpetuate fear, but also serve as a mechanism for collective meaning-making of traumatic experiences [46].

Cross-contextual studies show that similar practices are also found in other societies in Southeast Asia, where rumors, black magic, and violence are intertwined in complex social dynamics [30]. This confirms that the Using community's experience is not a local anomaly, but rather part of a broader pattern of how fear and trauma are mediated through cultural practices and media [30], [46].

Overall, the findings in this subsection suggest that trauma, rumors, and collective fear are integral to the cultural memory of the Using community. Media—both traditional and digital—serve as a medium that expands, reproduces, and transforms these traumatic memories [22], [45], [52]. Thus, the memory of violence not only persists as a remnant of the past, but continues to be present as a social force that influences the relationships, perceptions of threat, and cultural dynamics of the Using community to the present day.

5.4. Myth and identity negotiation

Research findings indicate that myth plays a central role as a source of symbolic authority in the construction and negotiation of Using community identity. The myth of Nyai Roro Kidul and the narrative of Majapahit heritage serve as symbolic frameworks that provide cosmological, historical, and moral legitimacy to cultural practices and community identity claims [24], [46]. In this context, myths do not function merely as stories of the past, but rather as symbolic resources that are continuously activated to affirm the position of Using culture in the broader social landscape [46].

Ethnographic studies show that the myth of Nyai Roro Kidul has undergone a localization of meaning in the Using context, particularly through its association with coastal spaces and specific ritual practices. This localization allows the myth to function as a bridge between local cosmology and broader Javanese cultural narratives, while also providing a basis for symbolic authority for local cultural actors [46]. Thus, myth operates as a legitimating mechanism that links local practices with regional and national cultural discourses [24], [46].

The Majapahit narrative also serves as a crucial source of historical authority in identity negotiations. References to Majapahit allow the Using community to connect with an imagined past glory that resonates strongly within Indonesian national discourse [24]. Through this narrative, Using identity is negotiated not as a peripheral entity, but as part of the greater history of the archipelago, thereby gaining symbolic legitimacy in relation to the state and national discourse [24].

Within the framework of symbolic power, myths function as cultural capital that can be converted into social legitimacy. The authority of myths is not inherent, but is generated through a process of collective recognition and symbolic reproduction in cultural practices [6], [8]. Cultural actors who are able to articulate myths persuasively have the potential to gain an authoritative position in the community, because myths provide a symbolic language that is recognized and shared [6].

Digital media expands the negotiation space for mythical authority by allowing mythological narratives to circulate within broader networks. The myths of Nyai Roro Kidul and Majapahit are not only presented in ritual contexts or oral narratives, but are also reproduced through social media posts, online discussions, and digital visual representations [10], [28], [56]. Social media serves as a space where myths are presented, reinterpreted, and debated by diverse audiences, so that the symbolic authority of myths becomes more fluid and open to contestation [10], [56].

Identity negotiations mediated by digital media are participatory and networked. The practice of sharing, commenting on, and reproducing mythological narratives allows for the formation of cultural identities that are no longer entirely controlled by traditional authorities [10], [57]. In this context, Using identity is negotiated through interactions between local actors, national and even global audiences, so that the meaning of myths can shift according to the context and interests of communication [57], [28].

Research findings also suggest that identity negotiations through myth involve a tension between local authenticity and broader audience expectations. Representations of myths in digital spaces are often simplified or stylized to make them understandable and appealing to non-local audiences [56]. This process opens up opportunities for cultural visibility, but at the same time risks reducing the complexity of the meaning of myth and the cosmological relations attached to it [56].

In the context of the Using community, identity negotiation through myth also interacts with discourses of ethnolinguistic identity. Mythological narratives are used to reinforce claims of a distinct cultural identity, while also negotiating the Using's position in relation to broader Javanese and Indonesian identities [35]. Thus, myth functions as a symbolic arena where local, national, and global identities are intertwined and dynamically negotiated.

Overall, this subsection demonstrates that myth serves as an important source of symbolic authority in the Using community's identity negotiations. Through the myths of Nyai Roro Kidul and Majapahit, the Using community articulates multiscalar identity claims local, national, and global in an increasingly mediated cultural space [24], [46]. Digital media expands and complicates this process by opening up wider spaces for participation and contestation, so that cultural identities are no longer fixed, but are continually negotiated through symbolic practices and networked communication [10], [28], [57].

6. Discussion

This discussion places the findings about the Using community within the framework of global debates about the relationship between indigenous communities and digital modernity. The findings suggest that Using's practice of digitizing oral language is not a local anomaly, but rather represents a broader pattern in which indigenous communities actively negotiate their relationships with digital media [13], [16]. In this context, digitalization does not mark a break with tradition, but becomes an arena in which tradition is negotiated, rearticulated, and expanded in new mediational spaces [8], [24].

The mediatization framework helps explain how digital media shape the social conditions in which cultural practices take place. Media become not just channels of communication, but also structural environments that influence how communities understand themselves and their world [8], [24]. Findings from Using show that digital orality operates in a mediated reality, where ritual practices, myths, and cultural narratives are reproduced through media logic without losing their connection to local cosmologies [13], [16]. Thus, digital modernity does not automatically negate cosmological practices, but rather reframes the way in which these cosmologies are presented.

The synthesis of empirical findings and cultural memory theory suggests that digital orality functions as a mechanism for expanding collective memory. Cultural memory, previously dependent on rituals and bodily performativity, now acquires new layers of mediation through digital documentation and circulation [3], [17]. However, this expansion does not erase the performative and embodied dimensions of cultural memory. Instead, digital media extends the reach of memory while still relying on symbolic practices rooted in local traditions [17], [22].

Within the framework of critical heritage studies, Using's findings emphasize that the digitalization of culture is always intertwined with the politics of representation. Tradition and heritage are never neutral, but are produced within power relations involving local communities, institutions, and media logics [30], [31]. Digital heritage opens up opportunities for indigenous communities to claim visibility and symbolic authority, but also presents the risk of a reduction in meaning as cultural practices are adapted to platform formats and expectations [12], [30]. Thus, cultural sustainability in the digital age must be understood as an ongoing process of negotiation, not as a final state.

The research findings also contribute to the discourse on platformization by demonstrating how platform logic influences the visibility and legitimacy of indigenous cultural practices. Digital platforms regulate the circulation of narratives through algorithms and popularity metrics, thereby influencing practices of cultural representation [25], [26]. In the Using context, communities do not completely submit to this logic, but navigate it strategically to maintain local meaning while reaching a wider audience [26]. This shows that platformization is not a deterministic process, but rather an arena of negotiation between media structures and cultural agencies.

Comparatively, the findings from the Using community align with patterns found in studies of other indigenous communities around the world, where digital media is utilized to maintain local languages, rituals, and cosmologies [34], [56]. The similarity of these patterns allows for the formulation of the concept of indigenous digitalities as an analytical lens for understanding the digital practices of indigenous communities that do not simply imitate Western modernity, but shape their own digital modernity [13], [16]. This concept challenges the universalistic assumption of digitalization as a homogeneous process and emphasizes the importance of cultural context in global media studies.

Digital orality, in this framework, cannot be understood as a form of degradation of oral tradition. Rather, it represents an expansion of the ecology of communication that allows oral practices to adapt to new mediational conditions without losing their cosmological and social functions [8], [24]. Using's findings show that digital oral practices remain

connected to the rites, myths, and embodied memories that underpin the community's cultural identity [17], [46]. Thus, digital orality serves as a bridge between the continuity of tradition and technological change.

This discussion also highlights theoretical implications for media and cultural studies. By positioning the Using community as a theoretical case, this article broadens the horizons of studies of mediatization, cultural memory, and heritage by incorporating the experiences of Southeast Asian indigenous communities that have historically been underrepresented [8], [30]. This approach emphasizes that theoretical contributions come not only from Western contexts, but also from local cultural practices that are able to reveal global dynamics in a reflective manner.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the digitalization of Using orality represents a global pattern in which indigenous communities negotiate digital modernity in contextual and meaningful ways. Digital orality expands, rather than erases, local cosmologies by providing new spaces for the articulation of memory, identity, and symbolic authority [3], [17], [30]. By understanding digital orality as part of global indigenous digitalities, this article contributes to a more inclusive and balanced understanding of the relationship between digital media, culture, and the sustainability of traditions in the global era.

7. Conclusion

This article concludes that the digitalization of orality in the Using community is not a sign of the decline of oral tradition, but rather a process of reconfiguring cultural practices through technological mediation. Mantras, prayers, rituals, myths, and cultural narratives continue to function as means of transmitting values and collective memory, even though they are now available in audio-visual formats and digital platforms. Orality is not disappearing, but adapting through new media that expand its reach and change the conditions of its performativity.

This article's first theoretical contribution lies in strengthening the concept of digital orality as a continuation of classical orality. The core characteristics of orality performative, situational, and rooted in social relations remain persistent in digital spaces, despite interacting with media and platform logics. In the Using context, oral practices can be rearticulated without losing their connection to local cosmologies and the bodily experiences that underpin culture.

The second contribution relates to the understanding of mediated cultural memory. The Using community's cultural memory is preserved not only through rituals and bodily performativity, but also through digital documentation and circulation, which prolong the collective memory's viability. Digital media provides a new layer of mediation that allows memory to be recorded, repeated, and reinterpreted, without completely replacing long-standing performative mechanisms.

The third contribution concerns identity negotiation within platformed spaces. Using cultural identity is negotiated through oral representations, rituals, and myths within the logic of digital platforms that regulate visibility and symbolic legitimacy. Using communities emerge as active actors navigating the opportunities and limitations of digital media to maintain symbolic authority and cultural sustainability at local, national, and global scales.

Empirically, this article positions the Using community as a theoretical case that enriches the global discourse on indigenous communities and digital modernity. The transformation of Using orality and cultural memory reflects broader patterns of how indigenous communities negotiate digital media without completely abandoning their cosmological and historical frameworks. This article also emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding cultural digitalization more comprehensively.

Overall, this research demonstrates that the digitalization of Using orality is a complex and meaningful process of cultural adaptation. Digital orality expands the space for cultural articulation, mediated cultural memory prolongs the viability of collective memory, and identity negotiation in digital platform spaces affirms the agency of indigenous communities in the face of digital modernity.

Compliance with ethical standards

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