

Existence of The *Menyilaq* Tradition Among the Sasak People in the Face of The Advance of Modern Information Technology

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the existence of the menyilaq tradition among the Sasak people, identify the dynamics of change resulting from the development of modern information technology, and uncover the adaptation and preservation strategies used to maintain cultural and social values, as well as local wisdom, in the digital age. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with research sites in Mataram City, West Lombok Regency, and North Lombok Regency that represent urban, suburban, and indigenous communities. The study selected informants through purposive sampling, including traditional leaders, cultural figures, village heads, and representatives of the younger generation. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results indicate that the menyilaq tradition remains intact but undergoes distinct patterns of transformation across different regions. In urban areas, the menyilaq tradition tends to be replaced by digital communication, whereas in indigenous communities, it is still upheld as a social norm. This study identifies three patterns of traditional shift: total digital conversion, rigid cultural preservation, and hybrid culture, with the hybrid model emerging as the most relevant form of adaptation because it integrates information technology with the preservation of Sasak cultural values. The implications of this study underscore the importance of synergies among cultural policy, education, family, community, and strengthened digital communication ethics as a strategy for the sustainable preservation of the menyilaq tradition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern information technology, which has developed rapidly in recent years, has brought innovations in human communication. Patterns of interpersonal relationships and communication have also shifted from traditional practices, long characterized by strong

face-to-face emotional bonds, to online relationships that eliminate physical distance between people [1]. These communication innovations are believed to have altered certain cultural rituals long practiced by society, particularly those involving message transmission. However, with the massive penetration of the internet, smartphones have now emerged as the dominant medium of communication, offering unlimited convenience [2]. Meeting patterns that once required face-to-face interaction are now easily replaced by interpersonal communication mediated by mobile devices. This shift not only affects the external aspects of invitation etiquette but also risks eroding the values of warm, personal communication by prioritizing practicality alone [3]. The younger generation's personalization of devices may erode the values of patience, etiquette, and polite language (polite speech) taught in the tradition of conventional *menyilaaq*.

The *menyilaaq*, or *pesilaaq*, ritual is a Sasak tradition on the island of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province, and is believed to have changed with the development of information technology [4]. The tradition of *menyilaaq* or *pesilaaq* in Sasak culture is essentially an oral tradition involving visits or social gatherings to deliver invitations directly and personally (verbal invitations) for important events such as weddings (*merariq*), *tahlilan*, or thanksgiving ceremonies [5]. This tradition is not merely an act of extending invitations but a time-honored legacy rich in meaning, etiquette, and the ethics of oral communication, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Sasak society. In collective life, *menyilaaq* plays a major role in strengthening family bonds and maintaining social harmony through deliberation, courtesy, and mutual respect (*saling teang*). These contributions stem from the fact that the *menyilaaq* tradition embodies positive values, such as religious values, cultural values, politeness, kinship, and responsibility [6].

Several previous studies have examined this tradition from various perspectives. Aini et al. (2023) focused on instilling character values in the *mesilaaq* tradition in North Lombok, while Mudarman & Kurniawan (2019) examined linguistic aspects and speech acts in East Lombok. Hasanah & Andari (2021) investigated a community-based model of social communication. Unlike those studies, which tended to be locally and spatially focused or took a macro-level approach to cultural rituals, this study specifically uncovers the existence of, and maps the dynamics of shifts in the forms, directions, and defensive strategies employed by the community to preserve the local wisdom of *mesilaaq* in the face of the influence of modern digital technology. Oktaviasary & Ai Sutini (2024) explain that local and foreign cultures can intertwine, both strengthening unity and distinguishing one from the other. Febriansyah (2025) emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure that technology is used as a tool to protect and strengthen culture, rather than as a catalyst for its decline.

Permadi (2020) explains that the introduction and development of communication technology in society pose a threat to indigenous cultures that reflect the unique local characteristics of a region, in this case, a nation. Adolescents should serve as a crucial pillar of a national culture that celebrates hedonism and modernity. Syarifuddin Jurdi & Andi Amiruddin (2025) note that despite current technological advancements, there is a consistent effort to showcase local cultural content through coverage of traditional events,

culture-based tourism promotion, and the dissemination of traditional values to the public via platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Stories, and other media.

Prior studies have largely focused on the normative aspects of cultural functions without mapping the forms of transformation, the factors driving these shifts, or the adaptation strategies communities use to preserve the *menyilaq* tradition in the digital age. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in an analysis that integrates the perspective of cultural preservation with the dynamics of digital transformation by identifying the existence of the tradition, the forms of shift, the factors influencing change, and the strategies employed by the Sasak community to preserve the *menyilaq* tradition as a local cultural identity amid the onslaught of modern information technology. Consequently, the objectives of this study are to analyze the existence of the “*menyilaq*” tradition among the Sasak people, identify the dynamics of change resulting from the development of modern information technology, and uncover the adaptation and preservation strategies employed by the community to maintain the cultural, social, and local wisdom values embedded in the “*menyilaq*” tradition so that it remains relevant in the digital age.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the existence and dynamics of the *menyilaq* tradition amid the onslaught of information technology [13]. Fieldwork was conducted in four representative regions on the island of Lombok: Mataram City (representing an urban community), West Lombok Regency (representing a suburban area), and North Lombok Regency (representing an indigenous community). Informants were selected through purposive sampling, including 4 traditional leaders, 2 Sasak cultural figures, 4 village heads from each region, and representatives of the younger generation (youth from various communities) actively involved in the *menyilaq* tradition. Primary data were collected through participatory observation of practices surrounding the organization of family and traditional events, as well as in-depth interviews to explore informants’ interpretations and attitudes toward the existence of *menyilaq* amid the threat of change posed by the onslaught of mass media. The study used the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique, as shown in Figure 2.

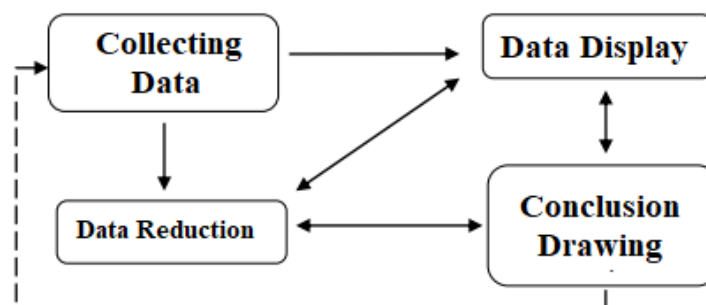


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman's Analysis

Miles & Huberman explain that there are four types of activities in data analysis: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions [14]. (1) Data collection: The

researchers first conducted a literature review to examine the Sasak traditional *mesilaq* custom, drawing on various previous studies. Subsequently, the researchers conducted direct observations in three regions of Lombok Island: Mataram City (representing an urban community), West Lombok Regency (representing a suburban area), and North Lombok Regency (representing an indigenous community). The researcher also interviewed informants selected through purposive sampling, including 4 traditional leaders, 2 Sasak cultural figures, 4 village heads from each region, and representatives of the younger generation (youth from various communities) actively involved in the “*menyilaq*” tradition cycle. The aim was to uncover the community’s adaptation and preservation strategies for maintaining the cultural, social, and local wisdom embedded in the *menyilaq* tradition so it remains relevant in the digital age. (2) Data reduction, which is the process of summarizing, selecting, and sorting through all the collected data to refine it into valid data related to the Sasak traditional *menyilaq* tradition to be analyzed; (3) Data presentation: After all the data has been collected and analyzed, the data related to the *Mesilaq* tradition is presented descriptively based on findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. (4) Conclusions are drawn from the discussion of the Sasak *Mesilaq* tradition as explained above.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Existence of the *Menyilaq* Tradition in the Digital Age Among the People of Lombok

Mesilaq, or *Menyilaq*, is a distinctive practice of the Sasak people who predominantly inhabit the island of Lombok and serves as part of a series of personal, social, and cultural rituals for welcoming guests [15]. Field research findings indicate that the *Menyilaq* tradition among the Sasak people is currently in a phase of dynamic cultural transition. The proliferation of smartphones has not eliminated this tradition but has instead created stratification in media adoption based on regional typology and the community’s demographic characteristics. In urban areas such as Mataram City, the demands of a fast-paced work rhythm and high mobility have drastically reduced the frequency of conventional, face-to-face “*menyilaq*.” Conversely, digital interaction spaces such as WhatsApp Groups (WAGs) are utilized as the primary means of disseminating information about social gatherings. Figure 2 illustrates how millennial youth practice the Sasak “*menyilaq*” tradition.



Figure 2. Meyilaq Tuan Guru in West Lombok

Based on observations in the city of Mataram, an urban area, the Sasak people no longer fully practice traditional Sasak customs, such as the *menyilaq* tradition. The process of passing down and socializing the *menyilaq* tradition is not fully taking place in Mataram because the city's young people have been influenced by a modern lifestyle and high levels of busyness [16]. One neighborhood head in Mataram acknowledged that invitations for every celebration in his area are now sent via a WhatsApp group because no young people are willing to perform the *menyilaq*. In urban areas like Mataram, the "*menyilaq*" ritual is now performed only on a limited basis by the host or a designated representative to deliver invitations to older relatives. Furthermore, an interview with one of the traditional leaders in Mataram (AD) revealed that;

"Mesilaqa, or menyilaq, is a tradition passed down through generations by the Sasak people. Menyilaq is used to invite family members, neighbors, or relatives in a polite and humble manner to attend an event organized by someone. However, I've noticed that young people today are more shy and don't know how to perform menyilaq."

Interviews with these traditional leaders indicate that the *menyilaq* tradition is still understood as cultural heritage that serves social, moral, and ethical functions in Sasak society. *Menyilaq* is not merely a means of delivering invitations, but also a form of respect, humility, and an effort to strengthen family and neighborly ties through direct communication. However, the development of urban society, particularly in the city of Mataram, has impacted the continuity of this tradition. According to the informant, the younger generation tends to have a limited understanding of the proper procedures for "*menyilaq*" and even feels embarrassed to perform it; as a result, the practice of "*menyilaq*" is now more often restricted to older family members or specific representatives [17]. This situation indicates a shift in intergenerational cultural transmission, influenced by changes in lifestyle, communication patterns, and advances in information technology. If this situation continues without preservation efforts, the values of politeness, respect, and social solidarity embodied in the "*menyilaq*" tradition risk being eroded within urban society.

Meanwhile, suburban areas such as West Lombok Regency and indigenous communities in North Lombok Regency present a different situation. West Lombok Regency is a region where urban and rural communities coexist and, in the context of the *menyilaq* tradition, is in transition. In rural areas, some people still practice *menyilaq*, but near the city of Mataram, the tradition has begun to fade. LS, a cultural figure and Sasak community leader, acknowledged that most people in West Lombok still uphold the *menyilaq* tradition. In fact, in villages where cultural ties remain strong, some residents will not attend a celebration unless they have been "*pesilaq*" by the host or someone specifically sent to perform the *menyilaq* ritual. An interview with a traditional leader and cultural figure in North Lombok revealed that:

"The tradition of 'menyilaq' or 'mesilaq' is still very commonly practiced, with a strong emphasis on Sasak traditional values, as seen in the Bayan community and its

surroundings. We do this to convey a message of brotherhood and strengthen social bonds in connection with intended events such as begwe ceremonies, weddings, Maulid celebrations, and other occasions. Typically, the Sasak people would feel embarrassed to attend a celebration even if it's taking place right in front of their own homes if they haven't been invited; it's simply taboo to show up."

The results of these interviews indicate that the tradition of *menyilaq* remains deeply rooted among the Sasak people in rural areas, particularly in North Lombok, where traditional values are consistently upheld. For the local community, *menyilaq* serves not only as a means of delivering invitations but also as a symbol of respect, recognition of kinship ties, and a way to strengthen bonds of brotherhood and social connections. A person's attendance at a celebration is viewed as respect for the host, but it is preceded by receiving the "*pesilaq*" as part of the social etiquette that must be observed. Therefore, someone who arrives without having received the "*pesilaq*" is often considered to be acting contrary to customary norms, and may even bring shame upon the individual in question. These findings indicate that *menyilaq* still functions as a social mechanism that regulates interpersonal relationships while maintaining customary order in communal life. This situation shows that strong internalization of cultural values and respect for tradition are the primary factors sustaining *menyilaq* in regions that still maintain strong customary ties, even as communities grapple with the development of modern information technology.

Directions and Patterns of Change in the Menyilaq Tradition

Based on observational data and interviews, it was found that a shift in the *menyilaq* tradition is occurring within the social life of the Sasak community, although the direction of this shift is not extreme compared to its original form. The shift is primarily driven by pragmatic considerations, related to adapting to the specific circumstances of individual activities and adjusting to the ongoing advancements in information technology that continue to impact Sasak society. Therefore, in general, the direction of the shift in the *menyilaq* tradition moves from the practice of *menyilaq* with a complete (ideal) set of processes and attributes toward a more pragmatic form of the tradition, characterized by the elimination of processes and attributes that are distinctive to *menyilaq* [18]. This shift is marked by several patterns of change observable in the *menyilaq* process. This study identified at least three patterns of shift in the *menyilaq* tradition within the social life of the Sasak community. These three patterns can be explained as follows.

First, the pattern of total digital conversion. This first pattern of shift involves the complete replacement of the "*silaq*" tradition with other methods, such as inviting guests or announcing an event via social media online. In this shift, communication is fully mediated, with invitations sent as text, images, or videos via WhatsApp, prioritizing speed [19]. This shift generally occurs in urban areas such as Mataram City. The communicative implications of this shift in the "*menyilaq*" tradition lead to mechanistic emotional relationships and a loss of warmth in personal interactions.

Second, a rigid cultural preservation pattern. Essentially, this second shift merely makes the “*menyilq*” tradition more rigid by clinging to symbolic elements amid the challenges of an increasingly pragmatic way of life. This pattern of change shifts the focus of preserving the “*menyilq*” tradition to indigenous communities in several villages. It reflects community leaders’ inability to uphold the “*menyilq*” tradition for the entire Sasak population in their region. In many instances of this shift, communication takes place face-to-face, requires the polite register of the Sasak language (*basa alus*), the wearing of traditional attire, and strict observance of etiquette.

Third, the hybrid cultural pattern. This third shift in the *menyilq* tradition is more accommodating, allowing *menyilq* to take place in a mixed form. *Menyilq* in its traditional form, such as physically visiting a home with Sasak tributes, is reserved for elders, traditional leaders, and close relatives. Meanwhile, invitations via digital media are used for peers or distant relatives. This hybrid model of *menyilq* is common in suburban areas such as West Lombok Regency. One advantage of this approach is that it balances the efficiency of modern technology with respect for traditional values.

Efforts by the Sasak Community to Preserve the Menyilq Tradition

Interviews with the Sasak community and traditional leaders in urban, suburban, and traditional areas (Mataram City, West Lombok Regency, and North Lombok Regency) revealed a shared desire to preserve the *menyilq* tradition. Sasak community members and traditional leaders also agreed that the younger generation should be the primary agents in preserving the *menyilq* tradition [20]. Based on the perspectives shared by Sasak community members and traditional leaders in the research sample locations, the study identified several proposed strategies for preserving the *menyilq* tradition. These views can be classified into three concrete steps for preserving the *menyilq* tradition, namely:

First, synergy in cultural policy. This step is also referred to as a structural measure because it promotes the preservation of culture or traditions through a policy-based approach, whether via policies at the political level, such as local regulations or village ordinances, or through policies in the field of education, by incorporating the *menyilq* tradition as a local content sub-subject in Sasak tribal areas [21]. This structural agenda requires collective support from local policymakers (the Department of Culture and the Department of Education) to map out the reality of this local wisdom and integrate it into programs aimed at strengthening cultural identity among students, youth, and other segments of society. From a policy perspective, the province of NTB fundamentally demonstrates a strong commitment to safeguarding the future of local traditions. This is evident, at the very least, in the local government’s desire to establish a Department of Culture. This represents, at the very least, a strong formal commitment to prioritizing cultural aspects as a specific focus. This commitment must, in fact, be accompanied by every citizen’s willingness to identify traditions worthy of preservation [12]. According to all respondents, the *menyilq* tradition is one worth preserving because it embodies the values of solidarity and effective communication, which are essential for maintaining social cohesion.

Second, family- and community-based internalization. This strategy is a cultural movement initiated independently by each family and then fostered as a collective, community-based effort. The process of preserving traditions such as *menyilq* begins within the household, where parents serve as the primary driving force. Leading by example is an effective way to guide the process of preserving traditions. Parents can set an example while also involving their own children in every “*menyilq*” event. All the parents interviewed by the researchers expressed a desire for this as a manifestation of their commitment to passing down the “*menyilq*” tradition to their children [22]. On a larger scale, the “*menyilq*” tradition can be promoted as a community agreement, ranging from the neighborhood level up to the village or subdistrict level. It would be even better if such an agreement were formalized as a customary regulation (*awik-awik*), making the *menyilq* tradition a mandatory ritual at every celebration. Traditional leaders and parents consistently involve young people in conventional *menyilq* ceremonies during internal celebrations to pass down the unwritten knowledge regarding the proper procedures for *menyilq*.

Third, Reconstructing Digital Ethics. This strategy is implemented when advances in communication and information technology can no longer be contained, as they erode the tradition of *menyilq* [23]. As social media replaces the process of *menyilq*, the final measure Sasak parents and communities can take is to ensure that the content of messages on social media, such as WhatsApp groups, adheres to ethical standards and propriety. Sasak traditional leaders even wish to incorporate this into the *awik-awik* which must be drafted so that it becomes a written agreement in rural areas stipulating that the sending of digital invitations via mobile devices must meet existing ethical standards, such as the requirement to begin with a formulaic phrase of apology that reflects humility for being unable to attend in person (replicating the spoken language of “*menyilq*” into digital text). Respondents recognize that digital media and social media are communication tools they use regularly, but they lack the skills to make the most of social media platforms, including to educate their children and foster digital literacy.

Table 1. Forms of Change in the Menyilq Tradition and Their Implications for Communication and Social Values

No	Pattern of Transformation in the Menyilq Tradition	Communication Pattern	Implications for Social Values
1	Complete Digital Conversion	Fully mediated communication; invitations are delivered through text messages, images, or videos via WhatsApp, emphasizing speed and efficiency of information dissemination.	. Emotional relationships become more impersonal and mechanistic, reducing the warmth of face-to-face interpersonal interaction.
2	Rigid Cultural Preservation	Face-to-face communication; the use of refined Sasak language (<i>basa alus</i>), traditional attire, and strict adherence to customary etiquette is maintained.	Emotional closeness and social harmony are strongly preserved, while the continuity of civic culture and local cultural identity remains well sustained.
3	Hybrid Cultural Model	A dual communication approach in which face-to-face visits are reserved for elders, traditional leaders, and close relatives, whereas digital media are used to invite peers and distant relatives.	Balances the efficiency of modern communication technology with the preservation of traditional Sasak values, respect, and social cohesion.

Based on the data presented in the previous section, the practice of *menyilaq* has shifted in implementation, even though the Sasak community continues to make efforts to preserve it. This shift can be categorized into three distinct forms, each with different communication patterns and social implications. The table below illustrates the relationship among these three aspects.

The shift in the form of the *menyilaq* tradition among the Sasak people has moved from an oral tradition to a textual one, with the development of information and communication technology being the primary cause. The rapid influence of information and communication technology, supported by modern society's pragmatic interests, has continued to shift the *menyilaq* tradition toward a textual form [24]. However, this tradition is not expected to undergo a complete shift because socialization and the instillation of cultural values by certain groups within the Sasak community remain strong. Therefore, the future of the *menyilaq* tradition will transform into a hybrid tradition that combines oral and textual culture. Figure 3 shows a model of this future shift in the *menyilaq* tradition.

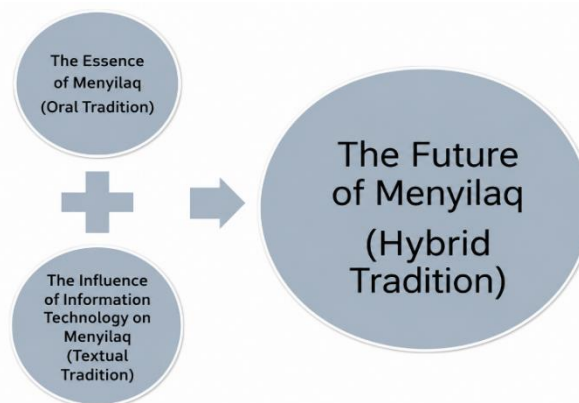


Figure 3. Model of the shift in the *menyilaq* tradition

The model of the shift in the *menyilaq* tradition shown above indicates that the shift is moving from an oral tradition toward a textual tradition. Because this shift is not extreme, a hybrid form of the *menyilaq* tradition will likely continue to exist. This shift in tradition has essentially eroded the social value of the “*menyilaq*” practice itself, as the transition from direct oral communication to digital text-based media reflects a reduction in linguistic meaning. In an interview with a cultural expert in Central Lombok, it was revealed that the essence of “*menyilaq*” lies in its nonverbal components (eye contact, the gesture of bowing, and the subtlety of vocal intonation), which carry a psychological charge of deep respect. When this medium shifts to the screen of a mobile device, pragmatic politeness is often lost because messages tend to be abbreviated, formal, and cold, which, if not wisely anticipated, could ultimately weaken the sociocultural cohesion of the Sasak community [25]. A hybrid model of the *menyilaq* tradition represents a form of cultural negotiation in which information technology is not positioned as an enemy of culture. This hybrid model requires two concurrent efforts: consolidating the socialization of cultural values and strengthening digital literacy. The shift in the *menyilaq* tradition

caused by the impact of advances in communication and information technology refutes the basic assumption of technological determinism found in this research.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the *menyilq* tradition among the Sasak people continues to exist amid the rapid development of information technology, though it takes different forms depending on regional characteristics. In urban areas, the practice of *menyilq* tends to decline and is beginning to be replaced by digital media; in suburban areas, it persists in an adaptive form; and in rural areas and indigenous communities, it is still maintained as part of social norms and cultural identity. The “*menyilq*” tradition is shifting from an oral tradition to a textual one through three main patterns: total digital conversion, rigid cultural preservation, and hybrid culture. The findings indicate that the hybrid culture model is the most viable adaptation for ensuring the sustainability of the “*menyilq*” tradition, as it integrates the efficiency of information technology with the preservation of core Sasak cultural values, such as respect, politeness, social bonding, and social solidarity. Therefore, preserving the *menyilq* tradition requires synergy between government policies, the roles of families and communities, and the reconstruction of digital communication ethics so that cultural values remain internalized among the younger generation in the digital age.

Further research is recommended to explore the transformation of the *menyilq* tradition through a broader approach, both comparatively across regions and across generations, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural changes among the Sasak people in the digital age.

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