

# ANUT NANGING ORA KATUT: THE ADAPTATION STRATEGIES OF SEDULUR SIKEP IN BLORA REGENCY TO PRESERVE IDENTITY AMIDST SOCIAL CHANGES

<sup>1</sup>Hamida Zama Rahmatillah,<sup>2</sup>Argyo Demartoto,<sup>3</sup>Drajat Tri Kartono

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Master of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Author's email:

<sup>1</sup>[hamidazamar@gmail.com](mailto:hamidazamar@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>[argyodemartoto@staff.uns.ac.id](mailto:argyodemartoto@staff.uns.ac.id); <sup>3</sup>[drajattri@staff.uns.ac.id](mailto:drajattri@staff.uns.ac.id)

Corresponding author: [hamidazamar@gmail.com](mailto:hamidazamar@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** *Sedulur Sikep adheres to their customary practices and order of life, which have been consistently upheld and passed down to the descendants and followers of Samin Surosentiko's teachings. The progression of time has brought social changes to Sedulur Sikep. The study aims to understand the identity of Sedulur Sikep, the social changes they face, and the adaptation strategies they employ to continuously adjust to these changes. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The informants consisted of key informants and main informants. The key informants were Sedulur Sikep figures, while the main informants were members of Sedulur Sikep. The results of the study indicate that the identity of Sedulur Sikep lies in the tata cara and tatanan urip that they apply in their daily lives. The social changes faced by Sedulur Sikep are caused by several factors, including modernization, government policies, and interactions with non-Sikep communities. In responding to social changes, Sedulur Sikep upholds the principle of "anut nanging ora katut" which means "following without being carried away."*

**Keywords:** Adaptation; Identity; Sedulur Sikep; Social Change

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Samin community is a subgroup of the Javanese people and represents a form of social grouping based on distinctive and a unique worldview (Hanifah, 2019). Members of the Samin community prefer to refer to themselves as Wong Sikep or Sedulur Sikep, which means "good and honest people", as a replacement for the term Wong Samin. The latter held a negative connotation in the eyes of Javanese society during the 18th century, associated with dishonesty. Additionally, Sikep can be interpreted as a person with a sense of responsibility. Sedulur Sikep are the descendants and followers of Samin Surosentiko's teachings, which emphasize the importance of maintaining good behaviour, being honest, and avoiding harm to others (Mardikantoro, 2021).

Sedulur Sikep has spread across several regions in Central Java, such as Blora Regency, Pati Regency, Kudus Regency, Pati Regency, Grobogan Regency, and Rembang Regency, as well as in East Java, specifically in Bojonegoro Regency. The distribution of Sedulur Sikep in Blora Regency began in Ploso Kedhiren Village, Randublatung Sub-district. In Ploso Village, as the number of followers grew, Samin Surosentiko sought a larger area, namely Bapangan Village. From Bapangan Village, the spread of Sedulur Sikep started (Mumfangati, 2004).

In terms of geographic or territorial concepts, Sedulur Sikep differs from most indigenous groups. Sedulur Sikep lives interspersed with non-Sikep. They do not have their own territorial boundaries (Suartina, 2014). Today, Sedulur Sikep does not live in isolation from other communities. In several regions, they live harmoniously with other communities without being separated by distinct geographic boundaries. This coexistence creates mutual influence between Sedulur Sikep and other communities making an inevitable part of their lives.

Sedulur Sikep, as followers of Saminism, live alongside non-Sikep communities who are not adherents of Saminism. Such distribution brings a consequences: they feel more unified through kinship ties, referred to as "seduluran" or brotherhood. With this sense of brotherhood, Sedulur Sikep acknowledges that everyone is a brother, particularly among fellow Sedulur Sikep members (Mardikantoro, 2021).

The existence of Sedulur Sikep has endured into modern times for more than two centuries. Nevertheless, both internal and external factors have influenced their lives, resulting in changes (Yahya, 2009). The human need to survive amidst various global change drives individuals and social groups to adapt. The influence of modernization on indigenous communities, including Sedulur Sikep, does not necessarily have adverse effects as long as the group responds positively and utilizes advancements to improve their lives and simplify social interactions while preserving their inherited cultural values (Handitya & Ryan Sapiro, 2023).

The changes experienced by Sedulur Sikep raise questions about how they adaptively strategize to preserve their identity in the face of social transformations in Blora Regency. Therefore, the research aims to understand the identity of Sedulur Sikep, the social change they face, and the adaptation strategies they employ. The results of this study are expected to provide benefits and enrich relevant information about Sedulur Sikep for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1 Adaptation Strategy*

Adaptation is part of the process of cultural evolution, encompassing a series of human efforts to adjust or respond to physical and social environmental changes that occur over time. Adaptation is the results of a society's process in facing environmental pressures or changes. Humans adjust to their environment in various ways to survive. Forms of adaptation can be seen when humans modify themselves according to environmental conditions or when they alter the environment to suit their personal needs (Helmi & Satria, 2012).

Marzali (2003) defines adaptation strategies as human behaviour in allocating resources to face challenges within their social, cultural, economic, and ecological environments. Meanwhile, Bennet (1976) describes adaptation strategies as behaviors or activities prepared by humans to meet their minimum needs and to overcome the problems they face. Bennet categorizes adaptation strategies into three parts: adaptive behaviour, adaptive strategy, and adaptive processes. Adaptive behaviour is dynamic, meaning it continually changes over time. It serves as a tool for individuals or group to sustain themselves. Individuals or groups adjust their behaviour in response to their environment, representing actions taken to learn and adapt during times of change.

Adaptive strategy refers to behavioral patterns used by individuals or groups to navigate changes through various means, as every environmental or situational change requires solutions aligned with the capabilities of the individual or group. Even if the change does not produce negative impacts. Adaptive strategy fulfills the needs of individuals or groups by conducting precise analysis and positioning to remain on the appropriate course of action. Adaptive processes can be categorized into two levels: individual or group. On the individual level, it involves utilizing personal abilities to overcome environmental obstacles, with the goal of satisfying needs through desired resources in the surrounding environment. On the group level, it involves adopting collective strategies to ensure survival and sustainability in life.

### *2.2 Social Change*

Social change is defined as the transformations occurring within the structure and functions of society, as stated by Kingsley Davis (Soerjono, 2017). Meanwhile, Sztompka (2008) defines social change as alterations occurring within or encompassing a social system, more precisely described as the differences between the state of a particular

system over different periods. Previously, Gillin and Gillin (1954) defined change as a variation in accepted ways of life, whether caused by changes in geographical conditions, material culture, population composition, ideology, or through diffusion or new discoveries within society.

Parsons states that there are causes that trigger social change, generally stemming from two primary sources: endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) factors (Etzioni, 1994). Internal factors driving social change, as described by Patty (2005), include: population, conflict, and new discoveries. Changes in population size can lead to transformations in societal structures, particularly in social institutions. Conflict as a part of social interaction cannot be eliminated but can be managed. When conflicts arise, they often lead to social dissatisfaction and unrest. During such times, individuals may become more susceptible to new ideas or influences. New discoveries means innovations on one field can influence other fields, creating interrelated impacts. These influences are interconnected and mutually affect one another.

External factors causing social change, as described by Patty (2005), include: natural environment, war, and influence of other cultures. Natural environment influences the social conditions, culture, and behavior of a society. Differences in natural environments lead to variations in the societies living within them. Wars bring about change, with one side emerging as the victor and the other as the defeated. The defeated side is often forced to conform to the will of the victor, affecting aspects such as economy, culture, and behavioral patterns. The introduction and adaptation of foreign cultures lead to changes in social life, including transformations in social systems.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Moleong (2006) stated that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically and describes them in the form of words and language within a natural and specific context using various scientific methods. The phenomenological approach was chosen to understand the research reality based on the perspectives of the research subjects regarding adaptation strategies to maintain their identity amidst social changes.

This research was conducted in Randublatung and Kedungtuban sub-districts. Randublatung was chosen because it is the origin of Samin Surosentiko, while Kedungtuban is the residence of his descendants. The research was carried out from July to December 2024.

The technique for selecting informants employed purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods. The informants consisted of key informants and main informants. Key informants were Sedulur Sikep figures who had detailed knowledge of the research issues, while main informants were members of Sedulur Sikep who could provide additional information regarding the research issues. Considering that the research approach used was phenomenology, this study utilized primary data sources through interviews with informants to obtain more in-depth data. Secondary data sources used in this research were derived from books and scholarly journal relevant to the study. The data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which included data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Identity of Sedulur Sikep**

For Sedulur Sikep, identity is a way to express their sense of self. It may sometimes be considered important or unimportant, but what truly matters is the preservation of the practices taught by their ancestors. If these ancestral teachings are not upheld as part of their identity, Sedulur Sikep considers it equivalent to obscuring their history. Therefore, the identity of Sedulur Sikep must always be fought for. However, regarding

the significance of identity, if it is only symbolically displayed, such as through sandhangan (attire), but the practices are not implemented in daily life this is deemed inappropriate.

Sedulur Sikep places great emphasis on their tata cara (customary practices), which include: *ojo ngumbar sworo* (do not speak excessively), *ojo ngumbar tumindak* (do not act recklessly), and *ojo ngumbar tatanan* (do not disrupt order). These principles are firmly upheld by Sedulur Sikep. Any changes to these principles are seen as changes to the order passed down by their ancestors. The *tatanan urip* (order of life) of Sedulur Sikep encompasses values such as: *ojo drengki* (do not envy), *ojo srei* (do not be hostile), *ojo panasten* (do not hold grudges), *ojo dahwen* (do not quarrel), *ojo kemeren* (do not covet), and *ojo bedhog, colong, pethil, jumput, nemu wae ojo dilakoni* (do not steal, grab, or take what is not yours). The entirety of the *tatanan urip* directs Sedulur Sikep towards honesty.

Although some believe that Sedulur Sikep's teachings are no longer relevant to modern times, for Sedulur Sikep, these ancestral teachings are essential as a foundation for their actions. Thus, if these principles fade, the identity of Sedulur Sikep will also disappear. Claiming to be part of Sedulur Sikep means applying the teachings of their ancestors in daily life. Failure to do so creates confusion because one cannot claim to be Sedulur Sikep if the principles are not practiced. The *tatanan urip* has existed since the time of their ancestors and has been continuously taught to future generations of Sedulur Sikep.

#### *4.2 Social Changes of Sedulur Sikep*

Sedulur Sikep as an indigenous community adhering to the teachings of Samin Surosentiko is not exempt from the social changes occurring in their environment. Social changes are driven by various factors such as modernization, government policies, and interactions with non-Sikep communities. These changes have impacted the lives of Sedulur Sikep.

In terms of modernization, Sedulur Sikep has become familiar with modern technology, particularly in agriculture, as farming remains the primary livelihood for many within the community. In their agricultural practices, Sedulur Sikep has started adopting modern farming techniques and tools to improve the quality and quantity of their yields. However, they are cautious about the technologies and methods they use, avoiding those that could harm the environment.

Sedulur Sikep deeply respects *Ibu Bhumi* (Mother Earth), and preserving nature is a central aspect of their lives, rooted in their awareness that the natural environment consistently provides for human needs. This respect and care for nature guide their adaptation to modernization without compromising their cultural and environmental values.

In addition to modernization, government policies have significantly influenced social changes within Sedulur Sikep. Initially, Sedulur Sikep did not register themselves in official population records. However, they now possess identity cards (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk* or *KTP*), although they continue to advocate for their right to list "Agama Adam" in the religion column, as they do not consider it merely a belief system.

Furthermore, Sedulur Sikep, who traditionally conducted marriages through their own customs without registering them with *Kantor Urusan Agama* (*KUA*), now officially register their marriages and have *Kartu Keluarga* (*KK*). Additionally, while they once refrained from formal education, many Sedulur Sikep members now pursue formal education at various levels.

Beyond these changes, interactions between Sedulur Sikep and non-Sikep communities have also influenced both sides. Initially Sedulur Sikep tended to isolate themselves as a form of self-preservation during the colonial era to protect their values, even to the extent of resisting the government. Today, Sedulur Sikep has integrated with non-Sikep communities and adapted to various social changes brought about by

multiple factors.

These interactions have affected several aspects, including the influence Islamic teachings. The introduction of Islamic values from the surrounding non-Sikep communities has led to shifts in some of Sedulur Sikep's traditional values. This illustrates the dynamic and reciprocal impact of their coexistence with broader society.

The traditional attire of Sedulur Sikep has also undergone changes, as they now wear more casual clothing. Originally, Sedulur Sikep men wore *udheng* (a traditional Javanese headcloth) and *baju gambyong* (a black simple shirt), while the women wore black *kebaya*. These garments were considered traditional Javanese attire, distinct from the clothing of the general population, which was perceived as colonial attire.

In addition to these changes, interactions with non-Sikep communities have led to economic diversification, such as engaging in trade. This marks a significant shift, as Sedulur Sikep previously avoided trade due to concerns that it was closely associated with dishonesty. This evolution reflects their gradual adaptation to modern social and economic practices while navigating their values and principles.

#### *4.3 Adaptation Strategies Of Sedulur Sikep*

Sedulur Sikep has faced social changes brought about by various factors such as modernization, government policies, and interactions with non-Sikep communities. In their efforts to preserve their identity while adapting to these changes, Sedulur Sikep has developed flexible adaptation strategies that remain rooted in their ancestral teachings. These teachings have become a way of life or an order of living (*tatanan urip*) for Sedulur Sikep, reflecting their values and worldview.

Sedulur Sikep acknowledge that adaptation is not an easy process, especially since they must also uphold their ancestral teachings. In this regard, they adhere to the principle of "*anut nanging ora katut*" (following without being carried away), ensuring that their ways and order of life are preserved while still being able to adapt to contemporary developments.

The application of "*anut nanging ora katut*" involves refraining from harboring ill will or hatred toward anyone. Despite differences in views or opinions, such differences should not be exaggerated or turned into conflicts. Sedulur Sikep believes that adaptation must be accompanied by mutual respect, as every individual comes from diverse backgrounds, and understanding cannot be achieved instantly. Everything requires a process. Certain aspects are embraced with open arms, while others are firmly rejected if they contradict the *tata cara* or *tatanan urip* upheld by Sedulur Sikep. This approach ensures that their identity remains intact while they navigate the challenges of social changes with wisdom and respect.

## **CONCLUSION**

The adaptation strategies of Sedulur Sikep illustrate a balance between preserving their identity and adjusting to ongoing developments. They steadfastly uphold the *tata cara* and *tatanan urip* passed down from their ancestors while remaining open to innovations as a way to navigate social changes. This approach is intended to ensure that they remain relevant and aligned with contemporary developments.

The adaptation strategies of Sedulur Sikep represent a unique effort in addressing social change, as they are not only required to adapt but also to continuously preserve the identity of Sedulur Sikep. This dual focus highlights their ability to harmonize tradition with progress, making their approach distinct in the context of cultural preservation and adaptation.

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