

Recontextualizing the Dynamics of *Kembar Buncing* Custom In the Bali Aga Villages of Buleleng

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Abstract

This study explores the evolving perception of the *kembar buncing* custom among the Bali Aga community, where the birth of unlike sex twins was traditionally considered a taboo, believed to bring misfortune and resulting in social stigma, exile, and financial burdens for affected families. In recent years, however, the perception has shifted toward greater inclusivity, with such births increasingly viewed as symbolic representations of harmony between good and evil. The study aims to understand the dynamics of this cultural transformation and its broader implications for preserving Bali Aga identity amid the pressures of modernity. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, non-participatory interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data reduction, data display, and verification to ensure systematic interpretation. The theoretical framework is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus, which provides tools for analyzing how social dispositions evolve through interactions with structural forces and through the strategic use of various forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. The findings reveal that the transformation of the *kembar buncing* custom is driven by regulatory adaptation, cultural negotiation, hegemonic resistance, and symbolic reconstruction. Changes in community habitus, shaped by the strategic mobilization of capital by key social actors, have contributed to a shift in customary paradigms. This transformation suggests the need to recontextualize traditional customs within contemporary frameworks, not only to ensure cultural sustainability but also to advance human rights and social inclusion within the Bali Aga society.

Keywords: *Practice; Social Stigma; Kembar Buncing; Bali Aga; Manak Salah*

Introduction

In most cultural contexts, the birth of twins, particularly unlike-sex twins, is generally regarded as a moment to be grateful for. For most societies, this kind of childbirth symbolizes abundance, blessing, and familial pride, particularly for the parents. However, the opposite views and beliefs regarding the birth of unlike-sex twins are found among Bali Aga communities of Buleleng, Bali. Rather than being seen as a celebrated moment, the birth of unlike-sex twins locally known as *kembar buncing* invites anxiety and fear for the whole family. Members of these communities commonly offer prayers to avoid having twins, especially those of different sexes, due to the heavy customary sanctions they entail.

The marginalization of families with *kembar buncing* children is deeply rooted in the local belief system that associates these births with impending misfortune, collective harm, or even the destruction of village order. As a consequence, the families with *kembar buncing* often face severe sanctions, including forced isolation to having their house burned.

In the 1960s, a family in the Bali Aga village of Padangbulia gave birth to unlike-sex twins (*kembar buncing*) but refused to undergo the customary exile. As a result, they were denied administrative services by the customary village authorities, and both children eventually died. A year later, the same family again gave birth to *kembar buncing*. This time, fearing a recurrence of the previous tragedy, bearing *kembar buncing* followed by the children's deaths—they chose to submit to exile. Unfortunately, one month into the isolation period, the female twin passed away. In the 1970s, another case of *kembar buncing* occurred, with the male child dying while in exile. A decade later, a similar incident took place, resulting in the deaths of both twins at the exile site. However, during the 1980s, a family with *kembar buncing* negotiated to be allowed temporary leave from exile for employment purposes, as the father was a civil servant and schoolteacher. If he failed to report to work during the customary exile period, which lasted for three *tilem* (new moon cycles), he risked dismissal. Resistance to exile also occurred in 2004, triggering conflict and ultimately leading to the family's expulsion from membership in the Bali Aga customary village community.

In the present era, the persistence of repressive customary sanctions surrounding the birth of *kembar buncing* should be considered outdated and in conflict with modern principles of human rights and equality. The government has made efforts to ensure equal protection and non-discriminatory treatment for all citizens, as reflected in the issuance of DPRD Decree No. 10 of 1951 dated July 12, 1951 (Irwin & Khairunnisa, 2013). This decree explicitly mandates the abolition of all forms of customary identified burdensome practices, particularly those related to *manak salah* or *kembar buncing*. Nevertheless, in the Bali Aga communities of Buleleng, traditional structures remain intact and continue to endorse exclusionary practices. Empirical observations reveal that such practices remain entrenched in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng, where customary traditions and law continue to legitimize the social exclusion of affected individuals.

This study emerges from the recognition of a significant gap in understanding the dynamics of *kembar buncing* customary practices in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng. The research emphasizes the transformation of the *kembar buncing* custom from the past to the present, intending to provide a reference for facilitating change within Bali Aga communities that continue to uphold the practice of social exclusion. This study provides an in-depth examination of the evolving aspects of the *kembar buncing* custom, along with an exploration of the key factors that shape these traditional practices, grounded on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. This study shares similarities with a previous work, which also examined the dynamics of a cultural tradition in a different object and location of study. The research conducted by Rahayu & Ayundasari (2024) focused on the origin, process, and values embedded in the *Tironan* tradition, as well as the cultural shifts that have occurred over time. In contrast, the present study concentrates specifically on the general overview and socio-cultural dynamics of the *kembar buncing* custom in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng. Despite differences in scope and focus, both studies share a common objective: to analyze the evolving dynamics within a traditional practice. The previous study serves as a valuable reference for identifying and interpreting the forms of change taking place in the *kembar buncing* custom of Bali Aga communities.

Various studies have previously explored the *kembar buncing* custom; however, none have specifically examined the dynamics of this tradition within the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng. The *kembar buncing* phenomenon has been investigated from multiple perspectives, including legal studies (Artama et al., 2022), religious viewpoints particularly through the lens of *dewa yadnya* (Winarti, 2023), *manusa yadnya* (Sudiada, 2021), and in more specific cases, the customary ritual sanctions imposed on families giving birth to *kembar buncing* (Lestawi, 2015). In general, studies rooted in religious

frameworks tend to focus on ritual processes such as *malasti* and *macaru*, yet these are often examined in isolated village contexts and not across multiple Bali Aga communities. Similar patterns can be observed in literary studies, including those by Cahyono (2006), (Aswagata, 2012), and Irawan (2022), which tend to associate *kembar buncing* with aspects of social life, such as psychological conditions, societal transformations, and prevailing myths surrounding marriage and twin births of opposite sexes. The studies by (Ambarsari et al., 2025) and (Piliang, 2008) also serve as the theoretical foundation for identifying the forms of transformation in the *kembar buncing* customary practice and the factors influencing its change process. Both studies employ Bourdieu's theoretical framework to examine cultural transformation, albeit applied to different objects of analysis. Thus, this study differs from previous works by not only examining the ritualistic aspects, but also uncovering the socio-political negotiations underlying normative changes in customary law. The Bali Aga community has adapted the *kembar buncing* custom through the strategic use of cultural, economic, and social capital, resulting in more humanistic practices that align with contemporary societal values. The community's capital and *habitus* as modern actors serve as the foundation for articulating their aspirations within the social field.

Method

This qualitative study was conducted across nine Bali Aga villages in Buleleng Regency: Sidatapa, Cempaga, Tigawasa, Pedawa, Pacung, Banyuseri, Padangbulia, Julah, and Sembiran (SCTP2 BPJS). Two of these villages, Julah and Pedawa, still practice social exile for unlike-sex twins (*kembar buncing*), although increasingly with humanitarian considerations. Padangbulia, meanwhile, is undergoing a transitional phase aimed at eliminating the exile stage altogether. These nine customary villages were selected for their diverse approaches to the *kembar buncing* tradition, enabling a comprehensive understanding of its dynamics. Informants were selected through snowball sampling, beginning with the heads of customary villages (nine individuals as key informants), who then referred researchers to three families with *kembar buncing* children. Given the geographical scope, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with seven participants, including a *pemangku* (priest), *ulu desa* (village head), *serati* (ritual officer), and three other customary officials. Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, FGDs, and document analysis. These were examined using a critical paradigm to reveal how changes in *kembar buncing* practices are driven by the mobilization of various forms of capital that shape the *habitus* of modern actors. The dynamics of the custom are analyzed through the lens of *habitus*, particularly how cultural capital, epistemic authority, and symbolic capital interact, often triggering symbolic violence. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, as cited in Sugiyono (2012), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This process enabled categorization and simplification of data based on the shifting dynamics of the tradition. Final conclusions were validated through a member-checking process with informants and other relevant sources. The study concludes that the transformation of the *kembar buncing* custom is largely influenced by the strategic deployment of capital within the customary arena by modern community actors.

Results and Discussion

1. The General Overview of the *Kembar Buncing* Traditional Custom

The *kembar buncing* presents a critical focus of research, as it invites various interpretations from various perspectives within the community. Among the Bali Aga communities, particularly those residing in the villages of Sidetapa, Sembiran, Cempaga,

Tigawasa, Pedawa, Pacung, Padangbulia, Banyuseri, and Julah in Buleleng, this tradition is practiced with diverse understandings and ritual expressions. Generally, *kembar buncing* refers to the birth of twins of different sexes. Uniquely, some members of the Bali Aga community distinguish between the terms *kembar buncing* and *manak salah*, even though both refer to unlike-sex twin births. This distinction is based on the sex of the child born first. If the male is born first, the birth is labeled *manak salah*; if the female is born first, it is referred to as *kembar buncing* (Belo, 1970). Such differentiation is rooted in the community's social construction of gender and hierarchy. The Bali Aga in Buleleng believe that if a male is born first, it implies that he occupied a lower position in the womb than his female twin. This is perceived as a violation of the patriarchal order that is broadly upheld within Balinese society, where males are traditionally viewed as holding a superior status. Thus, it is expected that within the womb, the male should be positioned above the female, signified by being born after her. Furthermore, in some interpretations, the birth of *kembar buncing* is strictly forbidden, as it is believed to challenge the hierarchical status of kingship, which must remain unparalleled within the community.

Due to the perceived transgression associated with unlike-sex twin births, customary sanctions are invariably imposed. These sanctions vary across Bali Aga customary villages, but generally, births involving *kembar buncing* are subject to a series of customary responses, including enforced social ostracism, obligatory purification rituals, and financial sanctions imposed on the family. The imposition of exile differs in terms of process, location, and duration, reflecting localized customary authority and power relations. Exile locations are typically remote and isolated such as village outskirts, dense forests, or riverbanks (Triadi, 2019) and often include spiritually charged (*tenget*) sites like cemeteries, cremation grounds (*pamuunan*), or near Pura Dalem, which symbolically reinforce the community's power to define purity and impurity. The duration of exile varies, lasting from 42 days, three cycles of 42 days, or being determined by the Balinese lunar calendar, specifically three occurrences of *tilem* (new moon). This ritualized imposition of exile exemplifies Foucault's concept of power as a mechanism of social control, where customary authorities exercise symbolic and disciplinary power to regulate deviance and maintain social order. By enforcing these sanctions, the community asserts its normative values and reinforces hierarchical structures, ensuring conformity through culturally embedded mechanisms of exclusion and purification.

The way the *kembar buncing* custom is carried out differs among Bali Aga communities, as each adapts the practice to align with its unique cultural traditions. These variations act as markers of cultural capital that strengthen the Bali Aga identity. Nonetheless, there is a general pattern that most communities follow. The process typically begins with the formal reporting of the birth of twins of opposite sexes, followed by the sounding of the *kentongan* (a traditional drum), the construction of a dwelling at the exile site, and the family's relocation. This is followed by purification rituals such as *macaru* and *malasti*, and ends with the family's contribution of voluntary labor (*ngaturang ngayah*) in one of the three villages where a *bale agung pegat* a ceremonial hall with a split roof still exists.

This provides a general overview of the *kembar buncing* custom in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng. Nonetheless, due to ongoing social dynamics and the influence of various forms of capital held by the Bali Aga communities, the practice of *kembar buncing* has experienced significant changes in its implementation. These changes include anti-essentialism perspectives, erosion of stigma, increased inclusivity, and revitalization of exile sites. The following sections present a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the *kembar buncing* custom in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng.

2. Anti-Essentialist Responses to *Kembar Buncing* Births in Traditional Communities

The birth of *kembar buncing* in Bali Aga communities has traditionally been believed to carry an immutable essence that must be preserved in its entirety and not be altered. Any deviation from this belief was thought to invoke supernatural forces, bringing misfortune upon the individual or family who violated the custom. This belief fostered a collective fear of giving birth to *kembar buncing*. Such fear is evident in informants' testimonies, indicating that many individuals would pray or even fulfill religious vows (*kaul*) in hopes of avoiding the birth of unlike-sex twins. This type of birth was considered unnatural, as it was associated with animals that give birth to multiple offspring of different sexes simultaneously (Dewi, 2018). Additional blame was directed at the children themselves, who were believed to bring about the destruction of the village or even all of Bali (Purnami et al., 2025) defile the cosmos (*ngaletihin jagat*), and necessitate large-scale ritual purification through *macaru* and *malasti* ceremonies.

The habitus of the traditional Bali Aga community regarding the birth of *kembar buncing* (male-female twins) is deeply rooted in essentialist values. When unlike-sex twins are born, the event is considered *cuntaka* (ritually impure), as it involves the simultaneous birth of two different genders (Sudibya, 2021). However, the degree of *cuntaka* is perceived to vary depending on the sex of the child born first. As explained by Wayan Radiasa, a customary leader, the birth of male-female twins is referred to as *manak salah*, while female-male twins are called *buncing*. The rituals performed also differ: if the male is born first, the ceremonies extend to the *makiis* ritual at the beach; whereas if the female is born first, the rituals are conducted solely within the village (Interview, June 30, 2024).

The essence of *kembar buncing* birth, viewed through the lens of birth order differences, has been internalized within the traditional community to the extent that it has become a *habitus*. The differential treatment between male and female twins based on who is born first is indicative of symbolic violence. Symbolically, the prioritization of the male-born-first (*manak salah*) over the female-born-first (*buncing*) reflects a gendered hierarchy embedded within customary norms. This subtle yet persistent differentiation operates through doxic acceptance, perceived as natural and unquestioned—thus reinforcing patriarchal values through ritual practice. In this context, symbolic violence functions not through coercion but through cultural legitimacy, shaping dispositions and legitimizing inequality in the name of tradition.

women are not permitted to precede or surpass men in any capacity. Such beliefs are consistent with the patriarchal system of Balinese society, which adheres to a patrilineal worldview. This notion has long been considered an absolute and naturalized standard in determining customary sanctions for unlike-sex twin births. As Ariyanti & Ardhana (2020) note, Balinese customary norms transmitted across generations firmly uphold the belief that women should be secondary, while men hold superior position.

However, the epistemic authority of the modern Bali Aga indigenous community has been utilized as a form of capital to transform the traditional *habitus*, fostering greater acceptance of *kembar buncing* births without negative stereotypes. Cultural capital, particularly through improved educational attainment, has enabled the community to reinterpret the *kembar buncing* phenomenon in ways that align with evolving social norms. This shift has contributed to the adaptation of customary practices in accordance with the broader trajectory of social civilization. Increasingly, the community understands that the birth of unlike sex twins is a natural biological process influenced by genetic factors. Moreover, the Bali Aga community has begun to critically recognize that the stereotypes surrounding birth order in male and female twins are socially constructed.

These constructions have been historically internalized, shaping collective consciousness and producing habitual patterns of thought and behavior. Through this reflexive engagement with tradition, the community is actively negotiating its cultural identity while challenging the symbolic foundations of previously hegemonic norms.

The previously held negative views toward *kembar buncing* are increasingly being rejected. In their place, the birth of such twins is now more commonly regarded as something distinctive, a reflection of balance and life's natural harmony (Triadi, 2019). In the process of transforming customary rules, there is inevitably a struggle within the social arena between traditional actors and modern actors. The resistance revealed by modern community members, as actors who challenge traditional understandings of *kembar buncing* customs, represents a manifestation of anti-essentialist attitudes, as it involves rejecting and refusing to revert to archaic cultural beliefs (Astuti et al., 2023). Thus, this transformation reflects a reconfiguration of cultural capital, symbolic capital, and resistance to traditional power structures.

3. The Erosion of Stigma Surrounding *Kembar Buncing* in Customary Law

The habitus of the traditional Bali Aga community has long been socially constructed, thereby shaping of the social stigma attached to the birth of *kembar buncing*, which was previously subject to discrimination, marginalization, and negative stereotyping within Bali Aga society, signals a profound transformation in the customary practice of the Bali Aga community. Traditionally, the birth of *kembar buncing* was believed to bring misfortune and was therefore subject to customary sanctions, most notably exile. Families with unlike-sex twins were expelled from the village and required to live on its outskirts or near cemeteries as a form of penance for perceived transgressions or spiritual impurity. Customary law, as an agent in reinforcing traditional sanctions, has positioned *kembar buncing* as *sebel* (ritually impure or *cuntaka*). The state of *cuntaka* caused by such births is believed to disrupt the harmony of the physical and metaphysical realms (*sekala-niskala*), and must be ritually cleansed through ceremonies such as *macaru* and *melasti*. However, all associated ritual costs are borne entirely by the family of the *kembar buncing*. This customary construction has contributed to the emergence of social stigma surrounding the birth of unlike-sex twins, resulting in symbolic violence through discrimination, marginalization, and negative stereotyping. These stigmas are deeply embedded within the traditional community's habitus, shaped by the intergenerational transmission of values, myths, and the epistemic authority of customary knowledge.

The customary domain has functioned as a space for perpetuating the negative stigma associated with the sanctions imposed on *kembar buncing*. Traditional leaders, as customary agents, hold full authority over the customary laws applied to such births. The traditional sanctions enforced include prohibitions on receiving visitors and restrictions on leaving the designated place of exile. These sanctions are reflected in the statement of Ketut Artana, a customary leader, who noted that prior to the 1970s, families with *kembar buncing* children had their homes and belongings burned. These families were exiled to remote locations, often cemetery sites deep within the forest, bringing only the clothes on their backs. During the exile period, which lasted 42 days, they were strictly prohibited from meeting with other family members (Interview, July 24, 2024). This prohibition contributed to a stigma suggesting that *kembar buncing* carried a deadly contagious disease, akin to perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the destruction of homes and property left deep emotional scars and lasting fear within the affected families.

The social capital possessed by traditional actors appears to exert dominance over families with *kembar buncing* children, as these families are prohibited from participating in any customary ceremonies or traditional activities prior to the completion of the *macaru* and *malasti* rituals. This restriction functions as a form of social capital that reinforces customary obligations, serving as a binding mechanism to ensure that families with *kembar buncing* promptly fulfill their duties in accordance with the prevailing customary regulations in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng.

However, over time, the Bali Aga community has gradually begun to revise customary regulations perceived as detrimental and inconsistent with contemporary civilization through deliberative assemblies (*paruman*). Currently, the community is slowly abandoning the practice of exile, although some still continue it. In Bali Aga villages where the relocation of *kembar buncing* families is still practiced, it is conducted with greater respect, humanity, and without coercion or obligation. Today, *kembar buncing* families are cared for at the place of exile; their houses are no longer burned down, and semi-permanent houses are built in the exile locations. However, such sanctions have undergone notable changes and have significantly declined. The social labeling and punitive treatment of *kembar buncing* have gradually eroded as the Bali Aga community's social capital and cultural capital continue to evolve. These shifting attitudes signify an erosion of social stigma, evidenced by the decreasing marginalization of individuals or groups once deemed deviant (Widyastutik, 2021).

Symbolic changes to the practice of exile have also been adopted by the Bali Aga community. These symbolic changes include the complete cessation of exile, relocation, or separation of *kembar buncing* children. However, prior to the *pakiisan* ceremony, the twins are temporarily entrusted to other community members and later redeemed by their biological mothers and carried again. This is reflected in the statement of Mr. Made Kariawan as a customary leader, said "Before the ceremony, the child is 'discarded' symbolically, taken by another mother, then redeemed again by their own mother, cleansed, and only then ceremonially honored" (Interview, July 25, 2024). This testimony illustrates a symbolic transformation regarding the separation of *kembar buncing* children. In addition to symbolic changes, the Bali Aga community has begun to fully abandon the exile stage. They have also started regulating *awig-awig* (customary village laws) to document and solidify these changes as a legacy for future generations concerning the evolving *kembar buncing* customs.

Another form of stigma erosion is evident in the sanctioning system concerning the financing of the *macaru* and *malasti* ceremonies. According to IGS. Cinta as a customary leader stated previously, payment was managed through postponement, cost-sharing, and installment arrangements. Postponement occurred when *kembar buncing* families lacked the financial capacity to pay a lump sum for the ceremonies. In such cases, the village authorities would initially cover the full cost, which the families then repaid in monthly installments until the total amount was fully reimbursed. However, this prolonged repayment period remained burdensome, prompting the introduction of cost-sharing measures. Under this system, the expenses were fairly divided, with 50% borne by the customary village authorities and the remaining 50% by the *kembar buncing* families. If the families could not pay their portion in a lump sum, they were permitted to negotiate installment payments for their 50% share. Nonetheless, this arrangement continued to impose financial strain on the families, who were already responsible for raising twins. Over time, as the customary village's financial capacity improved, it was agreed that all costs related to the *kembar buncing* ceremonies would be fully borne by the village authorities (Interview, June 21, 2024).

Further changes have occurred regarding the execution of the *makiis* or *malasti* ceremonies. According to Md. Kariawan as aa customary leader stated initially, all Bali Aga villages in Buleleng were required to conduct the cleansing ceremony at the beach following the birth of *kembar buncing*. However, this practice has evolved, and it is no longer mandatory to perform the ceremony at the beach. This adjustment was made considering financial constraints, labor efficiency, and time management (Interview, July 25, 2024). Importantly, this modification does not diminish the value or significance of the *malasti* ceremony. These changes were made through deliberative consensus reached by the community. Thus, the erosion of stigma surrounding the *kembar buncing* custom reflects a transformation in the community's habitus, shaped by the strategic positioning of social and cultural capital. The achievement of this shift in customary stigma has resulted in a contestation between traditional and modern actors, ultimately leading to the predominance of modern actors whose capital has proven capable of reshaping the structure of traditional agents. The transformation of *kembar buncing* customary practices has not occurred through a confrontational process but rather through gradual change and internal community negotiation influenced by shifting forms of capital.

4. The Inclusivity of *Kembar Buncing* Children in Society

The habitus of traditional Bali Aga society follows the view that *kembar buncing* children were not immediately accepted to participate in customary ceremonies unless they had undergone the *mabalik sumpah* ritual and purification of the micro and macro cosmos (Lestawi, 2015). Likewise, their families were prohibited from joining customary ceremonies before completing the exile period and the *macaru* and *malasti* rituals. Children born as unlike-sex twins were traditionally regarded as harbingers of misfortune, agents of village destruction, and representations of unnatural birth. This perception was rooted in the belief held by traditional Bali Aga communities that only animals give birth to more than one offspring at a time, particularly of different sexes. Over time, this view became deeply internalized within Bali Aga society, eventually forming part of its collective consciousness.

When the modern Bali Aga community acquires cultural capital through enhanced education, new social experiences, migration, and increased exposure to media and national laws, the traditional habitus begins to fracture, rendering former value systems less convincing. This shift has influenced changes in perceptions toward *kembar buncing* children, leading to the current customary guidelines, which no longer emphasize practices of exile or the performance of *macaru* and *malasti* rituals. Instead, *kembar buncing* children are treated similarly to newborn twins in general. Once the umbilical stump has healed, the father may participate in customary ceremonies, and the mother is considered purified when the child reaches 42 days of age. Entry into the village temples such as Pura Desa, Pura Dalem, Pura Siwa, or other temples in the Bali Aga villages is permitted only after the child has undergone the three-month ceremony. These regulations apply universally to all children born in the Bali Aga villages, regardless of their twin status.

The previously closed and sacrosanct domain of customary law (*ranah adat*) has begun to undergo reinterpretation, giving rise to a new paradigm regarding the birth of *kembar buncing* (unlike-sex twins). Such births are now regarded as a blessing, with some even claiming that *kembar buncing* children are akin to royalty. This shift is illustrated according to Nengah Tenaya as *Jro Penyarikan* stated who remarked that *kembar buncing* children are now considered as kings, as both the child and mother are ceremoniously carried by community members from their home to the place of exile, accompanied by the entire Bali Aga community. This demonstrates a significant transformation in the

community's treatment of *kembar buncing* births from one of exclusion to one of inclusion (FGDs, July 31, 2024). Their presence *kembar buncing* begun to be accepted by the community with a positive perception. Previously, such children were cursed for allegedly imitating a king; however, they are now regarded as descendants of royalty. *Kembar buncing* children are considered special as they serve as a symbol prompting self-reflection and reform within the Bali Aga customary community. This perspective is articulated in the *lontar Dewa Tattwa* belonging to the Guru Tanu family, page 2, published in 2005, which has been transliterated as follows.

Kahyangan muwang jagat awantara cihnanya, yen ana salah wetu ring pasabhaning kahyangan yadyan: sarwa tumuwuh, manusa, mwan sarwa patikawenang metu ring pertiwi, manusa wetu tan pasuku, tan pamata, muang ana lewihnia, ana kurangnya, wetu buncing, muwah kunang sakalwir tan paripurna kadi kawitanya, yadyan sarwa satwa.

Translation:

The characteristics of *parhyangan* and *jagat awantara* (the spiritual and natural realms) are believed to be subject to destruction if anything improper emerges from the sacred domain, whether it be plants, humans, or other entities. Examples include humans born without hands or feet, without eyes, with abnormalities or deficiencies, or born as *kembar buncing* (conjoined twins). Such occurrences are seen as deviations from their natural order, including among animals.

An excerpt from the *lontar* illustrates a changing perspective in the Bali Aga community concerning *kembar buncing*. Traditionally viewed as harbingers of danger and bad luck, these children are now seen as indicators of impending disaster, a symbolic function embedded in the community's traditional knowledge system. This evolving view reflects a significant shift in cultural understanding, as the community moves away from a rigidly exclusive stance toward a more inclusive interpretation of such births. Bourdieu's theory, when applied to the growing inclusivity toward *kembar buncing* children in the Bali Aga villages of Buleleng, offers a new perspective: that the transformation of collective habitus is influenced by the power of cross-field capital. This cross-field capital facilitates the production of new values through negotiation, subtle resistance, and creative adaptation within the *kembar buncing* customary system, ultimately resulting in the emergence of new cultural understandings.

5. The Revitalization of Exile Locations

The exile emerges as a physical manifestation of the *habitus* and the structural domain of customary law within the Bali Aga community in Buleleng. In the context of exile sites associated with the *kembar buncing* custom, revitalization does not imply a restoration of their former function. Instead, it signifies a transformation of these sites into more inclusive spaces through the relocation and redefinition of their purpose.

The exile sites have undergone continuous changes toward more humane and improved conditions, representing a form of revitalization of the exile practice related to the *kembar buncing* custom. This renewal has been implemented gradually in line with the evolving civilization of the Bali Aga community in Buleleng. This aligns with Sinaga's statement that revitalization essentially constitutes a dialogue between tradition in its original context and the contemporary context, allowing the emergence of a form of tradition distinct from its previous manifestation (Sinaga, 2014). According to Jro Sudaya as *Jro Mangku* stated in the past, besides burning the original house, families with *kembar buncing* children were exiled to three different locations. The first site was chosen as the farthest from the center of Bali Aga customary society. After spending 42 days at the first location, the family was then relocated closer to the center of civilization. At the second

site, they also had to stay for 42 days. To return to their own home, they had to pass through a third exile site for another 42 days. The third location, as the final point of exile, was situated increasingly near residential settlements (Interview, July 26, 2024).

Each stage of the exile site was strictly prohibited from being visited by family members or other community members. Upon relocating from the first to the second site, the previous location occupied by the *kembar buncing* family had to be burned down, and a new hut was constructed at each subsequent site (Belo, 1970). This practice aimed to symbolically burn away misfortune or any negative influences so that they would not remain attached to the family. The houses at the exile sites from the first to the third differed in construction. At the first exile site, the house was built using banana stalks, thatched with straw, and walled with *kelangsah* leaves. However, the practice of exile has begun to be abandoned by the Bali Aga community in Buleleng. Several factors have influenced this change, ranging from geographic conditions to increased social awareness among the Bali Aga people. The geographical changes include shifts in land ownership status at the exile locations. Initially, these sites were considered customary communal land but were later claimed as private property, leading owners to object to the use of their land for exile purposes (Lestawi, 2015). This has contributed to the modification of the exile practice, reducing it to only two locations and thereby shortening the duration. Another geographic factor is the difficult accessibility of the exile sites, which are located in steep terrain. Consequently, exile is now conducted at only one location and for a period of just 42 days.

The reduction in the duration of exile arose primarily due to community resistance and the advancement of societal civilization. As members of the Bali Aga community increasingly engaged in non-agricultural occupations, they found the traditional exile period of three *tilem* (three consecutive dark moon phases) excessively long and disruptive to their work. The community recognized that this prolonged absence could harm their livelihoods and potentially result in job loss, leading to resistance from families of the *kembar buncing* children. This resistance was a conscious form of opposition to the customary regulations, which were deemed no longer appropriate (Komorina, 2017). Through *paruman* (traditional deliberation), a consensus was reached to limit the exile period to 42 days and permit individuals to leave the exile location solely for work purposes.

Moreover, some Bali Aga villages have adopted symbolic and practical changes to circumvent government regulations by using the term *mengkeb*. This term refers to families with *kembar buncing* children who reside within the *karang desa* (village core area). To maintain humanity and uphold tradition, these families temporarily entrust their *kembar buncing* children to relatives living outside the *karang desa*. This transformation from exile to *mengkeb* within Bali Aga society was initiated by community groups themselves, reflecting a more humane implementation of the customary regulations related to *kembar buncing* (Hasbullah et al., 2022). Relocation practices continued until the Bali Aga community gradually abolished or abandoned the exile phase in the *kembar buncing* tradition. The revitalization of exile sites can serve as a basis for examining the notion that the transformative power of change agents cannot rely solely on cultural capital. Instead, it must be complemented by the possession of symbolic capital and social capital to effectively influence and reshape customary practices.

Conclusion

The *kembar buncing* tradition, once seen as rigid and unchangeable, is now understood to be evolving. Its transformation is driven by both internal and external influences. Internally, the Bali Aga community's own cultural and economic resources have played a crucial role in reshaping the custom. Externally, the impact of urbanization,

changes in broader social structures, and governmental pressure to make the custom more inclusive and representative of Bali Aga identity have all contributed to this change. Furthermore, the community's increasing willingness to engage in critical reflection has created the space for reinterpreting and modifying long-held practices. Indeed, customary change is not merely a result of the pressures of modernity, but also emerges from processes of cultural resistance, value negotiation, and dynamic *habitus* work. It is therefore advisable that any transformations within customary law be pursued by striving to establish more humanistic and inclusive customary village regulations, without diminishing the sacred values embedded in the culture.

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