

Creative Industry Development Strategy through Collaboration of Traditional Ceramic Artists and Craftsmen in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a lack of awareness of local traditions and the low profit value of products, has led to the decline of traditional ceramic craft centres in West Java. The purpose of this Research is to develop a creative industry strategy based on local traditions of craft centres through collaboration between artists/designers and artisans. This Research employs qualitative methods, drawing on a cultural and fine arts approach. The Research results in a model of creative industry development strategy based on local traditions of traditional ceramic craft centres, which can be replicated in other centres with similar cases.

Keywords: Ceramic crafts; creative industries; collaboration; tradition

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1.0 Introduction

Plered and Sitiwinangun are two of the largest traditional ceramic craft centres in West Java Province. The two centres have a very close relationship, as evident in their shared history and development. The Plered ceramic craft centre in Purwakarta Regency reached its peak from 1990 to early 2005. However, since late 2005, due to rising fuel prices, the number of artisans has continued to decline. This has prompted the central and local governments to revitalise the centre through training, mentoring, equipment assistance, and marketing. Unfortunately, these efforts have not been successful, as the number of Plered ceramic artisans continues to decrease (Yana et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the Sitiwinangun ceramic craft center in Cirebon Regency garnered public attention in the 1990s with the presence of Bonzan Edy, a ceramic artist who assisted the center in developing more creative and innovative Sitiwinangun ceramics while preserving its local distinctiveness. Unfortunately, after Bonzan Edy died in 2011, the Sitiwinangun ceramic craft centre experienced another decline (Yana et al., 2020).

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1.1 Current condition of Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic craft centers

The reduction in the number of ceramic artisans in Plered and Sitiwinangun has had a direct impact on the productivity and quality of products in the centres, both technically and aesthetically. This condition poses a serious threat to the centres' sustainability and future existence. Therefore, research on creative industry development strategies based on craft centres, through collaboration between artists/designers and artisans, is crucial to revitalise and enhance the competitiveness of traditional ceramic products in the centres (Asri et al., 2022).

1.2 Problems

The problems in this study are: a) decreasing awareness and interest of Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans to continue the tradition that is considered less profitable socially and economically; b) stagnation in the development and innovation of Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramics, resulting in low product competitiveness and consumer interest and appreciation; and c) there is no structured and massive collaboration between artists/designers and other stakeholders with Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans in the centre.

This study aims to examine the collaboration between artists/designers and ceramic artisans in Plered and Sitiwinangun as a strategic approach to developing creative industries grounded in local traditions. Through this collaboration, the Research seeks to identify sustainable development strategies that can strengthen these ceramic centers by enhancing the community's socio-economic conditions while simultaneously contributing to the preservation and continuity of local cultural heritage.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Ceramic crafts

Craft making has been a tradition for centuries, characterised by its reliance on local materials, the maker's involvement in the entire process, and products that embody culture, customs, beliefs, and traditional skills and knowledge passed down through generations (Leonardi, F., & Pareschi, L., 2025). In general, craft production empowers rural locals, often referred to as artisans (Bayraktaroğlu, 2020). Some of the raw materials commonly used in crafting include bamboo, wood, rattan, and clay. Clay is the raw material for making ceramic crafts (Purnawan et al., 2023). The process of creating and using ceramics is closely tied to other cultural elements, including the natural environment, religion, myths, and economics (Aprillia et al, 2022). In modern times, ceramics are also often used by artists to create more individualised and experimental works of art (Hiiop et al., 2022; Ponimin, 2021).

2.2 Traditions

Traditions are cultural practices from the past that are carried into the present through inheritance (Sari et al., 2024). The making and use of ceramics is a tradition that encompasses objects, social practices, and skills in the creation of products (Jagrati et al., 2020). Revitalisation is undertaken to save an area from crisis through changes in various fields, aiming to prevent further decline, increase employment, and foster community character (Setiartin R. T., & Casim, 2021). Traditional revitalisation is an adaptive form of reusing traditional heritage that requires active participation from various stakeholders through collaboration (Revita et al., 2023).

2.3 Collaborations

The concept of collaboration can be viewed from multiple perspectives. Collaboration is a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through negotiation, jointly creating official and unofficial rules and structures that govern their relationships and ways of acting or deciding on problems brought to them together. It involves sharing norms and mutually beneficial interactions (Raharja et al., 2019). Collaboration enables multiple stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and expertise to work together, fostering the exchange of insights and the generation of new knowledge that benefits all parties. (Hammett et al., 2020; Reinsborough, 2020)

2.4 Creative industry

The creative industry, as an implementation of the creative economy concept, is a business developed by individuals, institutions, or communities based on knowledge and creativity (Yusuf, M., 2023). The creative industry in Indonesia has experienced steady growth since 2015, contributing approximately 6.3% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Loeis et al., 2023). Until now, the creative industry in Indonesia remains concentrated in urban areas, although traditional arts in rural regions also hold potential for the development of the creative economy (Setiadi et al., 2021).

Several studies have discussed artists who draw on tradition for their ideas. J. Koplos discusses Lawson Oyekan, a Nigerian ceramic artist whose work also draws heavily on the traditions of Northern Nigeria (Koplos, 2019). Levy, Shibata, and Shibata wrote about Ryuichi Kakurezaki in the context of ceramic creation in Bizen (Levy et al., 2022). Then Ardini, S. P., and Winata, G. discuss Widayanto, whose work is inspired by Indonesian local traditions (Ardini, 2023). Based on these articles, it is evident that artists and designers can develop traditions into more creative and innovative artworks or products, even while working individually in studios. Hendriyana et al. (2024) stated that the analysis strategies for integrating local cultural wisdom with global sustainability principles in craft design. It highlights the importance of ecological materials and cultural relevance in achieving marketable yet culturally grounded craft products. Craft centres also have potential in the form of natural resources, culture, and skilled artisans that can be utilised to develop creative industries. To date, no Research has specifically addressed the collaboration.

3.0 Methodology

Research methodology is the study of methods to explain Research problems analytically and systematically. This research employs a qualitative, ethnographic approach to gain a deep understanding of the social dynamics of the tradition of ceramic craft making and its challenges in traditional ceramic craft centres in West Java Province, and to explore the potential for collaboration between artists/designers and traditional artisans. Ethnography was chosen because this research aims to understand the cultural practices, values, and social interactions within the ceramic artisan community that have persisted for generations.

3.1 Location and subject of research

In this study, the research subjects are ceramic artisans from Anjun Village, Plered District, Purwakarta Regency, and Sitiwinangun Village, Jamblang District, Cirebon Regency. The justification for selecting these locations is that both centres are at the heart of traditional ceramic craftsmanship in West Java, have long histories and traditions that are still preserved, and face similar challenges amid modernisation and global competition. The informants selected for this study consisted of artisans, community leaders, and government officials. Data were collected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants based on specific criteria, including artisans with at least 10 years of experience and in-depth knowledge of local traditions. Snowball sampling was employed to collect information, where the researcher selects a person to be sampled based on recommendations from individuals who have been previously sampled (Vincent & Thompson, 2022). Interviews were conducted in early 2025 at the Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic craft centres with ten informants, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant profile

Name of informant	Age	Location	Description
Adis Junaedi	82	Plered	Traditional ceramic craftsmen
Ajang Udung	56	Plered	Decorative ceramic craftsmen
Arnom	69	Plered	Figure / ceramic artisans/government
Eman Sulaeman	56	Plered	Figure/decorative ceramic craftsmen
Kuswanto	60	Plered	Decorative ceramic craftsmen
Kadmiya	57	Sitiwinangun	Figure / decorative ceramic craftsmen
Nurjaji	48	Sitiwinangun	Decorative ceramic craftsmen
Sariman	43	Sitiwinangun	Traditional ceramic craftsmen
Utama	73	Sitiwinangun	Figure / traditional ceramic craftsmen
Yandi	44	Sitiwinangun	Decorative ceramic craftsmen

(Source: Deni Yana 2025)

3.2 Data Collection Technique

Primary data in this Research were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and visual documentation. Participant observation involves observing the process of making ceramics from material preparation to finishing, and conducting in-depth interviews with informants using structured interview guides with open-ended questions. FGDs were performed in 2 centres, involving 6-8 participants each. Visual documentation was conducted by taking photos of the ceramic-making process and recording video demonstrations of traditional techniques. Secondary data were obtained from documentary studies, including statistical data from artisans and village offices, as well as literature studies from various journal articles, books, and research reports on traditional ceramics.

3.3 Instruments and data analysis

The instruments used in this research include interview guides for artisans, community leaders, and government officials. Additionally, an observation sheet is provided for the ceramic-making process checklist, along with recording devices for interviews and cameras for visual documentation. Data analysis is a crucial stage in conducting scientific research, as it enables researchers to answer the questions they are studying. Qualitative data analysis is conducted through sorting, coding, and thematising data obtained from the data collection process, which involves interviewing research participants, recording interviews and notes, and reviewing relevant literature.

4.0 Findings

Based on information from Eman Sulaeman (2025), during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an extraordinary surge in demand for Plered ceramic pot products, with prices rising 300%, while material prices increased only 20%. Even after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, sales of Plered ceramic handicrafts decreased more sharply than before. According to Ajang Udung (2025), this is due to market saturation and a decline in product quality, both technically and aesthetically, as artisans prioritise quantity over quality. Now, almost 327 Plered ceramic craftsmen have temporarily changed professions, which, according to Kuswanto (2025), is done while waiting for economic conditions in the centre to recover.

Although the dynamics in the Sitiwinangun ceramic craft centre during the COVID-19 pandemic differed from those in Plered, based on the latest data, when field data collection was carried out in early 2025, the number of Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans also declined significantly. Based on data from the Sitiwinangun Village Office, the number of active Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans decreased from 73 to 51 before the pandemic.

4.1 Myths and legends as the main spirit

According to Eman Sulaeman and Kadmiya (2025), 511 Plered ceramic craftsmen and 51 Sitiwinangun ceramic craftsmen who are still active today continue to believe in and are loyal to local traditions, as embodied in myths, legends, and traditional rituals for the spirits of their ancestors. Generally, they are hereditary craftsmen who inherit their craft from their parents. Adis Junaedi and Arnom (2025) explain that many Plered ceramic artisans still believe in the myth of Dayang Sumbi and Plered clay, which they believe is the incarnation of Dayang Sumbi's rice and will never run out, despite its continuous use in ceramic production. According to Ajang Udung and Kuswanto (2025), Plered ceramic artisans also still adhere to and believe in the legend of Prince Panjunan, a ceramic expert and Islamic religious propagator from Cirebon who first taught ceramic-making skills in Plered and, through his curse, instilled the values of honesty, discipline, concern for the environment, and creativity in working as craftsmen. Then Adis Junaedi (2025) explained that many Plered ceramic artisans still believe in ancestral spirits and perform traditional rituals when working on ceramics. While Kadmiya and Utama (2025) inform us that Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans still believe in the legend of Ki Buyut Kebagusan, or Ki Bagus Pranata, as the first person to make ceramics.

4.2 Economic motives and artisan categories

According to Eman Sulaeman and Kadmiya (2025), Prince Panjunan and Ki Bagus Pranata both taught ceramic-making skills to support the livelihoods of the people of Plered and Sitiwinangun. To become successful artisans, the people of Plered and Sitiwinangun were not only equipped with skills and artistic sensibilities but were also nurtured to develop an independent, honest, environmentally conscious, and creative and innovative attitude. Arnom (2025) explains that artisans in the centres are currently divided into several categories based on their role and the type of products they produce. Some of the artisans, due to their ability, became entrepreneurs who could employ other artisans and establish workshop facilities and product sales outlets. At the same time, others become ceramic artisans who work independently and sell their products to entrepreneurs. In line with Arnom, Eman Sulaeman (2025) notes that Plered ceramic artisans are divided into three categories: traditional, functional, and ornamental. Traditional Plered ceramic artisans are highly synonymous with making low-temperature ceramics with engobe colouring for cooking utensils and traditional ceremonies, such as jugs, pendils, and incense sticks. Functional ceramics are synonymous with creating flower pots with painted exteriors. While ornamental ceramic artisans are similar to makers of decorative ceramics for interior elements, such as vases and barrels, they use paint or glaze colouring. While Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans, according to Kadmiya (2025), are only

4.3 Creators at the center

The character and attitude of artisans making traditional, functional, and ornamental ceramics differ significantly in both Plered and Sitiwinangun. According to Adis Junaedi and Sariman (2025), conventional ceramic artisans are generally difficult to change and are less interested in product development and diversification. They only want to make products that they usually make every day, even though the price is low. In contrast, according to Kuswanto and Yandi (2025), ornamental ceramic artisans are generally more open to change and are very enthusiastic about product development efforts. According to Ajang Udung and Nurjaji (2025), in the centre's history of development, two ceramic artists graduated from art colleges: Bonzan Edy in Sitiwinangun and Dicky Najib in Plered. In the 1990s, they worked together and informally educated artisans at the centre. Both artists, according to Utama and Arnom (2025), succeeded in educating artisans who were not only skilled but also had high artistic and entrepreneurial sensibilities. The involvement of the two artists demonstrates that producing more creative and innovative products within these centers requires appropriate collaboration strategies between artisans and artists/designers.

5.0 Discussion

Strong natural, human, and cultural resources support the ceramic craftsmanship traditions of Plered and Sitiwinangun. It is not surprising that, given their uniqueness, both have grown into the largest ceramic craft centres in West Java Province.

5.1 Potential for creative product development in ceramic craft centers

Plered and Sitiwinangun clay have different characteristics and potential. Plered clay is smooth, plastic, hard, and bright in colour after burning. The weakness is a lower resistance to temperature shock, so it must be burnt in a closed furnace at higher temperatures and for a longer time (averaging 12 to 24 hours). There are also coarser Sitiwinangun clay particles, although still plastic, with a lower combustion temperature and a darker colour after burning. The advantages include resistance to temperature shock, allowing it to be burnt in an open furnace with a very fast burn tempo (only 1 hour). The source of clay, the main raw material for ceramics, is abundant in the area around both Plered and Sitiwinangun.

The number of skilled artisans employed by the Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic craft centres also represents a tremendous opportunity to empower the local community economy and assist the government in addressing unemployment. With its distinctiveness and local wisdom, Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramic craftsmanship can be preserved and thrive amid the swift global competition. Other cultural elements, such as the natural environment, religion, myths, and economics, have also become attractions, strengthening traditions in the centres. In addition, artisans' adaptive and open attitudes can create new opportunities to develop more modern, creative products that meet current consumer needs. This effort can be further enhanced through community collaboration.

5.2 Center-based creative industry development strategy

In developing the creative industries within the ceramic craft centres of Plered and Sitiwinangun, several concerns and strategic considerations must be addressed. Although both centres are geographically and administratively located within the same province,

their local cultures, characteristics, circumstances, and internal conditions differ significantly. Plered, which has a larger centre area, a greater number and variety of artisans, and a more diverse range of products, requires a longer, more complex process to select suitable artisans to collaborate with artists or designers. Conversely, the smaller scale and limited diversification in Sitiwinangun facilitate a more efficient and expedited artisan selection process.

Based on local data and traditions in the centres, derivative artisans who have inherited their craft directly from their parents deserve priority in collaboration with artists or designers. They are generally more loyal to tradition, skilled, possess the means of production, and are more proven in their commitment and integrity as craftsmen. In addition, the role and category of artisans should also be taken into consideration. Entrepreneurial artisans who make ornamental ceramics are generally more adaptable and open, making them potential partners for collaboration with their resources. Some artisans possess the capability to create traditional ceramics and fulfil functional requirements, but choose not to engage in such practices. In addition to genetic factors and the artisan category, another crucial consideration in selecting collaborative partners is the characteristics and uniqueness of their products. This is closely linked to the artisans' creativity and their ability to innovate in product development. An equally important factor is the artisans' experience. Technical and aesthetic maturity cannot be achieved overnight; thus, the artisans' expertise in ceramics production serves as a key criterion in selecting potential collaborators, alongside genetic factors, artisan categories, creativity, and innovation capabilities. In the collaborative process of developing creative industries based on craft centres, which are knowledge- and creativity-based businesses developed by communities of craftsmen with individual artists or designers, it is also necessary to have the support of other stakeholders such as government, academics, and the media with the same vision based on trust and the principle of mutual benefit to solve problems in the centres effectively and interactively.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged a few years ago, has had a significant impact on the development of traditional ceramic craft centres in West Java. Following the pandemic, artisans' awareness of and interest in continuing the tradition declined, along with market demand. This does not apply to derivative artisans who received their craft directly from their parents. They continue to survive because they are bound by local wisdom in the form of myths, legends, and traditional rituals. The stagnation in the development and innovation of Plered and Sitiwinangun ceramics can be overcome through collaboration among artisans, artists, and designers with extensive knowledge and networks. With the right strategy, collaboration can yield more creative, innovative products, thereby boosting competitiveness and consumer interest. This effort will foster the development of creative industries in centres previously centred in the city centre. The author hopes that this paper can make a positive contribution to the development of traditional ceramic craft centres.

This study has several limitations, including a small sample size and its focus on only two craft centers. Moreover, the location-specific nature of ethnographic research, the potential for informant bias, and the influence of post-COVID-19 temporal factors may affect the findings. Consequently, further research is required, including the implementation of a pilot project with clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs) and continuous monitoring of collaboration outcomes. In addition, more focused follow-up studies, such as market experiments or social network analysis conducted in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, are necessary to strengthen and expand the results of this research.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Directorate General of Research and Development of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia for supporting this research through the Research and Community Service program for Fiscal Year 2025.

Paper Contribution to the Related Field of Study

This paper contributes by adding information and insight into the phenomena that occur in the development of fine arts, particularly in the fields of craft and ceramic art. In addition, because the development of traditional ceramic craft centres is inseparable from historical, economic, and local traditions surrounding them, this paper contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and to broader economic development.

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