

Mythology and the Belief System of *Sunda Wiwitan*: A Theological Review in Cisolok of Sukabumi Regency of West Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mythology and belief systems adopted by the *Sunda Wiwitan* community that were factually related to the credo system that was considered sacred in a belief. Researcher in collecting data using interviews, observation, and literature review methods. The process of data analysis was done with qualitative data analysis techniques. In the process of analyzing research data, the researcher organized data, grouped data, and analyzed narratively. The results showed that the *Sunda Wiwitan* belief system worshiped ancestral spirits as an elevated entity. Aside from worshiping ancestors, *Sunda Wiwitan* also had a God who was often called *Sang Hyang Kersa*. Adherents of *Sunda Wiwitan* live modestly, only to be able to work in the fields, grew rice, with peace and prosperity. *Sunda Wiwitan* religion expresses symbolic meanings in the socio-cultural relations and cosmology of Sundanese nature.

Keywords: Mythology, Belief System. *Sunda Wiwitan*, Theology

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago that consists of many islands with a very diverse society, diverse tribes, races, languages, cultures, customs, and religions. ^[1] An ethnic group is a group of people who are related by awareness and identity. It is proof that Indonesia is a country with a very diverse society, so it is a concrete example of a multicultural country in the world. Diversity in Indonesia is also a factor underlying the variety of religions embraced by the community. It includes the flow of

beliefs that are based on ideas in the teachings of ancestors or spirits. There are several villages in West Java, which are manifestations of the existence of indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

The existence of traditional villages is a special attraction for the community because there is a unique culture and is different from the others, such as the Sundanese people in the Cisolok village of Sukabumi Regency. Human life requires a belief in which the belief is in the form of religious teachings or views that, according to the community, are considered good and true. In Cisolok of Sukabumi Regency, there are cultural and traditional elements that are still thick with religious nuances and various other local wisdom. Values and norms are very well respected by the community and have a peculiarity that is indicated by a high level of tolerance among the people.

Sunda wiwitan (original Sundanese) is a belief or worship of the forces of nature and ancestral spirits (animism and dynamism) that are adhered to by Sundanese traditional society (Ekadjati, 1995). ^[2] According to Djatikusumah (2002), ^[3] Sundanese can be interpreted with three basic concepts, namely: a) philosophical, which means clean, beautiful, good, light, b) ethnic that refers to a community like other communities, and c) geography that refers to the naming of an area. In this case, it is distinguished by the term Sundanese which includes large islands in Indonesia (then the Archipelago) such as Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and

small Sundanese, which include Bali, Sumbawa, Lombok, Flores, and others.

The belief in *Sunda wiwitan* is also evidenced by the existence of archaeological findings in various regions, such as the Cipari site in Kuningan Regency, the Arca Domas site in Kanekes of Lebak Regency, and the most phenomenal site of the Padang Mountain in Cianjur Regency. These findings indicate that the early Sundanese had a belief system (Indrawardana, 2014).^[4]

The origins of *Sunda Wiwitan* were not known for certain dates, but *Sunda Wiwitan* people believe that the early humans, the Prophet Adam, was Bedouin. They think that the Prophet Adam was their ancestor. In the belief of the Bedouin tribe, *Sunda Wiwitan* is a teaching that was brought by the Prophet Adam as the first human being sent down on earth to enjoy all its contents and maintain well by not damaging the earth and all its contents (Thaufan, 2015).^[5]

Sundanese people believe that the founder of the religion or belief of *Sunda Wiwitan* is Madrais whose full name is Madrais Sadewa Alibasa Kusuma Widjaya Ningrat, who lived around 1832-1939. Madrais is actually the name of the pesantren, which he founded in Cigugur, which has now become Paseban. His father was Prince Alibasa, grandson of Prince Sutajaya, son-in-law of Prince Kasepuhan, the eighth descendant of Gunung Djati. Madrais was transformed into a person who had a sense of sensitivity, refinement, social care, had a great love for culture, and upholds the nation's sovereignty. He taught Islam to the people and taught the importance of life as an independent and loving person. He explained the religion of Islam delivered in Java-Sunda writings, namely writing *ha, na, ca, ra, ka*, etcetera, so that the invaders did not know that he was spreading Islam. In this way, the teachings of Madrais are called Java-Sunda religion or what is now *Sunda Wiwitan*. However, at this time, the teachings of Madrais are pure monotheism where only

Allah (God Almighty) must be worshiped.^[6]

The *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings are contained in the *Sanghyang Siksakanda Karesian* book, a book that originated from the Sunda kingdom era, which provides religious teachings and moral guidance, rules, and lessons of Hindu character. Based on the information of *Kokolot* (elder) Cikeusik *Sunda Wiwitan* is not a Hindu or Buddhist, but an animist, a belief that worships the spirits of the ancestors. Only in its development, has this belief been entered into Hindu elements.^[7] In the *Parahyangan* story, this belief was referred to as the '*Jatisunda*' teaching. This research analyzed the mythology and belief systems adopted by the *Sunda Wiwitan* community in Cisolok of Sukabumi Regency, which are factually related to the credo system that is considered sacred in a belief.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion and Culture

Religion is often understood as a source of real images of the world. Religion is believed to originate from revelations revealed to all humans. Anthropologists call religion as a religious system. Anthropology is a science that also views the religious system as something that must be possessed by every human being. The religious system is one element of culture. In Anthropology, the religious order is one of the seven aspects of universal culture, namely: language, knowledge systems, social organizations, systems of living equipment and technology, systems of livelihoods, arts, and the religious system itself.^[8]

Element of universal culture is an element that is sure to exist in all cultures in the world. A culture that is very simple to even a very complicated culture certainly has seven aspects of that universal culture.^[1] It means the religious system must exist in every culture in the world, and also exists and is inseparable from the cultures that spread throughout Indonesia.

However, the religious system in Indonesia is not only one, two, or three.

Indonesia has hundreds of tribal groups, and tribal groups spread across the archipelago and have their religious systems that have been owned for generations long before Indonesia's independence and even further before that. In ancient times, the religious system that was believed and adhered by the ancestors of the Indonesian people was animism (the flow of beliefs and worship of ancestral spirits) and dynamism (the flow of beliefs and worship of objects that were considered to have supernatural powers) which was very familiar heard until now. Animism and dynamism are generalizations to the religious system of Indonesia's ancestors in the past. Still, the sub-elements of religion that exist in every culture in Indonesia are different and have their characteristics in each group.

Parsons and Kroeber sharply distinguish cultural forms as a system of ideas and concepts from cultural forms as patterns and actions of human activity. Based on this, Koentjaraningrat divides culture into three forms. First, the form of culture as a complex of ideas, values, norms, rules, and so on. Second, the form of culture as a complex of activities and patterned actions from humans in society. Third, the form of culture as objects created by humans. ^[1]

A first form is an abstract form of culture because this form cannot be seen or touched by the five senses. Ideas are abstract and exist only in the human mind. The idea is the forerunner or the initial process of the birth of a culture. Culture is born from ideas that are created and agreed upon in society. The ideas created are the result of the process of adaptation and learning from the environment in which the community lives. In the next stage, when the idea has been agreed upon, then it will become a kind of social system that will be held by the community in living their daily lives.

The second form of culture is a follow-up of its first form. The ideas that have been agreed upon together become a social system. It will regulate all actions of

all members of the community in their daily lives. The second form of culture is all actions with a regular pattern of all members of society. It has been arranged in a social system that is born from the ideas they have agreed on. Unlike the first form, the pattern of human action is something that can be captured by the five human senses and is not an abstract thing.

The third form of culture is the objects that result from the actions or activities of the people who walk every day. The third form of culture is in the form of concrete objects created by the public. It consists of computers, pencils, paper, clothes, pants, cabinets, guitars, mosques, churches, and many more objects that have been created by the community that is made to help him through his daily activities.

The three forms of culture are related to one another. The ideas of the mind that were born and agreed upon by the community will then become a life guide that will and must be obeyed. All the actions of community members are regulated and determined in their social systems that originate from the ideas they create themselves. Furthermore, all existing actions or activities of the community will, of course, give birth to a variety of objects that are made to support all their efforts or activities. It is even just a result that has been created from these actions or events. The objects that have been created over time affect the way of thinking of members of the community who live around it.

Koentjaraningrat universally divides culture into seven elements. The purpose of the elements of universal culture is that of the many cultures in the world with various cultural elements can be classified into seven major elements. The seven elements are elements that must exist in every culture in the world, from very simple cultures to very complex cultures. The seven elements of universal culture are religious systems, social organizations, knowledge systems, languages, arts, livelihood systems, living equipment systems, and technology. ^[1]

These seven elements are holistic in every culture in the world. At the level of implementation, these elements are transformed into cultural forms in society. Every element that exists is always transformed into seven forms. It is from the religious system to the system of living equipment and technology. Each element will be transformed into ideas, actions, and physical culture in every culture.

The Concept of God

Belief in the existence of God is the main basis in religious understanding. Every religion except Buddhism is based on a belief in a supernatural force. The way of life of every human being who believes in religion in this world is very closely related to that belief. This magical power, except in primitive religion, is called God. The concept of God is different in appearance. For example, people believe in deism but not in theism or pantheism but not in polytheism. Primitive religions have not yet given God's name to this magical power. In other words, supernatural abilities do not, however, originate from outside nature but are still rooted in life. The magic power does not yet have the meaning of theism or deism but dynamism and animism.^[9]

Dynamism. Dynamism comes from the Greek word "dynamis" which in Indonesian is called "kekuatan" strength. For primitive humans, whose level of culture is still shallow, each object around them can have mysterious inner strength. Primitive societies give names to these mysterious hidden forces. Melanesians call it "mana" the Japanese "us." In the history of religion and the science of comparative religion, this inner strength is usually called "mana." In Indonesian, it is called "tuah". Which of these has five characteristics, which is power, cannot be seen, does not have a fixed place, basically does not have to be good or bad, and sometimes it can be controlled and cannot be controlled. Thus, where is the power that cannot be seen, that is, a mysterious magical power, which can be seen is only its effect. Where is in

everything that has an impact, and there can be everywhere. However, *mana* is not permanent, in the sense that something which has *mana* does not always have what it has.^[9]

Animism. Animists understand that all things have a spirit. The spirits can do good, but also can do bad. Humans need to worship it while giving offerings so that the spirit does not do evil. When a human dies, his spirit leaves the body forever. The spirit that leaves the human body forever is called a spirit. According to belief, the spirit lives in a land of spirits similar to human life. Adherents of animism believe that every object on earth has a soul that must be respected so as not to disturb humans. Instead, it helps their lives. Animists usually do respect by worshiping and giving offerings. Animism believes that the spirits of people who have died can enter the body of an animal. They are also considered to be able to stay in the tomb, so they are feared. By the community at that time, the spirits of prominent people such as tribal chiefs and ancestors were considered sacred. Since the spirits lived in a world of spirits (heavenly) located on the mountain, the place of worship of the spirits in the Megalithic era was also built on a mountain or hill. This culture continued into the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic times.

Pantheism. Pantheism means that all is God. Pantheism holds that the whole cosmos is God. Objects that can be captured with the senses are parts of God. God is the cosmos, and God is immanent that is in nature. Pantheism is a flow or belief that God is in everything and that everything is God. God is matched with everything because His direct and active presence in the world wears a real form. Personal pantheism states that because God himself exists, then what exists is God or at least an embodiment of God. There is another view that considers God impersonal, namely as a universal soul or total reality. In this view, all beings are in God. Pantheism, both personal and non-personal, considers whole

existence as a sacred reality that contains everything.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to the category of qualitative descriptive research as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral data from respondents and observable behavior.^[10] Qualitative research is research that is limited to trying to reveal the facts of a problem and circumstances as they are so that it is only a disclosure of the facts.^[11] Thus, the qualitative description in this study was a description of the Sundanese Wiwitan belief system and myth.

Data sources in this study were divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were taken directly from respondents through interviews, namely Sunda Wiwitan followers. Meanwhile, secondary data in the form of literature documents, theoretical studies, and scientific works that were relevant to the problem under study. Researchers in collecting data using interviews, observation, and literature review. In the interview, the researcher conducted conversations with informants who understood research studies by preparing the concept of a questionnaire so that the data obtained was more accurate and directed-observation, namely observing the patterns and ideas of belief in *Sunda Wiwitan*. In the literature review, the researcher collected data supporting research in the form of religious references, magazines, newspapers, journal articles, etcetera.

The process of data analysis was done with qualitative data analysis techniques. Marshall and Rossman stated that in the process of qualitative research analysis, several stages needed to be done, namely organizing data, grouping data, and analyzing narratively.^[12]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sunda Wiwitan belief system states that the highest authority rests with

Sang Hyang Kersa (Almighty) or *Nu Ngersakeun* (Who Wants). He is also referred to as the *Batara Tunggal* (God the One), *Batara Jagat* (Lord of Nature), and *Batara Seda Niskala* (the Unseen). He resides in *Buana Nyungcung*. All deities in the Hindu concept (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Yama, etcetera) are subject to *Batara Seda Niskala*. There are three kinds of nature in *Sunda Wiwitan's* belief, as mentioned in the poem concerning the mythology of the Kanekes people. (1) *Buana Nyungcung*, which is the abode of *Sang Hyang Kersa*, which is located at the top. (2) *Buana Panca Tengah*, namely the dwelling place of humans and other creatures, which is located in the middle. (3) *Buana Larang*, which is hell located at the bottom. Between *Buana Nyungcung* and *Buana Panca Tengah*, there are 18 layers of nature arranged from top to bottom. The top layer is called *Bumi Suci Alam Padang*. The second-highest layer of nature is the natural habitat of *Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Asri* and *Sunan Ambu Hyang Kersa* unloaded seven *batara* at *Sasaka Pusaka Buana*. One of the seven *batara* is *Batara Cikal*, the oldest considered the ancestor of the Cisolok people. Others are *batara* that ruled in various regions of the Sundanese land.

teachings of religion always contain elements that are explicit and implied. The explicit element is what is clearly stated as a lifestyle that must be lived, while what is implied is a comprehensive understanding of the teaching. *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings basically depart from two principles, namely *caraciri* of human and *caraciri* of the nation. *Cara ciri* of humans are the essential elements that exist in human life. There are five elements included, namely *welasasih* (love), *undak usuk* (order in the family), *tata krama* (law of behavior), language, and culture. *Wiwaha yudha naradha* is an essential human nature that always fights everything before doing it. If there is only one method of a human trait that is incompatible with this, then humans will definitely not do it. The second principle is *caraciri* of nation. Universally, all humans

have something in common in *caraciri* of humans. However, certain things distinguish between humans from one another. In *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings, the differences between humans are based on *caraciri* of nation, which consists of appearance and tradition.

These two principles are not explicitly stated in the *Sunda Wiwitan* Book, which is called *Siksa Kandang Karesian*. But basically, humans actually live from what is implied. What is written will always be read and memorized. This does not guarantee that humans will live from what is written. Instead, what is implied can be a guide for humans in life. Initially, *Sunda Wiwitan* did not teach many taboos to its adherents. There are only two main taboos taught in the Sundanese religion, those that are not liked by others and those that endanger others.

Sunda Wiwitan believes in the presence of the highest authority called *Sanghyang Kersa* or *GustiSikangSawiji-Wiji* (God, who is one). *SanghyangKersa* is believed by *Sunda Wiwitan* to live in a high and regal place or *Buana Nyungcung*.^[13] In the opening mentioned five locations of heaven according to the position of the eye of the wind, namely: *purwa*, *daksina*, *pasima*, north, and middle. *Purwa* is east, where *Hyang Isora* is, white in color. *Daksina* is south, where *Hyang Brahma* is, red in color. *Pasima* is west, where *Hyang Mahadewa* is yellow in color. North is north, where *Hyang Vishnu* is black in color. *Madya* is the middle, the place of *Hyang Shiva*, various kinds of colors. That is *Sanghyang Wuku Lima* on earth.

It is clear that the teaching applied is syncretism from Shivaism and Buddhism. *Pikukuh*, the absolute customary rule, guides the view of *Sunda Wiwitan* life. *Pikukuh* is the rule and the way to live a life according to the mandate of the ancestors. *Pikukuh* is the orientation, concepts, and religious activities of the *Cisolok* community. Thus, this *pikukuh* did not experience any changes, as contained in the great-grandfather (taboo) deposited

ancestors. Great-grandfather is anything that violates the bustle. Great-grandfather is not codified in the form of text but is incarnated in the daily actions of *Sunda Wiwitan* people in interacting with their fellow humans, the environment, and their Lord.

Sunda Wiwitan teachings recognize the traditions of rhymes and chanting and dance moves. This tradition can be seen from the thanksgiving ceremony of the rice harvest and the celebration of the turn of the year based on the Sundanese calendar known as the *serentaun* celebration. In various places in West Java, *serentaun* always takes place lively and is attended by thousands of people. Although inculturation has occurred and many Sundanese people who embrace religions outside *Sunda Wiwitan*, understandings, and customs that have been taught by this religion are still used as role models in the lives of Sundanese people. Culturally the Sundanese people have not left this Sundanese religion.

Sacred place or place of worship that is considered sacred in the *Sunda Wiwitan* religion is *Pamunjungan* or called *kabuyutan*. *Pamunjungan* is a *stepped pyramid* that is usually found on a hill, and in this *pamunjungan* there are menhirs, statues, rock cloves, bowl stones, flat stones, and others.

Pamunjungan or *kabuyutan* is abundant in Sundanese land such as the *Genter Bumi* worship hall, *Cengkuk Site*, *Gunung Padang*, *Galunggung Kabunggung*, *Kawali Site* and others. At the time of the biggest and most luxurious *pamunjungan* was *Pamunjungan Kihara Hyang*, located in *Leuweung* (forest) *Songgom* or the *Balai Pamunjungan Mandala ParakanJati*, which is currently used as the *SindangBarang Cultural Village*. With so many of the *pamunjungan* or *kabuyutan* in Sundanese land, it proves that the religion of the majority of Sundanese people is *Jati Sunda Religion* or *Sunda Wiwitan*.

CONCLUSION

Sunda Wiwitan is a religion that has been adopted by a group of Sundanese

people hundreds of years ago. Even before Hinduism and Buddhism entered this country, the *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings already existed and developed in the community. The *Sunda Wiwitan* belief system worships the spirits of ancestors as an elevated entity. Aside from worshiping ancestors, *Sunda Wiwitan* also has a God who is often called *Sang Hyang Kersa*. In its development, several traditions of the *Sunda Wiwitan* were also influenced by several cultures. It includes first, Hindu-Buddhist culture coming from the Indian subcontinent; Second, Islamic culture coming from the Arabian Peninsula; third, Javanese culture, fourth, Western culture coming from European continent; Fifth, national culture because the Sundanese land are integrated and become part of the Republic of Indonesia and global culture. Although influenced by various outside cultures, Sundanese people have their own identity, which is inherent in Sundanese indigenous community, including in their belief system, namely *Sunda Wiwitan*.

Sunda Wiwitan is a syncretism of Islam and Hinduism practiced by the people of Cisolok of Sukabumi Regency. The religion provides *Sunda Wiwitan* followers with a view of life so that they live simply and accept what they are, only to be able to work in the fields, plant rice, peacefully and prosperously. Understanding religious teachings are directly practiced in the interaction of people with nature. *Sunda Wiwitan* religion expresses symbolic meanings in the socio-cultural relations and cosmology of Sundanese life. Their faith in Allah is seen only in the utterance of the shahada, but they practice religious rituals based on *pikukuh*, customary rules, and obedience to great-grandparents. Such faith is the spirit of keeping forests, rivers, and mountains living in harmony. Like, their actions carry out ritual worship at *Sasaka*.

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