



# Cultural Narratives: Yat R's Religious Expressions in Si Rawing on Radio Cakra Bandung

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Received: January 2025; Accepted: January 2025; Published: January 2025

**Abstract:** The emergence of religious communication through online platforms, such as YouTube, introduces new dimensions to religiosity, encompassing *religion online* and *online religion*. While *religion online* leverages digital platforms to disseminate religious messages and store information, *online religion* fosters active participation and interaction in religious practices. This dynamic became increasingly prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, when religious activities transitioned online. This study examines the aspect of *online religion* by exploring the spiritual experiences expressed by Sundanese cultural figure Kang Yayat Rukhiyat through the storytelling series *Si Rawing* on Radio Cakra Bandung's YouTube channel. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research collected data through in-depth interviews with Kang Yayat Rukhiyat and an analysis of the *Si Rawing* YouTube series. The findings reveal that Kang Yayat Rukhiyat's religious expressions in *Si Rawing* manifest across three dimensions: thought (doctrine), action (ritual), and community (group), consistent with Joachim Wach's theoretical framework. The study highlights the pivotal role of digital platforms in preserving and transmitting Sundanese religious and cultural heritage to younger generations, showcasing the synergy between tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** Joachim Wach; religious experience; Si Rawing story; Sundanese cultural figure.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of religious communication through online media has given birth to a new mode of human religion in religion. The new mode in question is the emergence of the categorization of Bergama people using online media; the dichotomy between these modes of religion is seen from the function of the media when it comes to relation to religion; let us call these two modes known as online religion (Mónika, 2021). *First*, Religion Online functions as an effective medium of religious communication. Through direct da'wah activities or the storage of religious information sources that can be accessed at any time, online media has become an important tool in spreading religion. This function allows religion to reach people all over the world as long as they are connected to the internet (Evolvi, 2021). Da'wah carried out by Ustadz Abdul Somad, Gus Baha, Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and others is now not limited to one place. Through recordings on YouTube and various other information media, their lectures can be watched by anyone, anytime and anywhere (Nasikhah, 2023).

*Second*, Online Religion shows a difference even though it is as thin as a tissue; in this context, the media does not only function as a tool of religious communication, but also becomes a space for religious communication itself. Religious activities carried out online are active and dynamic, making the media the main platform for religious interaction (Ahmad & Thorpe, 2020). The media not only functions as a tool for religious communication, but also as a space where religious communication occurs. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic a few years ago, when human activities were

severely restricted, many activities shifted to the online world. Starting from lectures, work to religious activities, everything is done online (Jogezai et al., 2021).

If examined further, actual religious practices in online media have taken place in the form of film screenings, such as the film *Azab* in Indosiar. These films not only use the media to spread the message of da'wah (online religion) but also make the media space for religious communication itself (online religion) (Rianto, 2020). The show shows the daily life of human beings like real people in real life, starting from having a family, having children, working, and even worshipping there.

Therefore, religion in the virtual space (online religion) shows a new pattern or mode of religion. People who carry out religious activities in virtual spaces are more suitable to be known as virtual people or virtual communities. This term is not new in the world of media. With the presence of a wider range of information media, a double reality has been created. Borrowing Budi Hardiman's analysis in the text of the professor's inauguration speech some time ago, Hardiman said that today's reality, in the midst of the presence of online media, has given birth to a dichotomy: reality as far as it is communicated (online reality) and the real reality that we live every day. Although online reality only exists as far as it is connected to the internet network (Budi, 2021).

The position of the media as a space for religious communication allows its users to express their various religious experiences. One interesting example is the fairy tale series *Si Rawing*. In addition to visual video shows, there are also online religious activities in the form of audio-visuals on YouTube media. For example, a Sundanese fairy tale featured on Radio Cakra's YouTube channel, titled "Si Rawing", by Sundanese cultural scholar Yasana Yat R, and broadcast by Dora Dori. In the fairy tale content, the author assumes that Yat R is trying to express his religious experience through fairy tales in the YouTube communication space. This assumption is based on the author's observation of each sequel to *Si Rawing's* life in the fairy tale, starting from childhood, adulthood, marriage, having children, to having grandchildren. Interestingly, if a common thread is drawn from *Si Rawing's* life from childhood to old age, it can be seen in the process of the human spiritual journey.

In short, the writers had the opportunity to meet Yat R, the author of the *Si Rawing* fairy tale, and conducted an interview with him. One of Yat R's key insights was that *Si Rawing* was created to reflect the background of ancient society, from the indigenous *karuhun* religion to the transition to Islam. Yat R also shared the philosophical aspects of human life, which are the result of his contemplation and life experiences, deeply influenced by his extensive readings of various religious teachings he has studied from childhood to the present day (Interview with Yat R, December 23, 2023).

The authors' starting point for conducting this research came from a deep interest in the religious experience of Sundanese cultural scholar Yat R, which is summarized in the fairy tale series *Si Rawing*. The series uses the media as a space for religious communication, presenting a perspective that has not been explored much. In addition, previous research has not explored much of the impact of media presence when intersecting with religion, especially in the context of media as a space for religious communication (online religion). Several examples of previous studies show gaps in this study, which makes this study relevant and urgent. *First*, the research entitled Religion as Media by Dwi Wahyuni (2017), talks about the integration of religion and media influencing the emergence of new religions, even the media in a certain position as a reference and support for religious people in the modern era (Wahyuni, 2017). *Second*, in the research entitled The Role of Social Media in Spreading Religious Messages and Social Change, by Juniarti and Nurwahid (2023), social media brings major changes in the spread of religion, allowing wider access and increasing engagement. However, it also has an impact on social interaction in the real world, with the potential to create a more closed society. Social media also plays an important role in influencing political views and disseminating information to the public (Iryani & Syam, 2023). *Third*, a research entitled The Value of Religious Character in Early Childhood Religious Obedience Fairy Tales by Heru Kurniawan and Umi Khomsiyatun, by Radita (2021). Discussing the value of religious character in early childhood contained in the Fairy Tale Book of Religious Obedience by Heru Kurniawan and Umi Khomsiyatun (Radita Ayu, 2021). *Fourth*, the research entitled Fairy Tales as a Media for Early Childhood Character Education, by Gunawan (2019). Discussing the role of fairy tales in the formation of early childhood characters. Through fairy tales as

a medium of character education for early childhood, children will be able to learn about the world, life, themselves, and others (Gunawan, Pranata, & Mitro, 2019).

From several previous studies, no one has specifically discussed the position of the media as a space for religious communication. Most studies only look at the media as a tool to disseminate religious content. Similarly, no study of fairy tales has specifically examined the fairy tale of *Si Rawing* and its relation to the religious experience of its author. Therefore, the author intends to examine how Yat R's religious experience is expressed in the fairy tale series *Si Rawing*. This study aims to find out the extent to which religious experiences can be effectively expressed through the *Si Rawing* fairy tale series.

## 2. Method

This research is a type of qualitative research with a case study approach. The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data (Sugiyono, 2017). Primary data is needed to obtain accurate information and obtained from field results through in-depth interviews with Kang Yat R, the Author of *Si Rawing's* Fairy Tales, in addition to the author also collects data from Youtube channels related to *Si Rawing's* fairy tales, especially Radio Cakra's Youtube Channel. Secondary data includes various research results or reports from previous research institutions journal articles from Google Scholar and Libgen online libraries, and videos from YouTube. The data collection technique used is an in-depth interview conducted in two ways, namely face-to-face interviews, and online interviews through social media (Muri Yusuf, 2014). In order to test the validity of the data, the researcher used a triangulation technique based on data sources and theories. Triangulation of data sources compares data from direct interviews with Kang Yat R as the main source and data in the *Si Rawing* fairy tale series contained on the Radio Cakra Bandung Youtube Channel. Meanwhile, the research approach uses Joachim Wach's religious theory, as well as the theory of Religion and Media. The location of the research is Jl. Vijayakusuma XIV, Pasir Endah, Ujung Berung District, Bandung City, West Java, which is the residence of Kang Yat R itself.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Religion and Media

As the development of information technology became more massive and the internet began to spread to private homes in the 1990s, scholars in the field of religion and the media began to consider the communication opportunities created by this new media (Amirudin, 2018). With the internet, the distinction between online and offline practices is increasingly blurred, and digital communication is becoming an integral part of everyday life (Bolander & Locher, 2020). For example, religious experiences such as pilgrimages and rituals are often mediated through technology. In line with that, Campbell coined the term "digital religion" to indicate the type of religious expression that occurs through digital technology but also has an impact on religious performance in physical space (Campbell & Connelly, 2020). At the heart of this approach is the idea that there is no longer a difference in how religion is represented in the media and how organizations integrate the media into their practices as the production and consumption of online religious narratives tend to converge. Religion is based on messages circulating among the people and communication systems that support a certain religious worldview (Widodo, 2021). That is why religion and the media are seen as intrinsically connected elements. In fact, in Campbell's view, throughout the history of religion has used various media to communicate its core values, including sacred texts, oral speeches, and printed books (Campbell, 2010).

In the early 2000s, Christopher Helland introduced a distinction between "online religion," which refers to religious groups that use the Internet to enhance their activities, and "online religion," which describes interactive online practices that are largely or entirely online (Helland, 2002). This distinction is important because it shows the existence of religious groups that simultaneously occupy online and offline spaces and also highlights how the Internet can create new types of practices that are intrinsically different from those that occur without the help of digital technology (Helland, 2002). However, the

theoretical approach of "digital religion." Unlike cyber-religion or online religion, digital religion means that online and offline spaces are interrelated.

In this regard, there is an interesting example of an event that occurred some time ago during the pandemic; Pope Francis, who preached in St. Peter's Square during the Covid-19 lockdown, when viewed in Campbell's eyes, can be considered an example of digital religion because it shows how offline spaces can be mediated to improve offline practices (Arasa et al., 2022). Religious believers cannot hear and see Pope Francis perform the blessing of *Urbi et Orbi* without media technology, but at the same time, the ritual is based on material space. Therefore, it shows how media technology creates new conditions for religious practice where materiality and space do not disappear but come in new forms. Because of the interconnectedness between physical and virtual actions that characterize digital religion, the terms "online" and "offline" may not always offer useful theoretical distinctions. One of the Italian philosophers, Luciano Floridi, gave his views and proposed the term "onlife" as a substitute for the online-offline dichotomy. The term onlife indicates the blurring of the boundaries between the real and the virtual, as well as the difference between humans, machines, and nature (Floridi, 2015).

In line with that, the author borrows the perspective of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, describing a spatial triad consisting of three dialectically interrelated aspects. *First*, space can be idealized, which means that it has pre-planned characteristics and is usually related to power relations (Molotch, 1993). *Second*, space is habitable, which means it can be altered by individual imagination and disruptive practices, but it is also linked to tradition and symbols (Watkins, 2005). *Third*, space can be perceived as related to spatial practices that affect the way people use a particular environment through their actions (Lefebvre, 2014). This triad shows how space has a specific purpose, but that goal can be withdrawn by imaginative and material efforts. Applied to religious contexts, these differences suggest that religious groups and individuals can negotiate spatial and imaginative practices to defend certain hegemonic and traditional spaces or create new uses for existing spaces (Flint-Ashery & Stadler, 2021). Thus, it can be understood that the relationship between religion and the media raises several tendencies. The process of codification that summarizes religion into symbols such as images, sounds, and visuals (Rizaldi, 2023).

### 3.2 Joachim Wach's Theory of Religious Experiential Expression

According to Joachim Wach, religious experience is a direct response of human beings as beings who can optimize their intellect, feelings, and spirits toward Absolute Reality (Wach, 1996). This is a key aspect that is truly universal. This is reflected in the actualized thoughts, behaviors, and social experiences of religious experience, emphasizing more ontological aspects than epistemological aspects (Villegas, 2020). Ontology is not always shaped by epistemology, but epistemology is often born from the womb of ontology itself. In this case, Joachim Wach's thinking is influenced by theological-dogmatic and phenomenological groups (Royyani & Kumalasari, 2020).

Meanwhile, according to Clifford Geertz, religion is a system of symbols that create a strong, pervasive, and long-lasting mood and motivation in humans (Effendi, 2020). This is done by creating a concept of general order and life and enveloping the concept in a way of factuality so that it seems as if the mood and motivation are real (Geertz, 2022). Meanwhile, symbols in religion, according to Geertz, can be in physical form, for example domes in Islam, crucifixes in Christianity, statues in Buddhism, and the like, or they can also be in the form of actions, such as the way of speaking, walking, and so on, or in the form of certain events, such as the *isra' mi'raj* of the prophet Muhammad, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the Buddha's journey (Elfimov, 1992). This symbol plays a role in conveying messages to humans, in addition to influencing and shaping human behavior, tendencies, habits, tendencies, worldviews, and religious ethos; in short, symbols create meaning for humans (Geertz, 2022).

Going back to Joachim Wach, religious experience can be expressed in several ways. *First*, religious (theoretical) thought includes cosmology, logocentrism, theology, and anthropology that are mythical or doctrinal. *Second*, Action (practical), shaping cultural behavior, rituals, and cults. *Third*, Alliance

(sociological), forming groups, both ethnic, racial, religious, and ethnic groups from simple to complex groups (Wach, 1996).

Joachim Wach also thoroughly discusses the two main things that underlie religious experience, the description of the history of religion or sect in religious thought, and the exploration of one's personal and collective experience (Wach, 1996). From these two things, it is known that religious experience cannot be separated from experience in general. Wach sets several criteria to identify systematic experiences, namely: experiences of absolute reality, experiences that involve individuals in mind and will, experiences that overcome the experiences of others, as well as experiences that are expressed in actions and become the main motivation for actions (Villegas, 2020). Understanding these various aspects, it can be interpreted that religious experience is the relationship between the human mind and his mind towards God, which then leads to the implementation of religious teachings such as religious practices (Wach, 1996). Some views in religious experience. *First* is religious thinking, which is a form of understanding the problems experienced by individuals by expressing the religious side that they know. A person will use prayer or religiosity in interpreting the problem that is happening. This religious thought is expressed doctrinally, which has three different functions, such as, affirmation, explanation, and relationship with one's knowledge and faith. Doctrine is only meaningful for those who "believe" and are not outside the faith (Wach, 1996). *Second*, Religious experience in the aspect of action is the result of understanding thoughts about God, man, and nature. Religious experiences are explored through the practice of *amaliyah*. According to Van Der Leeuw and Wiil, experience in worship is when humans seem to make themselves whole, face absolute reality and consider themselves (Anderson, 2020). *Third*, practice in the form of fellowship, defined as group experience through religious actions, where one group has a good relationship with another with high solidarity (Wach, 1996).

According to Hocking, homo religion forms a group in which the community is an ongoing experimental verification effort about the truth or how to state it in reality (Royyani & Kumalasari, 2020). Religious communities are more than just a form of communion, they present themselves as a microcosm that has its own laws, outlook on life, attitudes, and atmosphere. In modern Western society, there is an awareness of the nature of religion in religious communities within primitive cult groups. However, historical developments have degraded community life and weakened religious feelings (Mohan, 2020). The expression of these three religious experiences is the dominant point in Joachim Wach's view of religious experience. Joachim Wach interprets religion as a phenomenon that includes the spiritual dimension and the experience of the individual. As a Protestant theological scholar from Germany, he broadened his view of religion as a personal and social experience. For him, religion is not only manifested in doctrine or rituals but also through spiritual experiences experienced both individually and in the context of the community (Wach, 1996).

### 3.3 The Si Rawing Storytelling Series

*Si Rawing* is a legendary Sundanese storytelling series created by Kang Yat R, which gained immense popularity in the 1980s when it was narrated by the iconic broadcaster Wa Kepoh. In recent years, Kang Yat R has revived this beloved series, maintaining its original setting while introducing a more intricate storyline. The narration is now handled by Dora Dori, a prominent broadcaster whose delivery rivals that of Wa Kepoh. Unlike its earlier version, the modern *Si Rawing* adapts to the times by expanding its reach beyond radio broadcasts to YouTube via Radio Cakra Bandung's channel, offering a nostalgic experience for the 1980s and 1990s generation while captivating a broader audience.

The story revolves around a young man named Darma, living in the village of Jati Sari, Sumedang. Set against the backdrop of post-conflict traditional society, the tale begins with Darma's life alongside his father, Wikarta, the leader (*pupuhu*) of the *Cula Badak Putih* martial arts school, and his mother, Ningsih, a beautiful woman Wikarta married after completing his martial arts training under Mbah Wigena in Cianjur.

The plot unfolds as the villagers of Jati Sari gather to address a growing threat—a series of robberies by a gang known as the *Karaman Macan Liar*, led by a formidable warrior, Mbah Bewok. Coincidentally,

Mbah Bewok and Wikarta were once fellow disciples under Mbah Wigena but became rivals after clashing over their love for Ningsih, who eventually became Darma's mother. During the meeting, Wikarta and his *Cula Badak* disciples are tasked with defending the village from an impending raid by the gang.

That night, the gang attacks Jati Sari, and a fierce battle ensues. Wikarta confronts Mbah Bewok but is tragically overpowered and killed. Meanwhile, Ningsih resists two of Bewok's men who attempt to abduct her but are ultimately captured. Young Darma valiantly tries to save his mother but is brutally injured when his ear is slashed, leaving it torn apart (*rawing* in Sundanese). This traumatic event marks the beginning of Darma's transformation into *Si Rawing*. After his mother is taken away and his father dies, Darma is left an orphan under the care of Wikarta's eldest disciple, Marlan. As time passes, Darma, now known as *Si Rawing* due to his disfigured ear, grows determined to avenge his father's death. Marlan decides to take him to Cianjur to train under Mbah Wigena. However, upon arriving, they discover Mbah Wigena is not there. On their return journey, they encounter Ki Debleng, Mbah Wigena's elder brother, a quirky yet powerful martial artist. Ki Debleng takes Darma as his disciple and teaches him *Ulin Karuhunan*, an ancient Sundanese martial art. Armed with this knowledge, *Si Rawing* embarks on a journey to become an unparalleled warrior and ultimately avenges his father by defeating Mbah Bewok.

The *Si Rawing* series spans several arcs, each comprising over 400 episodes. The first arc, *Si Rawing Pilih Tanding (The Unmatched Si Rawing)*, chronicles Darma's childhood, the loss of his parents, his training under Ki Debleng, and his relentless pursuit of vengeance against Mbah Bewok. Along the way, *Si Rawing* encounters other legendary figures, such as *Si Jari Sakti* and *Si Banteng Wulung*, who add depth and color to his life journey. With its rich storytelling, cultural heritage, and timeless themes of resilience and justice, the *Si Rawing* series continues to resonate with audiences, bridging generations through traditional and modern platforms (Cakra, 2018a).

Figure 1. Announcer reciting *Si Rawing* at Radio Cakra office



(Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

The second chapter of the story, "*Si Rawing Jago Tanding*" (*Si Rawing the Unbeatable Warrior*), portrays *Si Rawing* as the target of a bounty hunt organized by the descendants of Si Bewok, who seek to capture and kill him. During his journey, *Si Rawing* encounters Saraswati, the daughter of Ki Nurbala, who leads the Macan Kumbang martial arts school. However, his path is fraught with challenges, including a confrontation with a mystical monkey demon, Jembawan Si Wanara Sakti, a being of extraordinary power.

Jembawan kidnaps Saraswati and attempts to force her into marriage. *Si Rawing* bravely engages Jembawan in combat but finds that his inherited martial arts skills, known as *Ulin Karuhunan*, are no match for the demon's immense strength. The battle ends tragically, with *Si Rawing* falling into a deep ravine. Miraculously, he is saved by a supernatural being who takes him to a mysterious cave called Sumur Goa Legok Panamping (Cakra, 2018a). This cave is a sacred place where great warriors of the past, including Eyang Jati Nur Alam, once meditated and perfected their skills. Eyang Jati Nur Alam, the creator of the legendary Ilmu Pancatunggal (The Fivefold Knowledge), had retreated from the martial arts world and inscribed his teachings onto the cave walls. Through a dream, *Si Rawing* learns this powerful knowledge, which is rooted in the harmony of the four natural elements: air, fire, water, and earth. These elements culminate in a final ultimate technique known as *Pancer Manunggaling Alam*—the unity of the natural elements. Armed with the Ilmu Pancatunggal, *Si Rawing* transforms into an invincible warrior. He defeats Jembawan Si Wanara Sakti, rescues Saraswati, and eventually



marries her. The climax of the story pits *Si Rawing* against Ki Buyut Ireng, a legendary warrior reputed to be hundreds of years old and undefeated. Ki Buyut Ireng is said to have lived during the same era as Eyang Jati Nur Alam. Despite sustaining severe injuries, *Si Rawing* ultimately triumphs over Ki Buyut Ireng, solidifying his place as an unparalleled hero in the martial arts world (Cakra, 2018).

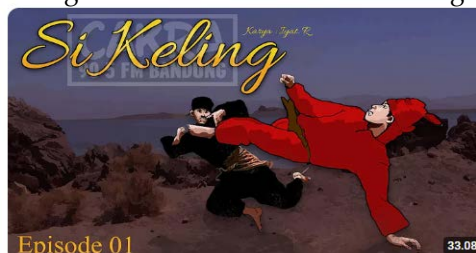
Figure 2. Announcer read the story text



Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

In this section, the focus shifts to Si Keling, the child of *Si Rawing* and Saraswati. Si Keling is kidnapped by Ki Buyut Ireng's men and is raised with the belief that *Si Rawing* is responsible for the death of his mother, Kartika. This false narrative is instilled in *Si Keling* by Ki Buyut Ireng, who manipulates the child's emotions to fuel a desire for revenge against *Si Rawing* (Cakra, 2019).

Figure 3. Visualization of Si Rawing



(Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

In the fourth part, "*Si Keling Jaka Singling*," *Si Rawing* faces deep inner turmoil. He has just fought his son, Si Keling, and accidentally caused him to fall into a deep river, uncertain of his survival. Consumed by guilt and despair, *Si Rawing* falls into a state of depression, questioning the worth of his martial knowledge, especially since it had led him to harm his own flesh and blood. In his moment of crisis, *Si Rawing* retreats to the *Goa Legok Panamping Well*, hoping to meditate and fuse his knowledge. He feels that his abilities have become useless, even dangerous, as they have driven him to such an irreversible act. It is only after the fall that *Si Rawing* learns the true identity of Si Keling as the son he had been searching for all along. Despite his initial belief that his knowledge could not be reconciled, he is not alone in this struggle. Eyang Jati Nur Alam intervenes, helping him realize that his quest for inner harmony and wisdom is far from over (Cakra, 2020).

Figure 4. Visualization of Si Rawing during the Introduction



(Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

This chapter narrates *Si Rawing's* journey to find Si Keling, who has now transformed and taken on a new identity as Jaka Sinangling. His physical appearance has also changed, with his formerly dark complexion (keeling) returning to a normal tone. Jaka Sinangling is tasked by Rama Pamungkas, a prominent figure who played a significant role in reshaping Si Keling's character for the better. Under Rama Pamungkas's guidance, Jaka Sinangling becomes a skilled healer and seer, accompanied by Hyang Roban, the king of the jinn from the Roban stronghold previously conquered by *Si Rawing*. Hyang Roban had sworn loyalty to *Si Rawing's* descendants (Cakra, 2021). In this chapter, *Si Rawing* seeks Jaka Sinangling's help to locate his son, Si Keling. Jaka Sinangling predicts that one day, Si Keling will return to reunite with his family. The episode concludes with *Si Rawing* engaging in another intense battle with Ki Buyut Ireng, ultimately defeating him. In addition, *Si Rawing* faces off against Danur Wenda Satria Langitan, a warrior with the mystical power of "Mountain Cracks." The story reaches its climax and concludes at the end of this episode (Cakra, 2021).

Figure 5. Visualization of Si Rawing with his counterparts



(Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

In this chapter, *Si Rawing* meets Si Keeling, now grown and known as Jaka Sinangling. *Si Rawing* also has a grandson named Nang Bule, who will eventually inherit his character and strength, embodying the same traits as *Si Rawing* (Cakra, 2022). During this phase, *Si Rawing* encounters Rama Pamungkas and learns that Rama Pamungkas represents a higher version of Eyang Jati Nur Alam. From Rama, *Si Rawing* is guided to reach the highest level of the Five Pillars of Science. This advanced stage is not merely about *Pancer Manunggaling Alam* (the unity of nature's elements) but is known as *Pancer Manunggal Daya Ciptaning Alam*—the pinnacle of human existence. It is a state where one realizes the impermanence of life and understands that humans must practice reciprocal relationships, embracing love even for those who are hostile or hateful (Admin, 2022).

In this part of the story, *Si Rawing* is tasked with withdrawing from the martial arts world and hiding far from the public eye to focus on passing on his legacy to his children. He chooses to retreat to a secluded wilderness called Babakan Paningtriman. However, a challenge arises from a warrior from Java who demands a fight, holding *Si Rawing's* children hostage. Despite his wish for peace, *Si Rawing* faces the challenge and ultimately defeats the warrior, Mbah Jugul Menggung. In the aftermath, *Si Rawing* suffers severe injuries, which bring him to meet Suri and reconnect with his parents, Eyang Jati Nur Alam (Cakra, 2022).

Finally, *Si Rawing* meets Rama Pamungkas again and asks for his guidance in passing his legacy on to his grandson, Nang Bule. However, Rama Pamungkas explains that the complete transfer of traits (*nitis*) cannot be achieved by humans. Instead, only *manitis*—a partial inheritance of traits or character—can occur (Cakra, 2022). *Si Rawing* is then instructed to return to his body, as his time in the realm of authority is not yet complete. When he does return, he is infused with a new strength, as subtle as a tissue, embodied in the ultimate technique called *Pancer Manunggal Daya Ciptaning Alam*. *Si Rawing* continues his spiritual practice in Babakan Paningtriman, now with his wife, Saraswati (Cakra, 2022).



Figure 6. Visualization of Si Rawing during the incarnation



(Source: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

In this section, the story follows *Si Rawing's* complete withdrawal from the world of martial arts, entrusting the responsibility to his children and successors (Cakra, 2023). The central character of this episode is Nang Bule, the son of Jaka Sinangling and Ayu Manganti. Nang Bule becomes a target for both the black and white factions, who are eager to claim him as their champion due to his extraordinary strength and potential to dominate the future world of martial arts.

At just four years old, Nang Bule falls into the hands of the white faction's master, Eyang Buana Putih, who begins training him in the sacred *Tirta Bagswara* martial arts. He is trained alongside his mother, Ayu Manganti. Meanwhile, his father, Jaka Sinangling, has taken on the role of a *Wanara* (monkey warrior) and changed his name to Jaka Wanara. This transformation is due to his inheritance of the *Wanara Orange* martial arts from Mbah Wanara Seta, which he intends to use to seek vengeance against Ki Warangkas, a notorious figure from the evil faction (Cakra, 2023).

Figure 7. Visualization of the grandchild of Si Rawing



(Sumber: Youtube Radio Cakra, 09/06/2024)

This brief story from the *Si Rawing* series illustrates Kang Yat R's portrayal of *Si Rawing's* journey, filled with struggles and life's twists and turns. From the loss of his family, *Si Rawing* has now taken on the spiritual task of *Rama Pamungkas* to attain a state called "*Wening Panggalih*." In the next section, the author will explore how *Si Rawing's* story serves as a representation of Kang Yat R's own spiritual experiences as a Sundanese cultural scholar who has undergone a long journey from the 1970s to the present day.

### 3.4 The Rawing as an Expression of Religious Experience

This section presents the research findings from an interview with Yat R. conducted on December 23, 2023. The interview aimed to explore the messages conveyed in the *Si Rawing* fairy tale series and to confirm the author's assumption that *Si Rawing* reflects Yat R's religious experience, as discussed earlier. Religious expression refers to how individuals respond to and interpret their religious experiences. Since each person has a unique perspective, religious expression is inherently subjective (Wach, 1996). An authentic religious experience will result in a corresponding authentic expression. For instance, if someone deeply understands a religious doctrine, their expression will align with that understanding (Hödl, 2023).

In the case of Yat R, his religious experience is expressed through his literary works, particularly the *Si Rawing* fairy tale. This work is a philosophical product of his reflections and life experiences, as well as insights drawn from various books on science, religion, and culture. As Yat R shared:

In the past, when writing *Si Rawing*, the main inspiration came from conversations with friends in Sumedang. I once met a child whose ears were deformed, which in Sundanese is called 'rawing,' and from there, the name of the character was born. Additionally, I've been reading books since I was young—everything from romance, philosophy, to religious texts. So, I just poured out what was in my mind. During my ten years as a storyteller, I always told stories without a script, only based on themes. When writing *Si Rawing*, I wanted to convey that in the old days, before there were police like now, people survived crime by studying martial arts. The martial arts I'm referring to are ancient martial arts (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

Additionally, Yat R shared that in the past, people had their own beliefs about understanding the universe, seeing it as a series of signs that could be interpreted. They lived according to the meaning they believed in. Yat R also touched on the issue of *karuhun* (ancestors) worship, explaining that when ancient people worshiped a tree, they were not worshiping the tree itself but rather venerating the force behind the tree or the transcendence it symbolized. In this context, the tree represents God's power in creating nature and all its beauty.

When the ancients worshiped trees, it wasn't the tree itself they worshiped, but the essence behind it. Essentially, both humans and trees are alive, but while trees live in silence (*cicing*), humans live with awareness (*eling*). So, it doesn't mean the ancients worshiped the spirit of *karuhun*, but they recognized that their existence in this world came through their parents, who descended from their grandparents, great-grandparents, and all the way back to Adam. That's why they often respected their *karuhun* as a form of gratitude (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

Yat R's perspective on the ancient tradition of respecting ancestors by making offerings to trees, or similar practices, may resemble the religious traditions of primitive peoples, often categorized as animism-dynamism (Hermanto et al., 2022). However, when asked about this, Yat R clarified that it is not animism or anything of the sort, but rather a gesture of gratitude for life in this world and a thankfulness to the ancestors who nurtured and gave them life. Yat R expressed religious experiences can be conveyed through fairy tales, reflecting his thoughts on how people in the past understood the world and nature in greater detail, with an awareness of the characteristics of each time, day, month, and even year. This is evident in the *Buhun Ulin Karuhunan Silat Technique*, which *Si Rawing* inherited from his teacher, Ki Debleng. The technique consists of seven moves, each corresponding to the seven days of the week.

The *Silat Ulin Karuhunan* science of Ki Debleng consists of seven moves, each representing a day of the week. These techniques are combined with insights from books on *Silat*, philosophy, spirituality, Islam, and other religious teachings. In the teachings of *Buhun*, each day has its own symbol and character. Sunday symbolizes mega (clouds), so the technique is called *mega mlang*. Monday symbolizes flowers, represented by a move known as a flower of flowers, resembling the movement of a person dancing the *tayuban*, *leuleus liat*. Tuesday symbolizes fire, and the move is called *geni pamatri*, a hand punch filled with heat. Wednesday symbolizes a leaf, and the move is *paniruk* leaf, using the power of a hand shot shaped like a flower. Thursday symbolizes wind, with the technique *bayu pangparalyz*, prioritizing speed and the science of lightening the body. Friday symbolizes water, with the move *banyu pangluluh*, slow but sure, reflecting the character of water. Saturday symbolizes earth, with the move *earth nail*, embodying the stable, grounded nature of the earth, like the letter *alif* in the Quran, representing a scene without a partner (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

What Yat R shared highlights his deep understanding of the symbols in ancient Sundanese culture, which is showcased in *Si Rawing*. This reflects his effort to preserve a culture that is fading and losing its appeal to younger generations. Yat R emphasized that the core message of *Si Rawing* should focus on nationalism and humanity, which align with the values of all religions. "Every religion teaches goodness and humanity, including Islam, which has been embraced by the Sundanese people. Islam spread peace, not violence, and therefore violence in the name of religion is not allowed" (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023). This perspective aligns with Islamic teachings, which emphasize compassion and mutual respect for believers of different religions (Aisyah, 2023).

In addition, Yat R also emphasized that the relationship between humans and God is closer than the veins in our bodies. Everything in this world, in fact, originates from God and is surrounded by God's presence.

Life, the living, and existence itself are all enveloped by God and are sustained by His love, through the love of nature. All of them live by God's will. Humans are fundamentally from one origin, with one purpose and one provision to live life. Although religion is a matter of individual choice, the essence remains the same. When a person feels the most noble of beings, their actions must align with their true nature, their breath, and their deeds. If humans wish to return to their origin, which is God, they must do good, because they come into this world without request, and death is inevitable. (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

What Yat R shares here is compelling—he speaks of the origin of humans from God and the inevitable return to God. Therefore, to return to God, humans must live by moral values during their time on earth, as God will not accept sinful beings and will reward them according to their deeds (Zayyan, 2023). Simply put, one cannot claim to be good without performing good deeds, and one cannot claim righteousness without embodying it. The human presence in the world is a given, and birth is never ordered; when the time comes, death is inevitable, and we must return to God. This aligns with Heidegger's view of being "thrown" into existence: humans are cast into the world without having asked to be born (Hardiman, 2016). Yat R's perspective on human existence suggests that, despite being thrown into life, we are endowed with the ability to think and be aware of our presence.

*Second*, the expression of religious experience in the form of deeds—such as how to worship, interact with others, and treat nature—manifests in acts of worship and rituals that promote harmony among humans in the world. According to Kang Yat R, individuals who understand their existence in the world will consistently engage in the worship of Allah and support one another. This is reflected in the *Si Rawing* Series, where the character *Si Rawing*, created by Kang Yat R, embodies the values of helping others selflessly without expecting anything in return. This belief is rooted in the idea that humans are tasked with caring for one another and fostering harmony (Cakra, 2018b).

The actions of the past, or the deeds of human beings, are certainly influenced by their understanding of God's verses in the Holy Book, particularly the Quran. For instance, why can the guardians fly simply by saying bismillah? It's because they are mature and consistent in practicing what they read and understand. They act not out of lust, but based on their comprehension and faith (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

For Yat R, reaching this level of understanding is both easy and difficult. It is easy because humans already possess the tools within themselves, but difficult to practice because people often become trapped by their lustful desires and anger. This is also reflected in *Si Rawing*, where the character seeks to reach a state of mental clarity (*wening panggalih*) by isolating himself to purify his soul (Cakra, 2023). Practicing *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, loving fellow humans, and even loving one's enemies is challenging. Kang Yat R emphasizes that even though Prophet Muhammad exemplified this through his response to being wronged by disbelievers—praying for their guidance instead of seeking

revenge—it highlights the righteousness that the Prophet Muhammad embodied and which his followers should strive to emulate (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023). Additionally, according to Kang Yat R, miracles do not arise from fasting or spiritual deprivation but from consistency in doing good. This explains why the ancestors (*karuhun*) are said to possess extraordinary strength—they are steadfast in their beliefs and their acts of kindness toward others (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

When a person does evil, they lose their humanity and will be rewarded according to their deeds. All of this is a manifestation of God's love. In Sundanese, this is known as compassion, while in Islam, it is referred to as *rohman* and *rohim*. It all comes down to how we treat fellow human beings. That's why, when the *kyai* (Islamic scholars) reach the level of guardianship, they do not discriminate against others, as Gus Dur did in Indonesia (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

An interesting point raised here is that the concept of love in Islamic teachings aligns with the values taught by the Sundanese people in the past, which helps explain why Islam has flourished in the land of the Sundanese. Kang Yat R also emphasized that human deeds are directly proportional to the rewards one will receive on the Day of Judgment. Evil deeds or actions that stray from righteousness lead to misfortune. This suggests that humans often struggle to live in accordance with their beliefs and actions. However, if people can practice what they read and understand, they will act based on their spiritual values, regardless of religious background, as Gus Dur exemplified (Soebarna, 2021). These universal human values were also passed down to *Si Rawing* by Eyang Jati Nur Alam. According to Kang Yat R, human values transcend religious boundaries (Interview with Kang Yat R, 23/12/2023). "When people reach the level of *ma'rifat*, their worship differs from that of ordinary people. *Ma'rifat* is not found in the holy book, but in the Oneness of Allah. The book serves only as a guide" (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

In the *Si Rawing* series, when *Si Rawing* reaches the level of *ma'rifat*, he follows Rama Pamungkas, who has mastered himself and lives according to his beliefs and words. This signifies that *Si Rawing* has attained the level of *mening panggali* (enlightenment). Rama Pamungkas acts as a *musyid* (spiritual guide) for *Si Rawing*, helping him achieve a high spiritual state and reach the ultimate goal of *manunggaling* (the union) of natural creativity.

*Third*, Expression in the Form of Fellowship (Group, People), Religious experience can also be expressed through togetherness in a community or religious group. For Kang Yat R, the fellowship he refers to is a membership in a Sundanese cultural association called Sunda Kiwari. This association consists of cultural activists who share a common interest in Sundanese or West Javanese culture (Interview with Kang Yat R, 23/12/2023). Yat R reflected on his past involvement, stating: "Yes, in the past, I was indeed active in the Sunda Kiwari Cultural Association, although now, due to my old age, I am rarely active. Recently, I was invited to perform *Si Rawing* by the Chakra radio, but I couldn't attend because of the distance and my physical condition. I've just recovered after being ill for two years, and I thank God for my recovery" (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

In this context, Kang Yat R's expression of religious experience through community or fellowship reflects his longstanding participation in cultural and spiritual groups. Despite his reduced activity due to age and health, his involvement in such groups has been a constant, indicating the ongoing role of community in his religious and cultural life. Additionally, the *Si Rawing* story is also connected to the *kapupuhuan* system or the leadership role of the village head in the modern context. As Yat R explained: "In the past, after the kingdom collapsed, the person in charge was the *Pupuhu*, because during the transitional period, even if there was a regent, it was controlled by the colonizers. This gave rise to a new social order, one that produced warriors. *Si Rawing* was part of that new order, acting as an advisor to the *Pupuhu* held by his wife, *Saraswati*" (Interview with Yat R, 23/12/2023).

This system served as a space for deliberation, where community members would come together to make important decisions. Religious groups often form because they provide a means of validation

and help develop a sustainable religious experience. These groups are instrumental in discerning truth and expressing religious experience in a tangible way (Wach, 1996).

From the findings of this research, it is clear that Joachim Wach's framework on religious experience, which emphasizes three main dimensions—thought, action, and community (Wach, 1958)—can be applied to Yat R and his work *Si Rawing*. These three dimensions are evident in the integration of spirituality, culture, and human values within his storytelling.

In the dimension of thought, Yat R expresses religious values through Sundanese cultural symbols that are full of meaning. For example, the tradition of worshipping a tree that is often misunderstood as animism is actually a tribute to God the Creator. This perspective shows how local spirituality can be connected to the universal concept of transcendence (Hapidzin et al., 2024). In addition, the symbolic relationships in the Fairy Tale of *Si Rawing*, such as the martial arts moves associated with the days of the week, illustrate a philosophical yet simple outlook on life. This work is a bridge between well-integrated understanding of religion, philosophy, and culture.

The dimension of action can be seen through the character of *Si Rawing*, the main character who is a symbol of the ideal human being. *Si Rawing* is described as someone who always helps others selflessly, reflecting the human values taught in religion (Jb, 2017). Through spiritual processes such as self-seclusion for the purification of the soul, Kang Yat R shows the importance of concrete actions as a manifestation of religious experience. For Kang Yat R, good deeds are a form of worship that is not only personal, but also contributes to social harmony.

The community dimension is also very evident in Kang Yat R's work, which highlights the importance of social relationships and compassion (compassion) as the core of togetherness (Hernawan & Kusdiana, 2020). He raised traditional Sundanese values such as respect for ancestors (*karuhun*) which is translated as an expression of gratitude to God. This tradition, although rooted in the local culture, has a universal spiritual meaning and strengthens the relationship between community members. This work shows that culture and religion can go hand in hand to build deep social harmony.

Thus, it can be said that the expression of Kang Yat R's religious experience contained in the *Si Rawing* fairy tale series is more dominant in his mind, this can be seen from the ideas conveyed by Kang Yat R regarding his understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and God. In other words, *Si Rawing* is actually an avatar for Kang Yat R in expressing his religious experience through Youtube media, because in the online space the expression of religious experience becomes unlimited, even though his age is old, his religious experience can still be widely expressed through Youtube media. Therefore, what Kang Yat R did with *Si Rawing* is a form of Online Religion from the perspective of Cristopher Hellend (Siuda, 2021). Where, Youtube is not only an information medium, but also a space of expression for Kang Yat R through the avatar *Si Rawing*. Kang Yat R in the avatar *Si Rawing* is a concrete manifestation of the concept of a virtual society, which carries out religious activities in a virtual space.

#### 4 Conclusion

The fairy tale of *Si Rawing* is an expression of the religious experience of Sundanese cultural scholar (Yat R), which is manifested through his thoughts on the philosophy of human life that is correlated with his fellow man, the world, and God. As Jochim Wah said, religious experience can be expressed with thoughts that manifest in certain doctrines or teachings. In this position, Kang Yat R chose to express his thoughts through a storyline that presents a fictional character as an imaginative body in conveying thoughts from his religious experience. Then the *Rawing* is also given the task of spreading goodness and eradicating evil, as a behavior that is part of the expression of his religious experience as a servant of God. In the association, *Rawing* is also involved in a community together to eradicate crime that is increasingly rampant.

Interestingly, in the midst of the increasingly massive development of information technology, along with the depletion of human attention related to the themes of religiosity, Yat R appeared to present this theme by following the pattern of Zama's development using social media (Youtube) to convey his religious experience, with distinctive packaging and still not many of his predecessors. Of

course, the pattern carried out by Kang Yat R can be an example that the presence of technology will not interfere with human expression on the condition of being able to think creatively and continue to innovate in it.

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