



New Religious Movement: Conservation of Cultural Belief Teachings in Lembang District, West Bandung Regency

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Received: July 2025; Accepted: July 2025; Published: November 2025

Abstract: This study explores the persistence of Budi Daya Faith as a form of New Religious Movement (NRM) in Lembang Subdistrict, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation over two years, the research examines how followers of Budi Daya maintain a coherent spiritual system across five dimensions of religiosity: belief in Hyang Tunggal as the Supreme Divine, symbolic ritual practices, oral transmission of sacred knowledge, personal spiritual experience, and ethical consequences in daily life. Despite facing marginalization and state regulatory limitations, the community survives by adapting its doctrine, preserving cultural expressions, and cultivating harmony with nature and society. This study concludes that Budi Daya Faith is not merely an ancestral tradition but a legitimate form of religious identity. It offers valuable insights into religious pluralism, the dynamics of indigenous belief systems, and the urgency of recognizing spiritual expressions outside of state-defined religions.

Keywords: ancestral religion; cultural resilience; Ethnography; Hyang Tunggal; indigenous belief.

1. Introduction

New religious movements or *New Religious Movements*, is a growing phenomenon in religious studies, especially in Indonesia, which is known for its diversity of beliefs and spiritual practices (Bhatt, 2023). In this context, new religious movements refer to the emergence of religious sects that are not tied to established religious traditions, but rather offer new interpretations and spiritual practices.

Religions were born throughout time and in various places. However, many of the religions that emerged were not recorded by historians. New religions emerged and developed sometimes as a new understanding or as a result of a syncretic approach to various other religions (Warraich, 2023). However, it is not uncommon in many cases, the doctrines and practices of the new religion are very different from the religion *mainstream*. The exclusivism of the customs carried out in the worship of several new religions raises suspicion from a wider social environment (Pratiwi & Suniadewi, 2024). So that most of them are hampered from developing or even banned, even though their existence has been approved by the Constitutional Court (MK) decision in November 2017 regarding the inclusion of Beliefs in the religion column on KTP (Samhudi, 2022).

The ruling sparked considerable debate and criticism, particularly regarding the criteria for determining which religions can be classified as indigenous to the archipelago. The challenge lies in the diverse fabric of beliefs that have evolved over centuries, making it difficult to draw a line between what is considered indigenous and what is considered foreign (Johansson, 2024). The Constitutional Court ruling aimed to clarify the status of different religions within the legal framework, but inadvertently highlighted the challenges of categorization in a country as diverse as Indonesia (Armia, 2023). Critics argue that such classifications can lead to the marginalization of certain belief systems and can undermine the cultural heritage that defines Indonesian identity (N. H. Susanto &

Basid, 2024). The ongoing dialogue around this issue reflects broader questions about nationalism, cultural preservation, and the role of religion in a pluralistic society.

On May 5, 2017, a site made a news story titled: Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court: Why are foreign religions recognized, but not ancestral religions?. Answer from the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court: We all know that the six beliefs or religions come from abroad, while the ancestral religions that are genuine and native to Indonesia, why are they not recognized? (Detik News, 2007). Constitutional Justice Maria Farida stated at that time: Because in reality, this belief system does exist and it existed before mainstream religions came, so we must also see that reality exists.

This is proven by data from the Directorate of Belief in God Almighty and Tradition, Ministry of Education and Culture, recorded that there are 187 Beliefs with an estimated 12 million adherents. The list of names of the Beliefs are: Paguyuban Rebo Wage, Paguyuban Keluarga Besar Keris Mataram, Humanitarian Association, Pran-Soeh, Indonesian Theosophy Association, Sumarah, Sapto Dharmo, Sukma Sejati, Kejawen, Sunda Wiwitan, Djawa-Sunda Religion, Trimurti Majapahit, Kebatinan Perjalanan, Budi Daya Belief, Pangestu, Parmalim, Kaharingan, Merapu and so on.

According to Makin, the phenomenon of NRM or folk religion emerged when the role of the Christian church declined in Europe since the twentieth century, this coincided with the rampant process of secularization and rationalization of NRM. NRM (which is an alternative spiritual path that is different from the path offered by the church in general) has succeeded in fulfilling the spiritual thirst of certain people since the 1960s to 1970s. Unlike Possamai, NRM is an unstructured religion embraced by marginal groups in contrast to institutionalized, established, and official religions that already have mature dogmas and theologies. NRM adherents are usually embraced by lower-class groups who are used to voice protests against the official religion embraced by the upper-class groups. For example, in America the emergence of folk religion was embraced by the working class and the marginalized in Latin American Society (Makin, 2019).

Similarly in Indonesia, folk religions founded by Indonesian prophets show signs of syncretism with the creativity of accommodating various revelations, rituals, and prayers from many religious traditions (Huda, 2022). This means that folk religions/NRMs can also become official institutionalized religions, because just like in religions *mainstream* who always use the ways of citizenship to attract the sympathy of the community.

This is in line with the statement of the leader of the sect Dutch Indian Theosophical Society (NITV) during the Dutch East Indies era (called the Indonesian Theosophical Citizens Association) in 1912, D. Van Hinloopen Labberton had the following mission: Human progress with or without religion? I think if religion is without reason, and if religion is not with true religious knowledge, it is impossible to progress inwardly. It does not matter what religion one adheres to, because what is called religion is: love for others, easy to help, and politeness. So, true religion is not a matter of appearance, but a matter of the heart. This belief system was founded in 1875, then changed to Perwathin (Indonesian Theosophical Citizens Association) in 1963. The motto of this system according to its leader, HP Blavatsky is There is no religion/faith higher than truth (Husaini, 2018).

Indonesia in the post-independence era of Sukarno (1901-1970) and Suharto, religion was defined by the state with an interest in maintaining the stability and harmony of society or the nation, but sacrificing the practice and values of diversity and plurality (Van Engelenhoven, 2021). Meanwhile, the government in the reform era recognized only six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In fact, the number of NRMs in the country continues to increase significantly (Fárek & Boháč, 2023).

In 1950, there were 78 sects recorded. In 1964, the number jumped to more than 300 sects. Between 1964 and 1971, due to the increasing number, the government strictly prohibited the sects that emerged, in 1971 the government disbanded around 167 sects (Machmudi, 2021). In 1972, the Secretariat of Cooperation in Belief in God Almighty (SKK) recorded approximately 644 sects of Belief: 257 in Central Java, 83 in West Java, 55 in East Java, 83 in West Sumatra, 70 in Yogyakarta, 26 in Eastern Indonesia, and around 112 recorded elsewhere (Subagya, 1981). However, in 1984 Pakem (Supervision of Community Belief Sects) only recognized 353 sects of belief. In the 2000s, it was

estimated that there were 8 million followers of this sect throughout Indonesia (Makin, 2019).

The activities of people's religion/NRM were finally restricted by the government in 1954 with the establishment of PAKEM (Pengawasan Aliran Belief Masyarakat). In 1960, PAKEM became even stronger in its legitimacy, because it was under the Attorney General's Office (Kejagung), so that with its authority this institution could directly ban or prohibit certain sects. Worse still, the government issued a blasphemy law in 1965 PNPS 1, according to which anyone who stated that they opposed or insulted the official religion practiced by the Indonesian people could be imprisoned for 2 to 5 years. In this year, followers of the sect finally had to convert to the official religion, otherwise they would be considered PKI groups.

This was then reinforced by the definition of religion issued by the Ministry of Religion in 1953, that: Religion must be founded by a prophet or messenger (apostle) who has a holy book and offers universal teachings that are adhered to by people in more than one country in the world (Bahey, 2023). This definition reflects the dominance of Semitic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) especially with the influence of Islamic teachings that have always been maintained and preserved throughout post-colonial Indonesian history. On the other hand, local religious traditions were forced to adapt to this government policy. The Kaharingan religious tradition in Kalimantan was modified under the umbrella of Hinduism; The Javanese-Sundanese Mysticism in Kuningan, West Java was modified under the umbrella of Catholic Christianity; The Journey and Budi Daya Mysticism in Bandung, West Java under the umbrella of Hinduism and Islam; The Pran-Soeh and Parmalim sects in West Sumatra under the umbrella of Catholic Christianity, as well as the modification of the Toraja tradition from Sulawesi. The definition of religion has been politicized for the legitimacy of power and this is the context and background for the issuance of the definition of religion recognized by the state. Finally, NRM/local religion/folk religion was rejected as a religion, as expressed by the Ministry of Religion Syaifudin Zuhri in 1967 (Subagya, 1981).

The struggle of NRM leaders including Wongsonegoro, at that time continued to struggle by forming associations such as the Indonesian Spiritual Congress Body (BKKI) in 1955; the Coordinating Body for Indonesian Spiritual Employees (BK5I) in 1966 by Sukowati; the Secretariat for Cooperation of Beliefs (SKK) in 1970 which was used by the New Order government for the interests of the Golkar Party; the Association of Belief Adherents (HPK) was founded in 1978; and the Coordinating Body for Belief Organizations (BKOK) was founded in 1999, this was also used for the interests of the Golkar Party's legitimacy in order to recruit votes (Damami, 2011a). However, the hope of recognizing this sect as an independent religion, equal to other Semitic teachings, disappeared in 1983. The reason was that this sect was no longer under the management of the Ministry of Religion, but instead switched to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This change marked a shift in the recognition and management of the sect. After 1999, this school of thought was then under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which shows that the status and recognition of this school of thought experienced significant changes in the structure of government and state policy (Damami, 2011a).

The belief stream is understood as the result of cultural construction that develops in local communities, which cannot be equated with official religions that are generally considered 'holy' and widely recognized. In this context, the stream reflects beliefs and practices that may differ from established religious norms. In addition, in accordance with Regulation No. 2 of 2002 concerning belief streams, the police have the authority to conduct inspections and monitoring of this stream. Such action can be taken if there are suspicious indications, which have the potential to pose a threat to social stability in the community. This shows the importance of monitoring streams that are not officially registered to maintain public order and security (Nurdjana, 2009).

As Indonesia continues to navigate its complex religious landscape, conversations around new religions remain vital. These conversations invite deeper exploration of how historical interactions have shaped contemporary beliefs and practices, and how these dynamics can be acknowledged and respected in a country that prides itself on its diversity. Ultimately, the challenge lies in developing an inclusive understanding of spirituality that respects Indonesia's diverse cultural nature while

promoting harmony among its various religious communities.

Eka Darmaputra articulates a nuanced perspective on Indonesian culture, suggesting that it consists of three distinct layers: indigenous Indonesian, Indian, and Middle Eastern (Islamic). This framework highlights the historical influences that have shaped Indonesia's spiritual landscape. *First* The indigenous layers of Indonesia, reflect traditional beliefs and practices that have existed in the archipelago for thousands of years, often characterized by animism and ancestor worship. *Second* The Indian layer, depicting the profound impact of Hinduism and Buddhism, introduced through trade and cultural exchange, left a lasting legacy on Indonesian art, literature and religious practices. *Final* The Middle Eastern layer, which is primarily associated with the arrival of Islam, marks another important chapter in Indonesia's religious history. Islam, which spread throughout the archipelago from the 13th century onwards, has become the dominant religion, influencing not only religious practices but also social norms, governance, and cultural expressions (Darmaputra, 1997). This layering of religious influences complicates the notion of a single indigenous religion, as it highlights the dynamic interaction between indigenous beliefs and foreign religious traditions.

In contrast to Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana, in his article entitled "Towards a New Society and Culture" in the Pujangga Baru Magazine (1935), he invited the Indonesian people to leave behind the era of ignorance in Indonesia (pre-Indonesia). His call: The Indonesia that the new generation aspires to is not connection Mataram, is not a continuation of the Banten Kingdom, not the Minangkabau or Banjarmasin Kingdom. Based on this thought, Indonesian culture is also impossible to be a continuation of Javanese or Sundanese culture, a continuation of Malay culture or other cultures. The new Indonesia must be on par with the world's leading countries. Indonesia is not a museum of antiquities. The climax of his thinking was Now is the time for us to turn our eyes to the West, urged STA (Alisyahbana, 1997).

Of course, STA's invitation received critical responses from various parties. Because Western civilization has now proven to have reached a dead end and is heading towards death. As John Mohawk said, in his short book, *A Basic Call to Consciousness: Indigenous People's Address to the Western World*, (Penang: Citizens Internatoinal, 2002), wrote: "Today the species of man is facing a question of the very survival of the species. The way of life known as Western Civilization is on a death path on which their own culture has no viable answers." This phenomenon is not only caused by external factors, but also by internal dynamics that cannot be overcome by their own culture. Western civilization, with all the technological advances and innovations it has achieved, now faces serious challenges that threaten the sustainability of human life. The culture that should be the driver of progress and civilization is now trapped in a destructive cycle that is difficult to change. Values that emphasize individualism and competition often ignore the importance of collaboration and sustainability.

In Indonesia, which is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, as well as having Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and various local belief communities, new religious movements often emerge in response to the social, political, and cultural dynamics that occur (Malleleang et al., 2022). This phenomenon can be seen as an attempt to find meaning and identity amidst rapid changes in the era, as well as a form of spiritual search that is more personal and relevant to the needs of the individual. These new religious movements often combine elements from various religious traditions, creating synergies between old teachings and new practices (Marimbe, 2024). For example, some movements may adopt rituals from traditional religions, while integrating modern concepts such as spirituality, mental health, and well-being. This creates space for individuals to explore their beliefs more freely and creatively.

In various literary sources, the emergence of new religious movements is often associated with several complex and interacting factors. Among these factors are social and cultural. These factors play an important role in the formation of this movement. Changes in the structure of society, such as urbanization, globalization, and shifts in traditional values, can create new spaces for the birth of new beliefs and practices that offer alternatives for individuals who feel alienated or dissatisfied with existing religions (Kong, 2025). Many individuals seek meaning and purpose in their lives, particularly during times of uncertainty and existential crises. New religions (based on local

traditions) often offer supportive communities, deep spiritual experiences, and satisfying explanations of life and death (King, 2019).

(Turner, 2016) argues that the emergence of new religions is a development of earlier religions, both Islam and other official religions, which consider their original religions to have followed modernity too far. NRMs are supranational in nature, and therefore prefer their connection with their traditional characteristics. The identity of these primordial traditions continues to be echoed by their founders and followers. Pareira Peane, who studied the Sai Baba religious movement in Singapore, views the presence of new religious movements as an answer to the religiosity of modern society in Singapore which is seen as dry in terms of religiosity. However, he also considers Sai Baba as a challenge to multiculturalism (Nicolas, 2007). In India, the birth of Mata Amritanadamayi is a form of modernization of Hinduism. Some Hindu doctrines are considered irrelevant to the context of modern society, so that its adherents feel that they remain modern society on the one hand and are religious on the other (Yonghui, 2007).

From the explanation above, it can be seen that NRM/Folk Religion/Ancestral Religion is a phenomenon that persists in various regions, especially those that still strongly maintain their ancestral traditions. New religions are basically examples of the most distinctive and pure forms of modern religiousness (Parker, 2019). The characteristics brought by NRM tend to be more supranational and exotic, but this religion can also consciously limit its own expansion. The emergence of various forms of new religious movements is something that cannot be avoided, this is part of modernity. Likewise with high belief in the dimension *prophecy* and the charisma of the leader, new religious movements can be the basis for the development of violence in the name of religion, which is born either as a new movement or as a movement of renewal and orthodoxy from existing religions in general (Gentile, 2020).

In general, this study will reconstruct the dynamics of changes in local religion/ancestral religion starting from the era before and after the enactment of the Constitutional Court decision in 2017, both related to internal and external dynamics. In the internal dynamics, it will be studied how the theological construction or belief of the Cultivation Belief Teachings adapts and maintains the doctrine of its religious experience and in maintaining its existence in society. While in the external dynamics, external factors will be studied in terms of government policies and responses, including civil rights as Indonesian citizens.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to explore spiritual practices and values in the Budi Daya Belief Adherents community in Lembang District, West Bandung Regency (O'reilly, 2012). This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal symbolic meanings, narratives, and cultural expressions that live in the daily lives of adherents, which cannot be explained by statistical data alone. Ethnography allows researchers to understand phenomena from an insider perspective (*emic*), with researchers as the main instrument through direct involvement in the field. Researchers underwent participatory observation for two years (2020–2022), participating in various religious and traditional activities such as *Cleansing the World*, *Keeping an eye on Mama Meikarta*, as well as birth and death processions, to authentically capture the social and spiritual nuances of the community.

The main data source comes from in-depth interviews with adherents, traditional figures, extension workers, and community leaders with various professional backgrounds. Interviews were conducted in Sundanese to be more familiar, accompanied by direct observation and visual documentation. Secondary data were obtained through literature studies that included methodology books, local belief journals, community archives, and online media. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select informants who were considered to have in-depth knowledge, and triangulation was carried out between sources to maintain data validity (Rai & Thapa, 2015).

The researcher also strictly adheres to ethical principles: establishing permission, maintaining privacy, and building relationships based on respect for local culture. Through this approach, this

study not only collects descriptive data, but also explores the values, meanings, and socio-spiritual functions of the Budi Daya Belief teachings. These findings are expected to contribute to the development of studies on local beliefs and Indonesian culture.

3. Research Results

3.1. Research Location

Cikole Village, located in Lembang District, West Bandung Regency, is a highland area at the foot of Mount Tangkuban Perahu. With an altitude of around 1,200 meters above sea level and rainfall reaching 2,200 mm per year, this village has a cool climate and fertile land, making it an ideal area for agricultural cultivation, especially vegetables. The majority of the Cikole community work as farmers, growing commodities such as tomatoes, chilies, mustard greens, onions and lettuce, the results of which are marketed not only locally but also outside Java. In addition, its beautiful natural potential has encouraged the development of the tourism sector with various facilities such as outbound arenas, villas, and family tourist attractions which now also support the economy of the residents (Perhutani, 2014).

Geographically, Cikole is located 22 km from Bandung City, bordering Jayagiri Village to the west, Ciater to the north, Cikidang to the east, and Cibogo to the south. Its area reaches 342,996 ha, consisting of residential areas, agriculture, tourist forests, and other public facilities. The transformation of this village has been clearly visible since the 1990s, when agricultural land slowly turned into residential and lodging areas due to the growth of the tourism industry. This change shows the dynamics of a village that is able to adapt to the needs of the times, while still maintaining its agrarian roots (Hindersah et al., 2017).

In terms of demographics, the population of Cikole Village is 14,470 people with a diverse age distribution and the majority of the population is male. The age division from infants to the elderly shows the importance of an intergenerational approach in fostering religious and social values. Each age group has its own characteristics in accepting and internalizing spiritual values, from the introduction of religious symbols at an early age to philosophical reflection in old age. This makes religious education and guidance an important part of forming a religious and harmonious society (Rochman et al., 2022).

In terms of socio-religious aspects, the people of Cikole Village live in diversity. In addition to the Muslim majority, there are Christians, Catholics, Buddhists, Confucians, and adherents of Budi Daya Beliefs. This diversity is not only formally accepted through policies, but also grows in daily social practices that are full of tolerance. The Saka Binangu Pasewakan as the center of Budi Daya Belief activities is a symbol of the coexistence of various beliefs in this village, with various cultural activities and interfaith discussions that are routinely held (S. Susanto et al., 2024).

Local culture is also highly preserved by the Cikole community. Arts such as *kecapi sulung*, *Jaipong* dance, and *wayang golek* are often performed in various social and religious activities. This tradition is part of a collective identity that is passed down across generations. Amidst social change and the flow of globalization, the Cikole community has demonstrated its ability to maintain ancestral culture without closing itself off from modernization. This is supported by an adaptive social structure, diverse but harmonious ethnicities, and an inclusive village government in its services (Maslihah et al., 2022).

In terms of ethnicity, although the Sundanese ethnic group dominates, there are also other ethnic groups such as Batak, Minang, Betawi, to Papua and Timor. This diversity creates social dynamics that demand intensive intercultural integration and communication. The village government has succeeded in facilitating a just and equal life together through deliberation, inclusive public services, and maintaining the principle of equality. This is a real reflection of local values such as "*silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*" which continue to be maintained as the foundation of social relations (Fauziah & Warlina, 2022).

In terms of human resources, data shows that there is still a gap in formal education attainment. Only a small portion of the population has succeeded in pursuing higher education. However, low formal education does not necessarily become an obstacle in the formation of morals and social ethics.

The community continues to show high tolerance, social concern, and strong religious ethics. In this context, the Cikole community is an example of how local values and social practices can form a strong moral character, even though formal education is not evenly distributed. This shows that character education is not only instilled through the formal education system, but also through the social environment, culture, and local traditions that continue to live in society (Ariffien & Wicaksana, 2021).

3.2. Religion as a Dimension of Human Spiritual Life

In the history of human thought, the relationship between rationality and spirituality has been a never-ending topic of discussion (Bak, 2025). Rationality is often positioned as a force for human liberation from dogmas that bind, while spirituality is believed to be the deepest dimension that gives meaning and direction to human existence (Akbari, 2025). Even in the most radical elaborations of thought, humans with all their intellectual potential still cannot completely free themselves from the spiritual aspects inherent in themselves (Steinbock, 2022). This phenomenon is evident in the thoughts of great figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre who carried *existential atheism*, Albert Camus with *heroic atheism*, as well as Karl Marx with *his socio-political atheism* (Hermawan, 2021). All three seek to negate the role of God within the institutional framework of religion and call for the liberation of humans from the shackles of *metaphysical authority* religion.

The rejection of God in their thinking does not immediately erase the presence of spirituality in the humanitarian discourse that they have built. Their criticism is actually more directed at the formalization of the concept of God in religious barriers that are considered to restrict individual freedom, rather than at the existence of God himself as *metaphysical entity* (its existence goes beyond physical presence). So, in this context, *radical atheism* does not seem completely sterile from divine nuances; paradoxically, it reaffirms the existence of God as an inevitable issue in discussions of philosophy and life (Siswandi, 2024).

Thus, it can be said that God, in whatever form or name, remains an existential horizon that is not easily ignored. Even in the most critical constructions of thought, God is always present, whether as something that is rejected, criticized, or unconsciously assumed (Haugaard, 2022). This shows that spirituality is not something foreign to humans, but rather an inseparable part of the basic structure of their existence.

This framework of thought is in line with Paul Tillich's view in the study of Religious Culture. Tillich never rejected the existence of God in the realm of human life, instead he expanded his understanding of the presence of God as the basis of existence *orground of being* which goes beyond the boundaries of religious institutions (Tillich, 2011). He refuses to simply entrust religious experience to formal institutions alone, because in his view socio-cultural dynamics in any space and time are a reflection or representation of human spiritual achievements. Culture in all its diversity is an expression of how humans capture and actualize spiritual values in plural historical and geographical contexts (Tillich, 2002).

The diversity of human culture, whether based on existentialist philosophy or humanistic paradigms, whether interpreted through psychoanalytic or anthropological lenses, actually reflects the chaos and complexity of the process of translating abstract spirituality into fragmented immanent reality (Khuat, 2024). By itself, each cultural variant brings receptions of the spiritual universe that can be instrumentally contradictory. Herein lies the source of pluralism in human theological understandings, not because of absolute differences in the substance of spirituality, but because of differences in cultural interpretation and actualization of the transcendent (Clarke, 2022). Therefore, the study of God and religion cannot be separated from the context of human culture, which is always dynamic, pluralistic, and often paradoxical.

In the view of the Teachings of Budi Daya Beliefs, the term naming religion for the community of adherents is taken from Belief. In this case, it is clear that in the 1973 GBHN it is stated that in the MPR Decree Number IV/MPR/1973 concerning the General Outlines of State Policy (GBHN), the term belief is expressly stated alongside religion. This document emphasizes that religion and belief in God Almighty are expressions of spiritual belief that are equally valid and recognized by the state. This

statement is important because it marks the first official recognition by the state of the existence of a belief system as part of the spiritual life of the Indonesian people, although it has not been fully equated in administrative practice. The 1973 GBHN became a basic milestone for the Believers to gain recognition, although this recognition was still normative and not accompanied by adequate technical policies (Wawancara dengan Engkus, 2020).

In Glock and Stark's view, religiosity involves a person's level of conception and commitment to their faith. Conceptualization refers to an individual's understanding of their religion, while the level of commitment must be understood comprehensively, leading to the various ways in which humans are religious (Stark & Glock, 1965b). Based on this, a person can connect or approach God without being limited by time, place, or certain colors (Ancok & Suroso, 2005). This means that a person's religious activities are not limited to rituals alone; these activities can also be carried out through other activities driven by supernatural powers. Religious activities do not have to be physical or visible; even actions that are not visible but are carried out in one's heart are considered acts of faith. Therefore, it is understandable that religious people will have various dimensions.

Although spirituality is a very personal and inner experience, in social reality, a person's religious identity must still be expressed through symbolic gestures and concrete actions. These symbolic expressions can be in the form of participation in religious activities, the use of religious/belief symbols, or affiliation with a particular religious institution, both in individual and collective contexts. In this regard, Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark explain that a person's religiosity cannot be separated from outward manifestations that show a connection with the teachings they believe in (Stark & Glock, 1965a). According to them, a person is considered religious if they show certain signs such as holding a membership card of a religious institution, believing in religious doctrine or ideology, living based on ethical principles derived from religious/belief teachings, participating in worship practices, and demonstrating a worldview that reflects a commitment to the values of their religion and beliefs.

Furthermore, Glock and Stark outlined five main dimensions of religiosity that are indicators of a person's religious behavior. These dimensions are: (1) the dimension of belief, which includes belief in fundamental religious doctrines; (2) the dimension of practice, which includes involvement in religious activities such as worship and religious celebrations; (3) the dimension of knowledge, referring to the level of an individual's understanding of religious teachings; (4) the dimension of experience, which relates to the emotional or spiritual experiences felt when practicing one's beliefs; and (5) the dimension of consequences, which indicates the extent to which the teachings one believes in can influence an individual's attitudes and behavior in everyday life (Stark & Glock, 1965a). Together, these five dimensions form a framework for understanding religiosity. Therefore, an individual can only be considered truly religious if his or her behavior and life orientation reflect these dimensions.

To understand the religious character of the adherents of the Budi Daya Belief teachings, the theory of five dimensions of religiosity developed by Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark is a relevant and applicable analytical instrument. This theory views religiosity as a multidimensional phenomenon, which is not only located in the aspect of faith alone, but also includes various aspects of a person's spiritual and social life (Stark & Glock, 1965a). The Budi Daya Belief teachings, as part of the local belief system that lives in the Sundanese community, can be analyzed through these five dimensions.

First, dimensions of belief (belief). In the Cultivation Belief it is reflected in the theological system which believes in the existence of *The One and Only God* as a source of life, which is transcendent and is the center of their cosmos of belief. Budi Daya adherents believe that the entire universe is in unity with matter. *The One God*, which is referred to in various local terms such as *Si Ijunajati Nistemen*. This belief is not merely a metaphysical abstraction, but rather a spiritual basis for explaining the origins of humans, nature, and life (Hanafiah, 2018).

Second, practice dimension. This dimension can be found in various forms of rituals and traditional ceremonies carried out by Budi Daya practitioners. They carry out certain rituals that aim to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and the power of *God of Murba*. For example, the ritual *offerings*,

prayers in refined Sundanese, as well as spiritual meetings in sacred places (*treats*) such as forests, Mount Merapi (Mount Tangkuban Perahu), or springs (*toya-mintembayan*). Although their forms are not uniform and tend to be simple, these practices contain high symbolic meaning and are an important part of their religious expression. *Samende* For the Budi Daya believers, it is a symbol of prayer to *God of Mercy* through the objects presented. *Offerings* comes from a spelling fragment which is shortened to Se-Sa-Jen, *Se* is *Fiber* (letters/words/speech of God), *on* means *Literature* (a string of words that cannot be expressed), and *Just* is *Jendra* (the universe and its contents). The same is true in the teachings of celestial religion or *Smith*, that the word of Allah is written down and called *Qouliyah* (verses of the Qur'an, or the Gospel) and some that are not written are called *Kauniyah* (the contents of the universe).

The universe and its contents are God's books that must be read by humans. For example, in the ritual offerings of the Budi Daya Belief teachings there is always bitter coffee and milk. Bitter coffee has a black symbol and bitter has the meaning of hardship, difficulty in living life and various trials. Meanwhile, *milk* symbolized by white and sweet, it means joy, happiness, and tranquility. This means that in their prayers, the teachings of these devotees (they remain silent, eyes closed, sitting cross-legged, both hands facing each other, and head bowed to the chest in a silent atmosphere) hope that after the misery/bitterness of life that is lived today will not come tomorrow or they will get happiness. And there are many more symbols of meaning that are presented in the procession *offerings*. However, there is a difference in the form of the offerings with other Belief teachings, namely there is always a red and white flag (small) standing upright in the middle, sandwiched by yellow tumpeng rice, and seven Tanjung leaves using a pendil filled with water. The following are the objects that are the ingredients *offerings* with the content of their symbolic meaning:

Tabel 3:

No.	Item Name/ Appearance	Meaning/symbol of prayer
1.	Tanning box	must be shared with one purpose, all goals and intentions are shared with God, Humanity, the Nation, the People, and Justice (in fact, we must have one purpose, one goal that must be based on the values of God, Humanity, Nation, People, and Justice)
2.	White backdrop/cloth	Actions and speech should be based on cleanliness of the HEART, MIND or CLEANLINESS OF BODY and INNER, so that when death comes, my self will return to being united with the One God, returning to my true self, returning to the origin of the four elements of the body.
3.	A small red and white flag with a pole (Sang Saka Dwi Waruna)	Dwi Warna or two colors (Waruna), namely Beureum jeung Bodas, means red and white. Beureum means Indung/Mother Earth and bodas means Father/Rama. Sang Saka means Soko. Meaning that it is our obligation to respect our parents/ancestors who have given birth to and taken care of us, as well as our homeland that has given us life. Devotion to parents, nation and state is a priority in life.
4.	Bright yellow tumpeng rice	Piling up things together makes them useful for our lives, don't like each other in living life/being egotistical about feeling the richest-most right in society, then we won't be able to be together.
5.	A small jug filled with water and seven hanjuang leaves inserted	Kendi means soil or land. Air means weak heart, Hanjuang means Hana Ing Juang (Hana: Live/Aya (Live/Exist), Juang: Fighting), seven (attributes that exist in God/Hyang). So, life must struggle to work for the weak water or help the country or defend the country with the behavior of the nature must be the seven nature. (life must strive to be devoted to the people and the nation, accompanied by noble behavior as in the seven attributes of God)

7.	A handful of rice	Life should be like the science of rice, the more rice grains there are, the more submissive
8.	Bitter and sweet coffee in coconut shell	In the course of life, it must be through bitterness and sweetness that should be boiled, cooked in the stomach (thought, memory) of the bright heart (In the course of life, it must be through bitterness and sweetness that should be processed, studied in the shell (thought, memory) in a calm and clean Heart).
9.	Rujak with seven types	A fragrant flower with seven colors. Seven types mean 7 poe or seven days. Overall it means: In Seven Days we experience various tastes of life.
10.	Seven-faced and fragrant flowers	Burning incense/steaming = ngudag Kusumaning Hyang Jati (Studying and experiencing and tracing the essence of the values of God). Menyan = Temen tur nyaan/ nu enyana/sa enya-enyana (in the exploration/study/appreciation must be done seriously and correctly); Fragrant incense = Silih wawangi (Good deeds); Parupuyan is a place for charcoal/embers made of earth (place of the essence or body of the truth). Red symbolizes fire, yellow symbolizes wind, White symbolizes Water, and Black symbolizes Earth (that the essence of water, wind, water and earth is the origin of the body of the truth or the support of life. Burning incense or ngudag means ngudag Kusumaning Hyang Jati. Meaning studying and experiencing and tracing the essence and values of God
11.	Three teak leaves	Humans in running life and breathing must be based on DETERMINATION, SPEECH and ACTION (Living life must be based on DETERMINATION, SPEECH and BEHAVIOR)
12.	Be kind to me	If we want to speak, act and walk, don't be noisy, but it should be in the throat first and then be vomited, exactly what you swear.
13.	Parupuyan and frankincense/agaru	Burning incense/steaming = ngudag Kusumaning Hyang Jati (Studying and experiencing and tracing the essence of Godly values). Menyan = Temen tur nyaan/ nu enyana/sa enya-enyana (in the exploration/study/appreciation it must be done seriously and correctly); Incense fragrance = Silih wawangi (Good deeds); Parupuyan is a place for charcoal/embers made of earth (a place for the essence or the body of the sakujur). Red symbolizes fire, yellow symbolizes wind, white symbolizes water, and black symbolizes earth (that the essence of water, wind, water and earth is the origin of the body of the sakujur or the support of life. Burning incense or ngukus means ngudag Kusumaning Hyang Jati. It means studying and experiencing and exploring the essence and values of the Godhead.
14.	Broke the chicken	Surrender to the Lord
15.	Chicken eggs	The pinnacle of life is mutual respect for others. Which means: The peak of life is respecting each other. Eggs are likened to the beginning of life that will give birth to good behavior.
16.	Fruits	living life must be serious, so that what is aspired to can be achieved to the goal.

Then the traditional figures/kasepuhan began to burn incense and continued *pray to the ancestors*. Which in essence is an expression of gratitude to the mother who gave birth, the father who always takes care of and provides for me physically and mentally, and the ancestors who have become intermediaries for my existence, to the policy makers of the Karatuan state. Continued by praising the greatness of God, and ending with the words *Witness* in Islamic terms is *Isyhad*.

Third, dimension of knowledge (*knowledge*) refers to mastery of the teachings and values taught by para *Teacher* or spiritual figures of Budi Daya. This knowledge is generally transmitted orally and passed down through informal teaching. Believers are taught to understand noble life values, such as honesty (*weak and honest*), determination, and attitude *devote* to ancestors and supernatural powers as a form of respect for the cosmic order.

Fourth, dimension of experience (*experience*) occupies a very important position in the practice of Cultivation. Personal spiritual experiences are often the starting point for the transformation of beliefs. Many adherents experience *Kates*, spiritual dreams, or inner callings that then strengthen their religious ties. This shows that the Budi Daya Belief places great emphasis on direct experience and a sense of spiritual connectedness with the universe as part of the sacred relationship between humans and divine power.

Fifth, *consequence dimension* from the teachings of the Budi Daya Belief, it is seen in the attitudes of its adherents who uphold the values of balance, honesty, harmony with nature, and respect for ancestors. These values are implemented in everyday life, both in social relations and in moral decision-making. For them, religiosity does not stop at the ritual level, but must be reflected in wise life practices that are in harmony with cosmic principles.

Thus, when viewed through the five dimensions of religiosity theory (Stark & Glock, 1965a), the Budi Daya Belief teachings have a complete and holistic religious structure. It not only contains a system of beliefs and rituals, but also forms a worldview, knowledge structure, spiritual experience, and deep ethical orientation. Therefore, the existence of this teaching should be recognized as a legitimate religious expression in the landscape of spiritual diversity in Indonesia.

In line with what Joachim Wach said in the formulation of three religious behaviors that characterize a person as a follower of a religion, namely: A person must have a religious experience that includes thoughts; Actions or rituals; and Community. These three forms of experience are very important and cannot be separated if someone wants to be considered religious. Each dimension is interdependent with the pattern of life in a person's religious behavior (Joachim Wach, 1996). Joachim Wach emphasized that it is a big mistake if someone does not consider the expression of a community or institution as an important complement to the expression of thoughts and actions that shape a person's religiosity. All three expressions are equally important, and in the context of society, intellectualism and ritualism have real meaning.

In essence, spiritual experiences serve as motivation to articulate meanings that confront absolute reality. This is due to the fact that feelings of joy and sadness, as well as aversion described as one's explosive nature, fear, and joy in the heart of a believer, are all involved (Hocking & Wach, 1996). Furthermore, expression through vocalization, typical religious/belief clothing also exemplifies a form of spiritual motivation aimed at communicating with others, utilizing voice, behavior, gestures, religious clothing and sharing joy or, conversely, feelings of surprise simultaneously, while providing a description of what they have witnessed. Hocking notes that individuals who have had profound spiritual experiences can become teachers, ascetics, or even beggars.

3.3. The Concept of Divinity: The Teachings of Belief in Almighty God Cultivation

Long before Hinduism, Buddhism, or Semitic religions entered the archipelago, the ancestors of the Sundanese people already had a system of belief or belief in God, namely animism or dynamism. The term God in Sundanese teachings is known as *Mr*. *Mr* is the creator and ruler of the universe which is supernatural. However, from His supernatural nature if we explore our own potential for the holiness of *laku lampah*, then *Mr* will always be in humans (Kurniawan et al., 2023). This is reflected in the behavior and behavioral patterns passed down by their ancestors, who always maintain the

harmony of the universe.

The spiritual roots of the Sundanese people have developed long before the arrival of major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Semitic beliefs. In the native belief system known as Sunda Wiwitan, the concept of God is embodied in the figure of *Mr* (The Creator and Ruler of the universe) who is transcendent and beyond the reach of the senses (Saringendyanti et al., 2018). However, His presence is believed to be felt through inner awareness and the purity of human behavior.

This teaching emphasizes that *Mr* is not a distant and separate entity, but rather exists within every individual who is able to maintain a pure heart and right actions. Awareness of the presence *Mr* serves as a foundation for ethics and spirituality in everyday life, reflected in values, customs, and behaviors passed down from generation to generation. The principle of harmony with nature, others, and oneself is at the heart of this teaching, which positions humans as guardians of cosmic balance. Belief in Hyang/God in Sundanese customs is not merely a form of worship of supernatural powers, but is also a value system that shapes the cultural and spiritual identity of its people (Mutaqin, 2017). This teaching conveys that a relationship with God is not only built through rituals, but through awareness, holiness, and a harmonious life.

The question that often arises in theological studies is about the truth of the existence of God. The concept of God emerged when humans witnessed the majesty of nature and all its wonders. Humans felt alienated and began to create something great, something transcendent. From here emerged the idea of God or the Almighty (Libby, 2024). The idea of a creator or the Almighty began to spread among all mankind, this impression grew as a result of human senses and reason beginning to realize that there was a great power that could not be matched by other creatures.

The history of spirituality in Indonesia is closely related to the study of Divinity, because spirituality emerged from the beginning as a search for the deepest meaning of human existence and its relationship with the Divine (Hermawan, 2025). In this context, Divinity is not merely understood dogmatically, but as an inner experience that is personal and transcendent.

The teachings of Belief in God Almighty include the main teachings of returning to the Source of Life, uniting with the Source of Life, and being useful in life. These three concepts are manifested in different naming terms, according to the guidance of each teaching. These terms include the following expressions: *Unity of the Lord, So that the Lord came into existence, May the land of the continent*, etc (Damami, 2011a). The terms used by the Teachings of Cultivation Belief are *Finding Myself Angelo Paesan Single Body*.

The core teaching of the One Almighty God emphasizes the awareness that the essence of human existence comes from the Source of Life (God Almighty). The life that is lived is a process of realizing divinity in oneself, fellow creatures, and throughout the universe. Furthermore, the teaching of the One Almighty God emphasizes that the ultimate goal of the life process that is lived is to return to the Source of Life (Damami, 2011b).

The description reflects a deep view in Belief in Almighty God that life is not just a series of worldly events, but a spiritual journey towards divine consciousness. In this perspective, humans are seen as creatures who come from and are connected to the Source of Life, namely Almighty God (Julhadi et al., 2024). Therefore, every aspect of life is an opportunity to manifest divine qualities, such as love, justice, and wisdom in relationships with oneself, others, and the universe.

This spiritual journey is not only individual, but also collective, because awareness of God's presence leads humans to live in harmony with others and maintain the balance of creation (Zohar et al., 2000). This process contains the meaning that divinity is not only something distant and transcendent, but is immanently present in every human action and good intention. In living life, a person is required to always be aware that his essence is part of something greater, nobler, and eternal.

The end of this process is *back to Source of Life*, namely God Almighty, not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense: full awareness of the origin, purpose, and meaning of life. Thus, this teaching forms a comprehensive spiritual framework, which directs humans to live life with

awareness, moral responsibility, and inner closeness to God (Zohar, 2012).

The teachings in Belief in Almighty God emphasize that humans have a moral and spiritual responsibility to live their lives according to divine decree. Life is seen as a journey that must be based on obedience to God's will, not merely based on personal desires or lust. In this teaching, God's will is the main guideline in making decisions, behaving, and acting in every aspect of life (Damami, 2011a).

In order to carry out God's decrees and will properly, a person is required to maintain cleanliness and purity of heart. This reflects that spirituality in this belief is internal and reflective, not just an external formality. Cleanliness of heart is understood as an inner condition that is free from envy, jealousy, hatred, and destructive desires, while purity of heart refers to the purity of intention in doing good and worshiping sincerely (Yusuf, 2022).

Thus, the core of the teachings underlines the importance of inner integrity as the main foundation in living a religious life. The process of maintaining cleanliness and purity of heart is seen not only as an ethical demand, but as a form of authentic devotion to God Almighty. In this context, spirituality becomes a transformative force that shapes human character to be in harmony with the will of God in everyday life (Karori, 2024).

The main teachings of Belief in the One Almighty God place humans, especially Believers of Belief, in a central position as active actors in realizing divine values in the world. Believers are invited to always strive for a life behavior that is in harmony with God's will, which not only has an impact on personal well-being, but also on the safety and happiness of all creation. This reflects a holistic view that human life is closely related to the harmony of the universe (Damami, 2011a).

Safety, happiness, and well-being in the context of this teaching are not only interpreted materially, but also spiritually and socially. Believers of Belief are invited to live with full awareness, compassion, and responsibility towards the environment and others. In practice, this can be reflected through an honest attitude, not being greedy, living in harmony with others, and maintaining a balance between personal needs and collective interests.

Thus, this teaching encourages inner transformation and real action as a form of devotion to God Almighty. Harmonious, wise, and loving living behavior becomes a spiritual medium to present divinity in everyday life, as well as a real contribution to maintaining the balance and sustainability of the universe.

3.4. Divinity Studies in Cultivational Beliefs

The study of divinity is the core of the teachings of the Budi Daya Belief. The main focus of this study includes the concept *sapta patala* or the Seven Powers of God and an understanding of the process of becoming one with God through spiritual practices known as *Finding Self*, *Nyuay Body*, *Angelo Paesan Tunggal*. In the view of Budi Daya adherents, God is called by various names that describe His nature and power, including: *The Almighty God* as the source of all things external and internal; *Hyang Maha Murba* which is present in all places and in every being; *The Holy Spirit* as the driving force of life; *God Almighty* who creates and regulates natural changes; *Hyang Manon* which does not impose will but frees people to choose with reason and wisdom; *God is Most Just* who knows everything down to the deepest inner movements; *The Most Merciful* who maintains the balance of the law of the universe; and *The Most Gracious* which pours life through the principles of balance and love.

The Budi Daya belief views God as a transcendent entity separate from the universe and cannot be identified with any creature or object. God has no form, shape, or form, and is beyond the reach of human physical experience (Frank et al., 2024). The oneness of God is emphasized as the essence that existed before the creation of the world and all its contents. However, the concept of divinity in this teaching is inclusive and adaptive to diverse religious environments (Pradana et al., 2023). Figures such as Mei Kartawinata who have an Islamic background and are related to the Sufi tradition of the Cirebon Palace helped shape the Budi Daya spirituality which contains values in common with Islamic teachings, such as monotheism, self-purification, and the search for the meaning of life

through the inner path.

In the development of its teachings, the Cultivation Belief also absorbed Hindu elements, especially the principles *Tri Hit Karan* which emphasizes the harmony between man and God (*The Paradise*), fellow human beings (*People*), and the universe (*Palemahan*). These values emphasize that the teachings of Budi Daya are not only a reflection of local spirituality, but also a space for dialogue between various belief systems that respect the universality of human values without losing their cultural roots (N. H. Susanto & Basid, 2024).

God in this teaching is understood as an eternal Being, without beginning and without end, not affected by time or change. His independent and transcendent existence is not created by anyone, has no partner, and does not require an intermediary to relate to His creation. He is the Supreme Unity, God for all beings, beyond the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, and culture. God is also *Almighty*, the source of all life and moral values, where humans rely on direct and personal inner awareness (Zulkarnaen et al., 2023).

Characteristic *Great Will* God shows that everything happens according to His absolute and wise will. The world was created and arranged so that all creation can live harmoniously in a balanced cosmic order. In this context, humans are not only recipients of gifts, but also responsible managers of nature. Physical and spiritual well-being is part of Divine grace which is manifested through the integration of spiritual, ethical, and ecological values (Ryff, 2021).

Characteristic *Many Questions* or *Omniscient* shows that God knows everything, both real and hidden, without being limited by space and time. His knowledge includes everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen. Therefore, human life is always under God's supervision. Believers are invited to always live in spiritual awareness, maintain harmony with nature and others, and act with honesty and moral responsibility (Sangma & Bharani, 2024).

God is also believed to be *Almighty Life*, the primary source of all life, whose existence is eternal and independent of the biological dimension. From Him life flows continuously to all creatures. Awareness of this nature forms the spiritual and ecological foundation in maintaining a balanced and sustainable life (Nur, 2025). In this context, humans are asked to care for life and not waste the gift that has been given.

In this teaching, God also has attributes *Hearer* And *All Seeing*, not in the physical sense like humans, but as a divine consciousness that transcends the senses. God's hearing and vision include the inner voice, the deepest intentions, and the unspoken spiritual vibrations (Chandy, 2022). Every movement and silence of creatures is always under His supervision. Nothing is hidden from Him, and therefore believers are taught to live with honesty, sincerity, and inner harmony in every action.

The last trait that is highly emphasized in the Budi Daya Belief is *Great Speaker*. God does not speak through words, but His holy will is the reason for the creation of all things. The word of God is understood as the will of creation that is manifested in the universe and human life. In silence, humans can hear the voice of God through the vibration of sense, awareness, and deep spiritual experience (Powell, 2024). Nature becomes a living scripture, a place where the word of God continues to resonate and can be contemplated.

With all these characteristics and understanding, the teachings of God in Budi Daya Belief form a deep spiritual framework that integrates with life. It is not just a dogmatic belief, but a system of ethics, cosmology, and life practices that guide humans in maintaining harmony between themselves, others, and the universe as a form of respect for the Creator (Schulz, 2024).

4. Conclusion

Thus, it can be said that the Budi Daya Belief Teachings in Lembang District are a concrete form of a new religious movement (New Religious Movement) that is able to survive through theological adaptation and contextual socio-cultural expression. This study answers the main question of how internal and external dynamics influence the existence of the teaching. Internally, adherents of the Budi Daya Belief demonstrate a complete religious system through Stark & Glock's five dimensions of religiosity: belief, practice, knowledge, experience, and consequences. They form a unique spiritual

relationship with God, manifested in the symbolism of rituals, cosmic values, and ancestral traditions that are still maintained. Externally, this teaching faces challenges in the form of state regulation, identity politics, and narrow interpretations of the concept of religion. However, the 2017 Constitutional Court decision became a turning point for civil recognition of the existence of local beliefs.

The main contribution of this study is the effort to deconstruct the dichotomy between official religion and local beliefs. This study broadens the horizon of religious thought in Indonesia through an understanding of non-dogmatic and local culture-based spirituality. In addition, this study opens a more inclusive academic space to reread religious diversity from the perspective of anthropology, ethnography, and contemporary religious studies. This study also shows that local spirituality is not just a cultural heritage, but also a system of knowledge and values that are relevant in facing the dynamics of modernity and religious pluralism in Indonesia.

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