

SEREN TAUN: Public Communication and Survival Living Sunda Wiwitan

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Abstract

The stigma against local religions as heretical teachings and non-official state religion has resulted in their existence being always faced various existential challenges. It is the experience of the local religion of Sunda Wiwitan in Cigugur, Kuningan, West Java, the case study of this research. It was forced to disband twice in the past. It was a tragic event that Sunda Wiwitan did not expect again. Therefore, the local religion which was formerly known as the Javanese Sundanese Religion (ADS) must find the appropriate strategy for its existence in order to survive. This ethnographic study describes the significance of the Sérén Taun ceremony for the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. The thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest, for Sunda Wiwitan, is not just a cultural representation of the Sundanese agrarian society. It is mainly as a strategy for survival, a medium for criticism and resistance, as well as a form of public communication regarding its existence. The ceremony, which is full of moral and cultural values from the Sundanese ethnic community, is a way of how Sunda Wiwitan is inclusive of the socio-cultural life in which it is located. The state's appreciation of Sérén Taun by making it an Intangible Cultural Heritage and the involvement of the community in every Sérén Taun ceremony is a sign that Sunda Wiwitan is increasingly being recognized and appreciated. Now the Sérén Taun ceremony is a prototype of how other local religions can survive by exploring and strengthening their roots, namely culture.

Keywords: Sunda Wiwitan, Sérén Taun, Public Communication, Survival Living

Abstrak

Stigma terhadap agama lokal sebagai ajaran sesat dan agama negara yang tidak resmi mengakibatkan keberadaannya selalu menghadapi berbagai tantangan eksistensial. Pengalaman agama lokal Sunda Wiwitan di Cigugur, Kuningan, Jawa Barat, menjadi studi kasus penelitian ini. Itu terpaksa dibubarkan dua kali di masa lalu. Itu adalah peristiwa tragis yang tidak diharapkan Sunda Wiwitan lagi. Oleh karena itu, agama lokal yang dulu dikenal sebagai Agama Sunda Jawa (ADS) harus menemukan strategi yang tepat untuk mempertahankan keberadaannya agar tetap bertahan. Kajian etnografi ini menjelaskan tentang pentingnya upacara Sérén Taun bagi keberadaan Sunda Wiwitan. Upacara syukuran hasil panen, bagi Sunda Wiwitan, bukan sekadar

representasi budaya masyarakat agraris Sunda. Terutama sebagai strategi bertahan hidup, media kritik dan perlawanan, serta bentuk komunikasi publik mengenai keberadaannya. Upacara yang sarat dengan nilai-nilai moral dan budaya masyarakat etnis Sunda ini merupakan salah satu cara bagaimana Sunda Wiwitan menyatu dengan kehidupan sosial budaya di mana ia berada. Apresiasi negara terhadap Sérén Taun dengan menjadikannya sebagai Warisan Budaya Takbenda dan keterlibatan masyarakat dalam setiap upacara Sérén Taun merupakan tanda bahwa Sunda Wiwitan semakin dikenal dan diapresiasi. Kini upacara Sérén Taun menjadi prototipe bagaimana agama lokal lainnya bisa bertahan dengan menggali dan memperkuat akarnya, yakni budaya.

Kata Kunci: *Sunda Wiwitan, Sérén Taun, Komunikasi Publik, Survival Living*

A. Introduction

Indonesia's multi-religious society has not been able to become an adequate community for all religious traditions, especially for local religions¹. Local religion has no place in Indonesia because this local religious tradition is not recognized as a religion. The rejection of local religion as a religion is clearly illustrated in Indonesian regulations which only recognize six (6) world religions as official state religions, namely: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The Indonesian state has also determined the characteristics of religion, namely: monotheistic, prophetic, holy book, and adherents of trans-national where not all of these characteristics are owned by local religions (Qodim, 2016:344-345). The perspective of the world religion paradigm, which is legitimized by Indonesian regulations, further discredits the existence of local religions. Faced with this existential challenge, how can local religions carry out the right strategy in order to continue to exist? One of the survival strategies of the local religion is to explore and strengthen their roots in local culture. Local religions lift and

¹ Rachmat Subagya raises the number of local religious communities that make up Indonesia's multi-religious society. In 1951 Indonesia had 73 local religious communities, in 1959 there were 142 communities, in 1965 there were 300 communities, in 1970 there were 151 communities (only in big cities on the island of Java), in 1972 there were 644 communities. Some of the local religious communities are located in West Java (69), Central Java (149), East Java (105), Sumatra (96), Yogyakarta Special Region (39), and Sulawesi (20). According to him, the data could still increase because not all local religions are registered in official records (Subagya, 1976:9).

celebrate ceremonies or festivals typical of indigenous peoples which are places where local religions are born and existed. By using this cultural identity, the existence of local religions (teachings and practices) is more easily accepted by the general public than when local religions use religious identities. By wearing cultural clothes, local religions can also be present inclusively in the community, disseminate the teachings and practices of beliefs, and even criticize and fight against all the pressures/threats they experience.

B. Method

This ethnographic study aims to describe the Sérén Taun ceremony as a strategy for the existence of the local Sunda Wiwitan religion in Cigugur, Kuningan, West Java, Indonesia, which is the case study of this research. Based on literature study and participatory observation, Sunda Wiwitan is one of all local religions in Indonesia that is experiencing existential challenges due to the impact of state regulations and policies and public opinion

C. Explanation

In fact, throughout its history, the local religion, formerly known as the Javanese Sundanese Religion (ADS), has experienced two forced dissolutions. In 1964/1965 the conversion of thousands of ADS adherents to Catholicism was an inevitable event. Formally since September 21, 1964, ADS was declared disbanded. However, after being affiliated with Catholicism for about 17 years (1964-1981), hundreds of ex-ADS Catholics declared themselves out of Catholicism and returned to ADS which is now called Sunda Wiwitan.

The appearance of Sunda Wiwitan in the Cigugur community and its surroundings has invited various reactions from the community. There are three variants of "community" which have different attitudes and views on the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. The first variant is a community that accepts and acknowledges the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. They are Sunda Wiwitan adherents, ex-ADS adherents of Catholicism, Islam, and Christianity, and community members who realize the importance of inter-religious harmony and tolerance. In general, this first variant is getting stronger in terms of quantity and quality. Although the number of adherents of Sunda Wiwitan tends to decrease due to the death of the older generation, the choice of the younger generation to the official state religion, and the characteristic of Sunda Wiwitan who never seek adherents; However, this first variant continues to

increase in quantity and quality because the community members want to recognize and respect various beliefs, including the Sunda Wiwitan.

The second variant is a community group that is neutral or does not care about the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. This variant assumes that religion is a matter for each (community) where one another is prohibited from disturbing one another. They are community members who are "comfortable" with their beliefs. Neutral attitude and do not care about other religions can be said to be decreasing in quantity and quality because now every religion is more open to interact with each other.

The third variant is the community members who reject the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. They view that Sunda Wiwitan is not a religion. On the contrary it is a heretical teaching because it is not monotheistic, does not have a holy book, does not have a prophet, and was founded by ordinary people. In the Cigugur community, this third variant consists of several fanatical Islamic figures who consider the founder of ADS (Kyai Madrais) to have deviated from Islamic teachings. Madrais deviation from the teachings of Islam is related to circumcision, haram-halal, and funeral procedures. Rejection of Sunda Wiwitan also emerged from several Catholic religious leaders who considered Djatikusumah (the leader of Sunda Wiwitan) to have betrayed Catholicism because he and his loyalists had resigned from Catholicism. The few Catholic figures considered Djatikusumah used Catholicism as a place of refuge from danger. Now their existence still exists even though the numbers are very small.

In the context of Indonesia's multi-religious society, the existence of this third variant is increasingly widespread and becomes a serious challenge for the existence of local religions. They reject local religions by adhering to state regulations that stipulate six world religions as official state religions and religious criteria according to the world religion paradigm. They also view local religions as heretical teachings that must be eradicated. It is not surprising, local religions experience discrimination, intimidation, and even verbal and physical violence. Likewise, the civil and political rights of followers of local religions do not get adequate places. It can be said that the third variant is the basis for the existential questions of all local religions, including Sunda Wiwitan.

How can local religions, especially Sunda Wiwitan, be able to maintain their existence? Faced various challenges that threaten its existence, Sunda Wiwitan adopts the Sérén Taun tradition as its existential strategy. The ritual of gratitude for agricultural harvests that has long been formed, practiced, and lived for generations has become the right strategy for Sunda Wiwitan.

Through Sérén Taun, Sunda Wiwitan identifies itself at the roots of the universal Sundanese agrarian tradition. With Sérén Taun Sunda Wiwitan can be present in the midst of the Sundanese ethnic community, negotiate various interests, collaborate with various parties, build solidarity with indigenous peoples, disseminate local religious teachings and practices (local knowledge, human values, nationalism, and divinity), even criticizing power and resisting threats/challenges that interfere with its existence.

Until now, the Sérén Taun tradition has proven to be the right strategy for existence and communication for Sunda Wiwitan. Now Sunda Wiwitan is one of the local religions in Indonesia that still survives. In 2021 the Sérén Taun ceremony was appreciated by the government of the Republic of Indonesia as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. The state's appreciation for Sérén Taun indicates that Sunda Wiwitan is increasingly being recognized by the state and society. In addition, Sunda Wiwitan has a responsibility so that Sérén Taun continues to be maintained and preserved. With the obligation to protect and preserve the Sérén Taun, it implicitly means the preservation and preservation of the local Sunda Wiwitan religion.

Sunda Wiwitan's slick tactics is an insight for other local religions in Indonesia in carrying out an existence strategy. In fact, any strategy adopted by local religions signifies the inability of the state and citizens to recognize and appreciate the diversity of religious traditions that exist in Indonesia.

Religion and Tradition The Roman idea of religion (*religio*) defined religion as synonymous with tradition². Religion is conceptualized similar to dharma, tradition or custom, namely a set (system) of ancestral practices (beliefs) developed by a nation (community), taught, and preserved from generation to generation. Religion is seen as the basic norm of social life that regulates how humans should live (Picard and Rémy Madinier, 2011: 22).

This Roman idea is in line with the idea of Clifford James Geertz (1926-2006), religion as a cultural system. In *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* by Clifford Geertz (1973), Geertz stated that humans live in a very complex system of meaning namely culture (network of values, symbols,

² The word "tradition" comes from the Latin "tradere." As a verb means to submit, convey, pass on, give. The noun form is "traditio" which means things that are handed over, delivered, passed on, or given (cf. Hardjana, 1993:29). Traditional religion is a community belief (custom) which is passed on from generation to generation from one generation to the next.

beliefs). One of the important elements in the complexity of culture is religion (Geertz, 1973:90; cf. Pals, 2018:397-398).

Geertz mentioned religion as a cultural fact. Through symbols, ideas, and customs, he expressed the influence of religion in every facet of people's lives. Religion is integrated into tradition. By seeing religion as a cultural system, religion will always change dynamically or be in the process of becoming, influenced by perceptions of what is understood as ultimate meaning depending on the construction of religiosity. In this regard, the way of expressing diversity between individuals and between religious groups is not a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of truths with rationality that can vary (cf. Lubis, 2015: 85-86).

The concept that identifies religion with this tradition is inclusive and open to all religious traditions. What is conceived of as religion includes all forms of religious tradition, including local religions which depict features similar to the Roman idea. The similarity appears because local religions have belief systems that appear in symbols, practice systems related to beliefs such as ceremonies or rituals, and adherents or communities (customary communities) who practice beliefs, teach, and preserve their teachings from generation to generation. Historically, local religions that are identical with traditions have been formed, lived, and taught from generation to generation (cf. Rosidi, 2011:xvi). This then forms what is called by James M. Heslin in *Essentials of Sociology: A Down to Earth Approach* (2017) as an ideal culture, namely the norms or values that a community considers ideal, which deserve life orientation and aspirations (Heslin, 2017:59). In line with Heslin, Ferry Hidayat in *Sacred Anthropology, Revitalization of the Metaphysical Traditions of the Indonesian Indigenous Society* (2010) calls it the term "customary philosophy" or "custom" only, namely things that animate and live human life for a long time (Ferry, 2010:16). It is not surprising that in the Indonesian context, the word "religion" is often referred to as *ageman* or *papastèn*, namely certainties, norms or values that must be held by humans in order to be safe in this world and the hereafter.

The embedded "religion" (ideal values, traditional philosophy, or custom) in society makes "religion" not easily erased. In the context of Minang customs, Ferry Hidayat (2010:23) said that the philosophy of *adat* or *adat* (read: religion) has never been completely abolished by any civilization that has ever tried to conquer it such as Hinduism and Buddhism from India, Confucianism from China, Islam from Arabia and Persia, or Catholicism and Protestantism from Europe. These foreign civilizations penetrated and

coloured Indonesian culture and civilization, but were never able to completely replace “religion”.

According to Ferry Hidayat, there are 3 (three) types of adat: (1) true adat, (2) custom, and (3) adat. The real adat is the custom which is eternal, while the last two customs are the customs that are made or occur according to human interests in certain historical periods, the temporal customs. Foreign civilizations can only penetrate into customary and customary customs, but it is impossible to do so into real adat (Riau Malay Customary Institution, 2005:137-138 in Hidayat, 2010:23-24). In other words, no matter how strong the influence of foreign (religious) traditions, they will not be able to completely erase local (religious) traditions. The identification of religion with tradition illustrates that religion actually has strong roots or is integrated in the civilization of society. Religion (local) has long been lived as an orientation and aspiration of life (Heslin, 2017), a custom that inspires and sustains human life (Ferry, 2010). Religion is integrated in the complexity of culture and becomes a cultural system (Geertz). This is what makes religion (tradition) not easily abolished by other religions (world religion) that came later. When world religions came, (local) religion as “true adat” still existed even though adherents of local religions converted to world religions.

There are Muslims on the island of Java who are polarized in three variants (according to Geertz): *abangan* (simple people like farmers who practice strong syncretism between Islamic teachings and Javanese traditions), *santri* (those who clearly live Islamic teachings) and *priyayi*. (the elite who manifest a religious tradition), the existence of a *slametan* ceremony (a ritual of thanksgiving to God that involves people from various religions and combines local traditions with religious teachings) in the multireligious community in Banyuwangi (Beatty), or the existence of “moral torment” (feelings “tormented and wrong” related to past behavior which is prohibited by the current religion) in the Urapmin (Robbins) community; illustrates that the “local religion” still exists even though their religious identity is Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism.

In line with the above idea, Anita Stasulane in “A Reconstructed Indigenous Religious Tradition” (2019:5), a study of the efforts to suppress local religions in Latvia, namely Dievturība by the Soviet Union; states that local religion has never really disappeared. Local religious manifestations can emerge as “statements and protests” against the pressures/threats they experience. Things related to local religion can appear in various dances, folk

or folk songs, traditional games, traditional products and crafts, folklore (use of regional languages and dissemination of values), traditional clothing and food. Traditional beliefs can also appear in the form of forest management, soil and water conservation, settlement arrangements, mutual cooperation, and social etiquette.

These local religious manifestations contain thoughts, messages, narratives about beliefs, even local religious struggles (Stasulane, 2019:5). With it, local religions try to maintain their traditions or religion. When state regulations require citizens to embrace the official state religion (world religion), indigenous peoples strive to maintain their original religion which is integral to all aspects of culture, even though their identity cards include the official state religion (cf. Munandar, 2017:191).

For local religions, arts and traditions of local communities become a medium of public communication, an effort to introduce their existence to a wider circle. Local arts and traditions become “vehicles” to send moral and humanitarian messages and “weapons” to criticize and fight against various threats. Culture is used as a means to show that local religion deserves attention, is treated fairly, does not need to be suspected, and is not discriminated against by the wider community.

In short, when the formal identity (institutions, organizations) of local religions experiences various existential challenges, then returning to the roots of the local culture where local religion is located will greatly support its existence. Local religion is like taking refuge in its own "home", a place where it feels safe and at the same time fights for its existence.

Sunda Wiwitan and Sérén Taun

Sunda Wiwitan is one of a number of local religions in Indonesia. The local religion, which was originally called the Javanese Sundanese Religion (ADS), was founded by Prince Sadewa Alibassa Kusuma Widjajaningrat alias Mohammad Rais or Kyai Madrais in the 1920s. After having existed for about 44 years, ADS or Madraism was forcibly disbanded by the government because ADS was considered unconstitutional and disturbing the community. Prince Tedja Buana Alibassa (son of Madrais) signed the letter to dissolve ADS on September 21, 1964.

After the disbandment, ADS "take refuge" in the Catholic religion. The majority of ex-ADS residents have converted to Catholicism. They followed in the footsteps of their leader who also chose Catholicism. While a small

number of other ex-ADS residents chose Islam and Protestant Christianity as their religion. Therefore, the Pasèban building, which is usually used as a centre for ADS activities, has been changed to a centre for Catholic religious activities.

After 17 years of "taking refuge" in Catholicism, ADS leader Prince Djatikusumah (grandson of Madrais) declared his departure from Catholicism. Djatikusumah's conversion was followed by his close family and loyalists. Then ADS was reborn under the name PACKU (Paguyuban Adat Karuhun Urang) in 1981. PACKU's existence did not last long. On August 15, 1982 the existence of PACKU was banned by the West Java High Court. After the PACKU ban, ADS emerged again with a new identity, namely the Karuhun Urang Indigenous Community (AKUR) or Sunda Wiwitan. This last name still exists today under the leadership of Prince Djatikusumah (93 years old). The church building was eventually taken over by Djatikusumah to serve as a place and centre for Sunda Wiwitan activities. This in turn worsened the relationship between several Catholic church leaders and Sunda Wiwitan figures and residents.

The existential challenges to Sunda Wiwitan are increasingly complex. Sunda Wiwitan gets discriminatory treatment from the local government which should recognize and protect it. Sunda Wiwitan face various obstacles to get their civil rights. Even though they are both Indonesian citizens (WNI), the rights of Sunda Wiwitan residents are distinguished from Indonesian citizens who embrace the official religion (Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). The marriages of Sunda Wiwitan residents cannot be registered at the Population and Civil Registry Office (Dukcapil). This then makes it difficult for their children to obtain Child Birth Certificates. Even though the Dukcapil publishes the Child Birth Certificate, regarding the data on the child's parents, they only include the mother's name, without the father's name. This is allegedly a systemic effort from the state to separate the biological aspects between children and their biological fathers. Furthermore, marriage and family became targets of shooting in order to reject the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. The stigma of "illegal marriage" or "kumpul kebo" which used to be attached to ADS adherents, is still attached to the marriages of Sunda Wiwitan residents.

Another discriminatory treatment is reflected in the government's policy regarding the blanking of the religion column on the National Identity Card (KTP). The religion column on the ID card for adherents of a local religion can be left blank, marked with a dash (-), or filled with the name of the

world religion. According to Sunda Wiwitan, the three acts are a form of abuse of human dignity. In this way, the government considers that the Sunda Wiwitan people have no religion and that Sunda Wiwitan is not an official religion.

A 14-year-old junior high school student testified about the discrimination she experienced. Once he was asked by the school administration about the name of his religion. When he replied that his type of religion was Sunda Wiwitan, the administrative officer could not list it because he considered Sunda Wiwitan not an official religion. Then the administrative officer required the girl to fill in the religion column by including Catholicism. The girl also experienced discrimination regarding the status of the child. In his birth certificate it is recorded that he is the "adopted son" of his real father. His parents' marriage was considered illegal and therefore could not be officially registered at the Dukcapil office. Another story is about the religion column on his parents' ID cards. They have been Catholicized, then converted to Islam, and finally converted to Confucianism; even though both parents have frankly mentioned Sunda Wiwitan as their religion. Likewise with their marital status; it says "married," but that status doesn't mean anything. The difficulty of obtaining Birth Certificates for children is an example of that difficulty.

The most actual form of challenge for the people of Sunda Wiwitan is the rejection from the community towards the construction of the future tomb of Djatikusumah-Emalia, the leader of Sunda Wiwitan. The placement of a large stone (a type of *menhir*) on top of the tomb building turned out to give rise to contradictory interpretations of symbols between Sunda Wiwitan and the demonstrators. The demonstration against the construction of the tomb led to the sealing and termination of its construction from the Kuningan District Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), on July 20, 2020.

Such is the existence of Sunda Wiwitan, one of all local religious traditions in Indonesia which is always faced with existential challenges. Indonesia's multi-religious society has not been able to become an adequate place for local religions to believe and live their beliefs. In Indonesia's multi-religious society, even local religions cannot use their religious identity in the public sphere. Rulers and the public do not recognize, appreciate, and protect local religious traditions. Therefore, local religions must have the right strategy to maintain their existence. Sunda Wiwitan realizes that he was born and exists in the Sundanese cultural tradition, therefore Sunda Wiwitan uses the harvest feast ceremony of the Sundanese agrarian society, namely *Sérén Taun* as one of

its existential strategies. Sunda Wiwitan "abandoned" religious identity, then "replaced" it with cultural identity.

Sérén Taun is a thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest in the agrarian society of the Sundanese ethnic group. The term "Sérén Taun" is derived from two Sundanese words: "sérén" means "surrender or surrender" and the word "taun" means "year" (related to the calendar). In the form of a verb, the word "sérén" becomes "nyérénkeun" which means "to surrender or surrender". The term Sérén Taun literally means: surrendering the (past) year to God. In general, the term Sérén Taun means: giving up the year that will end with all God's gifts received by humans (harvests) and welcoming the new year that will come with a request to God so that the next harvest can be better than the previous year. In the tradition of the Sundanese agrarian society, Sérén Taun is a momentum for its citizens to give thanks to God for all the agricultural products obtained this year and ask Him for better agricultural products in the coming year. This cultural representation of the Sundanese agrarian society is practiced in several areas of the Tatar Sunda (West Java and Banten provinces), such as: Cigugur Village, Kuningan; Kasepuhan Banten Kidul; Ciptagelar Village, Ciselok, Sukabumi; Sindang Barang traditional village, Pasir Eurih, Bogor; Kanekes Village, Lebak, Banten; and Kampung Naga, Tasikmalaya.

In accordance with its goal, namely being grateful for agricultural harvests, the material for the Sérén Taun ceremony also comes from the agricultural world. The main material is upland rice or field rice. Rice, in the belief of the ancient Sundanese agrarian society, is always associated with a woman named Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Asri or Pwah Aci or Dewi Sri. She is believed by the Sundanese people to be the goddess of rice and the goddess of fertility. Dewi Sri's partner is Kuwera, a man known as the god of prosperity. In the Sérén Taun ritual, the two are mated. The marriage of Dewi Sri and Kuwera is a symbol of unity between a man and a woman, a symbol of family welfare and community prosperity.

Apart from rice, in Sérén Taun there are also all kinds of fruits, tubers, and vegetables. The more and more complete the existence of the material, the more it describes the existence of prosperity and prosperity. Fruits with tubers symbolize the combination of the sky or the upper world with the earth or the underworld. While vegetables symbolize the mediator or the middle way between the two (heaven and earth). All the material for the Sérén Taun ceremony is a sign of harmony and oneness between man, the universe, and the Creator.

The distinctive character of the Sérén Taun ceremony in the Cigugur region is that Sérén Taun is a religious holiday for Sunda Wiwitan. The feast is always held on 22 Rayagung (10 Djulhijah in the Islamic year), which is the last month based on the Sundanese calendar system known as Saka Sunda.³

The number 22 is interpreted by Sunda Wiwitan as a combination of the number 20 and number 2. The number 20 is a symbol of the whole human being which is constructed from 20 types of body parts. According to Sunda Wiwitan, humans (male and female) have 20 body parts, namely: blood, flesh, fur, nails, hair, skin, veins, brain, lungs, liver, spleen, *maras*, bile, bones, marrow, fat. , stomach, intestines, kidneys, and heart. The twenty parts of the human body have different functions, but all of them are in one unit in the human body. The organs of the body are unique, but work together in one system of human life. This symbolizes the existence of diversity, but that diversity must be in unity for the common good. In a religious context, the number 20 symbolizes the existence of different religions, but all religions must work together, acknowledge and protect each other so that social conditions can be safe and peaceful.

The number 2 is a symbol of social reality which is always in pairs, even contradictory. Reality describes the existence of male and female, life and death, day and night, joy and sorrow, good and bad, right and wrong, or light and dark. According to the teachings of Sunda Wiwitan, the contradictory nature of the two is real and cannot be negated by humans. Both create, complement, perfect, and give identity to each other. Humans must accept this paradoxical reality and realize it as *papastèn* (certainty). Man cannot win the one by defeating the other; recognition of both paradoxical properties is inevitable. The logic is, there can never be light without darkness, there can never be a man without a woman; there can never be something good without

³ In the Cigugur community and its surroundings, the encounter of Islam with Sundanese culture gave rise to a new teaching, namely the Javanese Sundanese Religion with Kyai Madrais as its founder. However, the adaptation of traditional elements to Islam is very visible, for example cultural adaptation in naming the moon. The months in the Sundanese tradition partially adapt the Hijri month, namely: Sura (Muharram), Sapar (Shafar), Mulud (Rabiul Awwal), Sawal Mulud (Rabiul Akhir), Jumadil Awal (Jumadil Awal), Jumadil Akhir (Jumadil Akhir), Rajab , Ruwah (Sha'ban), Fasting (Ramadan), Sawal (Syawal), Hapit (Zulkaidah), and Rayagung (Zulhijah). The adjustment of the Old Javanese calendar system (the Saka year) into the Islamic calendar system was made in 1663 AD by Sultan Agung of the Mataram kingdom who set the year 78 AD as the starting point of the Saka year. With the new calendar system, the first month in the Javanese calendar is the same as the first month of the Islamic calendar.

something bad, etc. Recognition, respect, and protection of one another is a necessity according to the teachings of Sunda Wiwitan.

An Appeal from Sérén Taun

In the series of Sérén Taun ceremonies, the number 22 is spread in several types of rituals. For example, at the Dadung Party ritual (buffalo herding ritual). In the ritual that elevates the value of loyalty and simplicity of the buffalo herder, there are 22 male dancers (11 people are old people and 11 are young people). In a circle formation, they sit or stand in alternating positions. They symbolize closeness, cooperation, and harmonious relations between generations; parents play a role and are responsible for teaching values to the younger generation, guiding and directing them to truth and goodness. On the other hand, the younger generation is obliged to always learn from their parents, respect them, and guarantee their old age. The number also symbolizes regeneration (the ability of parents to humbly give their trust and role to young people), continuity (values and wisdom are always taught from generation to generation), and a symbol of love for one's own culture (not uprooted from cultural roots).). In other words, according to Sunda Wiwitan, the young and old elements play a role, are responsible, and work together for a common good.

In the ritual of the Dadung Party, it tells the story of the figure of the slave Angon Munding (buffalo herder). The buffalo herder is a symbol of simplicity, modesty, and humility of a servant towards his master or master. He will always accept and carry out the orders of his master. Ready to sacrifice for the sake of the master is also a typical character of a shepherd. Therefore, an employer must be wise in determining expectations and orders for his servants. The master does not enslave his servant based on the power he has. What about the policy of the state rulers for their people? Wise for the sake of the people or just stepping on the people?

The animal that is herded by a shepherd is the buffalo. Buffaloes are black-bodied and slow-moving animals. The buffalo doesn't "talk" much, but is ready to work. Buffaloes are animals that are in solidarity with each other and love their children. Sunda Wiwitan raises the buffalo as a human image that is not attractive to the naked eye, but he is a wise person, hard worker, in solidarity with others, and loves his next generation. The buffalo satirized human nature which often felt the greatest, most correct, quick to speak, lazy to work, and hated each other.

The number 22 can also be found on the participants of the Ngajayak ritual (the procession of offering rice and all kinds of crops). In *ngajayak* there are 22 young people (11 girls in pairs with 11 boys) and 22 quintals of rice. Young couples who bring offerings are a symbol of good actions that must be done early on. Anyone should be able to share anything with anyone. The position of 11 men covering 11 women in the procession symbolizes that men (in a patriarchal context) must be able to protect women. The pairing attitude (male and female) symbolizes that even paradoxical differences play a role in complementing each other.

Rice weighing 22 quintals is a symbol of sustainable prosperity. At the climax of the Sérén Taun event, the 20 quintals of rice will be pounded by the residents who attend the Sérén Taun ritual. The pounded rice will be distributed to those who really need it. It symbolizes the cooperation of all parties, concern for the poor and weak, and the spirit of compassion for everyone. Meanwhile, rice weighing 2 quintals will be stored in *leuit* (rice barn), which will later be used for seeds. Thus, the existence of rice varieties will not be destroyed and human prosperity can be maintained. This symbolizes the human ability to manage their wealth wisely, live frugally, and read future needs.

Still related to rice, Sunda Wiwitan also carries out the *Mesék Paré* (peeling rice) ritual. *Mesék paré* or manually peeling each grain of rice. Each grain of rice is removed from its strands and then peeled one by one using fingernails. Everyone can be involved in the rice-peeling ritual which is usually done in the Pasèban building. Participants will get three strands of rice and one small paper plate. In a quiet atmosphere and without interaction between participants, each participant peeled the grains of rice, the rice was collected in a paper plate, and if all three strands of rice had been peeled, the participants could collect the rice in the space provided, and then leave the place.

The *Mesék Paré* ritual teaches people about wisdom and patience. According to Sunda Wiwitan, achieving something good takes time and a process. Rice is the basic ingredient of the staple human diet. This rice must be processed first before it becomes rice that can be consumed. Before it can be consumed, rice (the result of agricultural labour) must be separated from the stalk and peeled off to become rice. After being in the form of rice, rice still has to be washed and cooked until it becomes rice. After becoming rice, hot rice must be cooled, after it cools down then the rice can be served and eaten with side dishes and vegetables.

The long process from rice to rice teaches humans that life is always related to process and time. The form of human thought, speech, and action must undergo a long "process" to bring good. Sorting through various possibilities, then choosing only the good ones, then making the bad things as a mirror is an action that must be done by humans. Everything must be carefully thought out so as not to harm yourself or others.

Other rituals in the series of Sérén Taun ceremonies are: the Damar Sewu ritual (a thousand torches), the Thousand Kentongan ritual, the Jamparing Apsari Dance, the Buyung Dance, and the Pwah Aci Dance (the dance of Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice). The Damar Séwu ritual is the ritual of lighting 1000 oil lamps scattered in the four cardinal directions with the fire in Pasban as the centre. This ceremony symbolizes the existence of "light" (goodness, prosperity) in every place, no place or party is excluded. The ceremony also invites everyone to illuminate each other, not to show off their brilliance, let alone just want to be the brightest themselves. Furthermore, this ritual commands everyone to be able to live honestly, openly, and provide help to anyone who is in the darkness and fear of life.

A thousand torches burning in the four cardinal directions is a symbol of strength. Sunda Wiwitan invites everyone to be "light or fire" for others. Like fire, man can ripen the raw, soften the hard, illuminate those who walk in darkness, give courage to those who are afraid, encourage those who are in despair. So, how is human behavior today? Does he become the light/fire that saves or destroys his fellow man?

At the Thousand Kentongan ritual, Sunda Wiwitan calls for vigilance and alertness that everyone should have. *Kentongan* is an object that will make a loud sound when hit. *Kentongan* is usually made of one bamboo segment with a small hole extending on one side. If the *kentongan* is hit it will produce a loud (and loud) sound. The sound of the *kentongan* will vary depending on the size and length of the bamboo segments. If a thousand gongs are struck, then a thousand various sounds will appear; all the sounds rebuke each other, complement each other, create melodies, even orchestras. Thus Sunda Wiwitan invites people to admonish each other, remind each other, and protect each other. In various forms of diversity (not to mention the diversity of beliefs) Sunda Wiwitan teaches that every element of difference can contribute to harmony and beauty like an orchestra. The *kentongan* ritual also invites people to wake up, be aware, and be alert. Because only humans who are alert and awake (not just silent, not just awake) are always ready and alert

physically and mentally, wise in mind, and remember the characteristics of humanity.

There are still a series of dance types to complete the Sérén Taun ceremony, namely the Jamparing Apsari Dance, Buyung Dance, and Pwah Aci Dance. All of these dances have their own message. Jamparing Apsari dance is a dance of love that is only played by young women. Eight young girls dressed like angels with long batik-patterned cloth up to their heels and pink shawls were waddling with bows and arrows. They are ready to shoot the arrows of romance or love. This dance has the message that everyone has love for others. The joy, agility, smiles, and beauty of the dancers symbolize kindness and beautiful things should be shared with anyone, without being picky

Buyung dance is the story of the women of the past who had a habit of taking clean water in the river using a pitcher (a type of large copper jug). The dances performed by these women illustrate that they have a big role and responsibility in the family. They are the preservers and guardians of life as water is a symbol of life. Therefore, women should be respected for their dignity, not looked down upon.

Similar to Buyung Dance is the Pwah Aci Dance. Pwah Aci dance is a dance that tells the story of a woman named Dewi Sri, who is believed to be the Goddess of Rice, the goddess of fertility and life. This dance, which is also played by women, makes everyone aware of the love of a mother, on "rice" as the identity of the Sundanese agrarian society; on the maintenance of land and water (environment), and on marriage and family.

In fact, the moral appeal and message of humanity is widespread in anything related to the Sérén Taun ceremony. In addition to the types of events described above, the voice of the voiceless can be found in prayers, introductory remarks and remarks from traditional leaders and bureaucrats, and explanations of the meaning of each ritual being held.

Sérén Taun: Public Communication and Survival Living Sunda Wiwitan

There are at least three important meanings of the Sérén Taun ceremony in Cigugur, Kuningan, West Java for the local religion of Sunda Wiwitan, namely: Sunda Wiwitan can lift and preserve Sundanese traditional arts and culture, convey moral and humanitarian messages to community members (communicate to the public) and maintain its existence (survival living). The three basic meanings or intentions of the Sérén Taun ceremony are related to each other, the three cannot be separated rigidly.

First, through the Sérén Taun ceremony, Sunda Wiwitan wants to promote and preserve traditional arts and Sundanese culture. Its concrete form is reflected in the use of traditional musical instruments (gamelan *goong rentèng*, *angklung* beans, *dogdog*, *jentrèng*, *kecapi*, flute, fiddle), the local Sundanese language that appears in songs, mantras, prayers, and greetings). traditional clothing for men and women (black *Pangsi* and headbands for men and white-brown *kebaya* for women), types of attractions (Puragabaya Gebang Kinatan dance, *Pwah Aci* dance, *Jamparing Apsari* dance, *Buyung* dance, old village children's games , *angklung* beans), traditional foods such as rice *begana*, *tumpang*, and processed products from tubers, and the type of action or behavior (peeling rice, pounding rice, fertilizing rice).

Another important thing is the location or place of the ritual. The series of Sérén Taun ceremonies are always held in several different locations. For example, *Situ Hyang* (lake of the gods), *Balong Girang* (sacred pond), procession routes (*Cisantana*, *Sukamulya*, *Cipari*, *Palebèn*, etc.), *Taman Sari Pasèban*, and *Pasèban Building* as the venue for the highlight of the Sérén Taun event. These places have their own historical stories so that their regular or regular use can serve as a reminder to the public about the historical aspects of Sunda Wiwitan and the spatial (geographical) territorial boundaries of Sunda Wiwitan.

Second, Sérén Taun brings local knowledge that is relevant and even significant for today's human life. Every part of the ritual of the Sérén Taun ceremony has a moral and humanitarian message so that humans live in peace and harmony with their fellow humans and the universe. There are noble values that are clearly visible, but there are also values that are hidden in symbols or symbols. Hosts and traditional elders usually reveal hidden values or messages through their narratives or speeches.

Third, moral values, humanity, and even religious values are the reasons why Sunda Wiwitan wants to promote or preserve Sundanese culture. These noble values are also the "weapons" for Sunda Wiwitan in criticizing and resisting various forms of discrimination (religious, social, gender) and destruction (culture, environment, and humanism).

This criticism and resistance is reflected in rituals such as: *Pesta Dadung* (the ritual of the buffalo herder with *dadung*, namely a large rope of hemp fiber as a guide for the buffalo) criticizing and resisting the repression of power and the destruction of the ecosystem; *Tayuban* dance (a social dance of all races) wants to reduce the gap between generations and power relations; *The Thousand Kentongan Ritual* (a percussion instrument made of bamboo)

seeks to expel laziness, indifference, and sectoral egoism; The Mesèk Parè ritual (peeling rice manually) expels mental or instant and easy-going culture by building a spirit of perseverance, loyalty, patience, and love for work; the Kaulinan Barudak attraction (an old village children's game) tries to fortify children and local knowledge from the dangers of foreign cultural intervention; The Damar Sewu (thousand torchlight) ritual reminds people to illuminate and protect each other, not to be selfish, hypocritical, and willing to win on their own.

The various rich dances of Emalia Djatikusumah (wife of Prince Djatikusumah, the present leader of Sunda Wiwitan) also sharpened the weapons of Sunda Wiwitan's struggle. The Jamparing Apsari dance (dance for romantic archers), Buyung Dance (dance for women seeking water), and Pwah Aci Dance (dance for the goddess of rice, the goddess of fertility) are media for planting and appreciating the teachings of the ancestors regarding the masculinity-femininity relationship. The art of dance is a concrete effort to revive Sundanese teachings and culture, transform, and pass on Sundanese values. The art of dance has also become a "weapon of resistance" against discrimination in the rights and social existence of Sundanese women, breaking through barriers of discrimination and the government's repressive attitude. Emalia, through art, tries to raise the confidence of the Sunda Wiwitan community in an effort to survive living amidst the scourge of anti-customs and Sundanese Wiwitan traditions. The dance also functions as a means of "public communication" that the teachings and existence of Sunda Wiwitan deserve attention, be treated fairly, do not need to be suspected and treated in a discriminatory manner by the surrounding community.

Behind the appointment and preservation of Sundanese arts and culture, the public is asking who raised them, admiring them because the public feels the benefits, and supporting them because the public realizes that local knowledge is important for the community.

The Sérén Taun ceremony, which is held every year, further shows and introduces the existence of Sunda Wiwitan to a wider audience. Residents in Cigugur and its surroundings always identify or relate Sérén Taun with Sunda Wiwitan. Sérén Taun also "calls" spontaneously and sincerely the community members to support his existence. This means that Sunda Wiwitan is not only known, but also strengthened by its construction by members of the community across: faith, region, age, gender, social status. Any member of the community can contribute to the Sérén Taun event in the form of financial, material, energy, time, thought, and attendance. Sunda Wiwitan which is

fused in Sundanese cultural identity and tradition can be supported and lived by citizens who are aware of protecting and preserving Sundanese culture.

Through *Sérén Taun*, Sunda Wiwitan has increasingly clear territories. The standard determination of the time and place of the ceremony makes Sunda Wiwitan have a clear temporal (time) and spatial (geographical) territory. The standardization of the *Sérén Taun* ceremony on every 22nd Rayagung (10 Djulhijah), ceremonial venues such as Situ Hyang, Balong Girang, Pasèban, and procession routes (Cisantana, Sukamulya, Cipari, Palebèn, etc.) Wiwitan. The existence of this firm territory further emphasizes the existence of Sunda Wiwitan.

Sérén Taun became the most adequate strategy for the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. The acceptance and appreciation of all levels of society (even the state) towards *Sérén Taun* is a sign of the acceptance and appreciation of the community towards the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. The *Sérén Taun* ceremony, which is integral to Sundanese culture and Sundanese values, also indicates that the Sunda Wiwitan religious tradition is integral to the social life of the Sundanese people without requiring the Sundanese to have a Sunda Wiwitan identity

D. Conclusion

Indonesia's multi-religious society is perceived as consisting of six world religions, without any local religion in it. Local religious traditions (local religions) are excluded from religious diversity in Indonesia. State regulations that only determine six world religions and criteria regarding religion simultaneously exclude local religions as non-religion.

The stigma of local religion as non-religious has an impact on the destruction of a number of local religions. If now there are local religions that still exist, they must struggle to maintain their existence. One of the existential strategies deemed appropriate by the local religion is to return to its cultural roots, the place where the local religion was born and exists. Local religion uses a cultural identity that makes its existence more acceptable to the community than using a religious identity.

Sunda Wiwitan is one of a number of local religions that exist in Indonesia. Sunda Wiwitan also faces the same challenges as other local religions. He also uses cultural identity as a strategy for his existence. Sunda Wiwitan raised the *Sérén Taun* Ceremony as a form of public communication, resistance, and resistance to the challenges that occurred.

The Sérén Taun ceremony in Cigugur has an important meaning for the existence of Sunda Wiwitan. For Sunda Wiwitan, the Sérén Taun ceremony is not merely a thanksgiving ceremony for agricultural harvests or a cultural feast for the Sundanese agrarian society, nor is it simply an event for various Sundanese traditional arts, regional agricultural products exhibition, or a meeting opportunity for community members and regional leaders. The Sérén Taun event is not just a spectacle or traditional entertainment at the end of the Saka Sunda year. For the local Sunda Wiwitan religion, Sérén Taun is a medium of public communication and its survival living. Sérén Taun is the way how Sunda Wiwitan can be known, recognized, appreciated, and even protected by citizens and the state. Sérén Taun is an opportunity for Sunda Wiwitan to introduce, revive, and pass on Sunda Wiwitan values (love for others and nationality) and Sundanese values. Sérén Taun wants to show the audience that the teachings and existence of Sunda Wiwitan deserve attention, be treated fairly, do not need to be suspected and treated in a discriminatory manner by anyone.

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