



ASCETICISM AND SELF-PURIFICATION IN THE FOLKLORE OF PRABU SILIWANGI: A SYMBOLIC STUDY AT THE CITARUM SITE

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ABSTRACT

Write abstract in English/Arabic. Use Cambria 11 for body of the abstract with one spacing between lines, justified, and consists of 200 words. Inform; the issue, purpose (contains objectives of the research), method (delivers data collection of the research), results of the research (refers to collected data as an effort to answer research question), impact and conclusion (summary of the finding and the result of the research). This study aims to examine the fundamental differences between folklore and history, as well as how both contribute to the understanding of collective identity and cultural heritage in Indonesia. This research is significant given the relatively recent development of folklore as an independent academic discipline in Indonesia and the need to conceptually distinguish it from scientific historiography. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing literature review and field observations at cultural heritage sites such as Patilasan Dipatiukur and Prabu Siliwangi. The data analysis applies an interpretive method to explore narratives and cultural symbols embedded in both folklore and historical artifacts. The findings reveal that although folklore does not rely on empirical evidence like history, it holds essential value as a collective reflection of community experiences, imagination, and aspirations. In contrast, history requires verifiable sources as its foundation. These findings underscore the importance of preserving both as integral parts of the nation's collective memory. The study implies the need for a synergistic approach that combines folkloristic and historiographical perspectives in education and cultural preservation. The originality of this research lies in its integrated approach, combining narrative analysis with the exploration of historical sites to trace the interconnection between collective memory, myth, and historical fact within the context of contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Pajajaran Kingdom, Spread of Religion, Islam, Sundanese History

INTRODUCTION

The presence of folklore in Indonesia is an inseparable part of the intangible cultural heritage that lives and thrives within society. Beyond stories, folklore is also rich in meaning, often embodying ethical, spiritual, and symbolic values. Furthermore, folklore is a relatively new discipline in Indonesia, developing as a distinct field.



According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), folklore can be defined as traditional customs and folktales passed down from generation to generation but not documented (KBBI.Kemdikbud.Go.Id, n.d.).

One form of folklore that can be studied in historical and cultural studies is the story of Prabu Siliwangi, which still lives on in the oral tradition of the Sundanese people. Several studies on Prabu Siliwangi's existence as a historical-legendary figure have been published in several scientific journals. Mas Noerdjito, Mohammad Fathi Royyani, and Hawal Widodo, in their article "The Role of Custom and the Sanctification of Springs in Water Conservation on the Slopes of Ciremai" (2009), concluded that the success of the communities surrounding the slopes of Mount Ciremai in preserving the environment is due to the myth of King Siliwangi.

The myth that several artifacts are remnants of King Siliwangi and his descendants has become a source of belief for the community, encouraging them to protect them. Therefore, destroying relics (heritage) will result in the loss of water sources. As a manifestation of this belief, the community regularly performs a Cai marriage ceremony (Ritual Kawin Cai). This ceremony aims to pray to God Almighty that the community's water source will never be depleted. The ceremony involves mixing water from the Balong Dalem (built by Sultan Matang Aji, Cirebon) with water from the seven wells surrounding the rock where King Siliwangi resides. In this article, the author does not reveal who Prabu Siliwangi Bersemedi is on the stone because this article is not intended to identify Prabu Siliwangi.

METHOD

History is an empirical science. Izzatur Rusuli (2015) states that empirical is a rational idea formed by individuals through their experiences. Meanwhile, according to Sugiyono (2013), empirical is a method or method that can be observed by human senses, so that the method or method used can be known and observed by others. The consequence of history as an empirical science is that every historical statement must be based on reliable sources (facts). Therefore, if there are no historical sources, there is no history.

This distinguishes history from fairy tales, because storytelling (without facts) is a product of the fictional imagination. In fairy tales, there is no claim that the story is based on empirical facts or whether an event actually occurred or not. The value of a source supporting a historical statement depends heavily on many factors, such as whether the source is authentic or not from a historical actor, whether the source witnessed the historical event directly, and whether the source is authentic or derived. Furthermore, it is also necessary to examine the time interval between the source and the historical event. These factors influence the quality of the source, or what can be called its credibility and authenticity. Therefore, history categorizes sources as primary, secondary, tertiary, and so on. From another perspective, there are also categories of facts (as supporting sources for history), namely artifacts, social facts, and mental facts. In terms of form, sources consist of material sources, written sources, and oral sources. The primary sources collected and used in this article are the Fragments

of the Carita Parahyangan (Carita Parahyangan) completed by Undang A. Darsa and Edi S. Ekadjati and the Carita Parahyangan (Carita Parahyangan) completed by Atja.

The data were then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, beginning with data reduction to filter relevant information from all sources (Miles & Huberman, 1992). The reduced data were then interpreted through a historical approach, focusing on King Siliwangi and his impact on the Islamic movement in Indonesia. Conclusions were drawn based on the relationship between the events of the Pajajaran Kingdom and the Islamic movement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Historical Background and Symbolic Representation of Prabu Siliwangi

Sri Baduga Maharaja or Prabu Siliwangi III, known as Queen Jayadewata (1401–1521), was born in 1401 AD in Kawali Ciamis, the son of Prabu Dewa Niskala, son of Mahaprabu Niskala Wastu Kancana. Prabu Siliwangi began the reign of the Pakuan Pajajaran era, ruling the Sunda Galuh Kingdom for 39 years (1482–1521). It was during this period that Pakuan Pajajaran (now located in Bogor City) reached the peak of its development. In the Batutulis inscription (1533 AD) it is reported that Sri Baduga was crowned twice, the first time when Jayadewata received the throne of the Galuh Kingdom in Kawali Ciamis from his father Prabu Dewa Niskala, son of Mahaprabu Niskala Wastu Kancana from Empress Mayangsari, daughter of Prabu Bunisora, who later held the title Prabu Guru Dewataprana. The second was when he received the throne of the Sunda Kingdom in Pakuan Bogor from his father-in-law and uncle, Prabu Susuktunggal, son of Mahaprabu Niskala Wastu Kancana, from Empress Ratna Sarkati, daughter of Resi Susuk Lampung. Through this event, he became the ruler of the Sunda Kingdom - the Galuh Kingdom and was crowned with the title Sri Baduga Maharaja Ratu Haji in Pakuan Pajajaran Sri Sang Ratu Dewata. Thus, once again and for the final time, after a "quiet" period of 149 years, the Sundanese people witnessed the royal procession moving from east to west. To describe the circumstances of the royal family's move, see Pindahnya Ratu Pajajaran.

In his youth, Sri Baduga, or Prabu Jayadewata, was renowned as a brave and agile knight-errant traveler. His first wife, Nyai Ambetkasih, daughter of his uncle (Ki Gedeng Sindangkasih, son of Mahaprabu Niskala Wastu Kancana), was from the Surantaka Kingdom, whose capital was Kedaton Village (now in Kapetakan District, Cirebon). The ruler of Muarajati Port in Cirebon directly bordered the Sing Apura Kingdom. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, King Jayadewata. In various ways, his contemporaries recalled the greatness of his late great-grandfather (Prabu Maharaja Lingga Buana), who died in Bubad and was given the title Prabu Wangi.

The name of King Siliwangi can be traced to numerous ancient Sundanese manuscripts, including the Sanghyang Siksa Kandang Karesian manuscript (Danasasmita, 1987), the Carita Parahiyangan (Atja, 1968), the Bujangga Manik manuscript (West, 2021), and the Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari (Atja, 1986). According to these manuscripts, at least since the early 16th century AD, the name "Siliwangi" has been known as a character in pantun stories and as a king who ruled in

Pakuan Pajajaran. Broadly speaking, the four manuscripts referring to King Siliwangi are described as follows. Like the excerpt from the Sanghyang Siksa Kandang Karesian manuscript below (Nurwansah, 2020).

"Hayang nyaho di pa(n)tun ma, la(ng) galarang, banyakcatra, prepa(n)tun tanya. 16 L 630 sili[h]wangi,"

"Hayang nyaho di pantun ma: Langgalarang, Banyakcatra, Siliwangi, prepantun tanya"

Apart from that, in the Carita Parahyangan manuscript, Sri Baduga's reign is described as follows:

"Purbatisi purbajati, mana mo kadatangan ku musuh ganal musuh alit. Suka kreta tang lor kidul kulon wetan kena Kontribusi Raja Sribaduga Terhadap Penyebaran Agama Islam di Sundakreta rasa. Tan kreta ja lakibi dina urang reya, ja loba di sanghiyang siksa".

The text quote has the meaning that: "The teachings of the ancestors are upheld so that enemies will not come, whether in the form of troops or mental illness. Happiness and prosperity in the north, west and east. Like human behavior that will be useful for many people is that which follows the teachings of Sanghyang Siksa Kandang Karesian. Every hulun is ordered to always be alert to the pancagati so that in the future they will not experience misery. A hulun must not be treasonous and cunning, and do not betray themselves, as stated in the following text:

"Ini twah ing janma pigunaeun na urang réya. Ulah mo turut sang hyang siksakandang karesian. Jaga rang dék luput ing na pancagati, sangsara. Mulah carut mulah saréréh, mulah nyangcarutkeun manéh"

In more detail, several actions that include betraying oneself are explained, namely when the determination is full of deception, so that what is said is not, what is not said is true (Nurwansah, 2017). From this manuscript, it can be seen that at that time many people of Pajajaran had converted to Islam by leaving the old religion. The end of the King of Sunda-Galuh (Pajajaran) Prabu Siliwangi is estimated to be 1518 AD, where Sri Baduga Maharaja or Prabu Siliwangi and his entourage left the Pakuan Pajajaran Palace in Bogor. The way taken when leaving the palace, namely by retreating secretly (not wanting to be known) or what is known as "Ngahyang" and is remembered by the Tatar Sunda community written in a Carita Pantun Ngahyangna Pajajaran. The Kingdom of Sunda-Galuh (Pajajaran) was re-established and continued by Prabu Surawisesa Jayaperkosa in 1521 AD or can be called the "new" Pajajaran Anyar. Below is a diagram of some of the names of the ancestral genealogy of the Sunda-Galuh Kingdom from Prabu Raga Mulya Luhur Prabawa.

The results of the study and comparison of various sources by practicing collaborative techniques (Purwaka Caruban, Pamarican Manuscript, Waruga Jagat, Babad Pajajaran, Carita Parahiyangan, and Babad Siliwangi) conducted by Saleh Danasasmita (2003) seem to be a stronger opinion. In these strong sources, Prabu Siliwangi is only one and is identical to the king figure named Prabu Jayadewata or Sri Baduga Maharaja who ruled as the Sundanese king who ruled in Pakwan Pajajaran in 1482-1521 (Lubis, 1991).

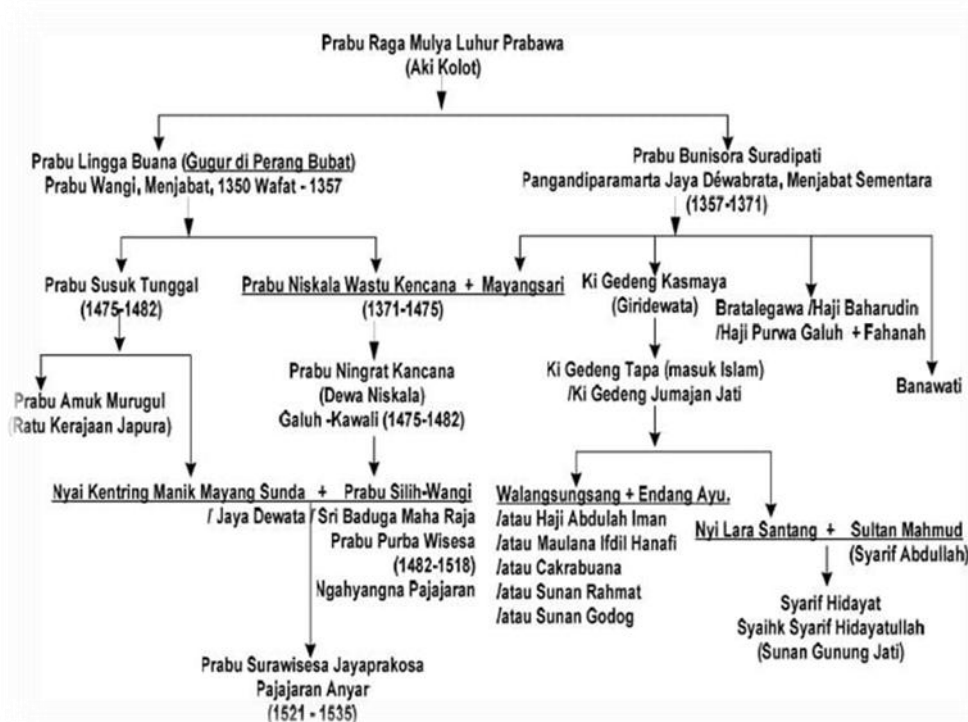


Figure 1. Genealogy of the Pajajaran Kingdom, Sulasman (2018).

Sri Baduga Maharaja was a Sundanese king who united two kingdoms in Tatar Sunda: the Galuh Kingdom and the Sunda Kingdom. These two kingdoms emerged after King Sanghyang Niskala Wastu Kencana, at the end of his reign, divided the Sunda Kingdom into two kingdoms: the Galuh Kingdom and the Sunda Kingdom. The Galuh Kingdom, located east of the Citarum River, was handed over to his eldest son, Tohaan di Galuh/Dewa Niskala/Ningrat Kencana/Jyaningrat. Meanwhile, the territory west of the Citarum River was handed over to his second son, Sanghyang Haliwungan, also known as Prabu Susuktunggal. Prabu Dewa Niskala's eldest son, Jayadewata, later married Prabu Susuktunggal's daughter, and soon afterward, the throne of Pakwan Pajajaran was handed over to his son-in-law and nephew.

During his reign, Sri Baduga Maharaja successfully mitigated the threat of natural disasters, including flooding, by constructing an artificial lake known as Sang Hyang Talaga Rena Mahawijaya. With the presence of the artificial lake, agricultural activities did not fail to bring prosperity to the entire kingdom. In addition to bringing prosperity to his kingdom, Sri Baduga Maharaja was faced with a critical problem, namely the Islamization of the Tatar Sunda region, pioneered by his son, Prabu Kian Santang. This Islamization threatened the integrity of his territory, as evidenced by the fall of the Sunda coastal region into the hands of Cirebon and Banten. To overcome the threat of Islamization, Sri Baduga Maharaja attempted to form a political coalition with the Portuguese, centered in Malacca. This coalition was realized with the signing of a political agreement between the Sunda kingdom and the Portuguese on August 21, 1522 AD, when the throne of the Sunda kingdom was handed over to the son of

Maharaja Sri Baduga, named Ratu Samiam, who was later known as Prabu Surawisesa (Djajadiningrat, 1913).

King Siliwangi had a Muslim wife named Subang Larang. By her, King Siliwangi had children: Walangsungsang, Rara Santang, Rajasanagara, and others, all of whom were Muslim. Walangsungsang was given the name Ki Samadullah by his Islamic teacher in Ampara Jati, Syekh Datuk Kahfi. In 1445 AD, Ki Samadullah established a settlement in the coastal forest, named Cirebon Larang or Cirebon Pesisir. This settlement was subsequently led by Ki Danusela. After performing the Hajj, Walangsungsang was given the title Haji Abdullah Iman by his teacher in Mecca. Walangsungsang also married Ki Danusela's daughter, Renta Riris (Kancanalarang).

After Ki Danusela's death, Walangsungsang succeeded him as leader of Cirebon Larang. With the financial support of his grandfather, Ki Gedeng Tapa, Walangsungsang built a palace for his troops. Sri Baduga even granted his blessing by sending Ki Jagabaya to convey the sign of his authority and conferring the title Sri Mangana on Walangsungsang. Syarif Hidayat, son of Rara Santang and grandson of King Siliwangi, came and settled in Cirebon, then became an Islamic religious teacher, replacing Sheikh Datuk Kahfi, who had died. Walangsungsang crowned him Tumenggung of Cirebon. By the time Syarif Hidayat became Tumenggung, Islam had spread to Kuningan and Laragung. In 1482 CE, Syarif Hidayat was crowned king of Cirebon with the title Susuhunan Jati (Sulyana, 2006: 39-40).

Understandably, the end of King Siliwangi's reign coincided with the beginning of the development of Islam in the Priangan region. It could be argued that King Siliwangi contributed to the development of Islamic da'wah by marrying a Muslim noblewoman, Subang Larang, and adopting a tolerant attitude. King Siliwangi also allowed his children from Subang Larang to embrace their mother's religion, a practice that was difficult for his time (Suryana, 2018). Sri Baduga was a wise king, and by God's grace, the people of Pajajaran prospered. He built defensive trenches and created several inscriptions (Kebantenan and Batutulis). Pakuan became the second largest city in the archipelago, after Demak, with a population of 50,000. Sri Baduga's reign is also known as the Gemuh Pakuan period, meaning Pakuan had a large population (Sulyana, 2006: 38).

B. Symbolism and the Process of Purification of King Siliwangi at the Citarum Spring

a. The Symbolism of Prabu Siliwangi's Purification at the Citarum Spring

King Siliwangi, believed to have ruled the Sunda Galuh Kingdom for 39 years, is said to have frequently purified himself in a pool located at the headwaters of the Citarum River, on Mount Wayang, Tarumajaya, Kertasari District, Bandung Regency, West Java. This folklore study on the symbolic meaning of King Siliwangi's meditation and bathing at the Citarum River Spring draws on an interview with Mr. Atep (Citarum River Cultural Heritage Preserve – King Siliwangi Baths) on October 4, 2024.

This relates to the purpose of the site as a place of meditation and bathing. Situ Cisanti is an artificial lake that collects water from seven main springs of the Citarum

River: Pangsiraman, Cikoleberes, Cikawadukan, Cikahuripan, Cisadana, Cihaniwung, and Cisanti. After revitalization by the West Java Provincial Government, the lake has become even more beautiful and has become a tourist attraction.

"Kolam itu memang diceritakan oleh pendahulu (ayah) saya sebagai kolam pemandian Prabu Siliwangi. Kalau pengunjung mau mandi di situ, ada tata caranya, saya pandu. Pengunjung harus melepas alas kaki, berendam sebanyak tiga kali, dan berkumur dengan air itu sebanyak tiga kali."



Figure 2. Mr. Atep (wearing a peci), Citarum River Cultural Heritage Caretaker, (Personal Documentation)

Atep, a seventh-generation caretaker of the cultural heritage site who has served for ten years, said that cleansing or bathing in the pool is not done to ask for something. He believes that asking for something should still be done to God. "So don't be mistaken. Bathing in the pool is only to cleanse the heart and clear the mind. Initially, you may have bad intentions toward others, but eventually, God willing, those bad intentions will disappear if you bathe in the pool," he said (Interview with Mr. Atep, November 4, 2024).



Figure 3. Atmosphere of Situ Cisanti, (Personal Documentation).

In Sundanese tradition, Patilasan is usually a destination for pilgrimages and traditional ceremonies. In the Sunda region, there is another place that is considered a

relic, a place that the ancestors of the village founders "willed" not to be disturbed. This place is usually a hill, river headwaters, or small forests. "Now Situ Cisanti Bandung can add to its beauty with various complete facilities so that it can provide greater comfort to visitors," said Kapendam III/Slw Colonel Inf Arie Tri Hedhianto, after accompanying Pangdam III/Slw Major General TNI Agus Subiyanto, visiting Cisanti, recently quoted from the statement of Pendam III/Siliwangi ("The Beauty of Kilometer 0 Citarum Situ Cisanti," 2021).

Atep also said that in the pool there is a footprint believed to be the left foot of King Siliwangi. The pool also has two sections, one for men and one for women. It is separated by a tree about half a meter in diameter that stretches across the pool. According to Atep, the large tree fell in 1974 and fell right in the middle of the pool, so it was used as a divider. Atep also admitted that several regional officials have visited the pool. However, he declined to reveal their names. At first glance, Kilometer Zero of the Citarum River may seem like an ordinary starting point, but behind it all, lies an irreplaceable charm. Through Patilasan Dipatiukur and King Siliwangi, we can reflect on the struggle and courage that shaped the history of this nation. The traces of Dipatiukur and King Siliwangi, carved into every stone and pool of water in this place, remind us of the importance of respecting and studying our precious historical heritage.

The situation following President Joko Widodo's visit in 2018 appears to have boosted the status of Situ Cisanti. "After the President's arrival, Situ Cisanti was managed by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), and the upper reaches of the Citarum River began to be widely known," said Bayu (the gatekeeper of the Hulu Wotan Citarum Site, Situ Cisanti). One of the springs, Cikahuripan, also known as Pangsiraman, is surrounded by an iron fence. There is also a small pavilion-like building for pilgrimage. At the site, guarded by a caretaker, visitors can request water from the spring pool and perform a ritual bathing ritual. These special visitors usually come at night on certain days and months during the full moon (Siswadi, 2024). Through the folklore used in this study, we can understand the wisdom of King Siliwangi, who was experiencing his unrest as King at that time. It also explores the development of Islam in the Pajajaran kingdom, which was being carried out by his family.

b. The Process of Self-Purification as a Spiritual Transformation of Prabu Siliwangi at the Citarum Spring

King Siliwangi, who is believed to have ruled the Sunda Galuh Kingdom for 39 years, is often associated with a self-purification ritual that holds deep symbolic meaning in local tradition. According to folklore, he regularly performed this ritual in a pool located at the headwaters or source of the Citarum River, specifically in the Gunung Wayang area, Tarumajaya, Kertasari District, Bandung Regency, West Java (Syah et al., 2025). This ritual practice serves not only as an effort to physically purify oneself, but also as a symbol of power and spirituality that reflects the values of tapa (meditation) in Sundanese culture.

The process of asceticism and self-purification that Prabu Siliwangi underwent is a symbol of an inner struggle filled with sincerity, humility, and openness to changes

in values and beliefs. The Citarum spring, as a location for asceticism, has a strong symbolic meaning. The clear flowing water represents the cleansing of the soul from all worldly stains, and is a reflection of the desire to return to the purity of human nature (Basor et al., 2025). In the spiritual tradition of the archipelago, nature is an integral part of the inner journey, and Prabu Siliwangi shows the close connection between humans, nature, and spirituality.



Figure 4. The soles of Prabu Siliwangi's feet during meditation (Personal Documentation).

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the figure of King Siliwangi in Sundanese society is not merely a historical figure, but rather a cultural symbol that lives on in the collective memory of the community. Belief in King Siliwangi as an ideal king who is wise, open, and compassionate is reflected in various oral narratives and cultural practices that are still preserved, particularly at the sacred site of the Citarum River spring on Mount Wayang. The story of his asceticism and self-purification at this site demonstrates a spiritual relationship between the ruler, nature, and society. This finding confirms that folklore is not only a narrative heritage, but also a medium for transmitting cultural values and identity. Scientifically, this research contributes to folklore studies by presenting a contextual approach to local narratives that have not been widely documented academically. This approach to the Citarum River site as a sacred space and collective memory opens up new discourse in examining the relationship between local mythology, religious transformation, and the social dynamics of Sundanese society.

This research also enriches understanding of how symbols of power and spirituality are formed, maintained, and passed down in the oral culture of traditional communities. However, this research has limitations in terms of data coverage and the depth of historical exploration of primary sources. The reliance on oral narratives without strong comparison with written sources leaves the analysis open to alternative

interpretations. Therefore, further research is recommended to delve deeper into the interrelationships between oral traditions, local archaeology, and the dynamics of the spread of Islam during the late Sunda Kingdom to obtain a more complete and comprehensive picture.

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