

Religious and Harmonious Values in *Beluk* Tradition:

A Study in Banjaran of Bandung Regency

Muhamad Rosadi^{1,*}, Agus Iswanto²

¹ National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia

² National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: muhammadrosadi40@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Beluk is a Sundanese traditional song art in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. This art is rarely performed any more, even though it contains many values. One community group in Bandung, is trying to preserve this traditional art. This article examines efforts to preserve *Beluk* tradition by Ciapus society in Banjaran District, Bandung Regency, West Java. This research found that the *beluk* tradition existed in society around Bandung, especially in Ciapus Village, Banjaran Sub District, for a long day. It is an effort of society that has its tradition to preserve it because it has essential values, such as religious values and education. This article builds the argument that *Beluk* tradition needs to be preserved because of the uniqueness, traditional performance, and the values contained and conveyed through the tradition. But, nowadays, *Beluk* tradition has faced some problems preserving its existence. Therefore, several adaptations have been carried out, although it is necessary to consider the authenticity of the tradition.

Keywords: *Beluk* tradition, intangible cultural heritage, preservation, religious values, harmonious values.

1. INTRODUCTION

West Java province, primarily resided in by Sundanese, has many cultural assets, such as material (tangible) and immaterial (intangible) cultural assets. They grow according to familiar environment situation and its condition due to people's creations, works, and intention. One of the cultural assets performed by Sundanese that avowed its existence as the worlds' inheritance is *Angklung* (one of the musical instruments from Sundanese culture. *Angklung* has several different tones for every single kind. It is because so many people must play it to get beautiful tones. *Angklung* itself was noted as a world inheritance by UNESCO on November 12th, 2010). But unfortunately, another Sundanese cultural inheritance, especially an immaterial (intangible) cultural asset, is considered not good enough as *Angklung* acts. Moreover, it was even deemed as rare. Therefore, it needed depth of attention from several

sides. It can be seen from the number of devotees getting more and more little bit, less performance frequency, and the lack of actors/ maestro. Even if it is considered already existing, the actors are getting old and weak.

Intangible cultural assets/inheritance, just like oral performances, have so many kinds and *genres*, especially in Sundanese people of West Java, such as *Papantunan* or *tembang Sunda* [1], *Sisindiran* [2], *Jangjawokan* [3], *Tarawangsa*, and *Beluk*. Among that intangible cultural assets, the writer chose *Beluk* Art to be studied more deeply. The Group Seni *Beluk* Mitra Sunda (SBMS), which stayed in Ciapus village, Banjaran, Bandung, West Java, has been chosen as the object of this research. *Beluk* Art was born and grew in heritage and still exists until now, although most of its actors got older. One obstacle faced in keeping its art going on is *Beluk* actors' regeneration.

Beluk, according to Atik Soepandi in Suhaeri [4], is sound art in a free break with a rhyme in Java poem (*pupuh*), which mostly used strains of voice (*eluk*, *meluk*) in high frequency. On the other hand, Patahudin [5] explained that *Beluk* originated from *meluk*, *celuk* or *eluk* meant exact definition using high tone or strident flicker sounds. Therefore, he concluded that *Beluk* is a sound art performed in high tones, patterned in *pupuh*, and crated in a plot called *wawacan*. *Wawacan*, explicitly, originated from *waca* means *baca*. In general, *wawacan* can be defined as literary works performed as an acting performance or a tale delivered orally [6].

Rosidi [7] expressed that *wawacan* is a tale written in certain poem namely *dangding*. *Dangding* is a certain poem form told about restricted things. *Dangding* consisted of couple poems called *pupuh*. There are 17 *pupuh* has already existed and known in West Java, such as *Dangdanggula*, *Sinom*, *Kinanti*, *Asmarandana*, *Magatru*, *Mijil*, *Pangkur*, *Durma*, *Pucung*, *Maskumambang*, *Wirangrong*, *Balabbak*, *Gambuh*, *Gurisa*, *Juru Demung*, *Lambang* and *Ladrang*. *Pupuh Dangdanggula*. They are used to express beauty, happiness, and more pleasures. *Pupuh Asmarandana* told about romance scenes and advices. *Pupuh Pangkur* used to talk about wanderer or preparation of war and anger. *Pupuh Durma* expressed in war scenes and angers. *Pupuh Maskumambang* told about sadness and depth sorrows. *Pupuh Wirangrong* talked about man who lose and got shy. *Pupuh Balabbak* expressed jokes all about.

Moreover, Abdurahman and Ayatrohaedi [8] explained that *wawacan* is one of Sundanese literary works that grew in the middle of the 17th century in Sunda land. Commonly, *wawacan* consisted of truth, sacred and impressive king family, and religious leaders like *Kiai*, *Pendeta*, *Begawan*. *Wawacan* brought through *Beluk* art or *mamaca* sung by couple persons taken in turns. One took part as *juru ilo* (reader), and others as singers. In ancient times, *Beluk* performed in circumcision feast, *babarit* (a celebration of seven months pregnant), birth dan marriage. On the other side, *Beluk* is used in ritual ceremonies in farming: *guar bumi* (starts working on the field), *mipit* (starts harvesting rice), and *ngakut* (moving rice to rice barn). Then, it is used too in *ngaruat* (rejecting reinforcement). *Beluk* is also used as an intermezzo in sparing free time when waiting for harvest in the night, keeping from animals wanted to eat it. Besides that, *Beluk* also used to keep a baby who had already been born from an animal's threat. In Aep Yanyan opinion (Leader of Beluk Mitra Sunda Art) in recent days, *Beluk* also performed on Independence Day August 17th and other governmental programs (Interview with Aep Yanyan in April 22nd, 2016, Leader of Beluk Mitra Sunda Art). Of course, in the *Beluk* traditional

art, there is traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge is helpful in several fields that are essential to community life, such as agriculture, fishery, health, horticulture, forestry, and religious life and education [9]. In this context, *Beluk* is valid for religious life and education.

As a part of traditional knowledge, *Beluk* traditional art is a part of cultural identity. Therefore, efforts of preserving traditional knowledge, including *Beluk* traditional art, are also efforts to preserve cultural identity [10].

Based on literary background, we found discourses talked about *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art* in Banjaran, Bandung. *First*, Duden Akhmad Patahudin [5] discussed the vocal technique used to perform *Beluk* songs. *Second*, Wildan Syamsuludin [11] made an effort to express the *Beluk* art process in a movie. Therefore, this research wants to complete both discourses to express religious and harmonious values in *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art*, which has not been discussed before.

2. METHOD

This research is qualitative. The data was collected through interviews, observation, and document study technics. The interview was conducted with a *Beluk* artist in Ciapus village, Banjaran, Bandung West Java. This research focused on expressing the religious and harmonious values of *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art*.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher will first discuss *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art* history to start the result and discussion section.

3.1. *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art in History*

Beluk Mitra Sunda Art was found in Ciapus Village, one of 11 villages where has already existed in Banjaran, Bandung. Ciapus lied on the Malabar mountain slope next to Puntang Mountain. The width of this area is 288.242 Ha consisting of settlement and farming land. Ciapus is only 1 Km from the sub-district town and 13 Km from the regency dan 24 Km from the province. Ciapus bordered on Banjaran Kota on north side, and Mekarjaya on south, Sindangpanon on west and Banjaran Wetan on the east. Based on the Monograph datum of Ciapus in 2014, citizens of Ciapus reached 14177, consisting of 7288 males and 6889 females. 14093 among them are Muslim, 81 are Christian, and 3 are Buddhist.

Table 1. List of *Beluk* Artists in Ciapus

Generation	Name	Address	Complement	
I	Mama Muhabat	Kp. Curug, Ds. Ciapus	*	
	Kulisi Sukatma	Ds. Sindang Panon	*	
	Sudarga	Ds. Banjaran Wetan	*	
II	Abah Asik	Kp. Pondok Sirap Ds. Ciapus	*	
	Mama Sikadimadja	Banjaran	*	
	Kulisi Jumsari	Cigentur	*	
	Olot Sukirta	Ciapus	*	
	Uko	Cileutik Banjaran	*	
	Inta	Kp. Ubra Ds. Ciapus	*	
	Tarsih	Kp. Pondok Sirap	*	
	Ma Enti	Kp. Kiara Payung	*	
	III	Suarta	Kp. Cinta Asih Ds. Ciapus	*
Aki Udus		Kp. Citanjung	*	
Aki Anom		Kp. Pasir Bungur	*	
Didi		Kp. Pasir Bungur	*	
Endim		Kp. Pasir Bungur	*	
Udung		Kp. Leuwi Gadung Ds. Ciapus	*	
Didi		Kp. Leuwi Gadung Ds. Ciapus	*	
Elan S		Kp. Empang Ds. Ciapus	*	
Sapri		Kp. Ciapus	*	
Moch Apandi		Kp. Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	*	
IV		Moch Apandi	Kp. Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	*
		Oyib Sujana	Kp. Ciapus	*
		Endik	Kp. Citarim Ds. Ciapus	Life
	Otang	Kp. Pintasari	Life	
	Caryo S	Kp. Ciapus	Life	
	Atang Rohanda	Kp. Ciapus	Life	
	E. Suryana	Kp. Ciapus	Life	
	Ujang Rachmad	Kp. Citanjung	Life	
	T. Supriyadi	Kp. Ciapus	Life	
	Taryo MS	Kp. Pintasari	Life	
	Arca	Kp. Ciapus	Life	
V	Otong	Kp. Citarim, Ds. Ciapus	Life	
	Tardi Supriyadi	Kp. Citarim Ds. Ciapus	72 year	
	Caryo S	Kp. Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	76 year	
	Atja	Kp. Citarim, Ds. Ciapus	76 year	
	Endang Koswara	Kp. Ubra, Ds. Ciapus	74 year	
	Syarifuddin	Kp. Citarim, Ds. Ciapus	53 year	
	Aep Yanyan	Kp. Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	51 year	
	Asep Rahmat	Kp. Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	46 year	
	Tata Witarsa	Kp. Pintasari, Ds. Ciapus	41 year	

	Wildan	Kp.Pintusari, Ds. Ciapus	36 year
	Eep	Kp.Ciapus, Ds. Ciapus	41 year
	Yoyo	Kp. Citarim, Ds. Ciapus	34 year
	Sandi	Kp. Citarim, Ds. Ciapus	32 year

Source: research data

Beluk artist in Ciapus is formerly individualist, no will to make a group. But then, in the head of village initiative, Oyib Sujana, "Mitra Sunda" formed on August 15th, 1979. Now, *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art* led by Aep Yanyan Cardiana. So *Beluk* artist is the fifth generation added by several persons from the fourth generation. Table 1 shows list of *Beluk* artists in Ciapus in the 2016 year.

3.2. Performance technique of *Beluk*

Beluk Mitra Sunda Art is usually performed at an invitation from people who hold a birth gift ceremony. *Beluk* performed after praying Isha till midnight, even more. Its location used to be in a home without any *waditra*. So that the artist of *Beluk* did not bring *waditra* except *wawacan* as manner performed. *Beluk* artists used to wear unique wardrobes in their performances.

In their performance, each member has a job description due to their skills. So that in acting, they used to be taken in turn based on situation and condition. Every single job had names, such as: "*Tukang Ngilo*", "*Tukang Meuli*", "*Tukang Naekeun*". *Tukang Ngilo* meant artist read sentence after sentence in *wawacan*. *Tukang Meuli* meant artists presented songs from sentence after a sentence read by *Tukang Ngilo* in beautiful voices and tones. Along with *Tukang Naekeun*, the artist reached a higher frequency in singing a song (*meluk*).

As follow the list of *Beluk Mitra Sunda Artist* in their performance:

1. *Tukang Ngilo*: Tardi Supriyadi; 72 year
2. *Juru Beluk*: - Caryo S; 76 year
- Atja; 76 year
- Endang Koswara; 74 year
- Syarifuddin; 53 year
- Aep Yanyan; 51 year

If *juru Beluk* felt tired, they took in turn with others, after *tukang ngilo* gave an order with "*coba taekeun*." Another *Juru Beluk* welcomes to change the song into fresher and higher. It is done to show the beauty of the voices after changing their variation.

If *tukang ngilo* read the last of the song, they sang together. Another habit could be expressed that there

was a little bit of joke if the artist felt tired or sleepy to take a break.

In *Beluk's* performance, the audiences were not restricted in genders, ages, or conditions. Everyone might see *Beluk*. But, there was no interaction between artists and audiences when the performance went on.

3.3. *Wawacan Theme Performed*

Wawacan which used to be read in *Beluk* art, according to Atik Soepandi in Suhaeri [4] is *Ahmad Muhamad, Ali Muhtar, Angling Darma, Arjuna Sastrabahu, Babad Cirebon, Babad Sumedang, Bharata Yuda, Cumina, Damar Wulan, Dewa Ruci, Eka Jaya, Ganda Manah, Hayatinipus, Jaka Bandung, Kidung Sunda, Kintabuhan, Lokayanti, Mahabarata, Mundinglaya, Nalaka Suraboma, Ogin, Pendawa Seda, Panjiwulung, Pua pua Bermanasakti, Purnama Alam, Ramayana, Rangga Pulung, Rangga Wulung, Rengganis, Sangkuriang, Sulanjana, Suluk, Suryakanta, Suryaningrat, Sonjaya, Supena, Udrayana dan Walangsungsang*.

Nowadays, *wawacan*, which *Beluk Mitra Sunda* artist almost reads, is only *wawacan ogin*. It is caused by the story within *wawacan ogin*, which is very famous and popular among Ciapus people. Popularity of the *ogin* story in Bandung and its surroundings is supported by information composed by Ekadjati and Darsa [12] encoded and described 40 *wawacan ogin* original text. West Java's Manuscript Catalogue revealed that *wawacan ogin* is sometimes called *wawacan Asep Ogin* or *Ogin Amarsakti*.

Unfortunately, *wawacan ogin* original text of *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art* has been unknown till the day. Based on Aep Yanyan (Leader of *Beluk Mitra Sunda Art*), the original text of *wawacan ogin* has been investigated. Moreover, unfortunately, the only original text of *wawacan Samaun* and *Supena* had been discovered. During this time, *wawacan ogin*, which is read in *Beluk*, is a *wawacan* manuscript transliterated into Latin.

3.4. *Religious and harmonious values of Beluk tradition*

The *Beluk* tradition has some functions in society, i.e., religious function, social function, and recreation function [13]. The *Beluk* tradition, which still survives in the Ciapus village community, is the ancestors'

legacy, which contains religious values and harmony. We can express this matter from the performance aspect and from the contents of the *wawacan* text that was read. The religious elements that appear from the performance process are the prayer ritual as a form of a servant's request to the Almighty God who created nature and its contents and prayed for the spirits of the ancestors who had gone ahead. In addition, the offerings are prepared in the form of *parawanten* (food), *pangradinan* (beauty tools such as whiting, combs, fragrances, oil, mirrors, etc.) Offering equipment is accompanied by burning incense. It follows traditions carried out by their ancestors affected by the teachings of Hinduism/ Buddhism.

In the content of the Ogin *wawacan* text that was read, the main theme conveyed was the conflict between evil and truth (goodness); that evil will eventually be crushed by goodness. This theme contains high moral and social values that reflect the views and attitudes of the Sundanese people, namely being patient, steadfast and forgiving, and loving.

Because early art was carried out in family rituals, there were many values about household ethics. For example, the *wawacan* Ogin text illustrates how husband and wife manners are built. Even deviations and violations of these manners and their sanctions are also described.

Wawacan Ogin said that when the wife of Baginda Ma'ruf named Dewi Lasmaya gave birth, she was betrayed by her madman, Nyi Nurhayati. Baginda Majesty, without confirmation, immediately believed Nyi Nurhayati's story that Dewi Lasmaya was not giving birth to humans but three animals. Such actions are not the nature of the ideal Sundanese husband.

In addition, the ethics of family life to be conveyed is a wife must always forgive the mistakes that have been made by the husband. This is stated in the verse that reads as follows:

*Pek hampura nu jadi salaki,
Kudu maneh menta di hampura,
Doraka mungpang kakolot
Maneh teh ulah ngaberung,
Doraka mungpang ka aing,
Geura kumbah dampel sampean,
Lamun hayang mulus,
Ratu Jin geus teu katinggal,
Musna leungit tipayuneun raja Mulki
Ngahuleng Dewi Lasmaya (hal.69)*

English translation:

Come on, forgive your husband
You must forgive him
Do not obey parents is a sin

You do not lust
Do not obey me is a sin
Come kiss the soles of his feet
If you want to graduate
Queen devil is not visible now
The disappearance from the presence of King Mulki
Dewi Lasmaya is silent

3.5. Shifting and Adaptation of Beluk tradition

A tradition, including Beluk, has an emotional and spiritual connotation [14]. It also has multiple meanings and can shift or change over time, but because of it, a tradition faces some problems. As a cultural product, the tradition also will adapt to the environment [15]. Beluk traditional art has shifted to change both in terms of the function of the purpose of the performance. In the beginning, the performance of the Beluk art functioned for ritual ceremonies. Slowly, its function shifted to, in addition to ritual ceremonies, also for the entertainment of the local community staged to enliven the atmosphere when relatives or families were carrying out the party. But Beluk's art also shifted because, in the subsequent development, the community uses the Beluk performance in celebrations of the holy day, such as commemorating the Indonesian Independence Proclamation Day, village anniversary, and others [16].

The current performance of Beluk does not use offerings and burn incense as one of the performance stages. Indeed, the *wawacan* book that is read also does not use the ancient book, which is still written in Pegon script.

These changes and adaptations occur for several reasons: the community, in general, is no longer interested and knows the traditional art of Beluk. The second is a little artist of the Beluk tradition. Third, it is due to the lack of regeneration of artists. In addition, society demands a more modern and fast lifestyle. But, those changes, adaptations, and translations need to consider the locality of the tradition [17].

4. CONCLUSION

According to the explanation above, we can conclude that *the Beluk* tradition already existed in the community around Bandung, especially in Ciapus Village Banjaran, because it consists of religious and harmonious values. Both values can be seen and expressed in the *Beluk* performance process and messages.

Therefore, the implication is, although there have been changes and adaptations in the *Beluk* traditional

art, their authenticity needs to be preserved. This is because this traditional art has become part of the identity of Sundanese culture in particular and Indonesia in general.

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