

**HOW MODERNITY EXPLAINS THE FUTURE OF
LOCALECOLOGY
(A CASE STUDY AT KASEPUHAN BANTEN KIDUL
COMMUNITY LIVING IN HALIMUN-SALAK
NATIONAL PARK WEST JAVA)**

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The paper explores the dynamics on Kasepuhan Banten Kidul community living in Ciptagelar, an enclave area within Halimun Salak National Park after its encounter with modernity. Using secondary data analysis and added by direct experience of visiting and interacting with people in the area, the evidence of the social change as the result of the encounter appear in several form, including the wearing of Islamic symbol among young generation and the way of placing tourism as a vehicle to reach the dream of "normal life". The main idea of the paper is to see the process of certain tradition, including its indigenous values, and its particular way to accept various factors coming from outside and then internalize or absorb it. The process itself is seen from the perspective of local value as dynamics and accumulative tradition, instead of original, static and permanent. In the end, it will reach the point of how this encounter determines local ecology in the area, including possible impacts in the near coming future.

Keyword: local ecology, modernity, tourism, accumulative tradition

INTRODUCTION

It was in the early December, 2004 when for the first time I visited Ciptagelar, which administratively located on Desa Sirnaresmi, Cisolok, Sukabumi, West Java. I should meet the leader of Kasepuhan Banten Kidul community, Abah Anom for getting indigenous community's view for one the magazine published by a community forestry project conducted by one national NGO in West Java¹. I stayed almost two weeks in Ciptagelar, which is an enclave area within Halimun Salak National Park managed by Forestry Department,

¹ Abah Anom has died in 2007 and has been replaced by his son, Abah Ugik

observed several things and conducted discussion with members of the community, including the leader. I stayed at small homestay directly in front of the main building, *imah gedhe*, and shared room with a Dutch anthropologist from Wageningen University, Bastian Bolman. Culturally, this community can be categorized as a part of ancient Sundanese societies. Their ancestors were the warrior of Padjajaran Kingdom which moved to the hilly areas after the invasion of Islamic kingdom Banten in the 18 century (Asep: 2000, Sajogjo Institute : 2014, Ki Ugis Suganda:-). Today, the members of the society live² in the areas surrounding “the heart” of the society, Ciptagelar.

There are two main issues which are often given attention by people related to the existence of Kasepuhan Banten Kidul; *first*, the “fragile” friendly environment lifestyle, as people also can find in other indigenous communities, including Baduy Kanekes and *second*, the religious expression of indigenous religion of those practicing Sunda Wiwitan which is surrounded by Islamic communities. Sunda Wiwitan is believed as the original faith of the ancient Sundanese, which is based on the monotheistic belief (Batara Tunggal) and respect to ancient spirits living on the sky or nature called Buwana Nyuncung (Indrawardana, 2014). This friendly environment lifestyle including the daily activities in treating natural resources, inevitably should face challenges below; strict rule of national park management and the coming of inevitably modernity, including tourism³. After the permanent road connecting Ciptagelar to the cities as the symbol of “modern world” and micro-hydroelectricity power was installed around 2003, the flowing of modernity has started to change the face of sacred Ciptagelar.

During a little time when I was living in Ciptagelar in 2004, I often saw the son of Abah Anom which is now the leader of the community, regularly played some modern music devices with his friends, showing his advanced skill in singing some of modern rock song, while his father and the elder playing *karinding*, a traditional music device. The leader, Abah Anom built several traditional buildings in front of his main house for tourist, researchers or government leaders who wanted to stay in Ciptagelar. I was free from any charge at the time because I was counted as Bastian’s research assistant, but usually some “rich” visitor would pay for the room and food. In the term of tourism, ironically, Halimun-Salak National Park management which often claim

² Approximately the members of Kasepuhan Banten Kidul in 2007 are 16.000 people

³ Government, represented by the forestry department since the beginning of the national park policy applied in Indonesia (1985) tends to see communities living in the area as breaking the rule, but after the reformation era, indigenous communities are the exception and legally protected by the law.

the people live in the “heart” of sanctuary zone of the national park and local government also involve in promoting *seren taun*, a traditional ceremony conducting once time in a year for expressing grateful for the blessing of rice harvesting. This ceremony regularly attracts thousands of people to visit Ciptagelar, including foreigners. Some of the eco-tourism company also offer trip to Ciptagelar for jungle trekking, off road or with the water rafting in Cibareno River, near Ciptagelar. Ciptagelar which is endowed by beautiful landscape and exotic culture, finally tend to be seen as one of the rest living museums of the ideal traditional community in the modern Indonesia. One of the third level leaders, Ki Absor saw the encounter between traditional life and modernity through tourism as one of the possible ways for the local community to connect with the “normal life” (Gema Desa Hutan, 2004). Normal life means; live in modern way and seen as good Muslims as the majority religion in the area.

Based on a brief introduction above, the main issue which is need to be addressed by this paper is how the dynamics as the result of the encounter between people living in the area on the one hand and modernity brought by various agents; tourism, dominant religion, research activity or government project on the other hand. Furthermore, how the future of local tradition and local ecology are, which expressed by the existence of local belief, Sunda Wiwitan shaping the friendly environment life style in the modern conjuncture of global and modern tourism. Here I would like to pose a central question; how does the modernity and tourism influence and trigger certain social changes within indigenous community of Ciptagelar in West Java?

Theoretical Framework

1. Modernity, An Inevitable Guest

The basic concept of modernity is developed from the English word; modern which linguistically taken from the Latin; *modo* meaning “of today” as the opposed to earlier periods. Modernity strongly marked by the idea of rationalism, the growth of technologies and modes of production, in turn facilitating an unprecedented rise of material living standard. Consequently, religious dogma and traditional value have become increasingly undermined by rational thinking leading to the notion of individualism, secular culture, mass consumption, and global humanism (Boot, 2008). Unfortunately, it also brings vulnerability (and violence) for certain groups such as traditional community, minority groups and peasant (Lewellen, 2002 and Kirby, 2006). The emergence of modernity and globalization as the battlefield of investment, information, trade, and discourses has therefore served to expose an

increasingly public concern to what Held and McGrew have called “some of the most fundamental issue of our time” (Kirby, 2006: 2). Modernity has two faces and consequences both in negative and positive ways. For some condition such as local values and traditions influencing local ecology, including which has been practiced by the community of Kasepuhan Banten Kidul in Ciptagelar for thousands of years and other community groups around the world, modernity might arrives as a difficult challenge.

The encounter between traditional communities with modernity is often facilitated by tourism, which is an activity which cuts across conventional sectors in the economy, meaning requires inputs and various intersections among economic, social, cultural and environmental nature. Meanwhile, tourism itself has problem with the definition regarding to its wide area of the study. By quoting a definition posed by Burkart and Medlik, Leonard and Jenkins (1997) emphasize that tourism is the phenomenon arising from temporary visits (or stays away from home) outside the normal place of residence for any reason other than furthering an occupation remunerated from within the place visited. Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. On the one hand, these dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio- economic progress proven by the fact that today, the business volume of tourism equals or even surpass that of oil e ports, food products or automobiles but on the other hand tourism also bring various socio-cultural consequences. Tourism is an opportunity, especially it is seen from the eyes of progress, including related to government policy which is often symbolized by the idea of economic growth. Since 2007, West Java Province’s government has decided to put Pelabuhan Ratu Ecotourism area in the Southern coastal area of Sukabumi regency as one of Major Tourism Region (Kawasan Wisata Unggulan in the province. It is including declare Ciptagelar as one tourism spot for cultural tourism in the hilly area (Dinas Pariwisata Jawa Barat, 2007).

Kasepuhan Banten Kidul is often categorized as one of indigenous groups in Indonesia living in harmony with the environment. Here, people practice a life style putting other non-human elements around them such as hills, trees, rivers or animals not only as non-living thing, but on the contrary, living things that can influence people’s life. Some scholars define this conception as “person-hood” as constructed by Hallowel (in Samsul Maarif, 2014) or Bird David (1999). Bird poses that the way indigenous communities’ “dividuating” the environment by turning attention to the “we-ness” rather than “otherness” can be seen as

the fundament of the friendly environment practices (1999:78). As Bird David sees in Nayaka society in India building intimately engagement with the environment as the form of sharing with fellow persons. Another example from India is posed by Tatia (Key Chapple, 2002) with Jainism placing non-violence (*ahimsa*) at the top of principal morality including to any kind of living or non-living being. Meanwhile Hallowell by taking Ojibwa cosmology sees that the cosmos is occupied by persons which are human and non-human beings (2014:152). According to this cosmology, Hallowell discovers that other non-human like thunder birds is acting like human: they dance, talk and hunt. Considering other non-human things as persons or individual can be an effective source of developing non exploitative practices toward environment, as done by Kasepuhan Banten Kidul community in West Java. In the same vein the personhoods cosmology often seen only compatible with certain areas, meaning that people from outside areas might having no bound with this local cosmology, including it can be in-compatible with rationality and world religion teaching brought by tourists or other outsiders. Finally, by taking a conception from Wilfred Smith's way in seeing religion as "an cumulative tradition" (Cox, 1996), local ecology in Ciptagelar can emerge in a new face after its encounter with modernity. Smith poses that a tradition, including Sunda Wiwitan practiced by Kasepuhan Banten Kidul community is developed dynamically in response to various internal and external factors (1996:74)

Methodology

The paper uses descriptive qualitative method in exploring the dynamics from the encounter between modernity and local ecology in Ciptagelar. Secondary data analyses are used as the primary method in answering paper's question. In line with the method, the secondary data mostly taken from sources; previous research reports, books, internet, journal and newspapers, meanwhile primary data is taken from the interview as mentioned above. The main aim of the paper is to provide the contemporary dynamics as the interplay between indigenous practices and the pressure of inevitable modernity; meanwhile the main argument applied to analyze the dynamics as mentioned above is by seeing indigenous tradition and its practices as an accumulative tradition. It means that the possibility of the tradition to appear in different face after the encounter with other factors or forces is quiet possible, including the possible impact in the future

Drinking with the Devil

1. Kasepuhan Banten Kidul Cosmology

Kasepuhan Banten Kidul is often categorized as a part of the indigenous Sundanese groups living in West Java and Banten having Sunda Wiwitan as their faith. Other groups are Cigugur community in Kuningan, Kampung Naga in Tasikmalaya and Baduy in Kanekes, Banten. The last group is often said as the “far-cousin” of the Ciptagelar community. The basic fundament of this faith is a monotheistic belief toward the greatest single God Sanghyang Keres a or Batara Tunggal and the respect to the ancestor living in the upper world (Indrawardhana, 2011). According to this belief, the history of the human being will always be related the three different worlds; (1) *buwana nyungcung/ambu luhur/upper* world where Sanghyang Keres a/God lives,(2) *buwana panca tengah/ambu tengah/the middle* world where human and other creatures live and (3)*buwana handap/buwana larang/lower* world describing hell as a bad place for those disobedience to Batara Tunggal (2011: 7). Human being is believed lives in the middle world, and will go to the upper world after someone dies. According to this basic cosmology, human being and other non-human creatures live in the same world and dependent each other’s. This bound brings to the way people in treating their environment in a friendly way, because as explained in the theoretical framework the concept being used here is personhoods or “dividuating” other non-human things such as river, forest, tree as *we-ness* rather than *other-ness*.

The people of Ciptapelar see the tropical forest around them, which also claimed as the conservation zone of Halimun Salak National Park by the government in three different categories:

- a. *Leuweung tutupan/forbidden forest* : which is strictly forbidden to be entered or exploited by each member of society
- b. *Leuweung titipan* which could be entered or used based on the certain *wangsit* , order or revelation from the ancestor through the leader of the community
- c. *Lueuweung bukaan* is the area that can be used for the agricultural land but with no extension (Gema Desa Hutan, 2004:9).

The local cosmology in Ciptagelar is also expressed by several traditional ceremonies and myth. The people believe the ancestor, which is often called “*karuhun*” already establishing a kind of agreement with certain animals ; the forest would be always protected by the people, but if the society needs certain animal for completing any kind of traditional ceremony such as deer or wild buffalo, they will voluntary come and ready to be sacrificed. Communalism also can be seen as the fundament of the society. As a traditional farmer society they use certain stars

formation as the guidance in starting planting period or harvest time. They usually use the formation of "*bintang kereti*" and *kidang* moving simultaneously from the east to west in a year as the anchor to start planting, stopping or harvesting rice plant or cassava. After harvesting, people will separate rice in to two different aims; mostly their rice will be brought home for their daily life, but some part will be kept in the "*leuit jimat*", a building near the leader house used for keeping the emergency stock and managed by the leader. The purpose of food stock is to anticipate the possibility of the crisis caused by the long drought, natural disaster or an extreme dry season.

People living in Ciptagelar express its bound with local ecology by conducting several traditional ceremonies having four purposes: (1) respecting the ancestors (2) respecting and purifying the world (3) respecting the paddy goddess (*Sanghyang Shri*) for getting good harvest and (4) for the wealth of the larger society including non-human creatures. The people belief that human being is only one creature living in the world, together with other both seen and un-seen creatures, and human being has no right to decide the fate of other creatures. In their mind, earth is like a mother and the sky is father for the society and it bring them to separate "world" in to: *jagad leutik* (micro-cosmos) which is "self" and *jagad gede* (macro cosmos) meaning the world. The expression of the cosmological system or sacred world can be seen from several ceremonies such as "*seren taun*", a huge traditional ceremony which are usually involving all member of community (and guests), held for three days as the symbol of the end of farming cycle and for expressing respect to the Sanghyang Shri blessing farmer and crops. Meanwhile, to avoid various kinds of disaster, people lead by the leader will conduct "*ruwatan jagad*" ceremony. People still have some other ceremonies related to farming activities such as: *turun nyambut*, a traditional ceremony in preparing rice field, *ngasek*, a ceremony to start planting , *mipit*, a ceremony to start harvesting rice crops using traditional tools (*ani-ani*), *nganyaran*, a traditional ceremony marked by providing foods for all members of society. Those ceremonies, including the way people categorize forest in different types are emphasizing the balance among human and non-human beings as the equal living things as the main idea of Ciptagelar cosmology.

The Fragile Encounters

The same as what is occurred to other indigenous groups around the world, the arrival of modernity is inevitable in Ciptagelar. It is marked by the permanent road connected to the city, electricity, many electric devices also the latest one, internet. These developments bring both of positive and negative impact at the same time. The arrival of

better road followed by electricity in around 2003-s makes people much easier to go the city for several purposes such as trading, education services, and health services, and vice versa. On the contrary, it starts changing life's orientation of the local people, especially the young. According to the direct observation, the member of community especially living in the "outer" Ciptagelar have started to see big city as the future, inspired by many people from the city coming as tourists, researchers, photographer, NGO staff etc.

In the similar vein, the encounter between external discourse of religion with the society have been started long before the era permanent road to Ciptagelar established in 2003. According to the Government Law in 1969, only 6 "world religions" were recognized legally by the government, meaning that Sunda Wiwitan belief was out from the discourse of the state. Responding this strict policy, the people have taken accommodative way, avoiding conflicts with the government and Islamic society surrounded. According to the interview conducted with the leader of the society; Abah Anom, Ki Suhendar and Ki Absor in the veranda of Imah Gede, December 2004, administratively the people living in Ciptagelar are Moslem, but they do not practice Islamic worshiping and cults as other Muslim. They prefer to be categorized as Sunda Wiwitan, with the leader was Abah Anom and believing certain cosmological view as described before. This step is different from their "far-cousin" living in Kanekes, Baduy which consistent in refusing to be categorized as Islam or Hindu and prefer to be said as "agama luar" or outsider. The different step is taken by some member of society living in Sirnarasa Village, which is located closer to the Islamic society in the coastal area. Here, according to Ki Absor, people start to be a real Muslim and leave Sunda Wiwitan. People living in Sirnarasa have more opportunities in enountering Islamic teaching through many "vehicles" such as traditional market, government office, tourism beaches etc, rather than those living in the hilly Ciptagelar which need two hours by motorcycle to be reached.

Another "fragile" dynamics is the encounter between people in Ciptagelar with the "modern" conservation policy; the establishment of Halimun Salak National Park in 1992, following 5 first national park areas established by the forestry department in 1985. The history of national park marked by the establishment Yellowstone National Park which was signed by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1872 (Wiratno, et al: 2001). The problem is the area where people live is often claimed as area of the national park having purpose to protect the ecological values of the tropical rain forest. Before the area was established as the sanctuary zone of the national park, several accesses are still possible,

but after the establishment, according to the regulation the land used activities especially for the agricultural land actually forbidden. It was added by another policy of extending the area of national park covering the whole area of Ciptagelar, and live permanently inside is illegal, stated on the Law No.5, 1990 (Prabowo, et al, 2010). According to Ki Absor (2004), the community refused the policy of categorizing local people as the illegal inhabitant by saying ; “our ancestor had lived in this area since, maybe thousands years ago, and national park just exist since 1992, so how could they say we are illegal ? In my opinion, the government’s policy is illegal”. More than that, Abah Anom explains that if the government’s purpose in establishing national park is to protect the forest and environment, community has been protecting the forest since hundreds years ago. Ki Absor added that people regularly protecting the forest with their own way, but the national park rangers are very seldom visiting the forest area, and raised the question how national park could protect the forest if they never enter the forest area. The fact is, even Ciptagelar is categorized as the illegal inhabitant at the time (2004), the government never forced them to leave their village, even ironically when I visited the head office of Taman Nasional Halimun Salak in Kabandungan, Bogor in the middle of 2005, they put Seren Taun traditional ceremony in Ciptagelar in their promotion campaign to attract tourist for visiting national park. Every years, thousands tourist, especially when Seren Taun traditional ceremony is conducted in Ciptagelar. The government paradoxly, tends to see Ciptagelar from the financial point of view and it makes government applying an exception by letting people live in the area of national park. It could bring a lot of money for the national park and even local people on the one hand, but also brings fragility on another hand. Tourism has brought many changes and challenges for the community.

Modernity and Tourism: Mother and Monster

I met a foreign researcher from Netherland, a group of photographer from Jakarta and 3 national NGO’s workers when I stayed in Ciptagelar in the end of 2004. We stayed at three homestays on the edge of the huge yard close to the *Imah Gedhe*, the central building where the leader live. I heard from Bastian, the foreign researcher that weeks before there were dozens of off roader, rafter and jungle trackers from Jakarta also gathered in Ciptagelar, complete with their modern devices. At one evening, when Bastian and I learnt how to use *karinding*, a traditional music device with Ki Absor, several of the local boys were learning to use modern camera from one photographer from Jakarta. Ki Absor added that Abah Ugik, the son of the community leader at that

time took his undergraduate school in Bandung, very skillful in playing drum and Western music, also very enjoy in off-roading. Few coming years, in 2010 I visited Ciptagelar for joining *seren taun* traditional ceremony with another thousands people. A lot of local boys offered “ojek” from Ciptagelar to Pelabuhan Ratu, others promoted homestays and some local girl studying in the city already wearing veil during the ceremony. I met again with my old friend, Ki Absor and when I asked him about this gradual social change in Ciptagelar, simply he answered; we need a normal life, as other groups living outside there and tourism provides the best way to reach that without devastating the forest, the local environment as the local cosmology inherited from the ancestor.

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism are the inevitable effects on host communities of direct and indirect relations with tourists, and of interaction with the tourism industry (Bogahawate,-). Tourism also can turn local cultures into only commodities when religious rituals, traditional ethnic rites and festivals are reduced and sanitized to conform to tourist expectations, resulting in what has been called "reconstructed ethnicity." Furthermore, once a destination like Ciptagelar is treated only for a tourism product, and the tourism demand for souvenirs, arts, entertainment and other commodities begins to exert influence, basic changes in human values may occur. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in Bali, when the intermingled between culture, religion and tourism are difficult to be separated (Picard, 1996) and sacred sites and objects may not be respected anymore when they are perceived as goods to trade.

In some cases, host communities often are the weaker party in interactions with their guests and service providers, leveraging any influence they might have. These influences are not always apparent, as they are difficult to measure, depend on value judgments and are often indirect or hard to identify. Based on the commodification of culture issue, the impacts arise when tourism brings changes in value systems / behavior, threatening indigenous identity. Finally, the worrying fact is when changes often occur in community structure, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality. What I could compare from my visit in 2004 and 2010 prove that tourism can bring both of positive and negative consequences, including toward the practices of indigenous religion: Sunda Wiwitan. The encounter with modernity, tourism and dominant world religion, especially Islam can construct the new face of Sunda Wiwitan in Ciptagelar, for instance; wearing veil during the traditional ceremony or starting to believe another “cosmology” as offered by Islam, besides Sunda Wiwitan’s faith. Another evidence is, as in other places, having and using some kind of

modern attributes and technology, including establishing the account "CiptarasaCiptagelar" in social media, managed by young members studying in the city. This transformation phenomenon can be explained by using Wilfred Smith (Cox, 1996) conception in seeing religion as a cumulative tradition which, dynamically could be openly influenced or even shaped by its encounter with various of internal and external factors. In this case, the determinant factors are modernity, tourism and Islam.

In line with the changes occurred in Ciptagelar, from the other point of view, tourism can generate positive impacts as it can serve as foster pride in cultural traditions and help avoid urban relocation by creating local jobs. It proves that the impacts are ambiguous: the same objectively described impacts are seen as beneficial by some groups and as negative by others. According to Kasepuhan Banten Kidul's case, actually tourism can be seen as a possible strategy to survive by adapting cultural expressions to the tastes of tourists or even performing shows as if they were "real life" as done in Bali. It also can strengthen community by raising pride of the groups, influencing tourism development with equal relationship between guest and host, developing alternative livelihood or reduce emigration from rural areas on the one hand, and protecting the cultural and natural environment on the other hand. Ideally, people in Ciptagelar can still live surrounded by protected forest with its ecological and cultural values, practicing Sunda Wiwitan as the basic cultural values attracting tourist to come and the can make life from the guest for daily life, besides from the agricultural lands

Every encounter, including with tourism activities as the latest face of globalization and modernity will always produce the process of take and give for the both sides. It includes the recent face of tourism activity in Ciptagelar facilitating the encounter of people from different cultural background, including lifestyle. Entering modernity as done by Kasepuhan Banten Kidul society can bring a risk of over exploitation of the social and cultural carrying capacity or the limits of acceptable change in the culture of the host population of the local community. It can be analogized as riding the bull in Texas; you could survive with your indigenous identity, life style, cosmology and identity, or will be collapse, fall to the hard ground. This hard landing from the wild bull namely global tourism can clearly be watched on the documentary movie directed by an American anthropologist, Peggy Vail entitled; *The Gringo Trail*⁴. Tourism and modernity can be a mother and a monster for the people living in Ciptagelar at the same time.

⁴ These serials of documentary movies are produced more than a decade and described the impact of global tourism toward local communities in several countries.

CONCLUSION

A brief conclusion which can be offered from the dynamics of the encounter between Kasepuhan Banten Kidul living in Ciptagelar, an enclave on hilly areas of Halimun Salak National Park, West Java with various external forces is related to the dynamics and the future of the indigenous values, including its religion under tourism and modernity. The society having its own cosmology institutionalized into Sunda Wiwitan belief has suffered from the encounter other group since hundreds years ago when Islamic power from the coastal areas succeeded forcing their ancestor to hilly and remote areas where they live now. After hundreds year survive with its indigenous cosmology bringing to the concept of personhood in treating and individuating other non-human creatures, expressing of friendly environment traditional lifestyle, finally they have arrived at the point where they should deal with the trend of global modern tourism, world religion, modern government policy. Ironically, tourism activities which, firstly attracted by the indigenous lifestyle of Ciptagelar society, combined with the increase of the mobility of the people have brought some consequences toward local socio-cultural changes. Seeing this phenomenon from the perspective of tradition as a cumulative tradition, on the one hand we can see that what's appeared in Ciptagelar can be seen as the normal and common dynamics as the result of the encounter between indigenous community with several factors coming from outside, with its negative or positive consequences. In the similar vein, on another hand we should aware to the example as previously studied by UNESCO in Nepal about the destructive impacts of un-controlled tourism bringing to un-equal host-guest relationship, changing norms, values and lifestyle, ecological crisis even prostitution (Ram Niwas Pandey, et al, 1995).

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