

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF SUNDANESE AND BALINESE CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This research will discuss one of the rituals of Sundanese and Balinese culture; specifically, it will examine the symbolic meaning contained in Sundanese and Balinese offerings used as media in the continuity of their organized events. In dissecting this problem, a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach is used to read and analyze societal and cultural phenomena. These stages are literature review, observation, interviews, and documentation. Offerings are an intermediary medium to convey gratitude to God, living beings in this world, and the ancestors they believe to be historical figures. Offerings in Sundanese culture are usually used on certain occasions such as the birth of a child, thanksgiving for pregnancy, wedding rituals, performance rituals, and so on; in contrast to the culture in Bali, these offerings become a daily habit and are used as a means of complementing their worship. The offerings displayed from two cultural perspectives have a character in their respective forms if, in the Sundanese culture, they pay little attention to aesthetics in the form of offerings. Still, in Balinese culture, they make offerings by paying attention to aesthetics in shape because they believe what they give to His Lord must be the best and most beautiful. This research needs to be done so that people can understand each culture they embrace and that culture can continue to be preserved and accepted from various perspectives.

Keywords: Culture, Habits, Society, Rituals.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a large archipelago, having a variety of diverse ethnic groups. This diversity makes Indonesia full of culture and art. The culture is born from customs or beliefs that are believed and carried out by the local community. This culture must be maintained and preserved so that it remains the cultural heritage of each region.

Selo Soemardjan and Soelaeman Seomardi said, "culture is a result, a sense of copyright of the people. The work

of this community produces technology and material culture or material culture that humans need to master the surrounding nature so that its strength and results can be enshrined for society" Seorjono Soekanto (1998, 189).

Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic also influence Indonesian culture in the process of art, such as crafts and works of art, as well as traditional arts with distinctive patterns and varieties obtained from genetic heritage, such as this ritual. Judging from the development of diversity and culture, this art is the same as Hindu-Buddhist culture, which uses offerings in its diversity process. Rituals are performed using several types of offerings that have specific meanings. From the meaning conveyed in this offering, it becomes a communication medium that wants to be related to the community.

West and Tuner (2008:5) say that communication is a social process in which a person uses symbols as a medium of communication to create and describe meaning in the local environment.

Offerings in Sundanese and Balinese cultures have different functions and meanings according to the teachings of previous civilizations. This ritual culture cannot be eliminated in the written rule of law because it has entered into the customs and customs of the local people that they have believed in since ancient times. This research will focus on the form that arises, both in terms of kinds, shapes, and colors, to the meaning and function of offerings used by these two cultures.

Indeed, if we study it functionally, we cannot see it with the naked eye, but this offering has many meanings for human life in front of the earth. Therefore Sundanese and Balinese cultures still use offerings even though many people have yet to learn the function and purpose of offerings in their own culture.

Culture is influential in strengthening Indonesia's resilience and forming a cultured community art. Sunda and Bali's offerings give much deep meaning if explored deeply in the value of tradition. Therefore the author will examine the definition contained in the two cultures to find out how influential culture has on the form of offerings in

each region, especially those that adhere to Sundanese and Balinese cultures.

The research can help convey to the community so that the community better maintains and preserves the culture.

METHOD

To conduct this research, the author will use qualitative methods that tend to descriptive analysis, making this research clearer in finding information and making it easier for researchers to get the facts in a study to be studied.

The qualitative research process will involve asking an in-depth question, collecting and searching for more specific data, and analyzing data ranging from general to more specific themes. The objectives of this qualitative research generally include information about the prominent cases explored in a study, participants from the study, and the location of the study.

According to Lexy J. Moleong (1999: 6): "Qualitative research is in the form of words, images, and not numbers, dealing with a double reality that must be understood and the research results agreed upon by the researcher and the subject of the researcher."

The approach that researchers will use is the ethnographic approach. An ethnographic approach is an approach in social science research. This approach studies a social and cultural group in the community in depth, which is an attempt to discover how community groups organize the culture they have in mind and then use that culture in life.

According to Spradley, 1980, Atkinson 1992, and Wolcott 1997, ethnography is an explanation of culture with a view to learning and understanding the individual's life. Ethnography means learning from people who directly explain the culture and subculture of that individual.

Wolcott (1977) explained that ethnography is a unique method or a set of ways in which various forms have specific characteristics, including ethnographer participation, understanding and following the daily life of a person over a long period, seeing what is happening, listening to what

is being said, asking them, and collecting what data exists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Offerings

Several regions use several terms in referring to the term offerings, such as Sajen, Sesaji, Sajian (Indonesian), Parawanten (Sundanese), Banten, or Be Banten (Bali). In the Big Dictionary Indonesian, offerings are interpreted as 'food (flowers, etc.) served to ethereal beings'. In contrast, the word Sesajen itself is construed as a dish (food, flowers, and so on that is served to delicate people, etc.), and the word serving is defined as '1. Something presented; 2. The ceremony offered food, flowers, etc., to supernatural powers.

The verb for the word sajen is bersaji which is interpreted as offering a dish in a religious ceremony carried out symbolically to communicate with supernatural powers, providing food and other objects that symbolize the intention of the communication. Offerings are a means because they are used to establish relationships with nature outside of humans. Because nature is "subtle," the offerings are eaten by the smell alone. According to the word's origin, the term offering comes from the phrase saji (serve), meaning that it is served (food) to subtle creatures as an expression of the human sense of belief.

Offerings as offerings are always present and provided as a symbol of spirit or spiritualism. This indicates that man believes another higher and greater power is above human management. They wanted to lean their lives on the Possessor of that power. However, it ultimately leads to the power of Almighty God. Offerings are also symbolic vehicles used as a means for spiritual negotiation with supernatural things. By symbolically feeding the ethereal spirit, the heart is hoped to be docile and willing to help human life. Offerings are made, so these supernatural beings do not interfere with human life. Ritual offerings are an essential part of the religious ceremonial system.

From the description above, offerings or offerings are the implementations of the relationship between humans

and ethereal beings. By being given offerings, supernatural creatures will feel happy so that they do not interfere with human life, and human life will be comfortable and peaceful. If the offerings are not given, it is believed to cause certain disasters or catastrophes. As for the offerings, they can be small foods (which are often consumed by humans), flowers, and others. Each offer's meaning depends on its "ujub" (purpose).

B. Offerings on Sundanese Culture

According to the community, the term *sesajen* is interpreted as *tasyakuran*, commonly known as a form of gratitude they offer. These offerings are presented in a ritual process to ask for salvation at the event they are about to perform. The meaning of *sajen* comes from the Sundanese language, *ngajenan*, which means *ngahormat* (Nanang, 2022). *Sajen* comes from the words SA and AJIAN: SA means singular, AJI means teaching, and AN means *seuneu* (fire). SA AJIAN is defined as a single teaching by worshipping God Almighty.



Figure 1. Sundanese Cultural Offerings
(Source: Author, 2022).

1. Variety and meaning of offerings in Sundanese culture

Traditional activities are closely related to the rituals and culture of offerings. This diving is a prayer event by providing offerings as a form of gratitude to his God for what they got and lived. Apart from that, this ritual is also used as a repellent or can be interpreted as rejecting something harmful or destructive so as not to come on the journey of life that they will take. At the same time, the *Sesajen* is a food served at the time of the ritual. The following is a variety of offerings in general that the Sundanese use.

- a. Dawegan or coconut has a deep meaning for human life. Coconuts are used as a symbol of human well-being.
- b. Bananas used in Sundanese cultural offerings use three types of bananas: one golden brush banana, two cotton bananas, and manggala bananas. The yellow on this banana symbolizes the rays, and the green represents nature.
- c. Frankincense has a deep meaning over the life of the

upper world and the underworld; black frankincense symbolizes darkness or the supernatural world or is called the underworld.

- d. Rujakan, i.e., various fruits are trampled, then there are coffees, sweet tea, and plain water. Rujakan, in terms of philosophy, describes that human life in this world is various; there are bitter, sweet, sour, and others that describe human life.
- e. Colenak became the favorite food of the ancestors in ancient times.
- f. Tek-tek, the essential ingredients are betel leaf, whiting, and tobacco. The betel used in green symbolizes nature or the earth. Then this tek-tek, when chewed, produces a red color that symbolizes human lust. The white color in whiting is denoted as female or chastity, and tobacco is represented as male. Combined, all the materials are intended so that the human beings on this earth must be able to maintain worldly passions.
- g. The seven flowers selected are the same number as the seven layers of the earth. The flowers present have a pleasant fragrance symbolizing life should be like a flower that is always fragrant and much liked by people. The flowers used are rose, kenanga, jasmine, paper flower, chrysanthemum, pandan leaves, and canticles.
- h. Rice has a high philosophy for human life where rice teaches us "the greater the fruit, the more ducking the rice will be" it provides a lesson so that man is not arrogant for any greatness he achieves.
- i. The egg symbolizes our forerunner as human beings when choosing native chicken eggs so that humans do not forget about their hometown, which teaches civilized and cultured humans.
- j. Serutu is a symbol of the sayings or teaching materials of the ancestors with a layered pattern. This layer of tobacco is easily torn if not careful in rolling; this symbolizes that humans must be cautious in stepping and studying life in this world.
- k. Brown sugar, a dark brown color, is the essential

ingredient in Sundanese offerings. This brown sugar is placed on a coconut, where the coconut symbolizes nature or the earth, thus making their hope to be given a sweet taste or a good life on this earth

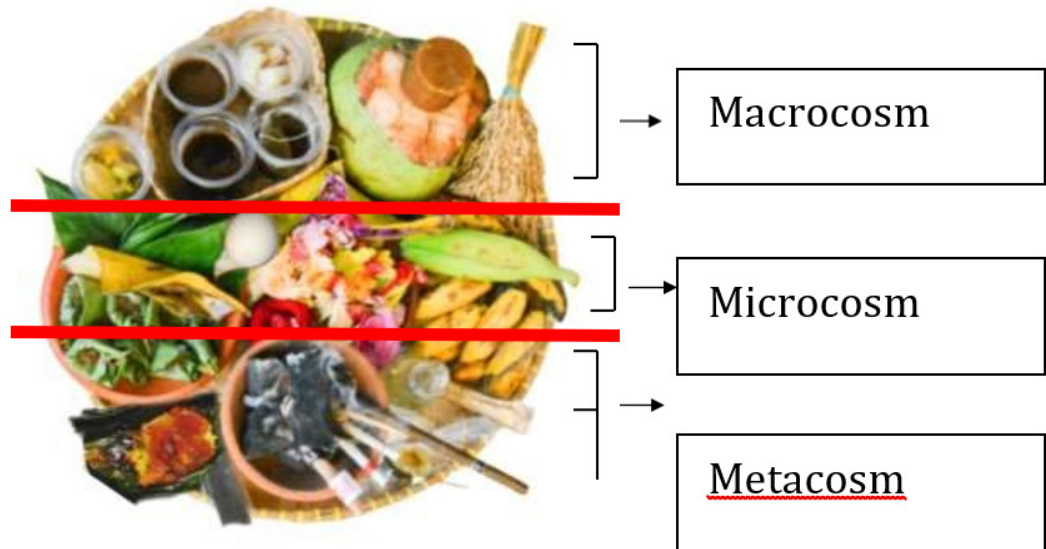
- l. Fambo oil symbolizes that man should be like this fragrant oil gives a pleasant fragrance, provides comfort, and is liked by people.
- m. This keletik oil has a long process to become oil. Therefore, it is symbolized that metallic oil is like a science that can later be useful for humans. Metallic oil has a clear color with a slippery texture, represented by this oil can facilitate human affairs on this earth by not forgetting to pray to his god.
- n. Bako madat is a type of frankincense with a more potent fragrance than ordinary frankincense. Bako madat has a dense and sticky texture and a deep black color. Uniquely from this, frankincense is wrapped in gold-colored brass and has a relief of a snake and skull.
- o. Parupuyan is a container for burning charcoal and frankincense. The materials used are soil, water, fire, and wind, and these materials make the symbol of human nature. Then this parupuyan becomes a place where frankincense is burned, where humans are a container for creating human traits or a place to process one's feelings.

Tumpeng is a symbolic form of the relationship between God and man and man and other humans. The shape of the cone that rises upwards like a mountain range symbolizes human hope to improve the standard of human life more prosperously. Tumpeng also illustrates that Indonesia is filled with mountains, and abundant wealth, presented tumpeng so that humans can be grateful for all the natural wealth that God has created. If in Javanese culture, tumpeng is a combined language of "tumapaking penguripan-tumindak lempeng tumuju Pangeran" which means to give you to the creator.

B. Offering offerings in Sundanese culture

After an in-depth study, Sundanese offerings have three

parts according to the concept of *buhun* that they uphold, namely *Tri tangtu*, which means *gusti anu asih, alam nu ngasah, jeung manusa nu ngasuh na* (God who loves, nature who hones it, and humans who guard). In the book that the author reads, the microcosm, macrocosm, and metacosm are described by Mr. Jakob Sumardjo with the explanation of the upper world and the underworld.



a. Pattern

Macrocosm means the great universe or often referred to as the universe. "Macro" means "great" and "cosmos," i.e., "order or world." This simple offering depicts the forces of heaven and earth, called the macrocosm. *Daweugan*, often called young coconut, symbolizes the planet universe, or female principle, which means giving birth and giving life. In the Hindu-Buddhist concept, women belong to the upper world, i.e., "God Uranis." The types of offerings included in the macrocosm are rice, coconut, *rujukan*, and brown sugar.

Microcosm means small universe, "micro" means small "cosmos," i.e., "order or world." Some offerings that fall into the microcosm group are seven-form flowers, native chicken eggs, three types of bananas, and *tek-tek*. In this offering, man is symbolized by the flower of seven forms because man is very diverse in nature, attitude, way of life, and destiny. The egg of a native chicken symbolizes the forerunner of human origin. Then three types of bananas enter the macrocosm; besides that, those who

Image 2. Sundanese Cultural Offerings Pattern

(Source: Author, 2022).

still have a buhun culture hold the concept of Tri tangtu, which means loving each other, sharpening each other, and caring for each other. Finally, tek-tek, the unity of the macrocosm, becomes a microcosm in its meaning. This tek-tek, when chewed, produces a red color that symbolizes human lust or is often symbolized as a color that means courage.

Offerings depict the power of the macrocosm, namely the earth that is presented to the power of the microcosm, namely humans so that a metacosm or so-called underworld (spirit or supernatural world) is created. The first is Parupuyan, white frankincense, black frankincense, bako madat, and several tobacco types and serutu. The types of offerings found in the metacosm are related to the underworld.

b. Color

In the Sundanese cultural offering, it can be seen that the colors that appear are very diverse and have meanings. Namely, there are green, red, yellow, white, black, gold, and brown. As already described above regarding the importance of each color itself, if outlined, this color is a single entity that symbolizes everything on earth, such as green telling the earth and the universe, red and yellow indicating human nature, and black and white representing the supernatural world. The arrangement and concept of the meaning of this color, by presenting it variously and combined in one container, becomes a unique attraction for the local community.

c. Shape

The form or form is present if we pay attention to the aspect of the offerings that are packaged to form a purse. The shape of the cone that rises upwards like a mountain range symbolizes human hope to improve the standard of human life to be more prosperous, indicated by the highest peak in this cone shape. The shape of the cone also represents that Indonesia is filled with mountains, and abundant wealth, which should be grateful for all the natural wealth that God has created.

C. Offerings on Balinese Culture

Offerings are part of Hindu-Buddhist or even pre-Hindu Buddhist traditions, relics, or animist beliefs that are acculturated with Javanese culture and other cultures of the Archipelago people. In Buddhism, all offerings are intended as symbols to help remind the person who gave the offerings of the reality of life. Water refers to humility; candles are the epitome of sacrifice and illumination; incense is the epitome of name and honor that is fragrant everywhere; and flowers are the epitome of beauty and eternity.

In Balinese society, which is predominantly Hindu, the ritual of giving offerings has become an essential ritual in daily life as well as in traditional ceremonies and religious ceremonies of the Balinese people. Hindus in Bali call it *sesajen* with the term *Banten*. *Banten* comes from the word *bang*, which means *Brahma*, and *enten*, meaning *remember* or *who is made aware*. *Banten* is a worship aid always related to religious ceremonies, especially Hinduism.

A man performs a ceremony or ritual because he is considered to have meaning and function. Almost no human group, community, tribe, or society would perform a customary ritual or religious ceremony believed to have no purpose or function whatsoever for them. Likewise, with Balinese (Balinese Hinduism), the rite of offering offerings became the most important religious practice in their lives.

Every day, they offer offerings in some corners of their homes. Rites of offering offerings are also performed in many of their religious traditions. There is hardly a part of the sacred rites of the Balinese Hindu community that is not accompanied by offerings of offerings.

1. Variety and meaning of offerings in Balinese culture

In various traditional rituals and ceremonies of the Indonesian people, including in *Banten* and *Bali*, different objects become symbols of offerings. In the *Yadya* rite in the Balinese Hindu community, for example, some objects that must be present in a ritual are flowers, leaves, fruits, food, and items that can be added. Here are the kinds of things, along with the explanations.

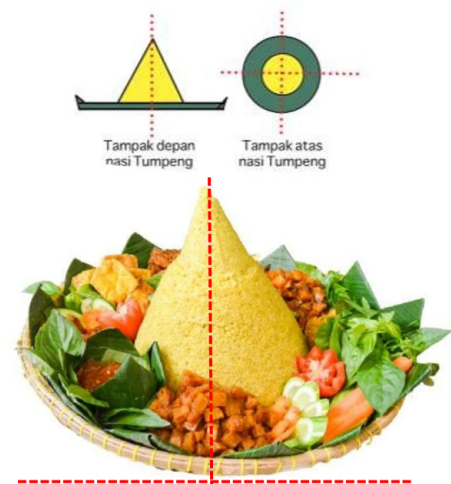


Image 3. Sundanese Cultural Offerings Pattern

(Source: Author, 2022).

1. Plawa or leaf Is an offering that becomes fundamental in every Banten, symbolizing the purity of heart. Usually, the leaves are often used are janur leaves because they are easy to create
2. Sirih is an offering symbolizing Sang Hyang Wishnu or Sang Hyang Narayana.
3. Flowers are a visualization of the beauty and sincerity of human bhakti love.
4. Rice is an offering that represents a staple element in human life.
5. Rampe flowers become a therapeutic scent for Hindus to easily concentrate their minds on worshipping God.
6. Coconut represents the world we are in, and it is believed that the head of Sang Hyang Brahma long ago was once transformed into a coconut plant on Earth, so the coconut also served as the tapakan of Ida Bhatara at the time of odalan (commemoration of the birthday of a Hindu holy place).
7. Tingkih is a representative of chastity and harmony.
8. Duck Eggs symbolize the moon or Arda Candra, a reflection of Sang Hyang Shiva.
9. Betel nut Because it is reddish in color, this fruit represents Sang Hyang Brahma.
10. Pangi is an offering symbolizing Ida Bhatara Sang Hyang Mahesora.
11. Banana is an offering in the form of fruit and a staple offering in yajna in Bali.
12. Gegantusan is a symbol of sad rasa, which is a blend of the contents of land and ocean, which is made from nuts, spices, salt, and anchovies wrapped in kraras / old banana leaves is a symbol of sad rasa and also as a symbol of prosperity is a symbol of the mysterious world embodiment of Hyang Widhi Wasa as Hyang Indra.
13. A Hundred seeds Are a collaboration of many grains, and this is what symbolizes the Panca Dewata.

b. Offerings visual in Balinese culture

Canang or flowers have a beautiful meaning of purpose. Canang is the simplest banten to offer.

1. Patterns and colors

Yellow flowers symbolize the Supreme God, who is in the West; red flowers symbolize Lord Brahma, who is in the south; white flowers symbolize Lord Iswara, who is in the east; dark color flowers symbolize Lord Vishnu like blue and purple is to the north, Green flowers in the form of sliced pandanus leaves are in the middle which represents Lord Shiva, namely as a counterweight.



Image 4. Balinese Cultural Offerings Pattern

(Source: Author, 2022).

b. Division of levels of Balinese cultural offerings

Each banten holy day ceremony used by the Balinese people is also different. There are three levels including:

1. Nista (Simple)

This nista-level canang is adjusted to the pocket's contents; for example, if our finances are small, the Balinese people make a simple canang, namely the nista level. In this level of nista, the canang is usually made of banana leaves or janur leaves that are made ordinary. The contents are flowers of five colors. Among them are pandan leaves made with small slices.



Image 5. Balinese Cultural Offerings Nista level

(Source: Author, 2022).

2. Madya (Middle)

At this intermediate level, if we have more money, the canang is distinguished and supplemented by banten in the form of food. Like the nista-level canang, the intermediate-level canang also contains the same content in the form of five colors of flowers. Still, there is little that gives it away, namely that some extras can usually be sugarcane and other foods such as cakes or sweets.



Image 6. Balinese Cultural Offerings Intermediate level

(Source: Author, 2022).

3.Utama (High)



Image 7. Balinese Cultural Offerings
Mian level
(Source: Author, 2022).

This leading tier is if we have excessive money and can afford banten, which is higher than madya and nista. The canang used at this main level is usually decorated and made better and created more attractive and aesthetic; the contents can generally be in the form of several foods and additional cigarettes apart from the flowers of five colors.

In addition, in canang, there are also often other foods such as sodeu, a type of dried rice, fruits, pastries, and other foods. In addition to food, they also sometimes add betel leaves.

c. Laying of Balinese cultural offerings

Balinese people certainly value offerings or what they often call banten. They use this banten to be spoken or given; of course, they offer to gods and gods, then to blind times. They use this as a platform for their God to ask for balance and peace in their lives, such as harmonizing ego, lust, and anger. For the laying of banten has its meanings, such as:

1. The laying of banten in the form of a canang in the temple kept above, which aims at God and gods as a symbol of the gods descending to earth and blessing their people.

2. The laying of the bottom or seugeuhan on the ground, which aims at the blind or the creatures of the lower realm, so that all negative energy can be neutralized into positive energy for the surroundings.

Conclusion

Offerings are a cultural heritage tradition that has been carried out for generations. Users of offerings to ask for salvation, give gratitude, and bring sound and reject insufficient offerings has a sacred nature for people who still believe in it. This presentation is usually done in places considered sacred or with a high history in the surrounding area.

Offerings will change in meaning according to the views and beliefs that the community holds. Offerings are a gesture in the dynamism and harmony of nature to be one with us, and we to be one with nature. We come from God and are given life by him, and God gives us natural resources in the form of food that provides energy and energy for the book of Jesus to survive.

The tradition of giving offerings in various rituals or traditional ceremonies and socio-religious rites in the Sundanese and Balinese regions is still very attached to their culture. However, in Bali, this culture has become a daily custom as an expression of plea to Sang Hyang Widhi for salvation in their lives from the disturbances of the universe by giving sajen in the form of canang every day. In contrast to the Sundanese culture whose traditions have begun to disappear, only a few regions are indeed attached to their culture and traditions in honoring their ancestors.

After an in-depth study, this offering has an attractive appearance with various meanings for its life; however, it has different types and varieties of offerings but has the same purpose: to ask for the safety and protection of the supernatural to avoid catastrophe. In addition, to express gratitude or gratitude for what has been obtained and hope for the same success and prosperity.

Overall, Sundanese offerings prioritize content rather than appearance in presenting offerings. Meanwhile,



Image 8. Laying of Balinese Cultural Offerings

(Source: Author, 2022).



Image 9. Balinese Cultural Sesajen main level

(Source: Author, 2022).

Balinese sajen prioritizes aesthetic appearance but needs to be separated from its vital meaning.

In Balinese culture, people always perform ceremonies for their safety. Like the temples in Bali; there are always offerings in the form of canang placed on the high platform that has the purpose of being offered to the gods and spirits of the ancestors. Meanwhile, offerings for evil spirits are placed at the bottom. For the Balinese, giving offerings every day, especially in front of their homes and crossroads, is a form of gratitude to the gods who have provided welfare for their lives.

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