

# Preserving Cultural Heritage Through a Traditional Ritual: A Case of Kabuyutan Ciburuy

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## ABSTRACT

*The research aims to reveal facts about the Seba ceremony in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, Garut, West Java, as a tradition of preserving cultural heritage that has been carried out for generations. The old manuscripts, stored in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, are no longer being used as a source for scientific advancements, and the building is no longer used as a facility to educate its descendants. The research seeks to understand the reasons behind this shift. It employs a qualitative method, a powerful tool for in-depth research, to provide a factual explanation of the research object factually. The research process included participant observation and interviews with local cultural figures, conducted formally or informally. The result of this research is a descriptive explanation of the Seba Ceremony as a means of preserving cultural heritage. The heirlooms encompass educational activities, such as the discovery of many manuscripts, one of which contains pieces of advice on old Sundanese character and ethics. Thus, the continued practice of the Seba has elevated it to a high level of cultural wealth, ensuring its relevance and vitality for future generations.*

**Keywords:** *Seba Ceremony, Kabuyutan Ciburuy, Preservation, Cultural Heritage*

## ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menemukan fakta mengenai Upacara Seba di Kabuyutan Ciburuy, Garut – Jawa Barat, sebagai salah satu tradisi pelestarian cagar budaya yang dilakukan secara turun-temurun. Naskah-naskah kuno yang tersimpan di Kabuyutan Ciburuy tidak lagi digunakan sebagai sumber untuk pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan, begitu pula dengan bangunannya yang tidak lagi digunakan sebagai fasilitas untuk mendidik keturunannya. Untuk itu penelitian ini mencoba membedah mengapa hal itu terjadi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif yang dipercaya dapat menjadi pisau bedah dalam penelitian, sehingga membantu menjelaskan objek penelitian secara faktual. Langkah penelitian dengan melakukan observasi partisipatif. Juga mengadakan wawancara dengan para tokoh budaya setempat baik secara formal atau informal. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah penjelasan secara deskriptif mengenai berjalannya Upacara Seba sebagai sebuah upaya pelestarian peninggalan budaya. Oleh karena benda-benda pusaka yang merujuk pada aktivitas edukasi, seperti ditemukannya naskah-naskah, salah satunya naskah yang berisi nasihat-nasihat budi pekerti dan etika Sunda lama. Hal itu menjadi kekayaan budaya yang tinggi dengan tetap dilaksanakannya upacara Seba sebagai wujud pelestarian agar tetap hidup dan relevan bagi generasi mendatang,

**Kata Kunci:** Upacara Seba, Kabuyutan Ciburuy, Pelestarian, Warisan Budaya

## INTRODUCTION

Historical relics are the cultural wealth of a nation as a form of human thought and behavior that is important to understand as they carry history, science, and culture in the life of society, nation, and state. As an intellectual work based on local wisdom, it needs to be organized, maintained and saved by given legal protection. With the promulgation of Law No. 5/2017 on the Promotion of Culture on May 29, 2017, the regulation of the object of cultural promotion will be clearer (Indonesia, 2017, p. 57). History is linked to everything that happened centuries ago, and for some individuals, historical proof can only be seen in the form of relics and other authentic evidence that have been discovered or whose legacy is known (Sholeh et al., 2024, p. 866). Cultural heritage should have outstanding universal value from the historical, architectural, commemorative, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view (Mekonnen et al., 2022, p. 2). Therefore, historical relics in the form of cultural heritage need to be preserved, as mandated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage.

Humans today require material culture legacy or artifacts in order to learn about their surroundings and borrow natural forces and results to suit their demands in daily life. Such understanding is obtained from the ability to think which is known as intangible cultural heritage or mentifact (mental heritage). This ability allows human to produce philosophy and knowledge, also known as local wisdom (Priambadi & Nurcahyo, 2018, p. 211).

History is also a discipline based on the legacy left by historical relics. However, the

historical legacy of a culture has its complexities. It depends on the very complex definition of culture which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and several other aspects of life (Ranjabar, 2013, p. 29). Culture concerns both the concept and the embodiment of the concept (Machdalena et al., 2020, p. 10). Based on the complexity of culture, part of culture that can form a human mindset is art. In art activities, there is a tradition that becomes the part of culture that has been passed down from generation to generation. Knowledge and tradition are two interrelated states, so when the knowledge is transferred into cultural structures and behaviors, it will be a special discussion (Palotti, 2022).

There is a need for public awareness and local wisdom needs to be maintained as a basis for recognizing national identity to be embodied in responding to the lives of today's society. Local wisdom means a philosophy that lives in the hearts of the people, the wise ways of living, and the right path in life, expressed through the ritual of custom (Pesurnay, 2018, p. 8). Concrete steps can be taken by exploring local wisdom and intelligence regarding preserving nature and living in harmony with nature to benefit the survival of the community. The Director General of Culture stated that local cultural wisdom has been proven for centuries to regulate the balance between human life and nature (Dwimarwati et al., 2023, p. 303). Local wisdom has a broad connotation; it can also be defined as wisdom in traditional culture, which refers to the culture of existing ethnic groups (Kartika, 2020, p. 507). In this regard, one of the traditions adhered to and preserved from generation

to generation can be found in Garut District, precisely in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, located in Pamalayan Village, Bayongbong Subdistrict (Darpan & Suhardiman, 2017, p. 96).

There are two main topics in this study. First, the tradition of Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy is implemented in harmony with the objectives of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage. Second, Kabuyutan Ciburuy is considered a Cultural Heritage site as a bridge between the past and the present, enabling people to learn and observe historical reality more closely.

Indigenous peoples understand the values and norms they have formed and maintained to become a guide to life. On this basis, the needs of the community develop into various needs, both physical and non-physical spiritual needs as well as physical and non-physical non-spiritual needs (Aswar, 2023, p. 322).

The essence of implementing the Seba tradition today is still the same, namely to build friendly relations between residents. This tradition builds togetherness and cooperation. During the procession, white foods made from sticky rice such as *ulen*, *wajit* and *ladu* are made. Then *anclak*, *tumpang bodas*, and *pamarab* (harvest) are also made. These dishes will later be given to participating residents. Overall, the Seba tradition contains advice and predictions for the future. *Kuncen* conveyed the advice and predictions in the form of mantras believed to be spoken directly by ancestral spirits. By implementing these pieces of advice, he will avoid disaster (Nugraha, 2018, p. 5).

In addition, a tradition is closely related to the belief that keeping it can provide

goodness in life. Therefore, Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy has been held for a long-time voluntarily without coercion. The belief that forms such perception and mindset is important to be studied.

## METHOD

This study aims to observe Seba Ritual as an effort to preserve cultural heritage and Kabuyutan Ciburuy as a cultural heritage site. This study applied a qualitative research method. This research method is generally used in studies of social science, the results of which are presented in the form of descriptive analysis. A qualitative research method is also used in studies related to phenomena, events, thoughts, and social activities of a group or individual (Sukmadinata, 2017, p. 60).

Qualitative descriptive research was adopted because this research examines the social phenomena of a traditional village in a naturalistic setting. First, the data is gathered straight from the source, with the researcher acting as the primary analytical tool. Secondly, the data is presented as meaningful words, sentences, or images (Subandi, 2011, p. 177).

The data for this study were gathered from relevant literature as well as field observations such as conducting interviews, making documentation, and seeing artifacts directly at Kabuyutan Ciburuy. The interview technique is distinguished by in-depth examination and extensive observation of a phenomenon under consideration for research (Hansen, 2020, p. 284). The resource person in this study was Ujang Nana Suryana, the Caretaker (*Kuncen*) from Kabuyutan Ciburuy,

a position passed down from generation to generation by his ancestors.

The findings of this study are expected to enrich the literature related to studies of cultural heritage sites and Sundanese cultural traditions. Previous studies of cultural heritage sites and traditions as well as rituals or ceremonies were used as a reference for comparison to enrich study analysis. This study is also expected to provide benefits to the socio-cultural life of the community and contribute to the policies issued by the government related to the Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Kabuyutan Ciburuy is located in Pamalayan Village, Bayongbong Subdistrict, Garut District at the coordinate point of 7° 17' 18" S and 107° 49' 43" E. Geographically, Kabuyutan Ciburuy is located at the foot of Mount Cikuray. It is crossed by three small rivers, namely Cisaat in the east, Baranangsiang in the north, and Ciburuy in the west. Kabuyutan Ciburuy is about 23 kilometers from the City of Garut and accessible by following the route to Cinisti Village, Bayongbong Subdistrict and traveling about seven kilometers to the south from the edge of Cinisti highway.

During the era of the Dutch East Indies, Kabuyutan Ciburuy was located near to Waspada Plantation and Cikajang Tea Plantation. Geographically, Kabuyutan Ciburuy covered a fertile area of 1 hectare that could produce agriculture to support the economy in that era. Based on the Statistics

of the Garut District, the total population of Kabuyutan Ciburuy in 2020 was 5720 people (Garut, 2020). Places that are often called *kabuyutan* by Sundanese people usually refer to important places such as burials of important figures, palaces, mandalas (education centers), or other important places (Ahmad Darsa & Nani Sumarlina, 2022, pp. 78–80). Kabuyutan Ciburuy itself is listed as 73 Sundanese cultural heritages based on education in the Mandala category (Alim, 2021, p. 28).

Prior to the colonial era of the Dutch East Indies, namely in the Hindu-Buddhist or pre-Islamic period, the Sundanese region, known as Kabuyutan (Mandala), was designated specifically for religious and intellectual activities. Mandala is the totality consisting of parts that make it perfect. The word 'Mandala' literally means the purest essence (Sumardjo, 2009, p. 304). Observed from the aforementioned definition, Kabuyutan (Mandala) Ciburuy is a place that consists of several parts that make Kabuyutan Ciburuy perfect. It is evident from several buildings in Kabuyutan Ciburuy with their respective functions, providing a purpose to Kabuyutan Ciburuy. In this regard, Kabuyutan Ciburuy once was a place that focused on intellectual development. One of the texts containing advice on old Sundanese character and ethics, called *Amanat Galunggung*, was written by Rakeyan Darmasiksa, ruler of Galunggung (Nugraha, 2018, p. 3). Other relics that strengthen the existence of Kabuyutan Ciburuy as an ancient educational institution are eyeglass prims made of horn, metal tubes with legs, scissors and pangot knives which are writing tools (Ahmad Darsa & Nani

Sumarlina, 2022, p. 80).

Another example is Kawali (Ciamis), precisely in the Astana Gede Complex. It served not only as the capital of the Galuh Kingdom but also as a *kabuyutan*. The place stores several stone inscriptions written in Old Sundanese letters. Similar to Astana Gede Kawali, Kabuyutan Ciburuy in Garut District is still preserved as a historical site. Until the present time, Kabuyutan Ciburuy remains a sacred place for a group of people, particularly the family of *kuncen*. Annual rituals are held in this place as a tribute to ancestors as well as a process of preserving cultural heritage (Admin, 2021).

According to Rohaedi, Kabuyutan or sacred buildings in West Java (in this case the Sundanese region) are not always equated with buildings, artifacts, or temples as commonly assumed by the community today. The term *kabuyutan* has been found in the historical manuscripts from the period of the Kingdom of Sunda. At that time, *kabuyutan* was used as the center of the kingdom where the king resided. Therefore, supposing there were wars or attacks from other kingdoms, *kabuyutan* would be the first affected place (Admin, 2021).

The opinion of Rohaedi is in line with that of Ujang as *Kuncen* of Kabuyutan Ciburuy that Kabuyutan Ciburuy was a place used by prospective royal leaders as well as rishi as an educational and intellectual center (Interview with *Kuncen* Ujang on September 12, 2020). However, Kabuyutan in Sundanese means ancient goods or places that should be treated cautiously since they may have unwanted consequences otherwise. The local community

highly respects the existence of Kabuyutan Ciburuy and historians consider it a highly important place where various historical relics are stored and preserved. Thus, the government has designated it as a cultural heritage.

Cultural Conservation is a material/tangible cultural heritage in the form of objects, buildings, structures, sites, or areas on land and/or in water, whose existence needs to be preserved because it has important value for history, science, education, religion, and/or culture through the establishment of Law No 11 of 2010 Article 1 paragraph 1. In general, the word *Seba* in the Sundanese dictionary means handing over an item to someone who is respected and respected. The meaning of the *Seba* tradition is handover, respect, and apology to ancestors who have left behind heirlooms in Ciburuy Kabuyutan, namely Prabu Siliwangi and Prabu Kian Santang. The aim of implementing this tradition was to strengthen ties of friendship and unite the four kingdoms, namely Galuh Pakuan, Pajajaran, Majapahit, and Tarumanegara (Nugraha, 2018, p. 8). The implementation itself was initiated by Prabu Kian Santang and is still ongoing.

*Seba* Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy contains the values of local wisdom and elements of cultural preservation, as imprinted in the minds of people keeping this tradition and believing in its wisdom. Culture is a means of self-expression and the source of communal identity, and individual expressions of local wisdom come to define and play an important role in a community's cultural life (Pesurnay, 2018, p. 1). Thus, *Seba* Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy can be interpreted as a tradition to





**Figure 1. Bumi Padaleman**  
(Source: Admin, 2021)

preserve cultural heritage and understand the historical heritage and also the benefits contained therein, in line with the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage.

It is an obvious fact that Kabuyutan Ciburuy is a Cultural Heritage Site storing historical relics. This is in line with the opinion by Darpan and Suhardiman based on the historical relics found in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, particularly ancient manuscripts, leading to the conclusion that Kabuyutan Ciburuy was once a mandala or religious center protected by the rulers at that time and an intellectual center (Darpan & Suhardiman, 2017, pp. 96–97). Other historical relics in Kabuyutan Ciburuy are weapons and art tools. In addition, there are also three cultural heritage buildings, namely Bumi Padaleman, Bumi Patamon, and Leuit (to store rice), the pictures of which are presented in figure 1, 2, and 3.

Bumi Padaleman is a sacred building to store ancient manuscripts written on palm and nipah leaves. Bumi Padaleman is a religious edifice housing ancient writings on palm and



**Figure 2. Bumi Patemon**  
(Source: Documentation of Kartika, taken on September 12, 2020)

*nipah* leaves. The entire amount reached 750 papers, but 438 of them were damaged and unreadable (Darpan & Suhardiman, 2017, p. 96). The community of Kabuyutan Ciburuy places the *padaleman* in a hidden manner covered by a bamboo fence, in consideration of anticipating damage to the manuscript. The awareness of manuscript maintenance is carried out by the community by preventing direct sunlight, to prevent ultraviolet rays from damaging ancient manuscripts (Rodiah et al., 2017, p. 101). People are allowed to enter Bumi Padaleman only during the implementation of Seba Ritual.

Bumi Patemon, as seen in Figure 2, serves as a meeting hall to receive guests and an information center. Moreover, this building, about 12m long and 6m wide, stores heirlooms, such as kris, trident, and art tools, namely Goong Renteng (the forerunner of modern degung art).

Historical objects stored at Ciburuy Kabuyutan originate from the Megalithic and Classical periods. One of them is a *leuit* for storing food, as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Leuit (to store agricultural products, about 7m long and 5m wide)**

(Source: Documentation of Kartika, taken on September 12, 2020)



**Figure 4. Pangalihan (to temporarily store the ancient manuscripts prior to Seba Ritual, about 3m long and 2m wide)**

(Source: Documentation of authors, taken on September 12, 2020)

### Cultural Heritage in Kabuyutan Ciburuy

Kabuyutan Ciburuy is frequently visited by numerous pilgrims. They are allowed to enter Bumi Patemon at any time. However, the heirlooms stored in this building cannot be viewed freely since they are only on display once a year during the Seba Ritual.

Seba Ritual which takes place in Kabuyutan Ciburuy can be used to bridge the past and the present. The community at the present time is able to directly observe the historical reality and learn the lessons and the values contained. The objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy are archaeological remains that can define the realm of the human mind at that time, known as 'the Archeology of Mind', a term coined by Sumardo. Archaeological objects are the products of humans using their minds. Therefore, the mind is observable not only from human behavior but also from historical or archaeological objects (Sumardjo, 2009, p. 3).

In this context, the wealth in Kabuyutan Ciburuy is significantly unique. First,

Kabuyutan Ciburuy has ancient buildings, manuscripts, weapons, and others. Second, Kabuyutan Ciburuy also has a ritual carried out routinely to preserve the relics. These two components constitute a cultural wealth, showing high Sundanese culture. The place where these historical relics are stored is called a *pangalihan* (see Figure 4).

Several manuscripts in Kabuyutan Ciburuy are among the oldest, strengthening the high awareness to preserve cultural heritage objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. Based on the writing style, the ancient manuscripts stored in Kabuyutan Ciburuy are compiled in the 15th century AD. Several important manuscripts in Old Sundanese are *Amanati ti Galunggung* (Mandate from Galunggung) and *Sewaka Darma* (Darpan & Suhardiman, 2017, pp. 96–97). The images of the manuscripts are presented in Figure 5 and 6.

The contents of the manuscripts were inscribed using sharp objects on palm and nipah leaves in ancient Sundanese language and letters. "*Amanati ti Galunggung*" contains



**Figure 5. The ancient manuscript of Kabuyutan Ciburuy**  
(Source: Personal Collection of Kuncen of Kabuyutan Ciburuy, 2020)



**Figure 6. Ancient Manuscripts of Kabuyutan Ciburuy**  
(Source: Personal Collection of Kuncen of Kabuyutan Ciburuy, 2020)

advice (mandate) regarding old Sundanese ethics and manners, hence the name. The manuscript was written by Rakeyan Darmasiksa, the ruler of Galunggung, to his son, Ragasuci (Sang Luhaming Taman) (District., 2015, p. 133).

It strengthens the fact that Seba Ritual and Kabuyutan Ciburuy are significant in the context of cultural heritage. First, the cultural heritage and tradition in Kabuyutan Ciburuy show the values of local wisdom passed down from generation to generation, which can be used as a reflection of history

for current interests. Second, the historical objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy show the important existence of Kabuyutan Ciburuy, particularly for the socio-political life at that time. Therefore, the preservation of cultural heritage becomes relevant and goes hand in hand with the mandate of the Law of Republic of Indonesia No 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage. This study aims to examine these two reasons.

There is another cultural site in Bayongbong Subdistrict, namely Ciela Village. An interview with the caretaker of Ciela Village, namely Ihak, reveals that Ciela Village and Kabuyutan Ciburuy have similar lineage (Interview with Ihak on September 12, 2020). It is understandable considering the close distance between these two sites.

Ciela Village also stores ancient objects such as kris, ancient maps, and others. The village also has a similar ritual to the Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, called Ngumbah Keris. Observed from the patterns of cultural activities in Ciela Village and Kabuyutan Ciburuy, it appears that the understanding of cultural preservation has been carried out traditionally and from generation to generation (Kartika, 2020, p. 28).

The Seba Ritual is in line with Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage. It reflects that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, as the formulator of the law, is well aware of the importance of cultural heritage, particularly related to material cultural heritage, either buildings or objects with historical values. Observed from the perspective of the law, Kabuyutan Ciburuy, including its buildings, objects, and Seba Ritual, is Cultural Heritage.



It provides an understanding that cultural preservation in Indonesia, in this regard Sundanese culture, has been carried out for a long time, even before the existence of the law. It indicates that in Sundanese culture, upholding the traditional values contained in cultural heritage is crucial. It is evident in the routine implementation of the Seba Ritual without any coercion, relying only on the belief that it is an obligation and provides goodness in life.

In addition, such belief has a good impact on every cultural heritage object. There are two important points to note in the preservation of cultural heritage. First, cultural heritage can be a medium to visit the past. Second, cultural heritage can serve as cultural wealth to show the noble values of the culture of a community.

Regarding cultural heritage as a medium to visit the past, people in the present time can observe the reality of the past by visiting a cultural heritage site. In this regard, history becomes more alive and can be interpreted more easily. Cultural heritage is highly important to interpreting history because history is a discipline that depends on the legacy left. One of the clearest legacies of history is cultural heritage, both buildings and objects. Meanwhile, cultural heritage is evidence of the nobility of a culture implying that more cultural heritage found equals nobler culture. Kabuyutan Ciburuy is a cultural heritage site that shows the nobility of Sundanese culture. The Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage can be used to observe the importance of Kabuyutan Ciburuy, not only of its cultural heritage of buildings and objects, but also of its Seba Ritual.

### **Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy**

Rural people still believe that to realize their aspirations, they need to put up extra effort by performing specific rituals that serve as a conduit between people and the Creator, facilitating the quicker fulfillment of requests (Setiati & Resita, 2022, p. 498). According to Ujang Nana Suryana, the Caretaker of Kabuyutan Ciburuy, the Seba ritual is not only an effort to preserve cultural heritage but also a tribute to the ancestors by striving to continue to preserve its heritage (Interview with *Kuncen Ujang* on September 12, 2020).

The Seba ritual is always held every third Wednesday of Muharram, around 7.30 p.m. local time, as a ceremony to express gratitude, usually accompanied by giving presents, to people with high positions, knowledge, and insight, and even supernatural power, such as to Prabu Siliwangi and Prabu Kiansantang as community leaders in ancient times (Admin, 2021). This ritual shows an aspect related to Sundanese culture, namely high respect for ancestors. It is quite common in every eastern culture (Asia and Indonesia, including Sunda). Respect for ancestors can be realized in various forms and it obviously can provide benefits in the context of preserving cultural heritage, namely historical objects with cultural value that can greatly benefit human life today as a medium to reflect.

On the other hand, based on the explanation of *Kuncen Ujang*, the ceremony or ritual of preserving cultural heritage contains noble values originating from belief, upheld as a perspective and way of life. These values are firmly held and passed on from generation to generation without expecting anything

in return, but rather as an obligation. This is an important value in preserving cultural heritage and encouraging awareness of the existence of relics or the efforts to preserve them. Otherwise, any government regulations (in this regard Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage) will not be effective. In fact, due to the high awareness of cultural heritage in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, the enactment of government regulations ensures the good implementation of conservation.

A series of the Seba ritual are carried out a few days before the implementation, starting from first cleaning the traditional houses in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. This activity also symbolizes a good understanding of the preservation of cultural heritage, that cultural heritage relics are not only limited to ancient objects. In Kabuyutan Ciburuy, there are three types of houses, namely Bumi Padaleman, Bumi Patamon, and Leuit (rice granary). Bumi Padaleman stores ancient manuscripts made of palm and nipah leaves. Bumi Patamon stores sharp weapons such as kris, trident as well as art tools. Lastly, Leuit stores agricultural products, in this regard rice, as the main staple food of the surrounding community (Interview with *Kuncen Ujang* on September 12, 2020).

On the day of the implementation of the Seba Ritual, *Kuncen Ujang* will recite the incantations semi-consciously. He believes that he is possessed by ancestral spirits while chanting. The incantations are believed to contain the prediction of future life. In addition, listening to the incantations is also believed to provide blessings. Therefore, in the Seba Ritual, the recitation of incantations is the

most awaited part, either by the surrounding community or visitors/tourists/ academics attending the ritual.

The Seba Ritual is held in several stages. On the first and second Wednesdays, a *babaktos* or *kikis* activity is carried out (replacing the bamboo fences surrounding Ciburuy Kabuyutan). On the third Wednesday, a celebration is held by presenting agricultural products from the surrounding community. The culmination of the ritual is *samawur* or *nyalikeun*, namely a ritual of splashing cultural heritage objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy using flower water and candlenut oil. It is believed to be able to preserve cultural heritage objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy (Interview with *Kuncen Ujang* on September 12, 2020).

Observed from a series of activities in Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, several aspects are in line with the points and objectives contained in Law No 11 of Cultural Heritage, namely to preserve cultural heritage objects that can be used not only as a bridge to observe the reality of the past but also as a living guideline, particularly for the Caretaker and the community living in Kabuyutan Ciburuy.

Adat community in Ciburuy Village is highly disciplined in maintaining this rule. All residents are required to attend the Seba ritual, including those overseas. This attitude is called *Tukuh Ciburuy* (Darpan & Suhardiman, 2017, p. 97).

The Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy shows an awareness of several historical facts that consist of mentifact, sociofact and artefact (Dienaputra, 2011, pp. 103–104). All sequences of Seba Ritual involve these three elements.

Mentifact and sociofact are observed in the activities while the artefacts are the cultural heritage objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. However, the dilemma of the implementation of rituals such as the Seba Ritual is the stigma that it collides with Islamic law as the religion adhered to by the majority of the community. It occurs not only in Kabuyutan Ciburuy but also in Ciela Adat Village with their ritual of Ngumbah Keris.

The tradition of Ngumbah Keris in Ciela Village always obtains rejection from the surrounding community because it collides with Islamic law. Ihak as the Caretaker faces this dilemma. On one side, as the Caretaker of Ciela Village, he has an obligation to carry out and preserve the tradition. On the other side, as a Muslim, he cannot merely ignore the stigma of the community (Kartika, 2020, p. 28). This is also experienced by *Kuncen Ujang* as the Caretaker of Kabuyutan Ciburuy. Unfortunately, the stigma led to the destruction of several ancient manuscripts made of palm leaves.

Many ancient manuscripts made of palm leaves are nearly damaged because they were once neglected by the previous caretakers. They consider that maintaining cultural heritage in Kabuyutan Ciburuy is not in line with Islamic law and refers to polytheism. *Kuncen Ujang* is the 149th Caretaker. The damage to cultural heritage objects in Kabuyutan Ciburuy occurred during the period of the 147th Caretaker, namely the uncle of *Kuncen Ujang* (Interview with *Kuncen Ujang* on September 12, 2020).

This kind of issue will always be encountered in every traditional ceremony

or ritual, but that doesn't mean there are no solutions or middle ground. The active role of the government is required to overcome this issue because solely relying on the caretaker will not be effective. In addition, an understanding that tradition and culture have different values from Islamic law must be continuously provided to the community at every level. This issue deserves attention to avoid bad possibilities for cultural heritage objects that will not be in harmony with the mandate stated in Law No. 11 of 2010.

### **Unique Relics in Kabuyutan Ciburuy**

It is not only cultural heritage objects and traditional activities in Kabuyutan Ciburuy that are of concern. Based on the confession of *Kuncen Ujang*, Kabuyutan Ciburuy has other unique relics, this regard coined by *Kuncen Ujang* as living form (human), namely albino descendants. There are several albino descendants in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, including his two children. He believes that albino descendants are a legacy of living forms based on the oral tradition he obtained.

In the history associated with Kabuyutan Ciburuy, the legacy of this living form is related to the time of the Rishis in Sundanese land, referring to Rishi Punjung Putih who was albino. According to *Kuncen Ujang*, in the general history of the Kingdom of Pajajaran, there was a subsidiary kingdom named the Kingdom of Kanjeng Dalem Keputihan. It is believed that this kingdom had numerous albino descendants. *Kuncen Ujang* also said that there was a term *Kebo Bule* or *Mundinglaya* during the reign of the Pajajaran Kingdom that he believes was used to call an albino

descendant (Kuncen Ujang, 2020).

Interestingly, there are different ways of viewing albinos in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. Even though albino is a genetic disorder that has been scientifically tested that *Kuncen Ujang* himself does not deny, he has another point of view that strongly adheres to oral traditions. It shows that awareness of cultural heritage, be it material or understanding, is held firmly by *Kuncen Ujang* and the community living in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. The two albino children of *Kuncen Ujang* frequently become the main attraction for tourists visiting Kabuyutan Ciburuy who do not only want to see historical and cultural relics or attend the Seba ritual, but also directly see the albino descendants in Kabuyutan Ciburuy.

The existence of what *Kuncen Ujang* calls this unique legacy is not without problems. *Kuncen Ujang* admits that there are negative comments from local residents regarding the genetic conditions of his two children. However, for the sake of peace in the social environment, he ignores these negative comments and focuses on carrying out his duties as the Caretaker of Kabuyutan Ciburuy. This condition cannot be prevented or minimized. It is like two sides of a coin, a positive and a negative side. However, for every visitor and tourist, the existence of two albino children of *Kuncen Ujang* means different. They appreciate and listen to his views regarding his albino children and, most importantly, his notably unique way of thinking in interpreting genetic disorders that have been scientifically proven nowadays. It shows how *Kuncen Ujang* is obedient and disciplined in upholding the principles and

beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation by his ancestors.

The fact that visitors and tourists, coming to Kabuyutan Ciburuy for various purposes, can accept what *Kuncen Ujang* calls the unique living legacy shows well openness and acceptance. On the other hand, it is a separate tourist attraction to draw tourists to visit Kabuyutan Ciburuy.

Developing Seba Ritual into a cultural and tourist attraction is also important to consider for several reasons. First, it can make Seba Ritual more widely known. Second, it can make people widely understand the past reality of Seba Ritual, and utilize it as one of the important values for self-reflection on the past. Third, it can encourage the economic and social growth of the surrounding community in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. In other words, Kabuyutan Ciburuy is significant in the context of Cultural Heritage Conservation. It also has tourism potential that can encourage economic and cultural growth for the surrounding community.

### **Kabuyutan Ciburuy in the Context of Tourism**

In the context of tourism, Kabuyutan Ciburuy with its cultural heritage and the Seba Ritual has the potential to be developed into an object of cultural advancement. It is because tourism is one of the important factors to support cultural progress. In addition, tourism contains an element of economic progress that can have an impact on the surrounding community. The tourism industry that uses culture as the primary draw is known as "cultural tourism." Cultural tourism offers



the neighborhood economic options in addition to assisting in the preservation of the community's cultural legacy (Kartika et al., 2022, p. 362).

However, a tourism object needs one important thing, namely a tourist attraction. Tourist attractions are usually derived from existing traditions or cultural activities. Tourist attractions contain beauty, uniqueness, values, and cultural richness as well as diversity, either man-made or natural. These are supporting factors to encourage tourists to visit these tourist attractions (Katika, 2019, p. 3).

Kabuyutan Ciburuy has now become a cultural heritage site and a tourist attraction. Several obstacles that hinder the development of this site are still frequently encountered, such as a lack of information both online and offline. That is the reason why there are still many people who do not know about the Seba tradition which is rich in philosophical meaning. Apart from that, the place is at the foot of a mountain where the infrastructure and security are inadequate. The success of a tourist attraction must also be supported by the level of education and stability of local residents in the economic sector. The majority of residents living in Pamalayan Village have only received education up to junior high school, making it difficult to socialize cultural tourism village programs (Alim, 2021, pp. 27–29).

Based on the aforementioned explanation, Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy has met the qualifications to be a tourist attraction. In addition, it has been proven by the arrival of tourists, either for scientific purposes, such as research or for personal purposes such

as pilgrimages. Utilizing the Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy as a tourist attraction can further support the preservation of the ritual, thus fulfilling the mandate of Law No 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage in Kabuyutan Ciburuy.

Tourist attractions are frequently the purpose for visiting a particular destination, such as Kabuyutan Ciburuy, that provide activities and experiences and a means of collecting the signs of tourism consumption (Richards, 2002, p. 2). It is similar to tourism in Bali which is already advanced and can still maintain its regional cultural identity. Even though the forms of interaction vary, they all have one goal, namely conveying a message so that the Balinese people are not carried away by foreign influences, but are steadfast in maintaining Balinese identity (I Nyoman Darma Putra & Ida Bagus Jelantik, 2023, p. 420).

The involvement of various parties is needed in order to realize Kabuyutan Ciburuy as an object of cultural advancement as well as a sustainable cultural heritage site that provides benefits to the community. Obviously, the role of government is significantly vital for this realization particularly through various policies and financial support, both in the context of preserving cultural heritage or tourism.

However, Kabuyutan Ciburuy will not perish even without the attention of the local government. This has been proven by the existence of Kabuyutan Ciburuy along with its rituals and traditions. Organically, Kabuyutan Ciburuy already has a sustainable system for a long time and across generations, particularly

for the successors of Caretakers. This is also implemented in a disciplined manner and obeyed by each successor as a calling and obligation and a guideline. Various times as well as cultural and life patterns have passed, yet the existing system in Kabuyutan Ciburuy remains, even before the existence of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Two interpretations can be drawn. First, the support of the government for the sustainability of the system to preserve Kabuyutan Ciburuy as a cultural heritage site. Second, the active role and attention of the government to develop Kabuyutan Ciburuy to maintain its sustainability as an object of cultural advancement.

Currently, tourism is a growing trend and lifestyle. Numerous parties use tourism for the development of several aspects, one of which is education. Tourism can also be used in historical and cultural contexts. The local community's dignity will be restored, and socio-cultural values will serve as a guide for tourists, creating a valuable experience (Waluya et al., 2022, p. 2). A great number of positive impacts can be obtained, particularly economic development and the welfare of the community living in Kabuyutan Ciburuy. Therefore, the active role and encouragement of the local government can be a determining factor for the preservation of Kabuyutan Ciburuy and a medium that plays a role in improving the economy of the surrounding community. It possibly can improve the economy with a wider scope, such as District, Province, and National.

## CONCLUSION

The Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy, as an attempt to preserve culture, is highly important. Supported by Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage, Seba Ritual can obtain legitimacy. Long before the enactment of this government regulation and even the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy has been carried out from generation to generation. It is evident by *Kuncen* Ujang who is the 149th Caretaker, based on the pedigree written in an orderly manner. In addition, the preservation of cultural heritage in Kabuyutan Ciburuy is proven by the existence of Kabuyutan Ciburuy itself. To survive with all its traditions shows that the awareness of cultural heritage preservation has grown traditionally from generation to generation. The assistance, supervision, and support from both the central and regional governments will be able to make Kabuyutan Ciburuy even more developed.

One of the promising potentials is developing Kabuyutan Ciburuy as an object of cultural advancement and one of the tourist destinations. In terms of various aspects, Kabuyutan Ciburuy fulfills the requirements to become an object of cultural advancement and a potential cultural tourism destination. Developing Seba Ritual in Kabuyutan Ciburuy as a tourist attraction can lead Kabuyutan Ciburuy to become one of the vital Cultural Development Objects in West Java, even in Indonesia. It is evident in every implementation of the Seba Ritual attended by various visitors and tourists from almost every circle, starting from academics with scientific

purposes, to tourists with spiritual needs for a pilgrimage to Kabuyutan Ciburuy.

In addition, with the collaboration between the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Tourist Attractions, based on government regulations governing them, Kabuyutan Ciburuy will remain sustainable and can become an important historical and cultural heritage for modern society to observe historical reality more clearly. It can also be used as a reflection on history and culture to raise public awareness of the importance of history and cultural heritage. By having this awareness, Indonesia as a nation and a country can grow stronger and more developed.

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