The Significance of the *Wana Kertih* Ritual in Preserving the Environment of Ubung Village - Lombok Tengah

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Abstract: This study discusses the ritual of Wana Kertih and its significance in preserving the ecosystem of the Ubung village, District of Jonggat, Central Lombok. The data in this study were collected through observation, documentary, and interviewing the local Hindu leaders. The analysis was done qualitatively, namely by describing the problems using the theory of religi and functional structural. It suggests that the local Hindus have been the pioneers in preserving the ecosystem of the local forest as they implement the teaching from the ritual. The procession itself consists of: (1) Atur Piuning (calling the God) and Nuwur Tirta (carrying the holy water) before starting the main ceremony called Tawur Agung; (2) Mapada, which is the rite of animal sacrifice; (3) offering prayer at Mount Rinjani and Mount Pengsong, (4) Mapaselang, which symbolizes the meeting between the God and the people; (5) mapakelem, which is sacrificing animals, and (6) planting trees. The ritual has: (a) ecological significance, which reflects men's awareness about the importance of preserving the natural environment; (b) religious significance, which suggests men's faith to God for endowing peace and prosperity, and: (c) social significance, which suggests togetherness and social solidarity. For these all, the ritual needs to be maintained.

Keywords: the ritual of Wana Kertih, environmental preservation, village of Ubung

I. INTRODUCTION

Nature has its ecosystemic life in which every living element is dependent to one another. The dependency altogether create condition and the structure and harmony of ecosystem. This is an important life circle which determines the environment. Men and nature depend each other. The quality of the nature is the condition for the environment and determines the quality of life. The higher the environment quality the better the quality of life and vise versa. This auggests that life depends on the fulfillment of the elementary needs. (Soemarwoto, 1991:55). The development across a country may contribute to the environment problem, for example the destruction of the forest. According to Salim (2006: 114) there are different background behind the deforesting problem that seek attention: (1) settlement or business opening; (2) mining and land exploitation; (3) illegal logging; (4) farming or fire; and (5) natural effects, wild animals, and pest.

All of these can be followed with other natural disaster, such as landslide and flood. Still there are a lot who do not care about them. Hunters and tree cutters keep destroying the forest and ignore the consequences. All are related to the anthropocentricism, which is actually contrast to a teaching that views all creatures are equal before God (Anshori, 2006). City or town development plan often underestimates its natural environment consequence. The traffic jam and the poor areas are some examples. Thus, environmental study should be vital. Such a problem could have been studied carefully by the government of Central Lombok. Related to the issue, the Indonesian central government has released the Regulation No 32/2009 on the Environmental Management and Protection and the Regulation No 18/2003 on Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction. The regulation needs more support from the local people because some cases of environmental exploitation are still found (Soemarwoto, 1991).

Although in the past the people of Lombok Tengah, especially the Ubung villagers mistreated the forest, thesedays the situation has changed. The local Hindu communities care about the environment. The people understand the importance of the ecosystem and all other natural resources for sustaining the life of all creatures in this earth (Suweda, 2000). This is mirrored in the tradition of the local Hindu ritual called Wana Kertih. The ritual is centralised at Dharma Amertha Sari Temple every year during the no moon day of the sixth month according to the local Hindu calendre. Historically, the tradition was first carried out on 6 to 7 Decembre 2018. In the local Hindu calender the day was named *Tilem sasih Keenam* in the *Caka* 1940.

The ritual of *Wana Kretih* is basically a holy sacrifice carried out in a forest in order to fight back all negative effect that can harm the nature. It can be regarded as a traditional way of Hindu to manage properly the environment. It is a concrete implementation of harmonising the world or *Bhuana Agung* and the life of human beings or the material and spiritual realm. The teaching suggests that in order to reach the goal of life called *mokhsa*, which can be seen as the spiritual realm, all need to work together to preserve the material or physical world. The Hindu scripture writes this as "*Moksartham Jagaddhitaya Ca Iti Dharma*" which means "the goal of life is to balance the material prosperity and spiritual liberty" (Mantra, 1997). Based on it, the ritual of Wana Kerthi of Jonggot at Central Lomjok has been seen as a tool to open the view towards realizing the importance of natural environment. In Hindu tradition the ritual is a kind of *bhuta yadnya* or the sacrifice to the nature and all creatures.

This article addresses two problems (1) What is the ritual *of Wana Kertih* procession traditionally held by the people of Dharma Amerta Sari Temple at Ubung, Jonggat, Central Lombok like? (2) What are the meanings of the ritual?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been some literatures that discussed areas related to the present study. The first one to review here is the Rebo Buntung procession held by Hindu and Islam people of Pringgabaya, East Lombok (Ruastiti, 2020). According to the study, the ritual is held every Wednesday during the Safar month for three days; (2) It is done with praying together at Tanjung Menangis Beach of Ketapang; (3) There are also holy offerings to the sea; (4) the pilgrimages have some meal together to celebrate the fortune given to them; (5) Some local entertaiment shows are also performed. In general the ritual is done to remind the importance to keep harmony between all creatures and natures.

Secondly, Aryana (2002) discussed the Hindu teaching of *Tri Hita Karana*, a concept about the importance of maintaining the harmony between men, nature, and God. Related to it is the ritual of *bhuta yadnya* which basically teaches men to sacrifice life for the sake of maintaining the purity of the nature and everything in it, including those creatures that may not be visible. The ritual also symbolizes gratitude to God as the Creator of all for everything that has been provided.

Thirdly, in order to maintain the harmony between God, the nature, and the creature, there is a Balinese ritual called Macaru. Singgin Wikarman wrote in 1998 entitled "*Caru Palemahan* dan *Sasih*" in which he explaines that *Macaru* actually also functions to harmonize all forms of life including the natural, material, and spiritual that can be also found within men themeselves (*bhuana alit*). He classified three different types of the ritual: (1) the first one to harmonise the life on earth, which is called *Bhumi Suddha*. (2) the second one to harmonise the time and space, called *Caru Sasih*. (3) the third one to harmonise the birth time of someone and his/her life, called *Caru Oton* or "*bea kalaning rare metu*". The ritual is done by making offerings in accordance with the levels, namely simple/basic, middle, and great.

Fourth, the ritual of Hindus are rich of symbols. Titib (2000) views that the symbols found in Hindu offering (*upakara*) rituals are interesting and purposely made to be beautiful. The forms can be small and simple, called *canang*, or look luxurious and complex, called *banten*. They function to symbolize the thankfulness or *bhakti* and to pure the minds and help them focus. They can be also regarded as symbols of the God or *Sanghyang Widhi* or means to help the mind to reach Him when praying. Thus, all of these are not independent from the Hindu theology. They are means to improve the faiths or *sraddha* and the devotion or *bhakti*. Regarding the materials, the offerings mainly consist of flowers, fruits, rice, and cakes that are supposed to be prepared and placed sincerely. These are some of literatures discussing how the rituals of Hindus are related to the environmental maintenance therefore have been reviewed to support the present publication.

III. METHOD AND MATERIAL

This research is a study about a Hindu ritual called *Wana Kertih* which is a tradition of the Ubung villagers, living at District of Jonggat, Central Lombok. The ritual was studied for it : (a) is a well preserved tradition in this digital 4.0 industry; (b) is part of *bhuta yadnya* ceremony which is held once a year during the sixth month of the full moon day;(c) teaches the people to care for the environment in order to live well. In this qualitative research the data were collected through observing the ritual at first place. The data were also obtained through studying documents or library research, interviewing some of the local Hindu authorities. The data were described and analyzed qualitatively by applying the religy theory and functional structural ones.

IV. DISCUSSION

The Hindus of Ubung Village at Central Lombok have become the pioneers in preserving the local forests and the environments. The villagers hold a traditional ritual called *Wana Kerthi* every the sixth month of the full and no moon day. The Ubung village is about 6,99 km2, with 3207 families, and totally 10941 people, consisting 5337 men and 5604 women (Kecamatan Jonggat Dalam Angka, 2018). The village is approximately10 km to West from the Kota Praya, Central Lomboh. The majority of the residents are Moslems (98%) only 2% are Hindus. However, despite being the minority the Hindus contribute so much to preserving the local environment.

4.1 The Ritual Procession of Wana Kertih

Hinduism teaches six rituals that are spiritually believed to be able to harmonize the life in the universe called *Sad Kretih*. The six are: (1) *Atma Kretih, which is essentially the ritual to purify the soul within*. However, it may be also interpreted to be a homage to ancestors; (2) *Samudra Kretih* which is a ritual to teach that sea has so many different kinds of lives that need to be protected. In reality, sea also works to absorb any chemical waste to clean the water circle needed on earth; (3) *Danu Kretih* is a ritual to remind men the importance of any water springs that they are to be protected from any kinds of pollution (4) *Wana Kretih*, which is also called *ameras wana*, is a ritual that tells us to understand the significance of forests. It teaches human beings that trees

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have so valuable functions because of their worldly and spiritual power; (5) *Jagat Kretih* is a ritual for understanding the importance of maintaining the harmony of socieities. It emphasizes the need to realize the duty or *swadharma* as members of a society; and (6) *Jana Kretih* is a ritual to cleanse the self in which the power of divinity or *atman* actually lingers (Wiana, 1998).

Hindu teaches the people that the world or *bhuana agung* and the bodies or *bhuana alit* will always have positive and negative force. In order to control the negative ones and maintain the harmony rituals of *bhuta yadnya* need to be done. The *Wana Kerthi* is a ritual for such a goal. The one carried out y the villagers of Penyungug Pura Dharma Amerta Sari, of Ubung Village, Central Lombok is described in the table below.

Table 1

The Ritual of Wana Kertih at Ubung Village, Central Lombok

No	Rituals	Activities
1	Atur Piuning dan Nuwur Tirta	 To ask for blessings or <i>wara nugraha</i> from the God, Ida Hyang Widhi, who indwells the Dharma Amerta Sari Temple, regarding the temple ceremony of Tawur Agung. To have the holy water of the Mount Rinjani and Mount Pengsong for (a) cleansing or <i>panglukatan</i>; (b) enliving or <i>pangurip</i>; and (c) protecting the life.
2	Mapada	• To hold a procession for the animal to be used in the ritual.
3	Ngaturang ayaban	• To bring offerings or ngaturang ayaban (offerings) to Mount Rinjani and di Mount Pengsong
4	Mapaselang	• To hold the ritual of <i>mapeselang</i> that symbolizes the meeting between the God or Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa and the human beings.
5	Mapakelem	• To sacrifice the life by sinking, planting, and releasing some offerings.
6	Matanduran	• To plant trees around the area of village of Ubung. umat

Sources: field data (Nuasa, 2019).

The ritual of Wana Kertih has several stages. First, it starts with *atur piuning* and *buwur tirta*. The so-called *atur piuning* is aimed at expressing gratitude to God the Almighty who indwells the temple of Dharma Amerta Sari. It also informs that there would be a ritual of Tawur Agung at the temple. *Nuwur tirta* is a ritual led by the temple monks or *pamangku* to purify the offerings or *banten*, or *upakara* that are made for the ceremony as well as cleanse the villagers who pray at the temple. The holy water or *tirta* therefore functions as a symbol of: (a) cleansing or *panglukatan*; (b) enlivening *pangurip*; and (c) preserving the life (Wiana, 2001: 83). The water is usually taken from the spring at Mount Rinjani and accompanied with several kinds of offerings or *banten*, namely: *Suci soroh*, *salaran*, *penegteg* dan *bungbung*. These all were carried with the holy water I a ritual called *nuwur tirta* and *asta giri*, to be placed or *dipendak* at the ritual area.

Secondly, the ritual *mapapada*, is a procession of carrying around (berulang kali) animals (*pada* 'feet') as sacrifice symbols (Widana, 2002: 145). The animals were chicken with one color feather, chicken with whute feather, *hen with multi colour feather* (*mañca warna*), cow, deer, moose, hog, duck, dog, turtle, goat, buffalo (Nuasa, 2019).



Picture 1: The Procession of *Mapapade* in the Ritual of Wana Kertih (Source: Archieve of Writer)

The ritual of *mapapada* is held a day before the highlight of the ceremony called Tawur Agung, mainly with a procession called "*purwa daksina*". *Purwa daksina*, which is also named *pradaksina*, is a procession to circle the ritual spot. It is from the East to the South, from left to right (clock circle) three times. The ritual, no matter how long it is, was carried out to go through three stages (*Tri Kona*: beginning; middle; ending). It is ended with *nuwek* (touching) the animals with a sharp *keris* to symbolyze that they are sacrificed and offered.

The ritual is based on some ancient Balinese scriptures called *lontar*, namely *Widhi Sastra*, *Roga Serengganing Segara Bumi*, *Widhi Tatwa*, *Lebur Gangsa*, in which it is mentioned that the spirits or *bhuta kala*, such as: ghost, devil, demon, are actually gods or damned souls for their sins that they are all to be born in the world to free themselves before transforming into higher forms of life. Thirdly, offering ritual of Asta Giri at Mount Rinjani and Mount Pengsong which is also related to the Ubung village. The ritual of *Ngaturang ayaban* is held by a priest or sulinggih. The offerings are *banten pasaksi, suci soroh, saji sorohan, tumpeng pitu, bebangkit, caru panca warna saha runtutannya*.



Photo 2: Banten for the Ritual of *Wana Kertih* (Source: Writer)

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Fourth, the procession of *mapaselang* as an expression of love of the God, *Hyang Widhi Wasa* to all of His creatures, including to the prosperity of the world. *Dewa Semara Ratih*, the focused form and named of God, is worshipped with everything yellow to symbolize the prosperity. It also suggests that the offerings and prayer are wellcome by the God. The ritual teaches that the soul is a gift by Him and everything in this universe exists because of His love and ruled with it. Therefore, forests, mountains, lakes, and seas, are supposed to be well preserved. In the ritual, the God, *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi*, is polarized into the forms of *Purusa* or male and *Pradana* or female as well as focused as the God of love or *Dewa Semara Ratih*.

Fifth, the procession of *mapakelem*, which is the ritual of sacrifice, namely by releasing some offerings or sinking to the lake or sea, or by planting some trees (Mas, 1985: 14). The ritual is held at (1) a lake or sea and (2) land or mountain. It is a kind of *Bhuta Yadnya* ritual as the goal is to balance the life elements called *Panca Maha Bhuta*. Traditionally such ritual is characterized with some particular animal sacrifices (Arwati, 2001:7). In the context of *Wana Kretih*, the procession of *mapakelem* is different from the traditional ones. In this ritual, the animals are released into the forests so that they live naturally. Nevertheless, essentially the ritual, which is the symbolization of the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, teaches how to harmonize the life with the nature (Ashrama, 2005).

Sixth, the program of planting trees is also carried out as an implementation of the teaching from the ritual. By doing it the local Hindus have been preserving the harmony with the environment. The trees that are planted are banyan, lead, palm, widow, teak, mahogany, campora, meranti, acasia, spruce, dapdap, chrysolite, bamboo, and rattan. Forest plays very vital role in the life of human beings. It is a natural resource that supplies seeds as well as protects the whole population in the area. In the forest the solar energy is transformed and absorved by leaves to produce C, H, O that change into carbon and protein. A forest also provide wood and many kinds of medical sources. It keeps the water production and supply that is needed for the farming and fishery industry (Nuasa, 2020).

4.2 The Significance of Wana Kertih for the Hindus of Ubung Village, Central Lombok

Accoreing to Geertz (in Rostiyati, 1994: 1) rituals signify efforts of men to reach security, prosperity as well as to preserve the life in the world. Ritual of thankfulness is one of the most commonly found that symbolizes both spiritual and social interest. Thus, the local Hindus hold the tradition in order to preserve the balance of men's life in the universe, namely with the nature (*palemahan*), with other men (*pawongan*), and with the God (*parahyangan*). This balancing idea is well known as *Tri Hita Karana* (Mantra, 1997).



Picture 3 The Ritual of *Wana Kertih* at the Temple of Dharma Amertha Sari Desa Ubung, Central Lombok (Source: Archieve of Writer)

The *Tri Hita Karana* teaching is seen in the macro and micro dimension of the locals. The macro perspective means that the people see the Lombok Island as one mandala (*palemahan*), the Hindus of Bali-Lombok as one ethnics (*pawongan*), and the local temples as one holy area (*parhyangan*). In practice the concept is realized into the rituals of *Bhuta Yadnya* (the ones towards the creatures or *bhuta* and the universe). Thus, the ritual of Wana kertih signifies ecologically, religiously, and socially.

a. Ecological Significance

The ritual of *Wana Kretih* belongs to the so-called the ritual of *Bhuta Yadnya*. The word *bhuta* refers to the five elements of nature, namely land, water, air, fire, and sky (*pertiwi, apah, bayu, teja* dan *akasa*). The five elements are known as *panca maha bhuta*. These five elements have two characters, namely the positive one (*daiwi sampat*) and the negative (*asuri sampat*). The first one helps the development of good and happy life. Whereas the negative one will cause anything bad and brings life to misery. The negative character therefore is innate in the life of nature but is supposed to be control to avoid disharmony. It may become problems

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when (a) men ignore their environment; (b) God's will to teach men with which men are expected to maintain the relation with God Himself, the nature, and between men. The philosophy is about living together and helping one anonther in order to be happy, namely by willing to sacrifice or *yadnya*.

The ritual *Wana Kertih* is similar to the holy day of *tumpek uduh* that is known by Hindus in Bali. On the day, the natural environment, especially the trees and plants are given some homage for their significant roles in preserving the harmony in the men's life (Karmini, 2019). The balance of the nature or *bhuwana agung* and men or *bhuwana alit* relies on the sacrifice we make or as Hindus call it the *yadnya*. The more men ignore the importance of *yadnya*, the worse the nature would be. Consequently, in the long run there would be more suffering condition. This means that *yadnya* is important in the life of men (Sudarsana, 2001: 15). The ritual of wana kertih is carried out with the acts of planting seeds and growing various trees. (Picture 4), among others, widow, teak, mahogany, campora, meranti, acasia, spruce, dapdap, chrysolite, bamboo, and rattan.



Picture 4 The Planting and Growing Trees (Source: Writer Archieve)

Hindu teaches that men are supposed to understand that their existence is only the small part of the universe. This is supported by the ecological principle as proposed by Capra (2001), who says that men is part of the life network. The religion tells that men should keep the harmony in order to live happy life. It is written in the holy *Bhagawadgita chapter III verse 14: "Annad bhavanti bhutani, parjanyad annasambhavah, yadnyad bhavati parjanyo, yadnyah karma samudhavah* (meaning: the life of creatures comes from food, food comes from rain, rain comes from yadnya, and yadnya comes from karma). Further, Bhagawadgita chapter III verse 11 says: *"Dewan bhawayatanena te dewa bhawayantu wah, parasparam bhawayantah sreyah param awapsyatha* (meaning: By offering *yadnya* you keep the divinities that they will in return bless you. By honoring each other you can attain the highest realization"). These holy teachings of Veda emphasizes the importance of *yadnya* in developing the prosperity in *bhuwana agung* and *bhuwana alit* (Pudja, 2002).

The ritual of *Wana Kertih* has been able to help the local people of Ubung, to care about their environment. This is in accordance with what the Functional Structural theory says about the importance of balancing and functioning properly to have normal life (Ritzer, 2012). Thus, the ritual teaches that Hindus will live well if they can live on harmony with the nature.

b. Religious Significance

Men as *bhuana alit* are supposed to preserve good relation with the nature or *bhuana agung* through sacrifice or yadnya, which is symbolized and celebrated through holding the ritual of Wana Kertih. Hindu teaches that *Yadnya* is the core of the life because God Himself creates all based on *yadnya* too therefore it should be understood and followed. It also suggests that those who are willing to sacrifice will be enlightened. In modern sense, to do donation, for example blood donation, is also a form of *yadnya* (Titib, 1998). *Yadnya* can mean praying, offering, or helping which is based on pure heart and for a noble goal, namely to balance the two power (*rwa bhineda*) namely the positive and negative (Arwatti, 1998).

The ritual of *Wana Kertih* religiously signifies the devotion to the God or Hyang Widi Wasa. It is supposed to provide the devotees with peace and prosperity. This is symbolized with the performance of the dance of *Sutri* during the ritual of dewa yadnya, which can calm and steady the mind. The local people also believe that by holding the traditional ritual their village would be protected. Durkheim (in Koentjaraningrat, 2002: 199), says that the innate religious emotion makes men obey what their religion says. In general this is also done because all men wish to live peacefully. Parsons (in Koentjaraningrat, 1987) suggests that men behaviors are often voluntaristics, namely that what they do is derived from their drive and also based on, hence, controlled by the values and norms.

c. Social Significance

The ritual of *Wana Kertih* is part of Bhuta yadnya. In Hinduism in its highest sense, it is a mirror of social ethics, a theological ecology, and a symbol of *yadnya*, purification of nature or *somya* in the concept of *Bhuta Yadnya*. It is also seen as a symbol of transforming the life on earth into divinities because of the purified cosmics (Sudibya, 1997: 18). Thus, it has a social and cultural religious sense as during the procession the villagers could gather to prepare the ritual or *ngaturang ayah* and to pray together. The local people therefore are reminded through the ritual that this life is supposed to be seen as an opportunity to understand that nature is formed with five essential elements, namely *Panca Maha Bhuta* that consist of air (*bayu*), fire (*teja, agni*), earth (*pertiwi*), and space (Wiana, 2001).

Green area where people can live in harmony with the society can support the development of the culture. That is the reason why our environment needs preserving in order that there is a balance in life. This in turn could guarantee the sustainability. According to Parson' structural functional view, societies are always in harmony in the beginning. When there is a difficult situation time will help disolve the problems in the end. Thus, according to this perspective, any disharmony could function as a step towards social balancing. Harmony from the social balancing is the ultimate goal of men's life. It is associated with silent peace or *sunia*, from which the *mantra "Om swargantu suniantu"* which is chanted to someone who passed away, is actually derived from. The condition is only possible when all develop love.

The local Hindu people of Lombok have worked to this teaching in which balancing is the key to living in harmony. Any unnecessary killing of animal would be then avoided even the harmful *bhuta kala* should be respected in the *yadnya* and given offerings in the rituals. The Wana Kertih at Ubung, Lombok, has proved to be good for maintaining social harmony and environmental care among the local villagers. One of the monks at Dharma Amerta Sari temple, called Wayan Dharma, during the interview says the following.

"The social solidarity and togetherness among the Ubung villagers can be seen during the preparation and procession of the ritual. They prepare the offerings together. This has created the good atmosphere, peace, security, which all come into the development of the village. (Interview, 1 Juli 2020).

The ritual is then a means to strengthen the unity of the people. As Max Weber (1864-1920) put it that religion can become the means for building the spirit towards the social harmony (Jalaludin, 2012).

V. Conclusion

The Hindus of Ubung Village at Central Lombok have become pioneers in preserving the local forest. They have the tradition of holding the ritual of Wana Kerthi that supports it. The ritual itself is divided into six stages, namely : (1) *Atur Piuning* and *Nuwur Tirta*, in which the villagers pray for the blessing or *wara nugraha* from the God or *Ida Hyang Widhi* at the temple of Dharma Amerta Sari as well as asking for permission that they would hold the ceremony of *Tawur Agung*, *Nuwur tirta* at the Mount Rinjani and Mount Pengsong as the protector; (2) *Mapada*, which is a spiritual procession for some animals that would be used in the ritual; (3) *ngaturang ayaban* ritual at Mount Rinjani and Mount Pengsong, (4) *Mapaselang* that symbolizes the meeting of God as the creator, Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa and the men as His creatures who are given His love; (5) *mapakelem*, which is a ritual of sacrificing, namely by sinking, planting, or releasing offerings (6) planting seeds and trees around the village.

The ritual of Wana Kerthi has several sigjificances (a) ecological one, namely the importance of keeping the men and the nature in harmony; (b) religious one religius, improving the devotion to the God from peace of mind can be gained: (c) social one, namely strengthens the social solidarity among the local villagers. The ritual of wana kerthi should be preserved because it supports the preservation of the natural environment that is needed for the sustained deveslopment.

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