



Saput Poleng, Lawar and Tuak (Perspective of Local Genius Knowledge, Vedanta Philosophy, Bhagavad Gita and Manava-Dharmasastra)

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ABSTRAK. *Saput poleng rwa bhineda memiliki 2 (dua) warna, yaitu putih dan hitam, dengan pola kotak-kotak yang melambangkan dualitas. (yaitu baik-buruk, hidup-mati, gelap-terang, dan lain-lain). Dari aspek teologis, saput poleng rwa bhineda diinterpretasikan sebagai media pelindung. Jika dijelaskan lebih lanjut, saput poleng rwa bhineda tidak terlepas dari kepercayaan animisme. (animo artinya roh, atau nimi yang artinya sesuatu yang menjawab elemen lain, dan isme artinya paham). Lawar dalam kehidupan sehari-hari masyarakat Bali dapat digunakan sebagai sesaji atau bahan ritual, dan tuak adalah simbol kolektivitas atau persaudaraan. Minuman ini selalu hadir saat perayaan atau momen tertentu. Namun, tuak juga menjadi minuman "persaudaraan" saat berkumpul. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis 'simbol-simbol' lokal masyarakat Hindu di Bali (saput poleng rwa bhineda, lawar, dan tuak) yang memiliki implikasi terhadap dimensi sosial-keagamaan kehidupan. Pendekatan ini berfokus pada data subjektif dari fenomena sosial atau dari interpretasi berbagai jenis dokumen. Saput poleng telah menjadi representasi dari Tri Hita Karana, yang dijunjung tinggi oleh masyarakat Hindu sebagai prinsip penuntun. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kearifan lokal, mereka berupaya melestarikan lingkungan alam Bali. Bagi masyarakat Bali, lingkungan fisik adalah titik krusial atau vital yang keberadaannya perlu dilestarikan. Penggunaan lawar sebagai sesaji dalam konteks ini dapat diklasifikasikan menjadi 2 (dua) kategori, yaitu sagi dan soda rayunan. Kemudian, tuak diinterpretasikan sebagai simbol yang menyatukan dan memperkuat ikatan sosial. Saput poleng rwa bhineda, lawar, dan tuak adalah subkomponen yang melekat dalam kehidupan sosial-keagamaan masyarakat Bali.*

ABSTRACT. *Saput poleng rwa bhineda consists of two colors white and black arranged in a checkered pattern symbolizing duality (good-evil, life-death, darkness-light, and so on). From a theological perspective, saput poleng rwa bhineda is interpreted as a protective medium. More broadly, its meaning cannot be separated from animistic beliefs (animo meaning "spirit" or "that which animates," and -isme referring to a system of belief). Lawar in Balinese daily life may function both as an offering and as a ritual substance, while tuak symbolizes collectivity or kinship. This beverage is always present during ceremonies or communal events, and it also serves as a drink of "brotherhood" during gatherings. The purpose of this study is to analyze the local symbolic forms of Balinese Hindu society (saput poleng rwa bhineda, lawar, and tuak) and their implications for socio-religious life. This approach emphasizes subjective data derived from social phenomena and the interpretation of various types of documents. Saput poleng has become a representation of Tri Hita Karana, a guiding principle esteemed by Balinese Hindus. Through this principle, efforts are made to preserve Bali's natural environment. For the Balinese, the physical environment is a vital and indispensable entity that must be protected. The use of lawar as an offering in this context can be classified into two types: sagi and soda rayunan. Meanwhile, tuak is interpreted as a symbolic medium that unifies and strengthens social bonds. In this way, saput poleng rwa bhineda, lawar, and tuak are inseparable subcomponents embedded within the socio-religious fabric of Balinese life.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Bali is known as an island steeped in ritualistic atmosphere, so the *natah* or *palemahan*, which is densely vegetated, especially with trees that serve as a "canopy" for Balinese life, is legitimized with a ritualistic atmosphere. One way to ensure the survival of trees is by "wrapping" the tree trunks using a two-tone camouflage cloth. Philosophically, this fabric with two colors, white and black, and a chessboard-like pattern, has a meaning of duality (i.e., good and bad, life and death, dark and light, and so on). From a theological perspective, the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth is interpreted as a protective medium (Cornille 2016; Makowski 2023; Singh 2018). If explained further, the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth is inseparable from animistic beliefs (animo means spirit, or nimi which means something that animates other elements, and isme means understanding). This is a way of paying respect to the elements that animate or the supernatural things that animate every vegetation (Brookes and Enery 2019; Mahalakshmi 2014). Moreover, the *rwa bhineda poleng* cloth serves as a marker that the tree covered by this cloth is believed to be inhabited by spirits, cannot be cut down, and requires offerings in both nitya and naimitika contexts.

The existence of the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth as a method used by Balinese society to protect their physical environment can be viewed from the perspective of environmental sociology and the concept of post-traditional society. Environmental sociology, thru cultural ecology theory, explains that the environment and culture are not seen as separate, but are a mixed product that evolves thru dialectics. Both play a significant role and influence each other. So, it can be explained that the natural character, which is often cruel to us, is not separate from human actions that are arbitrary toward it. Even for natural disasters that are purely the will of God, humans have no power. However, on the other hand, God has blessed humans with the ability to think about how nature can be controlled and how the terrifying effects of nature can be anticipated. Finally, humans are thinking about the best steps to empower and save nature. Thus, nature, which was previously perceived as "stingy" toward humans, is now able to be restored to its original character, which is "friendly."

Beside having an ecological aspect thru the creation of the *poleng* cloth, Balinese society also emphasizes the value of harmonization in the socio-religious dimension – *lawar* and *tuak*. *Lawar* is a typical Balinese dish that can be viewed from two perspectives: physical and spiritual. As Clifford Geertz said, Bali is a place known as the "island of rituals." Therefore, all forms of Balinese community products are not only intended as commodities but are also used as ceremonial tools. Specifically, from a spiritual perspective, *lawar* in the daily life of Balinese society can be used as an offering or ritual ingredient. The use of *lawar* as an offering in this context can be classified into 2 (two) types: *sagi* and *soda rayunan* (Leach 2014; Raghuramaraju 2015). *Sagi* is an offering that uses *lawar* and is presented during *Penampahan Galungan* for family members who have passed away and have not been cremated (*aben*), while *soda rayunan* is an offering that uses *lawar* and is presented during *Penampahan Galungan* for family members who have passed away and have been cremated (*aben*), or in the Hindu religious belief, family members who have been cremated are called *Sang Hyang Pitara*.

Tuak, as a traditional Balinese drink, is also rich in theological meaning. However, in this context, *tuak* will be literally interpreted in its sociological meaning. For the majority of Balinese people, *tuak* is a symbol of collectivity or brotherhood. This drink is always present at celebrations or during certain moments. However, *tuak* also becomes a drink of brotherhood during gatherings. From a sociological perspective, *tuak* is understood as a symbol that unites and strengthens social bonds. In symbolic interactionism theory, it is stated that "people are able to modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in actions and interactions based on their interpretation of the situation (Das 2023; Sugirtharajah 2020). According to that theoretical argument, *tuak*, which has received a negative stigma, has instead become a symbol that can unite, strengthen, and create bonds of brotherhood based on egalitarian principles. This means that by sitting in a circle while drinking *tuak*, people feel equal without any differences in social status (position, wealth, education level, power, etc.). This research formulates two research questions: a) how is the interpretation of *saput poleng* as local genius knowledge of Balinese society? b) how is the analysis of the interpretation of *lawar* and *tuak* in the socio-theological dimension of Balinese society? The purpose of this research is to analyze the local 'symbols' of the Hindu community in Bali (*saput poleng rwa bhineda*, *lawar*, and *tuak*) and their implications for the socio-religious dimensions of life.

2. METHOD

This research both utilizes and applies a qualitative approach. This approach focuses on subjective data from social phenomena or from the interpretation of various types of documents. By focusing on textual or contextual reasoning, data holism will be achieved, and the process of data elaboration will be more comprehensive (Foucault 2023; Lennon and Rogers 2017; Moses and Wiley 2020). By operationalizing the document study method, this research collaborates between what is happening empirically (the existence of poleng cloth, lawar, and tuak) and what is explained in Hindu religious literature (Vedanta Philosophy, Bhagavad Gita, and Manava-Dharmashastra). By examining this 'intersection' dimension, it creates an elaborative dimension of both aspects simultaneously.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The existence of the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth as a method used by Balinese society to protect their physical environment can be viewed from the perspective of environmental sociology and the concept of post-traditional society. Environmental sociology, thru cultural ecology theory, explains that the environment and culture are not seen as separate, but are a mixed product that evolves thru dialectics. Both play a significant role and influence each other. So, it can be explained that the natural world's often harsh nature toward us is not unrelated to human actions that are arbitrary toward it. Even for natural disasters that are purely the will of God, humans have no power. However, on the other hand, God has blessed humans with the ability to think about how nature can be controlled and how the terrifying effects of nature can be anticipated. Finally, humans are thinking about the best steps to empower and save nature. Therefore, nature, which was previously perceived as "stingy" toward humans, can now be restored to its original character, namely "friendly".

Beside having an ecological aspect thru the creation of the *poleng* cloth, Balinese society also emphasizes the value of harmonization in the socio-religious dimension – *lawar* and *tuak*. *Lawar* is a typical Balinese dish that can be viewed from two perspectives: physical and spiritual. As Clifford Geertz said, Bali is a place known as the "island of rituals". Therefore, all forms of Balinese community products are not only intended as commodities but are also used as ceremonial tools. Specifically from a spiritual perspective, *lawar* in the daily life of Balinese society can be used as an offering or ritual ingredient. The use of *lawar* as an offering in this context can be classified into 2 (two) types: *sagi* and *soda rayunan*.

Tuak, as a traditional Balinese drink, is also rich in theological meaning. However, in this context, "*tuak*" will be literally described in its sociological meaning. For the majority of Balinese people, *tuak* is a symbol of collectivity or brotherhood. This drink is always present at celebrations or during certain moments. However, *tuak* also becomes a drink of "brotherhood" during gatherings. From a sociological perspective, *tuak* is understood as a symbol that unites and strengthens social bonds. In symbolic interactionism theory, it is stated that "people are able to modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in actions and interactions based on their interpretation of the situation".

Discussion

Interpreting Saput Poleng as Local Genius Knowledge of Balinese Society

Bali as the "island of rituals". Based on data compiled from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Bali Province, the number of people who are Hindu is 3,247,283 (last updated on February 15, 2018). From that data, it can be concluded that the majority of the population on Bali Island is Hindu. Hindu religious teachings in Bali are deeply rooted in doctrines that tendentiously point toward a way to maintain harmony, balance, and equilibrium. Reality and duality are consistently placed in an egalitarian position for Balinese Hindu society. Referring to the teachings of the Vedas as a source of law and theological practice in Hinduism, it is stated that the pinnacle of Vedic experience is *atmanastuti*, or cultivating spiritual satisfaction or the *atman*. This is stated in *Bhagavad Gita* 3.10 :

*Saha-yajnah prajah srstva, purovaca prajapatih
Nena prasavisyadhwam, ssa vo'stv ista-kama-dhuk*

Meaning: At the beginning of creation, the ruler of all beings sent generations of humans and gods, along with sacred offerings to Vishnu, and blessed them by saying: May you be happy with this *yajna* (sacred offering) because its performance will grant everything desirable for a happy life and achieve liberation.

The balance of life for the Balinese people is embodied in the teachings of *Tri Hita Karana*, which is the concept of a balanced life between devotion to God (*Prajapati*), service to fellow human beings (*Praja*), and caring for the natural environment (*Kamadhuk*), all based on *Yadnya*. To realize the teachings of *satyam* (truth), *sivam* (purity), *sundaram* (harmony), and *Tri Hita Karana* with all their implementations, it must be done by humans. The teaching of *sundaram* (harmony) as a philosophy of harmony is elaborated more conceptually into *Tri Hita Karana* and more actualized within the Hindu cultural system in Bali (C. Brown 2022; Hernandez et al. 2021; Padet and Krishna 2018). To practice these religious teachings, it is first directed toward oneself (*swa artha*), religion is used as a force to serve fellow creatures of God (*para artha*), and it is aimed at believing in and worshiping God, referred to as *parama artha*, as the most noble goal.

The Balinese people, who are predominantly Hindu, have a concept for harmonizing life both vertically (theologically and environmentally) and horizontally (socially). As the focal point of the *Tri Hita Karana* implementation, which is embraced by the Balinese Hindu community as a guide for life, they are striving to preserve the natural beauty of Bali using a local genius approach. For the Balinese people, the physical environment is a nadir or vital point whose existence needs to be preserved. The physical world's existence is revered because there are essential reasons behind the Balinese people's genuine care for their environment. They have a concept known as "*natah*," which means an empty courtyard as the center of the Balinese world. The "*natah*" or "*palemahan*," which is associated with a beautiful environment with abundant vegetation, serves many functions for the sustainability of Balinese life, including vegetation or trees that help maintain soil fertility, regulate the water cycle, provide oxygen, and more (A. R. Brown 2022; Stolow and Meyer 2021). Natural disasters are not caused by God's wrath as the primary force against humanity, but rather, natural disasters and their negative impacts are caused by humans themselves. The presence of anthropocentric determinism toward the environment shapes the perception that the environment is for humans and that humans have

the authority to utilize it. This anthropocentric view needs to be eliminated because the environment will not have good prospects in the future.

The use of the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth as a tradition to protect the environment is inseparable from esoteric truth and who the guardians of this tradition are. In the context of post-traditional society, it is explained that tradition is a context in the sense that it is guaranteed by a combination of rituals and formative truths. Tradition is unimaginable without its guardians, as the guardians have the privilege of entering into truth (Marks 2016); Truth cannot be proven unless it is seen in the interpretation and practice of the guardians. The presence of the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth, complete with offerings, is a way to protect the environment with ritual legitimacy. When there is religious ritual doctrine behind the *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth, as a society living in a ritual environment, the Balinese people will not have the courage to damage their environment. This is because there is a belief that when nature is damaged, especially when there is ritual involvement, there is an expectation of logical consequences such as the wrath of the guardian of the large tree or an incurable illness.

Analysis of the Interpretation of Lawar and Tuak in the Socio-Theological Dimension of Balinese Society

Lawar is a typical Balinese dish that can be viewed from two perspectives: physical and spiritual. As Clifford Geertz said, Bali is a place known as the "island of rituals." Therefore, all forms of Balinese community products are not only intended as commodities but are also used as ceremonial tools. Specifically, from a spiritual perspective, *lawar* in the daily life of Balinese society can be used as an offering or ritual ingredient. The use of *lawar* as an offering in this context can be classified into two types: *sagi* and *soda rayunan*. *Sagi* is an offering that uses *lawar* and is offered during *Penampahan Galungan* for family members who have passed away and have not been cremated (*aben*), while *soda rayunan* is an offering that uses *lawar* and is offered during *Penampahan Galungan* for family members who have passed away and have been cremated (*aben*), or in the Hindu religion, family members who have been cremated are called *Sang Hyang Pitara*. This offering is presented at the coral guardian or *jero gede*, the *sanggah kemulan*, and other places. In short, it can be explained that from the perspective of Balinese Hindu society, *lawar* is seen as having a deep spiritual meaning, not only as a form of devotion from a devotee to the One God, but also as a form and representation of the devotee's devotion to their ancestors. From a theological perspective, if we use the scriptures, the above empirical statement is explicitly contained in the sacred verse Bhagavad Gita 12.2, which reads:

Sri-bhagavan upavaca, mayy avesya mano ye mam, nitya-yukta upasate, sraddhaya parayopetas, te me yuktatama matah.

Meaning: The personality of the One God says, the person who focuses their mind on My personal form and always worships Me diligently with great spiritual faith and beyond worldly things, I consider most perfect.

The religious practices performed by the Balinese Hindus, including offering *lawar* as an element of the ceremony, are inseparable from the essence of humanity, which is referred to as homo esparan, or beings who are always hoping. For the family members left behind, praying for the spirits of their ancestors is an obligation. The prayers recited also serve as a supplication or petition to the Almighty God for the souls of family members to be in a beautiful place or by His side. This normative statement is supported by a verse contained in Hindu religious literature called the *Manava-Dharmashastra*. Specifically, the family members' respect for their deceased ancestors, expressed thru prayers for them to find the best place with God or to be freed from all suffering due to the consequences of *karma* they endured during their lives, is written in the sloka *Manava-Dharmashastra* 9: 138 – 139 said:

But look, someone (a descendant) who behaves well can also free their ancestors based on their own ability, by praying to God to forgive those sinful ancestors.

If *lawar* is very dense with its semiotic substance regarding ceremonial means, then *tuak*, as a typical Balinese drink, is also dense with its theological meaning. However, in this context, "*tuak*" will be literally described in its sociological meaning. For the majority of Balinese people, *tuak* is a symbol of collectivity or brotherhood. This drink is always present at celebrations or during certain moments. However, *tuak* also becomes a drink of "brotherhood" during gatherings. From a sociological perspective, *tuak* is understood as a symbol that unites and strengthens social bonds (Harris 2019). In symbolic interactionism theory, it is stated that "people are able to modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in actions and interactions based on their interpretation of the situation." According to that theoretical argument, *tuak*, which has received a negative stigma, has instead become a symbol that can unite, strengthen, and create bonds of brotherhood based on egalitarian principles. This means that by sitting in a circle while drinking *tuak*, people feel equal without any differences in social status (position, wealth, educational background, power, etc.). However, as rational beings or creatures of reason, we should be wise in consuming something (read: *tuak*). Because beside having a collective function, excessive consumption of *tuak* will cause hallucinations or intoxication for anyone who drinks too much of it. Humans are "factories of desire," meaning something that provides pleasure and satisfaction, so humans become attached and find it very difficult to stop, always wanting more and more. In this case, people who drink *tuak* often cannot control their senses because this traditional drink has a hallucinatory effect. Ultimately, those who become drinkers will become addicted to alcoholic beverages and potentially harm others. The five senses as a medium for projecting worldly material are mentioned in Hindu religious literature known as *Vedanta* philosophy. In the teachings of *Vedanta* philosophy, humans are likened to a chariot carrying passengers, a charioteer, pulled by five horses and five

reins (Gautam 2022; Mishra 2019). The chariot is likened to the human body, the passengers to consciousness, the charioteer to buddhi or the intelligence that controls the senses, the five reins to the mind, and the five horses to the five senses. In short, it can be explained that if the charioteer, who is likened to the buddhi or intelligence that controls the senses, cannot steer the chariot in the right direction, then the chariot will be ruined. Just like humans, if the five senses cannot be controlled by wisdom, humans will fall into things that are harmful to themselves. Or, in other words, the human body will suffer, and the inability to think clearly will ultimately lead to personal or collective losses.

4. CONCLUSION

The two-tone cloth, *lawar*, and *tuak* demonstrate the socio-religious application of Balinese Hindu society by combining environmental essence (*palemahan*) and humanistic essence (*pawongan*). The *rwa bhineda* checkered cloth emphasizes the nature of the environment as both a physical and social entity, where humans carry out their activities (religious). Therefore, environmental protection using religious adages needs to be done. In the local Balinese tradition, *lawar* is not only understood as food, but also has a vertical dimension, representing human respect for ancestors. Therefore, food is not only of physiological value, but also carries theological significance. Finally, *tuak* is interpreted as a 'social adhesive', because its interpretation is not seen as an intoxicating beverage, but rather as the sociological dimension created by its presence.

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