

# The Traditional Art of Terbang Gebes in “Mikanyaah Munding” Culture

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## ABSTRAK

*Konservasi budaya lokal Mikanyaah Munding sebagai landasan Village Breeding Center bagi kerbau adalah penelitian yang dilaksanakan terkait dengan bentuk penangkaran kerbau berbasis budaya tradisional, yang dilaksanakan di Desa Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya. Di dalam budaya Mikanyaah Munding juga terdapat pelestarian berbagai seni tradisi Sunda, di antaranya adalah seni Terbang Gebes. Dalam tulisan ini digunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan kajian etnografi, sedangkan teknik pengumpulan data digunakan teknik wawancara. Dari pembahasan hasil penelitian diperoleh antara lain; sistem penangkaran kerbau berbasis budaya lokal Mikanyaah Munding, yang di dalamnya terdapat; kebiasaan masyarakat setempat di dalam memperlakukan ternak kerbau, kosa kata khusus terkait dengan peternakan kerbau, hajat lembur yang ada hubungannya dengan peternakan kerbau, dan berbagai bentuk kesenian tradisional Sunda yang dilaksanakan dalam rangka tradisi Mikanyaah Munding. Dalam artikel ini akan dibahas salah satu kesenian terkait, yaitu Seni Terbang Gebes.*

*Kata kunci: budaya, mikanyaah munding, seni terbang gebes*

## ABSTRACT

Conservation of local culture of *Mikanyaah Munding* (Nurturing Buffalos) as the base of Village Breeding Center of *Kerbau* is a research on traditional *kerbau* breeding in Cikeusal, Tasikmalaya. *Mikanyaah Munding* reserves a variety of Sundanese traditional art performance, one of which is *terbang gebes*. This research uses qualitative method involving ethnography as its perspective. The data is collected from interviews. The findings are: the habit of locals in treating their buffalos; specific vocabulary on breeding; festivities in relation to breeding and all kinds of Sundanese traditional performances include in *Mikanyaah Munding* ritual. This paper discusses one of its performances, *Seni Terbang Gebes*.

Keywords: local culture, *mikanyaah munding*, *seni terbang gebes*

## INTRODUCTION

Sundanese local wisdom in different regions is still maintained by their community supporters. Most of those cultural values possess aspects of art, education, agriculture, and stockbreeding. These cultural values are found in everyday life of rural Sundanese. One of them is in Cikeusal village-Tasikmalaya known as the traditional art of *terbang gebes* in *Mikanyaah Munding* ritual.

The ritual of *Mikanyaah Munding* itself is a living tradition in social and cultural life of Cikeusal village-Tasikmalaya. It is inherited traditions of customs, art, and characters in practical matters. It also has meanings related to a social action. The values of *Mikanyaah Munding* have been successfully adapted to the socio-cultural dynamics of modern society today. Thus, the *Mikanyaah Munding* culture is a growing tradition in Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya Village society in modern life.

In modern times, traditional Sundanese culture begins to be isolated from the community, even many Sundanese left this kind of culture. Some of the Sundanese people abandoned their culture because they could not carry out the process of cultural transformation naturally in the modern era. As a result, many Sundanese values are extinct or close to extinction since they are considered incompatible with modern era. However, there are still some traditional Sundanese cultures that have not been documented and inventoried.

The research reports in documenting and recording the distinctive Sundanese cultural values in different regions in West Java still need to be implemented. Although a variety of data and information regarding the Sundanese culture is increasingly difficult to track, and most likely will be vanished soon if Sundanese people ignore this traditional culture.

Documentation and inventory of Sundanese values related to the *Mikanyaah*

*Munding* culture is important. It needs to be done to keep the existence of specific Sundanese culture from extinction. The culture needs to be revitalized since it is related to environmental preservation of Sundanese community life. Thus, the study of Sundanese culture that reveals unique, interesting, and educational aspects for the community, as *Mikanyaah Munding* culture needs to be done.

Through this research, it is expected that the modern Sundanese society can reflect on ethics and aesthetics, as well as the habits of rural communities, as occurred in the village community Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya. They try to maintain the cultural traditions of *Mikanyaah Munding* vigorously. The culture implies messages on environmental education, safeguarding traditional arts, and character buildings. Those values are currently almost vanished because of the influx of modern culture influence.

## METHOD

This research applies a qualitative method, with ethnography as the research model that describes culture as it is. This model tries to study the cultural event, which presents a view of the subject in this study. This study relates to how subjects think, live, and behave (Endraswara, 2006: 50). The community in West Java-East Priangan has local wisdom in the form of *Mikanyaah Munding* culture. This is a cultural event that can be described through ethnographic research.

Ethnography typically aims to describe a particular culture in a holistic view including cultural, spiritual and material aspects. From this view, it will be revealed way of life from local's point of view. This is understandable because it will lift the real experience of a cultural phenomenon (Endraswara, 2006: 51). The use of local

wisdom models and ways of adaptation of the people to their natural environment are local culture expressions, which conveyed the view of people's lives that still adhere to local customs.

Conservation is preservation or protection. It literally comes from English word, conservation, which means preservation or protection (Reif, J.A. Levy, Y., 1993). This concept, when it is linked to an environmental science, it would be related to:

- 1) The efficiency efforts of energy use, production, transmission, or distribution,
- 2) Protective measures and a careful management of the environment and natural resources,
- 3) The management of a particular quantity of plants to make it stable against all chemical reactions or physical transformation,
- 4) The effort for long-term protection of the environment.

Cultural conservation has past and future dimensions. The past dimension is represented by the process of protecting and preserving the local wisdom owned by the community. While the dimensions of the future is intended to maintain cultural sustainability. Through this research, both dimensions will be studied.

Koentjaraningrat (1971) divides the form of culture into three parts, namely; (1) the form of culture as a complex of ideas, values, norms, and rules, (2) the form of culture as a complex of activities and patterned-actions of humans in society, and (3) the form of culture as objects of human works.

From the description of the three forms of culture in West Java community, local wisdom and traditional knowledge are existed in the *Mikanyaah Munding* culture, the cultural overview of *Mikanyaah Munding*, and cultural conservation related to *Mikanyaah Munding* culture.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subject of the research presented in this article, as well as related to the results of data collection in the field is an overview of local wisdom of *Mikanyaah Munding*, and preservation of *terbang gebes* associated with local wisdom of *Mikanyaah Munding*.

### The Culture of "Mikanyaah Munding"

The people of Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya have a unique tradition that is the tradition of *Mikanyaah Munding* or 'loving the buffalo'. It is a tradition to celebrate the baby buffalo birth when it is at the age of 1 to 7 days, and when he enters the age of 40 days as the last day of performing celebration.

While waiting for the baby buffalo stepping on the age of 40 days, the villagers of Cikeusal are forbidden to hire the baby buffalo, and even the buffalo's mother. The goal is to keep both of them still unite together until the baby old enough. The buffalo may be hired to cultivate the rice fields at the age of three months. When it is hired, the farmers treat him in a very special way. The buffalo plowing rice fields is accompanied by chanting *beluk* as a traditional art of local people.

The tradition of *Mikanyaah Munding* is the embodiment of the buffalo owner's affection for his cattle, which contains local values, as follow:

(1) As cattle, buffalo is regarded as a very meritorious animal for the community, especially in agriculture. The buffalo power is considered to be better than a tractor machine in *ngawuluku* (plowing the ground) and harvesting the rice. When farmers plow the ground, they are usually accompanied by *beluksinging*. The presence of *beluk* singing is a symbol to respect the buffalo, as well as entertainment for them while working in the fields to avoid feeling tired.

(2) As an expression of affection to the buffalo, the local communities are rarely

slaughtered buffalo. They prefer to slaughter cattle for meat used and served during the ceremony, unless the buffalo got an accident or severe illness, they slaughter it and process the meat to be eaten.

(3) If the buffalo is slaughtered, its leather is used to make a *terbang*. *Terbang* made from buffalo's leather produces better and loud sounds. Then it is used in art activities, which commonly refers to the art of *terbang gebes*.

The tradition of *Mikanyaah Munding* is not much different from the tradition for celebrating new baby born. At the age of 1 to 7 days, buffalo owners do the celebration at night. The surrounding community is invited to pray together for the ceremony. During the ceremony, it is usually read *barjanji* or *syiiran* (*selawat* and history of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.), which is accompanied by music of *terbang* (*rebana*) or *seni terbang*. *Terbang* is used to accompany *selawat*, praise and *marhabaan* as well as religious poetry or reading *wawacan* of Syekh Abdul Qodir Jaelani.

### Seni Terbang Gebes

*Terbang gebes* is one of the *buhun* (old) performing arts containing Islam values. The beginning of the art is estimated since Hinduism era in a Java island (in 1800s). The development process of *terbang gebes* in Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya is in line with the spread of Islam in the area. *Buhun* art that survive in Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya, was expected to develop since the establishment of Sukapura Regency under the leadership of Raden Wirawangsa, the Wiradadaha I.

*Seni terbang gebes* was evolved rapidly in the reign of Raden Anggadireja I as a form of entertainment that people love. He was the leader who not only paid attention to the needs of his people, but also concerned to the art and culture developments in Sukapura region, including *terbang gebes* art. This was led to the emergence of art groups

of *terbang* in Sukapura. The art groups of *terbang* that still survive in Tasikmalaya are *terbang rudat* in Cibalanarik Village, Kec. Tanjungjaya; *terbang sejak* in Salawu district, and *terbang gebes* and *terbang sejak* in Cikeusal-Tasikmalaya.

In early days of its development, *terbang gebes* was played by several groups, which aimed to fight and to show off supernatural powers. Each region, especially in the south and west of Tasikmalaya had one group of *terbang*. Each group was usually invited by another group to compete somewhere in a chosen place. Normally, a stage or arena used was an open arena in the field or wide yard. The show was held in the middle of the night until late in the morning (around 01:00 to 04:00). At that time, the function was only concerned with supernatural power competition.

As a venue for supernatural power competition, the players from each group often set up barriers on their backs. The barrier is made of *gombong* bamboo or a *pinang* tree. The players and their opponent were seated back to back, and the barrier was installed between their backs. They competed to beat by playing *terbang* as long as possible and as loud as possible, until sometimes their palms were covered in blood. Magical influence of this supernatural fights often made *terbang* of the opponent had no sound at all. The friction between the barrier and the backs of the players made the barrier cracking (but not crumbling), like a *palupuh* shape. The group who could beat *terbang* longest was declared as the winner. It should be understood that the fighting of supernatural powers here was not meant as the battle of life to die, but rather than a chance to test the players' abilities.

Along with the spread and development of Islam in Tatar Sunda, there was a shift in the form, function and purpose of *terbang gebes* performing art. The formation of sitting was not required to turn back to

each other, but facing the audience. The magical elements began to be eliminated. The special ritual that is still used is to visit the graves of the ancestors/art figures before performance. This practice is done when possible and mostly performed in the area of origin. The goal is to pray and to respect the ancestors in developing *terbang gebes* art.

*Terbang gebes* performing art is currently preferred to accompany the *shalawat* or praise of Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW. Its usage is preferred for daily entertainment to release tired after a hardwork in the fields during the day, and religious rituals such as Islamic celebrations, national holidays, and family rituals such as weddings, circumcisions, moving houses, baby births as well as official government events. Its performance is always combined with the *beluk* art. One of *terbang gebes* performances is held while waiting for the new buffalo birth from the first day until the seventh day.

The instrument of *terbang gebes* is similar to a tambourine. However, it is larger and heavier since it is made of very hard wood, like jackfruit wood. The front part of *terbang* is fitted by buffalo leather. The average weight of every piece of *terbang* is between 15-30 kgs. In contrast to the tambourine, the front part of the leather in *terbang* is fitted with the pegs around the instrument like a *bedug*. Each stake is tied with rattan and around the pegs with a rope made of *teureup* bark or wood so that the leather attached to *kuluwung* (*waditra* of wood that has been hollowed) becomes tight. The rope also binds the inside *kuluwung* so could be lasting up to dozen years. As the bark of *teureup* is scarcely to obtain, today the binding rope is made of thick plastic rope.

Members of *terbang gebes* group consist of 3-5 players. Three players are called core players and the two others are reserve players who will replace the core players when they are tired. Each group has 3-4 *terbang*



*Terbang gebes* in *hajat lembur* ceremony in Cikeusal village, Tasikmalaya (a personal documentation, 2013)

instruments with the same shape. The difference lies in the size of the *kuluwung* and the height of the sound produced when they are struck. The low-high sound produced depends on the tightness of the leather attached to the *kuluwung*, and the strength of the pegs installation. To strengthen the pegs, there is a spherical iron-shaped tool like an avocado with a wooden handle. Its weight is about 3 kgs, called *gengendir*. The harder the slags are fitted, the tighter the leather becomes, and the louder sound will be produced when they are beaten. The process of adjusting the low-tilt sound is called *nyetem*. After the show finished, the pegs and rattan rope were loosened to maintain the durability of *terbang* leather.

The way to play *terbang gebes* is not much different from playing tambourine. It just takes the strength of the hand to beat a heavy *terbang*, with average show is 30-60 minutes. In its origin area, Cikeusal village-Tasikmalaya, *terbang gebes* is often played from after Isha until dawn without stopping.

The rule of slaps of *terbang gebes* is bound by 3 rules of rhythm: that is *tepak balaganjur*, *tepak degdog*, and *tepak jeungjeung*, so that they result different sound compositions. In the performance, this *terbang* is always combined with *beluk* art. The current rhythm of *tepak terbang* is the result of adaptation with Islam. It means that *tepak Terbang gebes* could be used to accompany *shalawat*, *pupujian* and

*marhabaan* such as in *terbang sejak*, as well as religious poems that exist in the *pupuh* (songs) of *beluk*. On several occasions, *terbang gebes* and *beluk* also appear to collaborate with modern music.

In the past, *terbang gebes* is often called as *terbang sered* or *terbang ubrug*. It refers to *silih sered* position (push each other) among the players with the aim to entertain or pit the power. Meanwhile, the name for *terbang ubrug* because the performance is often carried out at *ubrug* in *ngariung* sitting position (gathering in circle) or *ngajajar* (lined up).

In the past (according to Pak Ipin Saripin), this art is popular and played by teenagers to middle age. However, following time changes and the swift currents in modern art, the interest of the younger generation of *buhun* art is decreased significantly. As a result, the inheritance process of the music is inhibited and leaving only one group in Cikeusal, under the leadership of Ipin Saripin, a retired teacher who cares to the preservation of *buhun* art in the area. He and elderly people of the village work together in the process of regeneration to the younger generation. For example, by putting this traditional art as an extra-curricular in a junior high school. Another attempt to attract young people is by modifying *terbang* to be a lighter, smaller and simpler instrument, namely *terbang batok* made from coconut shells covered with buffalo leather and using a rope strap, rubber rope, or flip-flops.

### Figures of Seni Terbang Gebes

Discussions on *terbang gebes* as a traditional art cannot be separated from its creator, or those who inherited and developed it. The original creator (according to Ipin Saripin), is unknown in historical records because *seni terbang* has been known since long time ago, when Hinduism developed in Tatar Sunda hundreds of years ago. Nevertheless, *terbang gebes* that still exists in Cikeusal village-Tasikmalaya is

a service and relics of the *pupuhu* (village elders) in the village. Since 1870, *terbang gebes* was developed by Mbah Irja, a distinguished *pupuhu* for his supernatural power and his passion for *terbang*. Furthermore, the development of this art was inherited to his grandchildren named Embah Candrali. Under Embah Candrali leadership, *terbang gebes* was developed rapidly along with the development of *beluk*, *rengkong*, and *tutunggulan*, which made it being ponded by its audience as well as the government of Sukapura. The name of Candrali was then used in the name of the "Candrali" art group and the name of football field in Cirangkong Cikeusal Village. "Candralijaya" is the initiative of Ipin Saripin as the leader of the group.

In his lifetime, Embah Candrali inherited this *terbang* art to his offspring. Among of them were Eyang Madhuri, Eyang Ubaini, and Eyang Edoh. After the death of Eyang Edoh, his wife Ene Eja accompanied by Eyang Madnuki, Aki Maskan, Aki Ihin, Mr. Samsu Natamihardja, and Ipin Saripin continued to maintain *buhun* arts, with all limitations they have. Personal interest and a collective spirit of Cirangkong community in Cikeusal Village towards the existence of traditional arts help this art remain sustainable. In caring of the performance, Ene Eja for example, in her elementary school age often joined the practice of *tutunggulan* in afternoon, after returning from religious school (reading the Qur'an and studying religion). On those days, the *buhun* arts were quite in demand by the younger generation. It was also regenerative since the elementary students were taught, practiced, and given opportunity to perform *terbang gebes* on end-year ceremony or welcoming parties.

At the moment, there are only a few active players who are already in the middle-aged and still descendants of Eyang Edoh. Among others are Mang Asep, Mang En-

dang, Mang Ejen, Kang Entus, Mang Empud and Mang Basar. They perform *terbang gebes* in turn in different events. Based on mutual agreement, once *terbang gebes* performs, *beluk* must be included. The goal is to make the performances become more interesting so that both *buhun* arts could have the same opportunity to perform. This also maintains the spirit of collectivity and solidarity among members of groups that have been established for a long time.

### Elements of Values in Terbang Gebes

An art, especially traditional art is closely related to the value of its content, especially the cultural values. As it can be seen from its historical records, the life and development of *terbang gebes* cannot be separated from the culture of the local community that is the community of Cirangkong in Cikeusal Village.

Culturally, the area of Tanjungjaya, especially Cikeusal village is rich of traditional cultural arts, which include folk performances. However, in the context of "interest", the development and preservation have less attention from elite government. The survival of the *buhun* art depends on the concern and dedication of its players and also of individuals or certain groups who still appreciate it and learn its values.

The values contained in the art of *terbang gebes* are full of meaning, started from making instruments to performing on stage. The level of difficulty in making *waditra terbang* teaches us the importance of patience, diligence and thoroughness in doing something. This character is generally developed in farmers who live in remote areas with hard conditions because of natural contours. The presentation of *tepak lagu* has the meaning of togetherness and harmony. Differences cannot be eliminated, but it is important for us to adapt and respect each other to make it a unifying element that produces beautiful togetherness. The different composition

of *tepak* rhythm shows creative and intellectual art of the composer so that the rhythm composed can raise appreciation, cheerfulness, and entertainment. Art of *terbang* also describes the value of acculturation between Hindu and Islamic culture, without affecting the authenticity of religion itself. The rules of rhythm presented as accompaniment of poetry praise or *shalawat* show that this art has a deep religious value in the worship and social aspects of its community in their daily life.

In the various activities of the cultural practice of *mikanyaah munding*, *terbang gebes* is often used by Cikeusal buffalo breeders, especially after a 40-days-old buffalo. For Cikeusal buffalo breeders, celebrating of 40 days buffalo without *terbang gebes* will be incomplete. This ritual is done as a gratitude that the buffalo can stand until the age of 40 days, and is expected to live longer.

### CONCLUSION

*Terbang gebes*, as discussed in this article, is a part of the *Mikanyaah Munding* ceremony at rancher community in Cikeusal village. Up to now the habit of holding a buffalo celebration after 40 days is still practiced in the area. During the ceremony, *terbang gebes* is always performed. It means that the maintenance of *Mikanyaah Munding* culture is very closely related to the preservation of *terbang gebes* art.

The values of local wisdom such the *Mikanyaah Munding* culture need to be preserved, because of a positive impact on environmental maintenance, as well as learning of the importance of good treatment towards buffaloes that help farmers.

Especially for the conservation of traditional arts, the culture of *Mikanyaah Munding* has succeeded in maintaining and preserving various forms of Sundanese arts; one of them is *terbang gebes*. If the culture of *Mikanyaah Munding* does not exist, the art of *terbang gebes* will be vanished.

Thus, further research related to various aspects of the culture found in the *Mikanyaah Munding* is still need to be documented in its various aspects, especially a variety of its arts. In such research, it will be possible to find variety forms of other arts mainly associated with *Mikanyaah Munding* rituals in Cikeusal Village-Tasikmlaya.

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