



Exploring Religious Change: The Baduy Tribe's Perspective on Leaving Sunda Wiwitan for Islam

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the religious transformation within the Original Baduy community, focusing on how individuals perceive and experience the shift from the traditional Sunda Wiwitan belief system to Islam. It explores the perspectives of both those who continue to uphold ancestral beliefs and those who have embraced Islam, aiming to understand how this transition is interpreted and negotiated within the cultural and social context of the Baduy people. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study involves in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Triangulation of data from multiple sources and theoretical frameworks ensures the credibility and depth of findings. The analysis draws upon theories of religious conversion, identity formation, and cultural continuity to offer a comprehensive understanding of the transformation process. The findings indicate that the change in religious orientation does not cause significant conflict within the community. Instead, peaceful coexistence is maintained between followers of Sunda Wiwitan and Muslim Baduy members, rooted in shared kinship values, strong customary laws, and a deeply ingrained culture of tolerance. Religious conversion is often influenced by intermarriage, social interaction, exposure to Islamic teachings, and personal spiritual development. Importantly, cultural traditions such as rituals and community ceremonies continue to be upheld by both religious groups, reflecting a form of spiritual syncretism and mutual respect. The study highlights how the Baduy people manage religious plurality while preserving community unity and cultural identity. It contributes to broader discussions on indigenous religions, religious change, and interfaith harmony in traditional societies, offering valuable insights into how cultural resilience supports peaceful religious transitions.

Keywords: Suku Baduy, Islam, Sunda Wiwitan

1. Introduction

Local wisdom, passed down through generations, plays a vital role in shaping the identity and social norms of indigenous communities in Indonesia. For the Baduy tribe of Kanekes, Banten, this wisdom manifests in the form of religious beliefs, customs, and harmonious interaction with nature (TEKİN et al., n.d.). It serves not only as a cultural foundation but also as a means to regulate human desires and maintain environmental sustainability (Zufriady et al., 2024).

The Baduy people are traditionally divided into two groups: Inner Baduy (*Baduy Dalam*) and Outer Baduy (*Baduy Luar*) (Priyombodo et al., 2022; Nurmaulida, 2023). The Inner Baduy strictly adhere to ancestral traditions and the Sunda Wiwitan belief system, avoiding external influence and modernity (Perangin-angin et al., n.d.). In contrast, the Outer Baduy engage more with surrounding communities, leading to gradual adaptation in social and religious practices. Despite these differences, both groups maintain a deep commitment to cultural values and peaceful coexistence (Scholar, n.d.).

Religion in the Baduy community is not isolated from tradition; instead, it is deeply intertwined with their worldview. Sunda Wiwitan, as the original belief, emphasizes obedience to ancestral teachings and balance with the natural world. However, in recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift—especially among the Outer Baduy—towards embracing Islam. This religious transition is shaped by factors such as intermarriage, interaction with Muslim neighbors, exposure to da'wah, and socioeconomic considerations (Kumoro, 2020; Abduh et al., 2023).

While some studies report that Baduy individuals who convert may leave their ancestral settlements (Widad, 2021), it remains unclear whether this departure results from internal regulations, social pressure, or personal choice. Nevertheless, the absence of open conflict indicates a high level of tolerance and mutual respect within the community (Pradana et al., 2022). Converts often continue participating in traditional rituals, showing that religious identity does not dissolve cultural unity.

This study explores how the Original Baduy perceive the transition from Sunda Wiwitan to Islam. It examines the cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions of this shift and how religious plurality is negotiated within a community that values both tradition and freedom of belief (Supriyadi et al., 2022). By highlighting indigenous perspectives, this research contributes to a broader understanding of religious transformation and coexistence in traditional societies.

2. Methods

Researchers believe that individual consciousness shapes social reality. Consequently, qualitative methods were chosen to further study social facts or reality. (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022) (Mazlan et al., 2025; Tekin et al., 2024). This research concentrates on the principles of immersion that exist in the beliefs of the Baduy tribe. This research is based on existing literature and representatives of the original Baduy tribe. Since this study uses this theory, the process of collection, subtraction, transmission, and verification/conclusion is required to analyze the collected data. And source triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the data collected (Agámez-Llanos et al., 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Sunda Wiwitan Baduy Tribe

The Sundanese Wiwitan people believe in God. In the Baduy creed, according to the Sunda Wiwitan people, God is referred to as "Batara Seda Niskala," which means The Invisible One, and "Batara Jagat," which means Ruler of the Universe. Most people believe that Sang Hiyang Keresa or Nu Ngersakeun is the one with the highest power. They also believe that God resides in Buana Nyungcung, which means the Upper World. (Edwar et al., 2021). They consider God to be something mystical that can only be seen by the heart and felt by the heart. They believe that Prophet Adam and Prophet Muhammad are prophets worthy of belief. In addition, people believe that life, illness, death, and fate are given to others. Kawalu and Eid fasting, which are performed for one day in the first, second, and third months of the year, as well as circumcision for boys aged four to seven, are known as circumcision. "to dive" (Artikel et al., 2020). It is very important to remember that the Baduy Shahada consists of two types: the Inner Baduy Shahada, which is given to puun and is similar to the Sunda Wiwitan Shahada, and the Outer Baduy Shahada, which is the Islamic declaration of faith recited in Islamic marriages. They believe that God created the universe, and the land is considered the foundation of the world in Baduy mythology. Most people believe that Batara Tujuh and the ancestors of the Baduy created the universe. They also believe that Kanekes is the center of the universe, where the first humans were created. As a result, the people of Sasaka Domas perform worship ceremonies as a way to honor the spirits of their ancestors. They also believe that Kanekes is the center of the universe, where the first humans were created. As a result, the people of Sasaka Domas perform worship ceremonies as a way to honor the spirits of their ancestors. According to one of the leaders of the Baduy, called "puun," who is responsible for their beliefs and charter, as well as their customs. The Sunda Wiwitan people head south to Sasaka Domas, which they consider a sacred place, in the same way that Muslims go to the pilgrimage site. The Baduy customs are highly valued. These rules are consistent and serve as guidelines in interacting with nature, God, and fellow humans. (Priyombodo et al., 2022). Maintaining the cleanliness of the Baduy land and daily activities is one

of the many prohibitions and taboos. This shows the worldview and rich beliefs of the Sunda Wiwitan faith, as well as the commitment to preserving the traditions and customary laws passed down from their ancestors (Alviz-Meza et al., 2022).

1.2 Status Muslim Suku Baduy

The Baduy Tangtu people only marry following Baduy customs, unlike the Baduy Panamping, where the groom usually goes to the *amil* in *Cicakal Girang*, the only Baduy village where the majority of the people are Muslim, after the traditional wedding is completed. This Islamic village is located in Baduy because the people there consider it a way to legitimize marriages. The Baduy community has beliefs that differ from ordinary Muslims, but the marriage process still follows Islamic religious rules. (Abduh et al., 2023). Some messages can be found by considering this customary provision (Palomo et al., 2017). First, the Baduy people believe that the marriage process must be sanctioned by customs, religion, and state law. Second, they held this wedding to honor the Sultanate of Banten, which is also Islamic, that once ruled and governed the land of Banten. This is done by Baduy customary rules, which require the Baduy people to marry in a manner that complies with Islamic law and customs. In the Baduy Tangtu (*Dalam*) community, also known as *kawin batih* (eternal marriage), both the bride and groom and their parents recite the *sadat tangtu*, which is different from the *syahadat Panamping*, before the marriage process begins in the *Baduy Panamping* community (*Luar*).

1.3 Islam dalam Pandangan Sunda Wiwitan

The Sunda Wiwitan belief among the Baduy tribe is influenced by Islam. This includes the following elements according to (Aprilia, 2022): (1) Religious Syncretism: It often occurs that local belief aspects are transferred and incorporated into Islamic teachings, or vice versa. This has the potential to cause religious syncretism, where Islamic teachings are combined with the traditions and beliefs of Sunda Wiwitan. (2) Cultural and Environmental Influence: How the Baduy tribe interacts with Muslims outside their region can affect their religious beliefs and practices. Trade, social relationships, and interactions with the surrounding community can lead to these interactions. (3) Adaptation to Nature: Islam provides rules about how to worship, halal and haram food, and other issues. Syncretism in the field of religion: In areas where Islamic culture and religion develop, there is often a transfer and absorption of local belief aspects into Islamic teachings or vice versa (Nazarovets & Mryglod, 2025). This has the potential to cause religious syncretism, where elements from both beliefs mix, and where Islamic teachings blend with the beliefs and practices of Sunda Wiwitan. (2) Cultural and Environmental Influence: How the Baduy tribe interacts with Muslims outside their region can affect their beliefs and religious practices. This interaction can be caused by trade, social relationships, and interaction with the surrounding community. (3) Adaptation to Nature: Islam provides rules about how to worship, halal and haram foods, and other matters. Nevertheless, there are fundamental values that unite both, allowing the Baduy Tribe to merge the beliefs of Sunda Wiwitan and Islam.

1.4 The Baduy Tribe's Perspective on the Transition from Sunda Wiwitan Belief to Islam

After gradually becoming acquainted with Islam, the Baduy community finally officially embraced the religion. Jaro Daenah stated that (Suidat et al., 2023), about 4,000 people live in thirteen villages outside the Kanekes Village. He stated that they do not want to call themselves Baduy people because their way of life is similar to people outside Baduy. However, the residents of Baduy Pemukiman are considered unable to maintain Baduy Dalam as their territory, so they remain part of Baduy Luar. According to Sundanese Muslims living outside Kanekes is called Sunda Islam. They are also called *dulur Are* or *urang Are*. This phrase explains his position as a Sundanese ethnic group that is only distinguished by religion because they do not adhere to Islam. The Baduy people of Sukamulya and Sukatani villages are Muslim, but their faith is considered less perfect because they still adhere to ancestral beliefs (*sunda wiwitan*). The Baduy people, especially the Baduy Dalam, are

often considered new adherents of Islam because they do not know the culture of reading and writing, especially Arabic script.

Mr. Udin, who is 52 years old, said that the Baduy people usually become Muslims. He believes it's normal and their desire. The right to choose one's belief is one of the teachings of the ancestors of the Baduy tribe. However, in the end, residents must adhere to the rules if they want to leave the Baduy area; they choose another belief. Although Mr. Udin felt dissatisfied because he chose another faith, the dissatisfaction did not last long because the most important thing is that there is no religious conflict in the Baduy tribe's territory itself. Additionally, an interview with Kang Sani showed that the Baduy tribe, which consists of both Islam and Sunda Wiwitan adherents, remains close to one another despite their differing beliefs. He often visits his family members who live in Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar, who still adhere to certain beliefs.

Sunda Wiwitan. The Baduy people believe that siblings remain siblings and will not change or break apart, no matter what, even if they change, including religion. According to also, all of this is believed by the Baduy people because their belief comes from one family, and there is no need for conflict. Also, all of this is believed by the Baduy people because their belief comes from one family, and there is no need for conflict (Ade Luqman Hakim, 2020). The result is the religious harmony present in the customary area of the Baduy community because of their belief that the Baduy community comes from one lineage or family, which unites this family despite having different beliefs. There is much evidence showing that they remain harmonious. According to in their social life, the Baduy community demonstrates the principle of cooperation. It has nothing to do with his religion or who he is. They voluntarily help each other when their neighbors need assistance. For example, the Baduy people voluntarily cooperate to build settlements. Second, related to religious ceremonies. Baduy Muslims often follow the activities, beliefs, or traditions that have been practiced by their ancestors, regardless of the differences in religious beliefs within the Baduy community. For example, in the Seba tradition, they often celebrate it in a grand way. They believe that this is a habit that must be practiced forever as a way to show gratitude for the blessings that God has bestowed upon the people. Third, although they are no longer identified as followers of the Sunda Wiwitan religion, their kinship remains. The religious identity of the Baduy does not hinder social ties. According to the beliefs of the Baduy people, many changes are caused by violating their customs or principles. This belief is still strong. The Baduy people believe that they are one lineage that cannot be separated by religion or social status. This belief is proven by the Seba ceremony, which is held every year to show gratitude and acknowledge certain individuals.

3. Conclusion

The Baduy people are very loyal to their religion, and therefore, they behave well and honestly. The belief that the Baduy people must respect and follow the customary rules established by their ancestors in their daily lives is the main evidence of this belief. Until this research was conducted, there was no evidence of religious conflict between Baduy Muslims and Baduy people. The conflict, if any, is related to issues in the management of agricultural land. They believe that they come from one lineage or family, which causes religious harmony in the Baduy region. Some phenomena of religious conversion that occur in the Baduy community are caused by various factors, such as past events and changes in social status.

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