

CONCEPT OF *SILIH ASIH*, *SILIH ASAH*, *SILIH ASUH* IN THE ACCULTURATION IN BANDUNG

Santi Susanti

Department of Television and Film
Fikom Unpad
Jatinangor, Indonesia
santisusanti2202@gmail.com

Iwan Koswara

Department of Communication Management
Fikom Unpad
Jatinangor, Indonesia
iwankoswara17@gmail.com

Abstract— *This study aims to reveal the meaning of silih asih, silih asah, silih asih in the mixing of Chinese culture and Sundanese culture in the city of Bandung. Silih asih, silih asah and silih asuh is the life guidance of the Sundanese in communicating, which aims to create harmony with the surrounding environment without releasing their own identity. Social life in the city of Bandung cannot be separated from the cultural background of each unique perpetrators. Two of the different cultures are Chinese and Sundanese culture. Through qualitative research method, this research found that the expression of silih asih, silih asah and silih asuh, became the driving force for the integration of Chinese culture with Sundanese culture. Specifically, it becomes the basis of daily behavior for individual informants.*

Keywords—*silih asih; silih asah; silih asuh, acculturation, basis of behavior*

I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As the capital city of West Java, Bandung consists of a heterogeneous population. It's not only the Sundanese but also the immigrant communities who settled temporarily or permanently for a reason. Mamat Sasmita, the founder of Rumah Baca Buku Sunda, stated, Bandung is a melting pot of Sundanese society and its surroundings which made Bandung has many immigrants with a very thick tribe. By this condition, the people of Bandung become more plural and more complex. Bandung, which in 1865 became the capital of Priangan to accelerate the movement of concentration in various fields (Ohashi in Mikihiro, 2005: 31), developed rapidly into the center of Sundanese culture and central government (Kunto, 1984).

Social life in Bandung cannot be separated from the cultural background of each unique perpetrators. Two of the different cultures are Chinese and Sundanese culture. The acculturation of Chinese and Sundanese cultures occurred for long ago, around the 1800s after the lifting of Chinese restrictions into the territory of Priangan (Hardjasaputra, 2002: 86). Generally, acculturation occurs by trade.

The majority of ethnic Chinese were known as traders for a long time. In the colonial era, the majority of Chinese ethnic life was traded, either as merchants or small traders, but there were also teachers in Chinese schools and became colonialist soldiers (Suryadinata, 2010). According to Jahja (1995: 27-

28), most ethnic Chinese in generally cannot speak Chinese in the slightest. Their daily language is the local language (Java, Sundanese, Madura, Padang and others) or Bahasa Indonesia.

They are generally entrepreneurs in trade and industry. Through trading activities, the relationship between the Sundanese and the Chinese in Bandung is connected. This has been happened since 1871, in line with the economic development due to the implementation of the Priangan Reorganization in the economic field. Chinatown area in the city of Bandung has no territorial boundaries because the relationship of Chinese citizens and Sundanese (native) around the 19th century very close.

Relationship with the Chinese caused indigenous people since 1881 to recognize various types of Chinese food, such as *bakmi*(noodles), *bapau*, *kecap* (soya sauce), *sekoteng*, *takoah* (*tahu*), *tauco*, *taoge* (sprouts), *bihun* (vermicelli) and *soun*. The natives then absorb the knowledge of making the food. On the contrary, the Chinese people gradually recognized and absorbed some Sundanese culture, including language (Kunto, 1986: 508). Cultural acculturation between Sundanese and Chinese takes place also through marriage. A number of male Chinese are married to indigenous women, Sundanese or Javanese. In Priangan, Sundanese women are much favored by male Chinese are Sumedang people (Catur in Hardjasaputra, 2002: 184).

During the reign of the Old Order (1945-1968), the government restricts the economic and political fields. However, according to Soeria Disastra, from a cultural point of view, the government opened the door wide. In contrary to the New Order regime (1968-1998), Chinese citizens experienced restrictions in all areas, except the economy. The gap comes up again. The condition improved after entering the reform era (1998-2008). The willing of Chinese citizens to be recognized as a part of the Indonesian nation was realized by President Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000 when he revoked Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 which contained a ban on celebrating Chinese New Year for ethnic Chinese imposed by the New Order regime. Then, President Megawati Soekarnoputri followed it up by issuing Presidential Decree Number 19/2001 dated April 9, 2001, which established Imlek as a national holiday. The declaration of the inauguration of Imlek as a national holiday was presented by President

Megawati Soekarnoputri while attending the 2553 Chinese New Year celebrations at Hall A Arena Pekan Raya Jakarta Kemayoran on Sunday, February 17, 2002. Beginning 2002, Imlek is officially declared as one of the national holidays.

As the inauguration of Lunar as National Holidays, the Chinese community in Indonesia, including in Bandung, is no longer restricted in celebrating their new year. Lions that characterize the celebration of Lunar New Year, often held every year. Even in Bandung, the Cultural Carnival procession that presents Barongsai and various other Chinese cultural arts, become an annual agenda that is often anticipated by citizens of Bandung. Chinese people who feel they have become part of the Bandung community are no longer afraid to express their cultural identity. Some Chinese individuals who love Sundanese culture openly conduct activities associated with the delay and they also mingle with the citizens of Bandung in various economic activities, social and cultural. Some Chinese individuals became informants in this study.

In communicating, one form of wisdom in Sundanese culture is the concept of *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* (SILAS), which is related to the concept of society for the children and grandchildren of nature are always in harmony with the environment. According to Suryalaga, *silih asih* interpreted as mutual love with a sincere affection. *Silih asah* (mutual grasp) is mutual intellectual minds of inner birth, mutual add knowledge, broaden insight and experience; and *silih asih* contain the meaning of guiding, guarding, nurturing, paying attention, lead and cultivate carefully for something positive. Every human being has a duty according to his obligations (proportional) and professional in running it which signifies the maturity of his insight. The success indicators are human with cageur, bageur, bener, pinter, singer personality. (*Pikiran Rakyat*, May 4, 2004).

Silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh is the Sundanese motto of life to create harmony with the natural environment. A harmonious life at its core is the awareness of interdependence, not forgetting their own identity and habitat. Ultimate results are human beings capable of realizing a life full of harmony with fellow creatures of Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala (Suryalaga, 2009: 106).

Similarly, the Chinese individuals who became informants of this research are part of Sundanese society in daily life. They are not only good at practicing their love for *kasundaan* in the forms they are interested in, as well as understanding the philosophical values embodied in their *kasundaan* practices.

Based on initial interviews, these philosophical values are obtained through interaction with people who understand *kasundaan*, as well as through written sources like books and articles on the internet. Understanding the philosophical values of practicing *kasundaan*, encouraging them to consistently apply the values of *kasundaan* in everyday life. This study aims to reveal the experience of Chinese individuals applies the concept of *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* in practicing *kasundaan*.

Previous research on the concept of SILAS conducted by Julia from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) entitled *Membangun Kultur Silih Asih, Silih Asah, dan Silih Asuh Melalui Pendidikan Seni* (Building Culture of Silih Asih, Silih Asah and Silih Asuh through Art Education).

Focusing on the influence of art education on the formation of *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* concept, the study resulted in the finding that art education has a potential to develop character education and able to build people in practicing local wisdom and be able to maintain national identity.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. With this method, the study explores the experiences of Chinese individuals in the doing *kasundaan* through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation review.

Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2006: 4) stated, qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written words from people and observed behavior. Facts, information or events become an early reference in qualitative research. In this study, the Chinese individual's experience of applying SILAS concepts in carrying *kasundaan* is delivered in narrative sentences.

The main sources of information from this study are in-depth interviews with research subjects, assisted by observation and literature review related to the study. The object of this research is the concept of SILAS which is applied by Chinese individuals in undergoing *kasundaan* in daily life.

The subjects of this study are two Chinese individuals who have a high concern for Sundanese culture, namely Tan Deseng and Soeria Disastra. Tan Deseng, a versatile musical artist who made the concept of *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* as a guide in everyday behavior. Soeria Disastra is a Chinese artist who embodies his love for Sundanese culture through literary works and music art. Both contributed to the development of Sundanese art and culture.

The research subject is chosen purposively to support the established research objectives. This is in accordance with Moleong's revelation (2006: 233) "In qualitative research, there are no random samples, but purposive samples", which based on the needs of the researcher.

A number of theories and concepts are used as research guides. It is the theory of transcendental phenomenology from Husserl, the theory of social phenomenology from Schutz, and the theory of social action of Max Weber. The theoretical and conceptual reference is an approach of thinking in explaining how the Chinese individuals undergoing *kasundaan* can be explained subjectively. Phenomenology theory is used as a basis to reveal the experience of Chinese individuals in Bandung who have *kasundaan* in everyday life.

The reality of *kasundaan* which is lived and interpreted based on the perspective of the research informant. The researcher as a research instrument does not assume anything against the individual being studied but tries to assemble the

experience of the studied informant into a reality that is found in their viewpoint. In this study, the researcher did not attempt to prove the problem but to find the meaning of *kasundaan* by Chinese individuals from their point of view and experience. The key to the discovery of truth lies with the informant being examined or the person who found the problem.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kasundaan within the Chinese individuals is formed through the process of adaptation by interaction with the Sundanese people. They are interested in the concept of Sundanese culture, then love and practicing *kasundaan* in everyday life. The process of adaptation that occurred between the Sundanese culture with Chinese culture that became the background of the original culture of the individual who became the informant of this research occurred because Sundanese culture is very open. Professor of Philosophy Parahyangan Catholic University (Unpar), Bambang Sugiharto revealed,

“Sundanese is very tolerant, roomy, very relaxed with differences. Tolerant that does not have much to say about the difference. *Kasundaan* is open. That openness as a friendly host and warm to different cultures.” (Bambang, Interview Februari 3, 2014)

According to Bambang, the openness is driven by the not so ethnocentric character of Sundanese people that made the West Java community is relatively much more open to modernity and all kinds. The cosmopolitan atmosphere is more easily grown in West Java in Sundanese culture than elsewhere.

The concept of SILAS is one of the Sundanese local wisdom in creating a harmonious life by arranging relations with the environment (Suryalaga, 2009: 125). The word *silih* in Sundanese society means "mutual", which has a reciprocal meaning for those who apply it. *Silih Asih*: love one another; *Silih Asah*: sharpening each other's thoughts, reminding each other; *Silih Asuh*: caring for each other, guiding each other.

SILAS is a Sundanese life concept loaded with local wisdom and universal values. Ultimate results are capable human beings of realizing a life full of harmony with fellow creatures of God. (Suryalaga, 2009: 126)

For Deseng, from the three concepts of SILAS, the concept of *asih* is the foundation of the three. The presence of compassion or affection in a person is able to encourage him to do *asah* and *asuh*. Deseng applied the concept of SILAS in order to blend Chinese culture with Sundanese culture. In 2000, Deseng established Padepokan Pasundan Asih with Ibu Ade Cahyadi, a Chinese descendant who loves Sundanese culture very much. Pasundan Asih is a place for Chinese descendants in Bandung who love Sundanese art. They come from diverse professional backgrounds. There are doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, handyman or pure artist. In the padepokan, Deseng applies the concept of SILAS by practicing Chinese descent who love Sundanese art to play classical class and sing Sundanese classic song. (Tempo Magazine, June 1, 2008)

The establishment of Pasundan Asih received support from various parties, including Sundanese figure Popong Otje Djundjuran, who became one of the Pasundan Asih committee. Ceu Popong, known by Deseng since the 1960s, often attended and participated with Deseng and his two daughters on various occasions.

Through Padepokan Pasundan Asih, Deseng blends Chinese descent with Sundanese culture. Occasionally, Deseng also collaborated on Chinese culture with Sundanese culture through choirs singing Sundanese and Chinese songs, as well as dances.



Fig. 1 Performance of Padepokan Pasundan Asih Choir with Deseng as a conductor.
(Source Deseng Documentation)

For Deseng, establishing a padepokan is an attempt to invite Chinese people in Indonesia to gather, learn to have a culture where they live, the Sunda land.

“We must have a culture in our life. Don't be just ID Card's nation, but a cultured nation, customs where we live.” (Deseng, Interview September 27, 2013)

One of the greatest hopes of the artist who devoted his life wholeheartedly to *kasundaan* is to restore Sundanese culture to its roots. He invited the Sundanese people began to apply again the pattern of life based on Sunda wiwitan or Sundanese origin culture that is based on *silih asih*, *silih asah*, *silih asuh*.

Soeria Disastra also applies the same thing in realizing the concept of SILAS through art activities. In 1995, Soeria established the Paduan Suara Kota Kembang (Flower City Choir), which consisted of 100 Chinese descendants, most of whom were schoolmates at the Chinese School, Chiau Chung. The average age of the participants is 40-70 years. Until now, the group is often invited to fill art events in Bandung and surrounding areas. In each of its performances, the group performed songs of nationalism and patriotism in Indonesian, Mandarin and Sundanese. Some songs in Sundanese are often sung by Paduan Suara Kota Kembang are *Karatagan Pahlawan*, *Lemah Cai*, *Sabilulungan* dan *Hariring Bandung*.



Fig.2. Soeria Disastra conducting Paduan Suara Kota Kembang singing patriotic and nationalism songs (Source: Private Documentation)

Soeria Disastra also concerned with encouraging the life of Sundanese literature. Together with the President Commissioner of Bank NISP, Karmaka Suryaudaya, who is also Sundanese art and culture lover, Soeria founded Lembaga Kebudayaan Mekar Parahyangan (LKMP) since July 24, 2002. The institution organizes activities to encourage the writing of Sundanese literature. Together with Klub Pecinta Sastra (KPS) Bandung, LKMP held a writing contest *Carpon Mini Sunda* (Sundanese miniature short story) followed by dozens of *carpon* writers from various regions in West Java. The award-winning masterpiece was booked in an Anthology of Sundanese miniature short story entitled “*Ti Pulpen tepi ka Pajaratan Cinta*” in 2002. The event was held in cooperation with *Paguyuban Panglawungan Sastra Sunda* (PPSS) and Kiblat Buku Utama Publishers. As a judge, there are authors from various regions in West Java such as Darpan A. Winangun, Hadi AKS and Soni Farid Maulana. Soeria revealed, the competition was held to support the progress of Sundanese literature.

“I feel obliged to support, to encourage Sundanese literature to move forward. So, I embrace the entrepreneur. Those who spend the money held a competition. The prewords translated to Sundanese.” (Soeria, Interview December 30, 2013)

In the past, when *Seni Budaya* magazine still published, LKMP handed the prize for the best short story published magazine in every year. *Seni Budaya* is an art and culture magazine managed by Tatang Benyamin Koswara, the eldest son of legendary karawitan Sunda, Koko Koswara or Mang Koko.

According to Soeria, unifying Chinese and Sundanese literature is a reciprocal effort. Absorbing the culture of outside literature can enrich ourselves, introduce the Sundanese culture, is an effort to promote the culture of Sunda. Soeria Disastra efforts in unifying the Chinese culture with the Sundanese through the arts brought him Danamon Award as a credible figure in unifying the people of Indonesia and Tionghoa through the arts and culture. Senior writer of Kompas, Her Suganda, once called him "penyebar virus

Sunda” (the spreader of Sundanese virus). Through the art, Soeria Disastra has proved that the differences between Chinese and Indonesian can be put together.

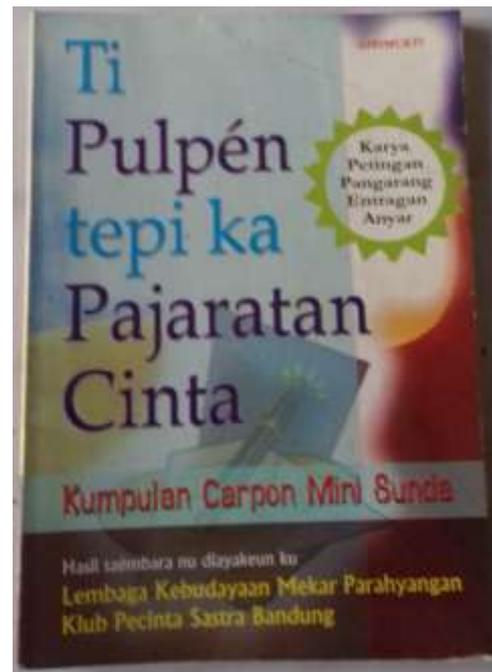


Fig. 3. Anthology of Sundanese Short Story “*Ti Pulpen tepi ka Pajaratan Cinta*” as a results of short story Competition held by LKMP & KPS Bandung, conducted by Soeria Disastra

The exposure of Tan Deseng and Soeria Disastra proves that SILAS concept helps to realize harmony of relationship between two cultures, namely Chinese culture and Sundanese culture.

IV. CONCLUSION

The concept of *silih asih*, *silih asah*, *silih asuh* is one of the Sundanese cultural wisdom results as a guide to living life in this world. The point is alignment in togetherness. The principle of "mutual" which means a reciprocal relationship in applying the concept of SILAS shows that SILAS is a concept of the life of Sundanese people oriented to the existence of harmonious social relations as one way to reach the main human and noble character. Thus, SILAS is not just an expression, but a pattern of life that contains values or norms filled with wisdom. Therefore, we should maintain and apply SILAS in a life that has been influenced by a multicultural culture that undermines the pattern of our lives.

REFERENCES

- [1] Hardjasaputra, Sobana. *Perubahan Sosial di Bandung, 1810-1906*. Disertasi. Bandung : Universitas Padjadjaran; 2002.
- [2] Jahja, Junus. *Muslim Tionghoa: Kumpulan Karangan*. Jakarta: Yayasan Haji Karim Oei; 1995.
- [3] Julia, *Membangun Kultur Silih Asih, Silih Asah, dan Silih Asuh Melalui Pendidikan Seni*. Bandung: Seminar Internasional Quo Vadis Seni Tradisional 6, December 2011. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.4905.0649

- [4] Kunto, Haryoto. *Wajah Bandoeng Tempo Doeloe*. Bandung: Granesia; 1984.
- [5] Moleong, Lexy J. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya; 2006.
- [6] Moriyama, Mikihiro. *Semangat Baru*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama; 2005.
- [7] Suryadinata, Leo. *Kebudayaan Minoritas Tionghoa di Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT.Gramedia; 2010.
- [8] Suryalaga, Hidayat. *Kasundaan Rawayan Jati*. Bandung: Yayasan Nur Hidayah; 2009.
- [9] Bedah Buku "Kasundaan-Rawayan Jati": mengenal pandangan hidup orang Sunda; *Pikiran Rakyat*. 4 Mei 2004
- [10] Seorang Cina dengan Kecapi Sunda; *Tempo*, 1 Juni 2008.