

Analysis of the Banyumas Begalan Tradition from the Perspective of Christian Religious Education and its Implications for Christian Marriage

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the Begalan tradition that has developed specifically in Banyumas, Central Java from the perspective of Christian Religious Education and explore its implications for Christian Marriage. This study attempts to explore the meaning, practice, and significance of the Begalan tradition for the local community which is then examined from the perspective of Christian Religious Education including the symbolic values in the Begalan tradition that are in line with the principles of Christian Religious Education. The findings in this study indicate that a deep understanding of the Begalan tradition gives importance to the experience of Christian faith that is adaptive and respectful of local culture which then has implications for the context of Christian marriage. This article proposes practical approaches in Christian marriage related to the Begalan tradition, where the concept of integrating positive values from the Begalan tradition in the form of Thanksgiving practices for Christian marriage into traditional ceremonies after the marriage blessing becomes a form of harmonious integration between church and culture. The method in writing this article is through autoethnography where the author is involved and has direct experience in it and is also supported by literature studies. The conclusion of this article is the need for correct interpretation and learning of Christian marriage that adopts local culture, then it is hoped that there will be ongoing dialogue between Christian faith, especially Christian religious education and local traditions such as the Begalan tradition and other local traditions, this is very important to create a harmonious relationship between the church and local traditions, as well as to enrich cross-cultural understanding among Christians.

Keywords: Begalan Tradition, Christian Religious Education, Christian Marriage

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Javanese society, tradition not only functions as a social bond, but also as a cultural identity that distinguishes them from other communities in Indonesia. In Javanese society, tradition is often closely related to ritual and ceremonial activities involving all members of society, for example, the slametan ceremony held to celebrate various important moments, such as birth, marriage, and death. Banyumas as one of the districts in Central Java, Indonesia, is a region rich in cultural heritage and tradition. This region is located in the southwest central part of Central Java province with its district cap-

ital in Purwokerto, covering an area of 139,115.3 Ha and inhabited by around 1,828,573 residents.¹ One of the unique traditions that continues to be preserved until now in Banyumas is the Begalan tradition known as Begalan Banyumas or also Begalan Purwokerto, which is a cultural ritual that is rich in meaning and symbolism, especially in the context of Banyumas community weddings. The Begalan Banyumas tradition has a category of material culture dimensions (artifacts) represented by the use of household equipment, social culture represented by musical instruments and their players and finally gestures represented by facial and body expressions. The ²Begalan tradition is a cultural heritage rich in values and symbols, especially in the context of Banyumas community weddings. These values have emerged over a long period of time, sometimes even throughout the existence of the community. These values are very strongly attached to the community. ³Begalan not only functions as entertainment, but also as a means of conveying moral and social messages to the bride and groom and the community present. In its implementation, this tradition presents interactive dialogues between the characters in the performance, which are often interspersed with humor and local wisdom. This makes Begalan an effective communication medium to convey important messages about married life and the values of togetherness. At first glance, the Begalan tradition and Christian Religious Education do have major differences between the two, where the Begalan tradition is a cultural tradition that is passed down from generation to generation based on the oral tradition of ancestors while Christian Religious Education is based on the Christian Faith and the Bible as the main source, but when viewed as an educational method, both are tools and means to bring about education and teaching that has good intentions. So it would be interesting if this Begalan tradition was then reviewed from the perspective of Christian Religious Education. The integration of the Begalan tradition in modern Christian wedding ceremonies is something unique and important because it is an effort to harmonize local cultural values with religious teachings. In this context, Begalan can be seen as a ritual that not only enriches the sacred experience of the bride and groom, but also strengthens the relationship between families and communities. Through a deep understanding of this tradition, the bride and groom can gain spiritual provisions that are useful in living their married life. The theory developed in this paper is Berkes' theory which states that local wisdom is a collection of practical knowledge and beliefs that develop through a process of adaptation through inheritance. ⁴If viewed from this theory, the Begalan performance fulfills the elements of local wisdom, namely a collection of knowledge about guidelines for life in marriage and is practiced in wedding ceremonies and contains values that must be applied and believed by the Banyumas community through a process of adaptation to current conditions and continues to be passed down as a culture. Likewise, the Theory of Christian Religious Education, one of which is by Homrighousen, which means that through Christian Religious Education all students, young and old, enter a living fellowship of faith with God Himself, and by and in Him they are also included in the fellowship of His congregation who acknowledge and glorify His name at all times and places. ⁵So through this theory of Christian Religious Education, it is necessary

¹Banyumas Regency Communication and Information Service, *Banyumas Regency Data and Information 2024 Vol 8,2024*, ISSN 2909-5804.

²Asrofin Nur Kholifah, (2018), Rendering Cultural Elements In Banyumasan Begalan: A Translation Studies Perspective, *Jurnal Ilmiah Lingua Idea* vol 9 (2), 81-90

³Widiati, R. (2017). *Local Wisdom of the Aboge Community and Efforts to Preserve it in Cikakak Village, Wangon District, Banyumas Regency with a Review of Cultural Geography* . 2(6), 1-14

⁴Berkes, F. (1993). *Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective*. In *Traditional Ecological Knowledge Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases* . Edited by Julian T. Inglis. Canada. (MUST BE COMPLETE DATA, e.g. what page?)

⁵ Homrighausen EG and Enklar IH, *Christian Religious Education* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 26.

to understand that the fellowship of Christians glorifies God by submitting to God's will in all things including the meaning of marriage and the cultural life around it. The Christian Marriage Theory which is based on the Bible as the main reference also states that men and women unite, leaving their father and mother. This can also be interpreted as meaning that this theory teaches and educates good advice about maturity in making decisions and not depending on parents.

The autoethnographic study chosen by the author is important because the author sees and feels firsthand the experience of how the Begalan tradition is carried out, so that he can explain the meaning and perspective that are directly felt towards this Begalan tradition which is then connected in the context of Christian marriage, but also this article is supported by a literature review as a framework for finding research gaps and complementing previous research so that a novelty is produced in the research. Research conducted by Aulia Sholichah Iman Nurchotimah et al (2023) in *Local Wisdom of the Begalan Tradition in Traditional Weddings: Insights from Banyumas-Central Java Indonesia* resulted in a finding that there are ethical values instilled through this tradition, which offers guidance and teachings to the bride and groom in marriage. This practice is in line with Javanese ethics, which emphasize harmony, respect, and ethical teachings, which foster a sense of awareness and self-awareness. The Begalan tradition is not just a ritual, but also a way to instill essential life values, making it an integral part of the history and culture of Banyumas. In short, this study examines the performing arts of Begalan, a cultural tradition in Banyumas Regency related to marriage. ⁶Then also research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2023) shows that the Begalan Tradition has the function of socialization and family education, including religious and moral education. This ritual is an important moment for the bride and groom to receive valuable advice from parents and community leaders regarding family life. ⁷In addition, other studies also highlight that Begalan can function as an effective means of preaching, considering the many religious values implied in the symbols of this tradition.⁸

This study contributes to providing new insights into how cultural traditions can enrich premarital education materials in the church, especially in areas that still practice local customs such as Banyumas and build new interpretations and practices of the symbols in the Begalan tradition that can be aligned with the context of Christian religious education and Christian marriage. Therefore, studying the integration of the Begalan tradition in modern Christian wedding ceremonies is relevant not only for couples, but also for society in general. This step is important to maintain a balance between preserving local culture and implementing religious values in everyday life. What about Christians in the local area and more specifically the views of Christian Religious Education in responding to and viewing the Begalan tradition originating from Banyumas, Central Java province? In the observations and experiences felt directly by the author, there are various views within Christians themselves regarding the Banyumas Begalan tradition, for example, there is doubt among Christians to include the Begalan tradition as part of the Christian wedding procession. In many cases, some really do not have a problem, some are hesitant and uncertain, and some openly refuse to use this Begalan tradition in the context of Christian marriage. The naming of this traditional activity, namely 'Begalan', often creates negative perceptions and connotations, namely that the basic word 'Begal' is an activity that has connotations of evil deeds, namely

⁶Aulia Sholichah Iman Nurchotimah et al, (2023), *Local Wisdom of the Begalan Tradition in Traditional Weddings: Insights from Banyumas-Central Java Indonesia*, ISVS e-journal, Vol. 10, Issue 8, 90-102

⁷Rahmawati, N., Nursetiawati, S., & Siregar, J. (2023). *The Function of Family Socialization and Education Through the Begalan Tradition in Kalimandi Village*. E-Journal Naurendigiton.

⁸Munawar, I. (2020). *Islamic Symbols in the Begalan Tradition in Banyumas*. UIN Walisongo Thesis

stealing or robbing, which clearly contradicts the values of the Christian faith, making Christians feel reluctant or hesitant to use this tradition.

This paper ultimately aims to explain more clearly and comprehensively the meaning, practices, and values in the Begalan tradition as understood by most Banyumas people; analyze the Begalan tradition through the perspective of Christian Religious Education, identify elements that can be used in teaching and values that are in line as a meeting point. Provide analytical results on how understanding Begalan can influence strategies and approaches in the context of Christian marriage.

METHOD

Autoethnographic studies are studies that open up space for writers or researchers to use their senses and personal experiences to better understand the environment or cultural situation around them.⁹ Through autoethnographic studies, writers can also provide an overview of observations based on experiences seen and felt directly by the writer where the writer in this context has been involved in the activity in the field. Furthermore, the data analysis technique applied in this study itself is the inductive data analysis technique, namely drawing conclusions from specific and real facts in the field based on the data obtained as a conclusion. The steps taken in this study are data collection both through literature studies and autoethnographic studies, then data reduction, data presentation, and finally drawing conclusions. The autoethnographic method chosen as the method in this writing which was then developed with references to previous writing and research has a very important relationship with the topic of discussion because it provides a clear and effective perspective and has an interpretation that is indeed felt and experienced directly by the researcher so that a real and clear picture can be obtained about the Begalan Banyumas tradition, especially in the context of Christian marriage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Begalan Tradition in the Understanding of Banyumas Society

Begalan, comes from the word Begal (Javanese) which has a negative connotation, namely robber, a person who works by robbing other people's belongings. The robbery carried out by these robbers is done consciously and is known by the victims and in a conscious state, this is called in Javanese, namely mbegal.¹⁰ The term Begalan in this art does not mean actually robbing other people's belongings, but rather maintaining safety if evil spirits come and disturb. So, the term Begalan here is a requirement, or pangruwat to avoid all supernatural powers that threaten the safety of the bride and groom. The meaning of Begalan can be explained by the words kabegalan sambekalanipun, which means kept away from danger.¹¹ The Begalan tradition is a traditional oral art that functions as a means of wedding ceremonies in the Banyumas region. The Begalan tradition is a depiction of an event that occurred in the past in the Banyumas region in the form of robbery of the belongings of the groom's entourage by robbers or robbers. Begal means the same as a robber, namely a person whose job is to commit a crime by robbing other people's belongings. Robbers who rob other people's belongings are used in the Begalan tradition as a metaphor only, not seizing goods in the real sense. But robbing the time of the bride and groom who are

⁹Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, (Routledge, 2008). (HOW MANY PAGES)

¹⁰DINPORABUDPAR, tourism and culture of Banyumas, Central Java, (Banyumas: Dinporabudpar 2009), 86

¹¹Wien Puji Priyanto, Values in the Art of Robbery in Banyumas, FBS Yogyakarta State University, 165-166

going to get married by giving advice and guidance to the newlyweds about family life. ¹²The Begalan Tradition procession is depicted with a scene of robbery of the belongings of the groom by a robber. Begalan is carried out by two adults who are the brothers of the bride. The two Begalan players dance and have a dialogue in front of the bride and groom carrying household equipment. The equipment has a symbolic meaning that contains elements of education and contains Javanese philosophy that is useful for the bride and groom who will run a family life. The main goal is to advise the bride and groom to be able to live their marriage in a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere, which in the Javanese proverb is said " kaya mimi lan mintuna nganti penye kaken-kaken ninen-ninen " which means living in harmony until the end.¹³

Begalan Oral Art as one type of Banyumas art that is used as a medium to convey educational values in the form of moral values. ¹⁴Educational values in Banyumas Begalan are conveyed through the existence of symbols or emblems on the equipment and tools for wedding ceremonies. Symbols or emblems are something like signs that can be paintings, words, badges, and so on that state something or have a certain meaning. For example, the color white symbolizes purity, the picture of rice symbolizes prosperity, and so on. There are many meanings and symbols that are manifested by the use of these household equipment, namely educational values such as religiosity, social, honesty, democracy, independence, fighting spirit, responsibility, respect for the environment. ¹⁵These values can be used as guidelines or life guidance for the younger generation who will marry and live in society.

The educational value conveyed through the symbols of household equipment used in Begalan is Wlira and Brenong Kepang . Wlira is a tool used as a beater which is usually called Pedhang Wlira . The length of the tool is 40 cm, 2 cm thick. The material of this sword comes from the areca nut tree. In addition, the tool functions as a tool to express the character of the dance, like the sampur in classical Javanese dance. The carrier of the tool is called Suradenta. Suradenta describes or as a symbol of a responsible man, must dare to face everything related to the family. Brenong Kepang is a tool carried by the bride's escort named Surantani . The contents of Brenong Kepang are kitchen tools, namely, wangkring , a tool like a wooden or bamboo shoulder pole, symbolizing the meaning of togetherness, the meaning is that people who will live a family life must consider many things first, so that they can face difficult and happy situations together. Ian or Ilir , a type of fan made of small and large bamboo, symbolizes tolerance, mutual respect, has a meaning that for those who are married, they can distinguish between good and bad deeds. Cething , symbolizes that humans must always remember that humans are God's creatures and live in a country or place or a container that has a set of rules and cannot be arbitrary. As a manifestation of the value of religiosity. Centhong , symbolizes that husband and wife must be good at protecting themselves so that there are no disputes, the husband must not be arbitrary towards his wife, all household needs must be borne together, contains the values of democracy, justice, and gender. Kukusan , symbolizes that after daring to be married, they must learn to meet their needs, is a value of fighting spirit and responsibility. Irus symbolizes honesty, democratic values, where husbands or wives should not be easily influenced by others who can later damage the family. Siwur , a symbol that if you already have children, you must act

¹²Endri Apriliana Adi Wahyu, Nugroho Trisnu Brata, (2020), *Redefinition Of The Begalan Tradition Meanings By Sanggar Sekar Kantil In The Marriage Rites In The Banyumas Community* , Journal of Ethnic Culture, <https://dx.doi.org/10.26742/be.v4i2.1564>.

¹³Supriyadi and Slamet. 2007. *Begalan Seni 'Bridal Ceremony Dance of Banyumas Community*. Surakarta: ISI Press.

¹⁴Wien Puji Priyanto, *Values in the Art of Robbery in Banyumas* , FBS Yogyakarta State University, 165-166

¹⁵ ibid

fairly.¹⁶

The educational value conveyed by the players through dialogue between Begalan players, the essence of which is explaining various symbols. Examples of dialogues are " Lha, jan-jane ki abrag abrag kanggo apa ? ana pa maknane kok dadi ora olih tek jaluk ?", "Dene si rika ora ngerti abrag-abrag kiye kanggo apa ?", "tek bicaraiya, abrag kiye jenenge Brenong Kepang kanggo kondisi srana gole besanan ." (meaning: "What is this household equipment for?, What is the meaning that I can't ask for it?, "You don't know what this household equipment is for?", "I'll tell you, this equipment called Brenong Kepang is used as a requirement to find a besanan". This dialogue contains the value of togetherness in married life, everything must be truly resolved and considered.

Christian Religious Education Perspective on the Banyumas Begalan Tradition

The Bible cannot be separated from the cultural aspect. The Bible tells about various aspects of human life including culture in it. Humans are creatures of God who are given reason and are able to create with wisdom and thoughts including creating culture, meaning that humans are able to respond and actualize themselves to their surroundings and even to the mandate given by God. The living God is the God who created humans with eyes that can see, with a brain that can think, with hands that can build, so that humans, in the name of God, conquer the world to him. God the Creator, is also the Giver of the task of culture. ¹⁷Jesus' attitude towards culture is explained by H Richard Niebuhr in his book *Christ and Culture* in five attitudes , namely: ¹⁸1) Christ against culture , 2) Christ of Culture, 3) Christ above culture, 4) Christ and culture in paradox , 5) Christ, the transformer of culture . Christ's position as a reformer of culture is a more adaptive and contextual choice, the effort to transform culture is an effort of faith as an expression of gratitude for the grace and salvation of God, not an effort to save the sins of the world, cultural transformation is not an effort to change culture into God's culture by changing all models and artistic culture but rather to give meaning to God's work in every existing culture.

Christian Religious Education of course has its basis in the Bible as a source of teaching and Christian faith which is believed to be a revelation inspired by God Himself. This is of course different from culture and tradition which emphasizes more on human reason and wisdom as the main source of ideas. Christian Religious Education does not mean eliminating the role and wisdom of humans, because basically the source of human wisdom also comes from God. So culture as a result of human work is seen from the perspective of Christian faith as a blessing and gift from God to shape humans to live their lives better, have more characteristics as a shared identity and have recognition of their existence.

For this reason, Christian Religious Education views the Begalan tradition as a cultural tradition that has many values and positive aspects in it, including within the framework of education. Values are a reflection of ideal ideas about "the 'true'", "the good", the great", and "the holy." The core of community life is values. These values need to be internalized, developed, and implemented by all members of society. ¹⁹The educational values in the Begalan tradition have something that is in harmony and in line with the goals of Christian Religious Education, especially in terms of ethical education and character formation where in it the Begalan Tradition has a lot of good advice in living a household life, such as the values of goodness that God ordered through the Bible to bring goodness and prosperity to mankind. The values of ethical

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷J. Verkuyl, *Christian Ethics: Culture*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia. 1982).

¹⁸Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* , (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1956).

¹⁹Wien Pudji Priyanto, (2018). *Educational Values in the Art of Begalan Narration in Banyumas* . Horizon of Education: Scientific Journal of Education Vol 2(2) <http://dx.doi.org/10.21831/cp.v2i2.8506>

and character meaning as advice for marriage taken from the symbols of household equipment in the Begalan tradition have a number of good meanings and symbols in forming the character and ethics of a strong family such as the values contained in the Begalan tradition mentioned earlier.

Implications for the Context of Christian Marriage

Marriage is an institution specifically formed by God, God sets rules and boundaries in marriage to protect two humans from destruction. God determines that marriage will end when death separates them. The process of going through marriage that will be passed is certainly not easy, that is why Christian marriage is prepared so that people who go through it understand the intent and will of God in marriage, because it is important in Christian marriage to build it in the advice of God's word. In the Christian paradigm, the marriage of believers is a sacred bond before God between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-6). In Christian marriage, God is the leader of the family and blesses the marriage of believers because God who unites husband and wife and the head of their household is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3).

The context of Christian marriage is inseparable from marriage counseling, which usually begins in a process called pre-marital guidance until the wedding ceremony (marriage blessing). Marriage counseling itself is a process of assistance given to prospective husbands and wives before or after marriage to help them achieve happiness in their marriage and household.²⁰ There are many pieces of advice and messages for each marriage, other people will have different values and expect us all to follow their advice and opinions, but of course in Christian marriage, Christians will follow the message of God's word that comes from God the creator of the world and family, God who created the first humans Adam and Eve, God who has expressed His love by saving mankind. Christians will consciously follow and submit to the commands and advice of God's word.²¹ According to Shertzer and Stone, guidance is a process of assistance shown to individuals to recognize themselves and their world.²² So it can be concluded that guidance is the process of providing assistance by a mentor to individuals or groups of people so that they can develop their abilities well and wisely in determining choices so that they can achieve happiness in life. Furthermore, premarital guidance is a social service process in the form of counseling, assistance given to prospective husband and wife, before carrying out marriage, so that they obtain welfare and happiness in marriage and family life.²³ For that reason, usually when entering a holy Christian marriage, the prospective bride and groom will be guided in the premarital guidance process for a certain period of time where they will learn from the pastor or spiritual leader about the meaning of Christian marriage and advice on living their household life in the future. Premarital guidance is the initial stage before the prospective husband and wife carry out the marriage blessing in the context of Christian marriage.

The integration of Begalan tradition with Christian values opens up space for dialogue between culture and religion. In many cases, local traditions are often considered to be in conflict with religious teachings, but in the Begalan context, this is not always the case. According to the author's observations as a direct experience, the process of integrating Begalan tradition in the context of Christian marriage is unique and special, because it is something that combines religious practices and culture. Religious messages are received during premarital guidance and the wedding blessing procession in the church, which is then

²⁰Nasaruddin Latif, *Marriage Counseling*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Hidayah, 2005), 33.

²¹Pieter C. Reid, *Entering Holy Matrimony: A Pastor's Guide to Premarital Counseling*, Publication Division of the Lutheran Church of Indonesia, 2022, 5

²²Syamsul Yusuf, A Juntika Nurihsan, *Counseling Foundation and Guidance*, (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2009), 6.

²³Syubandono, *Basic Concepts and Methods of Marriage Counseling " Marriage Counseling "*

followed by marriage advice in the Banyumas Begalan procession during the wedding thanksgiving procession.

One way to integrate the Begalan Banyumas tradition according to the author's observations and experiences is to adapt certain rituals that accompany Begalan to suit Christian teachings, for example the Sungkeman ritual for each parent by the bride and groom which symbolizes respect for parents which is the embodiment of God's command in the ten commandments of God, namely honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12), the ritual of feeding each other between the bride and groom is the embodiment of God's command in marriage where the husband is commanded to love his wife and the wife obeys her husband (Ephesians 5:22-25) then there is also a ritual of using household equipment that has many symbols and certain meanings and is a reminder to always work hard and make an effort and also symbolizes the blessings that God provides for married couples. Furthermore, in the context of the community in society, this integration can also strengthen relationships between fellow members of society and especially church members with the general public. The author's experience when practicing this Begalan tradition is that there is a positive response in society that views that Christian marriage does not eliminate culture but instead maintains and strengthens the Begalan Banyumas tradition.

CONCLUSION

The Begalan Banyumas tradition in the context of Banyumas society is an important art in Banyumas community weddings. In Banyumas community weddings, this Begalan storytelling art, in addition to preserving the heritage of ancestral cultural values, also has positive values and hopes in giving good messages and prayers for every married couple in Banyumas society.

The perspective of Christian Religious Education on the Begalan tradition itself also has a positive meaning in teaching universal values of goodness in teaching messages of goodness and advice for married couples. Of course, there will be good messages in general that come through the Begalan tradition that come from ancestral heritage or specifically that come in the context of Christian faith that comes from the Bible. Through understanding this Begalan tradition, it then has implications in the context of Christian marriage, namely that it can be synergized in thanksgiving and wedding receptions. Premarital learning that is part of the context of Christian marriage that is usually carried out in the church environment can be synergized with good and useful messages from the art of Begalan storytelling so as to form a learning concept that adopts the Begalan tradition and an effort to build a strong foundation in marriage.

Through this research, the author also provides recommendations and suggestions for further research, especially those related to the Banyumas Begalan tradition, namely the opening of opportunities and chances to connect the Begalan tradition with the effectiveness of the evangelism mission and matters related to the development of church members in the Banyumas area which are connected to this Banyumas tradition.

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