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Pigs (*Wam*) Sacredness as Traditional Medicine in The *Balim* Valley of Papua

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Abstract

The *Balim* people in Papua, Indonesia, call pigs in their native language as *wam*. They place pigs as important and sacred animals in their lives. The pig is a symbol of identity found in every aspect of their life. Pigs are used in all traditional ritual processes. In addition, the pig is a treasure for the *Balim* people, which shows their self-esteem and social status. The pig is a dowry for marriage and a symbol of family ties. Furthermore, the pig is a symbol of peace when there is conflict. The pig solves any problem that occurs. On the other hand, as a sacred animal in traditional medicine, the pig is believed to be a medium to discover someone's illness and can heal people suffering from pain due to black magic.

1. Introduction

One of the traditional rituals believed by the *Balim* people in Papua, Indonesia, is traditional medicine using pigs. Pigs are used as a medium believed to heal those who are in pain due to wrong doing or offense to nature and others and those who are sick due to black magic. Pigs are used in the ritual process as an intermediary medium to see the physical condition of a sick person and how the treatment should be undertaken. There are two parts to the rituals in traditional *Balim* medicine. The first is a disease caused by a mistake against nature or others so that the family will take the sick person to a Hathale or shaman. The shaman will ask the patient if there must be an honest confession from him for what he has done that has caused pain. After that, the shaman recites a certain spell, and they will slaughter a pig. The pig is split or dissected into two parts, from the head to the lower

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abdomen. The shaman will examine the animal's organs, specifically the liver and stomach of the pig, to determine the type and location of the disease in the patient's body and how to cure it.

In the second ritual, the patient is sick because of black magic or, in the belief of the *Balim* people, is called *imag* poison. *Imag* is a poison that is not visible to the physical eye but a natural force sent by an *Imagarek*; an *Imagarek* has natural powers that can kill other people in ways that are visible to the person who will be the target, how it works through the eyes, touch, food, and drink. In the *imag* ritual, the shaman will use water, lard, and pig's blood as a healing medium, which has previously been in certain incantations. The patient must tell about his condition one week before he got sick, what he ate, whom he met, and all his activities during the few days before feeling sick told openly. The shaman will recite spells related to the clan of the patient or the person suspected of having sent the poison *imag*e (black magic) and give the patient water, pieces of meat, or pork blood to eat or drink and rub on his body. Believe it or not, the patient experiences recovery and can return to his activities.

To see the uniqueness of this study, researchers have summarized several previous studies related to traditional medicine. Research related to pigs as a healing medium was written by Serli Patasik, Occultism and Disease Healing in Lani Tribe Papua. Patasik places more emphasis on the healing process with traditional medicine in the beliefs of the Lani Jaya people as a form of occultism and compares it with occultism in the OT and NT Bibles. Patasik uses literature review techniques in his analysis of the Lani Jaya community's belief in traditional medicine using pork as a form of belief in dark spirits, and according to him, this is contrary to the Christian faith.

Vats and Thomas (2015) conducted research on using animals as traditional medicine by the Sukuma people in the Busega District in northwestern Tanzania. This research examines animals in religion, art, music and literature, and some human cultures. Animals have been used as food, cloth, and medicine since ancient times. In Tanzania, people still rely on traditional medicine systems to care for their health. This research looked at 42 different species of animals used for 30 different medicinal purposes, such as stopping bleeding, reproductive disorders, asthma, coughs, weakness, and wounds, as well as for other religious beliefs. The Sukuma are believed to be superstitious that they will seek healers or fortune tellers to determine their future and to cure ailments with animal medicines. The method used in this research was to collect information about ethnozology; data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires and open interviews.

They are taking into account two previous studies regarding the occult and healing of the Papuan Lani tribe and studies on using animals as traditional medicine by the Tanzanian Sukuma tribe. These two studies show the function of animals in traditional medicine. The research conducted by Patasik put more emphasis on occult concepts in looking at the beliefs of the Papuan Lani people in traditional medicine. In contrast, the research conducted by Vats and Thomas looked at the function of animals in the life of the Tanzanian Sukuma tribe which is used as medicine, especially wild animals and the pet used by the healers and fortune tellers of Sukuma. The Gap research that the author raises in this article is related to the cosmology of the *Balim*- Papuan people, their belief in power in nature that can give life and healing through all that is provided in nature. The difference between this research and the two previous studies is the method used in studying rituals that use pigs as sacred animals in the beliefs of the *Balim* people. This is related to their belief that there is power in pigs which is a medium for shamans to diagnose someone's illness or to cure illnesses due to the influence of *imag* (black magic). This research examines the beliefs of the *Balim* people from the perspective of the sociology of religion, which can be seen in their rituals.

2. Research Methods

To explore and study the sacredness of pigs in traditional healing rituals, the authors use qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach. The urgency of qualitative methods in this study is to describe the *Balim* understanding of the sacredness of *wam* (pigs) in their lives. Meanwhile, ethnography is defined as research that focuses on descriptive explanations and interpretations of the culture and social system of a group or a particular society through direct observation and appreciation. of the group or community under study. Ethnography will examine how people organize culture in their minds and use that culture in life. The urgency of researcher uses an ethnographic approach so that researchers can understand the way of life of the *Balim* people from their point of view and their daily experiences in practicing pork values in their culture. Learning from them, it is hoped that this value can be used as a strength for them. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research was conducted in Pisugi Village, Pisugi District, Jayawijaya Regency.

3. Results and Discussion

The sacredness of Pigs (Wam) in the view of the Balim people

Pigs are animals that have sacred values in traditional rituals (Hamilakis, Y., & Konsolaki, 2004; Della Costa, 2020; Age, 2023). Pigs (*wam*) are very important in the life and culture of the people of the *Balim* Valley; they are the basis of their culture. A baby, first learning to speak other than the words pa-pa (father), da-da (mother), is the infant version of ma-ma (u*wam*). This is because, since infancy, a child has been friends with little pigs. *Wam* (pig) is cared for and cared for on a par with raising a child. The people of the *Balim* Valley treat *wam* (pig) very well and with great respect because it is related to their ancestral beliefs.

> *"Wam (pig) is the incarnation of God, and the spirits of the ancestors in our lives (Balim people) help us to live a good life. Wam (pig) is the "mother/mama" who is present in life to help Balim people in their lives*." [5]

This statement explains that the origin of *Balim* life is related to their belief in power in nature and ancestral spirits, so *wam* (pig) becomes important and valuable in the daily life of *Balim* people in their living space. The explanation below is a simple example of *wam* (pig) being so important and occupying sacred things, such as *wam* (pig) being used in all processes of traditional rituals. *Wam* (pig) is a treasure for the *Balim* people that shows their self-esteem and social status; *wam* (pig) becomes a marriage dowry and a symbol of peace in the event of a conflict. The dowry is incomplete; if there is no *wam*, any problems are resolved with the *wam* (pig). The body cannot be buried before the *wam* (pig) is killed; the blood is shed to ask permission from the ancestral spirits so as not to disturb the spirits. The crematorium is smeared with *wam* (pork) fat so that on the way to the afterlife, it will not be disturbed by evil spirits.

Wam (pig) is used in the process of laying stones for construction, the process of demolishing new roads in places that are considered sacred, and the inauguration of houses and even churches for Catholics where the doors are smeared with *wam* (pig) blood or oiled with *wam* (pig) oil. The poles

[5] *Interview, Mr. Marinus Surabut and Mr. Eligius Wuka, 10 July 2022.*

of the *honai* (a typical *Balim* house) are smeared with *wam* (pork) fat which is understood to provide protection for the people living in the *honai*. Weapons of war, such as arrows, were also smeared with *wam* (pork) fat. All of these actions show the sacredness of *wam* (pig) in the aspects of the life of the *Balim* Valley people.

Eliade (1959) asserts that, in encountering the sacred, one feels touched by something not worldly. Humans can feel or be aware of the sacred because it differs completely from the profane. That is what Eliade calls hierophany. The most basic hierophany is manifested in a rock or a tree, to the highest hierophany is God in Jesus Christ for Christians (Kim, 1972). Sacred trees and sacred stones are not worshiped as trees or stones; they are worshiped precisely. After all, they are hierophanies because they denote some things which are no longer stones or trees but sacred.[6] Everything in nature is capable of expressing itself as cosmic sacredness. The cosmos can become a hierophany in everyone's religious experience. This can also be seen in the cosmology of the *Balim* people; pigs are sacred animals because the *Balim* feel a different power when they perform rituals using these animals.

For Durkheim, the sacred is *par excellence*, which the profane cannot and cannot touch with impunity. The sacred are those things which are protected and isolated by prohibitions. Prohibited things are established and must be kept at a distance from what is sacred. Durkheim described religion as an integrated system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things: things separated from and surrounded by prohibitions. In Durkheim's thought, the sacred and the profane are heterogeneous, completely separate from one another, but bound together in an all-encompassing dualism. Durkheim identified the sacred as a category of social values. The emphasis is on the sacred as the status conferred by people and communities on objects, times, actions, persons, and so on, not on the experience of qualities attached to objects or the power manifested through them.

Durkheim explained that religious belief is a representation that reveals the nature of sacred things and their relationship with other sacred things or profane things. In essence, rites are rules of conduct that determine how humans should behave sacredly. For him, the sacred stood at the heart of every religion, but Durkheim did not see the sacred as an isolated concept. It does not stand alone because the sacred must be understood and only has meaning, with the opposite reason, the profane—the sacred stands as one of the elements in the dichotomous system. So the sacred are things that are protected, isolated by prohibitions.

Meanwhile, the profane are things where the prohibitions are applied and must be kept away from sacred things. "The sacred" is the unified system, beliefs, and practices related to something sacred and united in one moral community. In this case, religious phenomena are categorized into two, namely, beliefs and rituals. It can be concluded that, according to Durkheim, religion is social. Something considered sacred does not come by itself but is determined by society. Real collective representation in society through religious symbols, myths, and legends, and in that way, society reflects itself. The presence of pigs in every traditional *Balim* ritual and their lives symbolizes their belief in the sacred.

From the explanation above about *wam* (pig) in the lifestyle of the *Balim* people, it is their characteristic that has been preserved to this day, so *wam* (pig) is a construction of *Balim* identity. Identity is fundamentally related to the human capacity to identify himself, which can be related to motivation and behavior. The most powerful identification is group identity, both in terms of self-capacity rooted in socialization, peer relations, or shared interests that are felt or become the effect of social identity. Identity must be distinguished from roles, with the identity of social actors

[6] *Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and The Profane The Nature of Religion translated from the French by Willard R. Trask (New York: Brace Word, 1956) 9-11.*

constructing the meaning of related cultural attributes, which take priority over other sources of meaning. According to Giddens, self-identity (self-conscious object) must be routinely created and maintained in the individual's reflective consciousness. Identity is the identity of a person or group of people with self-capacity that is even contained in nature and culture, *wam* (pig) has become an important part of the pattern of living with the *Balim* people and can be said to be their identity.

The Impact of Imagarek and Hathale's Presence

The phenomenon that occurs in the life of the people of the *Balim* Valley with strong social harmony, which is their identity in the tribal clan, is "disturbed" by the fear of a natural force possessed by someone that can cause pain and even death, known as *Imagarek*.[7] The influence of *Imagarek* (a person with black magic that can kill someone) becomes a separate problem in living together. Heider (2017) said it was black magic that society was so afraid of that caused death (Cf. Miller, 2010). The writer finds that *Imag*erek is not just a belief in the past but still exists today. There is unrest, and even problems arise within the *Balim* community because of the abilities possessed by an *Imagarek*. *Imagarek*'s presence in shared life is seen as a "threat." Society is in fear, anxiety, and suspicion that can cause life together to become static.

Imagarek can make people suffer pain to the point of death; this ability has been passed down from generation to generation. The *Balim* people call this magical power *imag* or black magic poison. People who are poisoned by black magic (*imag*) cannot be cured medically but are healed traditionally by a Hathale (someone who can cure non-medical ailments), abilities possessed by Hathale are hereditary, and not everyone has the ability.

Hathale can heal people poisoned by *imag* with their rituals, such as using water, blood, and *wam* meat (pig) as media. Catherin Bell concludes that ritual is related to myths and is the key to giving meaning; ritual is related to the community's social life, which is related to symbols, language, and practices or actions. Bell describes ritual as practice, indicating a way of acting that is distinguished from other ways of acting in everyday life. Meanwhile, Turner et al (2012) saw that the experience of living together becomes meaningful when reflected in space or liminality; it is expressed in various symbols in society through transition rituals. Rites are part of the organized social life of the group into which people are born. Rituals are an important part of *Balim* life; their relationships are renewed and strengthened through rites and customs. The ritual performed by Hathale to heal people affected by *imag* poison is related to the concept of people's belief in the sacredness of *wam* (pig).

With this belief, their ancestors believed that certain rituals performed by Hathale could heal sick people. They believe another power in nature can hear and do what they cannot, but they know there is a sacred power in nature. According to Eliade, with hierophany or sacred, that is, abilities that come from outside the other with the surrounding environment that provide benefits and values, this ability is in the entity's contents or its form. Conscious human action or behavior continues because it has been done before. This action was a repetition; the sources said that they did not know exactly when the healing ritual by Hathale started, but the healing ritual using water, blood, and *wam* (pork) meat by Hathale was a traditional belief that they continued to do.

[7] *Imagararek has a natural power that can kill other people in visible ways. Imagarek is known to exist from the stone age to the present day. According to the story of the Balim people, a man lost the war, and his family was killed; he walked into a stone cave around the Usilimo District area named Kungku cave. That is where he found a power called imag, which can cause the death of other people, and he also found an antidote to save people affected by the imag. The image found was used to take revenge for the death of his family during the tribal war. Interview, Mr. Augustine Kosay, 9 May 2022.*

The understanding of the *Balim* people, from this ritual, there is power in the *wam* (pig), which some of them believe is the embodiment of ancestral spirits. There is power in nature or the land where the sweet potato grows, and when the sick person has confessed and followed all the rituals here, he will recover. The understanding is that nature is the source of life, including *wam* (pigs), and land is seen as a mother, so as life, the land is seen as a house that provides protection. The land is also believed to be the abode of ancestral spirits, the source of human life force. It can be concluded that nature is seen as a home for them, a place to provide protection, life, and shelter. The spirits of the ancestors remain with them as long as they take good care of nature, so when they get sick, either because of the hands of people who sent *imag*es or because they have made mistakes to nature or others, nature also provides healing.

When the ancestors of the Baliem people realized that there was a higher power or force outside of themselves, which according to them, existed in nature, which brought protection or disaster for them, their concept of "power, strength" that they could not see is their form of belief. This belief becomes evident in their rituals, including those performed using *wam* (pig) by Hathale. This is what is called a rite, a special action. To find out the uniqueness of the rite, the object of the rite must be determined first; according to Durkheim, the privilege of the object of the rite is revealed in belief. Rites are rules of conduct that determine how humans should behave sacredly.

The interesting thing, and according to the author, as a red thread in seeing Durkheim's theory related to the sacred is something powerful, majestic, respected, in a profane condition that is not touched, which is exemplified in the life of primitive society, every animal that is not a totem, may be hunted and eaten because these animals include the profane. On the other hand, animals used as totems are sacred parts prohibited from being killed by clan members, except as sacrifices or offerings in religious ceremonies. It is different from religious sacredness in the *Balim* people's life concept. In fact, for the *Balim* , the sacred becomes part of them, not through a profane process, but it becomes a process of symbolic interaction.

This view has been formed in their minds; it is manifested in the ritual process with the medium of *wam* (pig) performed by a Hathale to heal people poisoned by black magic (*imag*). People poisoned by black magic (*imag*) cannot be cured with any treatment other than getting treatment from hathale with water, meat, and *wam* (pig). Their way of thinking is simple, real, and carried out to this day. There are often sacred or sanctified values; what is sacred can take the form of symbols, values, and beliefs in society. These sacred values regulate people's lives; people are not allowed to violate these values. According to the author, every customary regulation regulates indigenous peoples' lives for the better; the sacred values embodied in beliefs are believed and lived up to this day. This belief shaped them to respect the spirits of their ancestors who brought them fertility, goodness, and blessings, and disobedience caused curses or calamity for them.

In the simplicity of thinking of the ancestors of the *Balim* Valley community, which was passed down for posterity, it can be seen how they are very aware that there is a power or other power outside of themselves; there is a certain power in nature that can provide healing. They have conceptualized elements of the core of their belief in supernatural powers. Marret's theory of extraordinary powers explains that the oldest religious model is human belief in supernatural powers that cause reality that ordinary humans cannot create. This magical power that the *Balim* people understand exists in nature, whether in plants or animals, even through the intermediaries of tribal chiefs, war leaders, and traditional elders who have the natural ability to understand genealogy and war alliances. However, it is also possessed by *Imagarek* and Hathale.

Rituals performed

As explained in the introduction, two forms of traditional healing rituals are performed with pigs. The first is for illnesses suffered due to violations against nature and others. It is said to be a violation of nature, for example, crossing the boundaries of war or entering someone's customary rights without asking permission first. Violation against others, taking other people's garden produce or other people's livestock secretly, or committing adultery with another husband or wife. If a family member is sick because they are considered to have intentionally or unintentionally committed a violation against nature or others, the ritual process is carried out as follows:

1. The family will gather to agree on whether the person concerned needs to do the pig-splitting ritual; if all family members agree and are ready, they will tell the tribal chief or Hathale (shaman) to agree on a meeting time. It is usually negotiated by looking at the physical condition of the sick person who does not get better and gets worse.
2. Families or those who are sick prepare objects or media *wam* (pig), which will be carried out in the ritual; the size of the pig is chosen depending on the severity of the illness.
3. Tribal chiefs, Hathale (shamans) and their families, and sick people (patients) gather according to a mutual agreement.
4. To start the whole series of rituals, a joint prayer is usually led by the elders in the group. If the group performing the ritual is a church counselor or an administrator, they will lead the prayer.
5. Stages after praying, the sick person (patient) is allowed to speak openly or give a confession, both himself and his family, to the Hathale (shaman) or tribal chief; the patient must make an honest confession to facilitate his recovery, the patient will tell about his pain and tell the body where it feels uncomfortable. If a patient in this confessional stage does not speak the truth or admit his transgressions, it will be difficult for him to recover.
6. After the confession from the patient and his family, there is a prayer for transferring the patient's condition to the object prepared earlier. In this part, they believed in transferring the patient's illness into the prepared *wam* (swine).
7. Next is the preparation for pig surgery. The pig is first tied or wrapped around its neck, and it is prohibited to bleed.
8. The pig is split in two from top to bottom, and the ritual leader will examine each organ of the pig's body one by one to find which part is experiencing interference and pain in the patient's body and confirm the condition of the patient who is sick. Usually, the ritual leader will look at the pig's stomach strings, intestines, and heart and diagnose it on the patient's body.
9. After finding any findings in the results of the pig surgery, the person who witnessed the process of pig surgery will report it to all those present in the ritual process.
10. When the ritual leader or hathale finds something that is suspected of being different from the organs of the pig being examined, for example, in the stomach strings or intestines of a pig, the curse of the stomach strings or intestines will be washed in running water until it is completely clean. It is believed that when the intestines or strings of the pig's stomach are clean, the stomach of the sick patient recovers and heals.
11. The traditional elders who are present will pray together for healing and expel all evil forces that disturb the patient's health.
12. The final step is to draw lots or count the earlier transgressions/sins discussed in the ritual and throw them into running water so that all that is discussed disappears and disappears.
13. After all the stages have been carried out, they eat together, and the ritual is complete.

The second ritual, performed for those sick due to exposure to poison *imag* (black magic), is known as the *imag* ritual. There are three stages of the healing ritual performed by Hathale (shaman)

in the *imag* ritual. The first stage is Isamelogo (water healing); the patient's illness is still mild at this stage, and the patient and family will come to the hathale (traditional healer) for treatment. The shaman will give a glass of water, read a mantra and give the patient to drink; if the patient has recovered, the ritual is complete. Treatment is done by reciting a spell on a piece of lard the size of a finger knuckle, which is given a certain leaf and dipped in the original salt water of the *Balim* Valley, and eaten by the patient.

The third stage is *Wam* Mep Warogo (healing with *wam* blood and flesh). This third stage is carried out if, in the second stage, the patient has not recovered; in the third stage, the patient is very seriously ill and sometimes cannot open his mouth or speak. In this third stage, a young piglet will be slaughtered, the pig's blood will be collected in a container, and the meat will be cooked. Then the banana frond will be cut into the palm size to be dipped in pig's blood. After reading certain mantras and rubbing on the patient's body parts, the patient will drink a little pig's blood and eat a piece of pork. After this ritual, there is usually a physical change in the patient, who was previously weak and helpless, gradually recovers and improves. In these three forms of ritual, the role of Hathale is very important, and partnerships occur with the people involved in these rituals. When the ritual process is complete, they will return to normal life, with the belief that the power in nature is with them and accompanies them. This supernatural power strengthens their relationship with each other, nature, and ancestors.

4. Conclusion

The *Balim* culture sees the *wam* (pig) as a sacred animal that is different from other animals, an animal that symbolizes the community's collective representation of their belief in power in nature and ancestral spirits. *Wam* (pig) is a symbol of human closeness to nature, a symbol of close kinship ties, a symbol of peace, and a symbol of brotherhood. *Wam* (pig) is a ritual animal in every *Balim* tradition. Traditional medicine, passed down from generation to generation using pigs (*wam*), shows the beliefs of the *Balim* people, which must be respected as their local wisdom in maintaining their relationship with each other, nature, and ancestors.

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