

# The Role of the Ngunduh Tradition in the Conservation of Swallow's Nests in Karangbolong Village, Kebumen Regency of Central Java, Indonesia

Hikmah Supriyati

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Program of Biological Education Department, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Research and Community Service Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

Email: hikmashsupriyati@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The Ngunduh tradition of swallow's nest is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation by people in Karangbolong Village, Buayan District Kebumen Regency. This ritual tradition is carried out so that the implementation of taking swallow's nest runs smoothly and avoid disaster. According to the myth that circulates, taking swallow's nest without ceremony or ritual will result in accidents and even death. The purpose of this study is to determine the Role of Ngunduh Tradition in Conservation of Swallow's Nests in Karangbolong Village, Buayan District, Kebumen Regency of Central Java, Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Apart from that, to support the data, interviews were also conducted with people who have been involved in taking swallow's nests. Based on the results of interviews and literary studies that have been conducted, the concept of conservation already exists in the tradition of taking swallow's nest. The Ngunduh tradition that has been preserved by the community will have a positive impact on the existence of swallows in Karangbolong. The belief in the Ngunduh ceremony before harvesting swallow's nest is a myth that is very useful in preserving nature. This tradition will be a part of the life of the local community because it is accompanied by spiritual beliefs and strengths related to the existence of swallow's nest in Karangbolong cave.

**Keywords:** Ngunduh Tradition, Conservation, Swallow's Nest, Karangbolong Village

## INTRODUCTION

Karangbolong Village is one of the villages in Buayan District, Kebumen Regency. Karangbolong Village is a village located on the south coast of Kebumen (Sujarno, 2008). Karangbolong is famous for its beach tourism, the beach in Karangbolong has its own uniqueness, namely there is a large coral with a hole in it so that people who visit the beach can pass it. Besides that, in the hill of Karangbolong village, there is also a cave. The cave is a habitat for swallow.

The swallow is an aves with the Latin name *Collocalia fuciphaga* from the species *Aerodramus fuciphagus* which is able to make nests using saliva. Saliva has been studied to contain nutrients that are good for humans. Based on research, the nutritional content in swallow's nest consists of: amino acid protein, carbohydrates, as well as sodium, calcium, magnesium and potassium compounds (Saengkrajang, 2013). Apart from having a fairly high nutritional content, swallow's nest also has a fairly high selling value. The price of swallow's nest in the world market reaches 2200 dollars or around 30 million per kilogram (Kompas, 2020). Therefore, many people hunt swallow nests.

Taking swallow nest is not done carelessly. There is a ceremony or ritual that is carried out before taking the swallow's nest. The local community calls it "Selamatan" (ceremonial meal) (Prayogi, 2016). According to the myth that circulates, taking swallow's nest without ceremony or ritual will result in accidents and even death. This is because the Javanese people believe in a very good relationship between humans and supernatural beings. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out various sacred rituals. Javanese rituals still have something to do with Kanjeng Ratu Roro Kidul. Basically, this ritual is done to show gratitude as well

as ask permission from the Creator. There are also those who think that this ritual tradition is carried out so that the implementation of taking swallow's nest runs smoothly and avoid disaster (Paramithawati, 2010).

The existence of a tradition passed down from generation to generation by the community allows this ritual tradition to have a role in protecting the existence of swallow's nests in Karangbolong village. Research on traditional myths in society is still rarely carried out. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting research on "The Role of Ngunduh Tradition in the Conservation of Swallow's Nests in Karangbolong Village, Kebumen Regency of Central Java, Indonesia".

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Qualitative research is descriptive and tends to use analysis with an inductive approach (Sugiarto, 2015). The literature sources of this research are thesis, books and journals. Apart from that, to support the data, interviews were also conducted with people who have been involved in taking swallow's nests. The interviews with the community were conducted online using WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted on April 27, 2020. The results of the analysis of this study were descriptive. Existing data will be analyzed in paragraph form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Swallow's Nest

Swallows are insectivorous birds that migrate from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. The natural habitat of swallows is limestone caves. Swallow saliva can produce a

nest. Swallow nests are produced by *Collocalia fuchiphaga* (white nest) and *Collocalia maxima* (black nest) bird species (Elfita Lina, 2014). Swallow's nest has a high enough selling value. The price of swallow's nest in the world market reaches 2200 dollars or around 30 million per kilogram (Kompas, 2020). This is because the nutritional content of swallow nest which is highly nutritious and has a very delicious taste.

Swallow's nest contains glycoproteins, carbohydrates, amino acids and mineral salts. The main carbohydrates found in wallet bird's nest are sialic acid (9%), galactosamine (7.2%), glucosamine (5.3%), galactose (16.9%) and fucose (0.7%) (Ramli & Azmi, 2012; Colombo et al. , 2003). According to Sam et al. (1991) stated by Ramli, and Azmi (2012) stated that amino acids and mineral salts are also found in bird's nest wallets, the main mineral salts are sodium and calcium, in small amounts of magnesium, zinc, manganese and iron. According to Kathan and Weeks (1969), three non-essential amino acids (aspartic acid, glutamic acid and proline) and two non-essential amino acids (threonine and valine) were found in Swallow's nest. Marcone (2005) reported that the chemical composition of white and black wallet bird's nest is identical, namely fat (0.14–1.28%), ash (2.1%), carbohydrates (25.62–27.26%) and protein (62–63%).

Swallow's nest is beneficial for the human body, both for maintenance and treatment. Several recent investigations have shown that swallow's nest can stimulate growth and cell division of the human body and can increase immunity (Adiwibawa Eka, 2009). This is reinforced by research conducted by Chan (2010) that wallet bird's nest is believed to have health benefits such as anti-aging, growth promotion and enhancing the immune system. Wallet bird's nest is not only used as medicine, but also a delicious food.

## B. The Tradition of Taking Swallow's Nests

The Ngunduh tradition is a hereditary ceremonial tradition that is carried out before taking the swallow's nest. The ceremony of taking swallow's nest is held four times a year. The collection time was for prey karo around August (first take), kapat prey around October (second take), prey kapat around January (third take), and kasanga prey which fell around March (fourth take) (Rahmandani, 2017).

As with any ceremony in general, the ceremony to take the swallow's nest in Karangbolong is also carried out in stages. The stages that must be passed in this ceremony are as follows (Sujarno, 2008):

### 1. Ceremony in gazebo-like building (pendopo) Office of Karangbolong

This stage begins with a budget submission to the Kebumen Regency Regional Revenue Service unit by the foreman who supervises swallow's nest. After it was approved and the funds were disbursed, the foreman and his men bought ceremonial equipment such as a buffalo, incense, flowers, and so on. Buffalo is slaughtered and cooked at the foreman's house. Furthermore, the cooked buffalo meat and other ceremonial equipment are brought

to the gazebo-like building (pendopo) office in Karangbolong. At around 13.00 the opening ceremony began with remarks from the head of the unit in Karangbolong. Then proceed with a prayer led by the elders and end with a meal together.

### 2. The Shadow Puppet Performance in Cave

After the ceremony is over the participants are directed to go to the "Contoh" cave. Arriving at the "Contoh" cave, they immediately arranged the shadow puppet equipment. The shadow puppets will be played by 10 characters and last for 2 hours.

### 3. Float offerings at Karangbolong Beach

After the shadow puppet performance, participants headed to Karangbolong beach to give offerings in the form of: young coconut, red and white porridge, telon flower and so on.

### 4. Ritual meal (Kenduri) at the foreman's house of swallow's nest

In the evening, around 6:30 p.m. another festival or celebration was held at the foreman's house, which was only attended by the Karangbolong village apparatus, and residents of the surrounding community. The ceremony was carried out in a simple manner, namely only in the form of a greeting along with the ujub from the foreman, then continued with a prayer led by the Karangbolong village apparatus and ended with eating tumpeng together. In the salvation ceremony at the foreman's house, 66 offerings are provided (Attached). The offerings provided must be complete because if they are lacking, they are believed to result in the take swallow's nest process not being smooth. In the morning around 07.00 WIB, the foreman and his men put offerings to several places that were considered haunted.

### 5. The Ceremony (*Selamatan*) at the Swallow's Nest Guard Post.

After placing the offerings in several places, the foreman and his men headed to the guard post for the diving ceremony. Then the foreman and his men returned to the *pendopo* of Karangbolong to prepare the take swallow's nest equipment and discuss when is the right time to take the swallow's nest. If there is an agreement on when is the right time to take the bird's nest, then after sunset a ceremony is held once again and a (tayuban) performance is held. With the performance of the tayub art in the (*pendopo*), the whole sequence ends in the ceremony of taking the swallow's nest in Karangblong Village.

## C. The Role of Tradition in the Conservation of Swallow's Nests

The ritual tradition of taking swallow's nest is a ritual that has been there and has been passed down from generation to generation by the people of Karangbolong. The people used to believe that before taking the bird's nest, a ceremony / ritual (*Selamatan*) must be carried out. It is said that if the take of swallow's nest is done without ceremony or ritual, it will result in accidents and even death. This has become a myth that has been believed by the community in Karangbolong.

If you look closely, the tradition of ngunduh has a role in the conservation of swallow nests in Karangbolong. Conservation is an effort to manage change towards the preservation of values and legacy of a better and more sustainable tradition (Rachman, 2012). Evidence of this conservation can be seen in the timing and details of the ceremonies performed. Indirectly, with the application of this tradition, only certain people can harvest swallow nests.

In addition, there is a fixed schedule for taking swallow nests to provide opportunities for swallow birds to make and repair their nests before harvesting. Thus the ecosystem and habitat of the swallow's nest will be maintained from disturbance of human activities. Not only that, the ngunduh ceremony also requires preparation both before the ceremony, during the ceremony and after the event. These preparations do not only concern the ceremonial equipment, but also the place, time, leader and participants. Everything must be prepared properly and carefully, so that the ceremony can run smoothly and the harvest can be maximized.

The existence of swallow's nest is related to local people's beliefs about supernatural powers, natural forces and respect for ancestors. This belief leads to certain attitudes and behaviors of the community, especially in relation to the existence of the area. People hold certain rituals and respect in the hope that they can live in harmony and even get help from these natural forces. This belief is very beneficial for the conservation function of swallow's nest. The spirit of caring for nature is part of the life of the surrounding community because it is accompanied by the belief and spiritual strength associated with the existence of a swallow's nest in Karangbolong cave.

The Ngunduh (Selamatan) tradition which must be done before taking swallow's nest is an ancient myth. This is reinforced by the results of an interview conducted via WhatsApp to one of the villagers of Karangbolong who had worked in collecting swallow nests. According to Mr. Turmuji, the recent collection of swallow nests was not carried out with a series of ngunduh traditions. Before taking the swallow's nest, the community in Karangbolong village only did a prayer together. This is because the community / officers in Karangbolong Village are used to taking swallow nests.

The job of taking swallow's nest is one of the jobs at high altitude. The work passes through a coral cave along the Kebumen coast (Sujarno, 2008). Thus the need for complete equipment to avoid work accidents. Such as swimsuits, buoys, steps, horse saddles, ladders, head batteries, shoes, shirts and pants, and tools of taking swallow's nest. The existence of learning in the form of explanations and field practice by an expert who made the community in Karangbolong village understand how to take swallow's nest.

Swallow's nests, which have a high enough selling value and nutrition, attract people. The large number of people who can take swallow nests at an unspecified time has disturbed the habitat and ecosystem of the swallow birds. This makes it one of the factors for the extinction of

swallow nests in Karangbolong Village. According to Turmuji, from the interview results, he said that the bird's nest in Karangbolong Village is currently managed by the local village management. This is done because seeing the conditions where the birds' nests are taken, which have been damaged and the resulting bird nests are very few / reduced. Therefore the need for community awareness and participation of village administrators in maintaining and managing swallow nests in Karangbolong Village.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that swallow's nest which has a high selling value and nutritional value must be maintained. One of the ways to protect the habitat and ecosystem of swallow's nest is conservation. The concept of conservation has existed in the tradition of taking swallow's nest. The ngunduh tradition that has been preserved by the community will have a positive impact on the existence of swallows in Karangbolong. The belief of the ngunduh ceremony before harvesting swallow's nest is a myth that is very useful in preserving nature. This tradition will be a part of the life of the surrounding community because it is accompanied by the belief and spiritual strength associated with the existence of a swallow's nest in Karangbolong cave.

## REFERENCES

- Adiwibawa, Eka. 2009. Meningkatkan Sarang Burung Walet. Yogyakarta: Kanisius
- Chan, S.W., 2010, Review of Scientific Research on Edible Bird's Nest. Review-Scientific. Departement of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Elfita, Lina. 2014. Analisis Profil Protein dan Asam Amino Sarang Burung Walet (*Collocalia fuchiphaga*) Asal Painan. Jurnal Valensi Vol 4 No 1 Hal: 61-69
- Kathan, R.I.I., and Weeks, D.I., 1969, Structure studies of collocalia muroid I, Carbohydrate and amino acid composition, Arch. Biochem. Biophys., 134: 572-576.
- Marcone, M.F., 2005, Characterization of the Edible Bird's the "Caviar of the East", Food Res Int., 38: 1125 – 1134.
- Paramithawati, Septiana. 2010. Upacara Tradisi Ngunduh Sarang Burung Walet di Desa Karangbolong Kecamatan Buayan Kabupaten Kebumen (Kajian Bentuk, Fungsi, dan Makna). Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Semarang.
- Prayogi, Wachas. 2014. Kepercayaan Masyarakat Terhadap Ritual Sebagai Syarat Pengambilan Sarang Burung Walet (Studi Kasus Di Desa Karangbolong Kecamatan Buayan Kabupaten Kebumen). Skripsi Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
- Rakhmandani, Machfud Miftahuddin. 2017. Nilai Spiritual dalam Upacara Ngunduh Sarang Burung Walet di Karangbolong Kebumen. Skripsi Prodi Studi Agama-Agama Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
- Ramli, N., and Azmi, S.M.N., 2012, Food Safety Governance: Standard Operating Procedure on Controlling of Nitrite Level, Handling and Processing of Edible Bird's Nest, Aust J. Basic appl Sci., 6(11): 301 – 305
- Saengkrajang, Matan .2013. Nutritional composition of the farmed edible bird's nest (*Collocalia fuchiphaga*) in Thailand. Journal of Food Composition and Analysis 31: 41-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jfca.2013.05.001>

Sugiarto, E. (2015). Menyusun Proposal Penelitian Kualitatif: Skripsi dan Tesis. Yogyakarta: Suaka Media  
Sujarno. 2008. Upacara Ngunduh Sarang Burung Walet di Karangbolong, dalam Patrawidya Vol. 9 No. 1. Maret 2008. Yogyakarta: Balai

Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Yogyakarta  
<https://kompas.id/baca/nusantara/2020/03/11/mengintip-pengolahan-sarang-walet-seharga-rp-30-juta-per-kg/>  
The interview was conducted on 27 April 2020 to Mr. Turmuji.