

# The Social Construction of the Rebo Wekasan Ritual in Building Collective Trust in the Karundang Tengah Community to Increase Social Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

The Rebo Wekasan ritual which has become a tradition in various regions of the archipelago aims to seek safety from the arrival of danger and is a form of guarding or rejecting reinforcements and asking to be protected from harm. The purpose of this study was to investigate how Rebo Wekasan as a ritual in building the collective trust of the Karundang community as an effort to grow social resilience in a pandemic. This study uses social construction theory. The approach used is qualitative by interviewing the leader of the neighborhood association, a religious leader, the daughter of a traditional leader, and one citizen. The main results of this research, obtained through thematic analysis, are first, while most people construct the Rebo Wekasan ritual as an effort to reject reinforcements and maintain tradition, some see it as simply an attempt to reduce stress due to the pandemic; second, while these constructions are different, the three of them together can encourage collective resilience in the form of stress reduction; third, related to mechanisms, three ways allow construction to lead to collective resilience, namely through traditional mechanisms, functional mechanisms, and pragmatic mechanisms. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the community's construction of the Rebo Wekasan ritual led to several mechanisms, resulting in community resilience in facing the pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Rebo Wekasan; ritual; social communication; social construction.

## Abstrak

*Ritual Rebo Wekasan yang menjadi tradisi di berbagai wilayah Nusantara bertujuan untuk mencari keselamatan dari datangnya mara bahaya dan merupakan bentuk menjaga atau menolak bala dan memohon agar dilindungi dari mara bahaya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui Rebo Wekasan sebagai ritual dalam membangun kepercayaan kolektif masyarakat Karundang sebagai upaya menumbuhkan ketahanan sosial di tengah pandemi. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori konstruksi sosial. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan mewawancarai ketua rukun tetangga, tokoh agama, putri tokoh adat, dan salah satu warga. Hasil utama penelitian ini, diperoleh lewat analisis tematis, adalah pertama, walaupun sebagian besar masyarakat mengkonstruksi ritual Rebo Wekasan sebagai upaya menolak bala dan mempertahankan tradisi, ada juga yang melihatnya sebagai sekedar upaya untuk meredam stress karena pandemi; kedua, walaupun konstruksi tersebut berbeda-beda, ketiganya secara bersama-sama mampu mendorong ketahanan kolektif dalam bentuk pengurangan stress; ketiga, terkait dengan mekanisme, terdapat tiga jalan yang memungkinkan konstruksi membawa pada ketahanan kolektif yaitu melalui mekanisme tradisional, mekanisme fungsional, dan mekanisme pragmatis. Berdasarkan hasil-hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa konstruksi ritual Rebo Wekasan oleh masyarakat membawa pada sejumlah mekanisme yang pada gilirannya menghasilkan ketahanan masyarakat dalam menghadapi pandemi.*

**Kata kunci:** COVID-19; Rebo Wekasan; ritual; komunikasi sosial; konstruksi sosial.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the livelihood of the global society. Society is experiencing changes in mobility with actual health threats. This creates a sense of gloom and anxiety in the community regarding the future of health and the economy they are about to experience (Singh, 2021). The efforts taken by the community involve various preventive steps, either scientific in nature according to the recommendations of health workers, or non-scientific ones using cultural values related to local wisdom (Omidvari, 2022). In line with this, cultural resources are utilized in various parts of the world, both in developed and developing countries, as a way to overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic (Mahamid & Bdier, 2021; Rezaei, 2021).

Local wisdom related to cultural values tends to take the form of rituals as one of the important cultural resources in society. These cultural resources are artifacts derived from thinking, reasoning, and imagination that are shaped and transmitted by culture (Mattson, Mathew, & Katz-Buonincontro, 2021). People use cultural resources to interpret and cope with various life problems, including dealing with emotional and psychological difficulties, especially when there is no external support that can help (Almuhtaseb, Alby, Zuccheromaglio, & Fatigante, 2020). This means that rituals can form collective beliefs that can increase community resilience.

Banten is one of the provinces in Indonesia that makes much use of cultural resources as part of ritual traditions to overcome problems that arise in the lives of the people. In addition, Banten is known for its multicultural society (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2021). The following table shows the number of religious adherents in Banten.

**Table 1.** Number of religious adherents in Banten

No	Religion	Adherents	Percentage
1.	Islam	11,120.00	94.82%
2.	Protestant	308.94	2.62%
3.	Catholic	143.32	1.22%
4.	Hindu	8.47	0.07%
5.	Buddhism	141.64	1.2%
6.	Confucianism	2.22	0.02%
7.	Other beliefs	6.54	0.06%
	Total	11,742.92	100%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs (2021)

It can be seen from the table above that the majority of Banten's population is Muslim. It is the religion of Islam that is used as a cultural resource in the form of a *tolak bala* ritual (rejecting evil forces) that is carried out to deal with the pandemic.

One form of cultural resource used by the people of Banten during the pandemic is the *Rebo Wekasan*, a Javanese ritual that aims to repel evil forces. The *Rebo Wekasan* ritual is carried out in the form of taking turns taking mass ablutions using flower water and rajah and is accompanied by prayers carried out together on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar. The purpose of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual is to seek safety from danger, as a form of guarding or rejecting disaster and a request to be protected from harm.

Even though during this pandemic the Government forbade mass gatherings, the community still holds the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual. The community has the belief that the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual is a preventative ritual that can be used by the community to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

The belief in the preventative efficacy of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual is not only possessed by the indigenous people of Banten but also by immigrants who have different socio-cultural backgrounds. The *Rebo Wekasan* ritual procession held in the last two years seemed to involve the entire community of Banten, including immigrants, regardless of ethnic differences.

As the 33<sup>rd</sup> province in Indonesia, Banten has a fairly large number of immigrants. This can be seen from the results of the 2010 Population Census at the provincial level, which showed that the indigenous Banten ethnic

group only made up 40.77% of the total population of Banten. Meanwhile, the remaining 59.23% were immigrants from outside the province of Banten. As much as 15.59% were Javanese, the originator of *Rebo Wekasan* (BPS, 2011).

*Rebo Wekasan*, a ritual procession of the Java people, has also become part of the culture of the local and other immigrant communities. This can be seen from the emergence of trust and confidence in the cultural goals of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual, namely to repel evil, maintain health and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Belief in the efficacy of this ritual in the effort to prevent COVID-19 is questionable and is often considered a health myth. Health myths appear not only in the context of traditional society but also in modern society, both in non-health institutions as well as in health institutions (O'Neil, Khan, Holland, & Cai, 2022). However, ritual functions do not have to be directed at physical manifestations. The functions of rituals can take the form of social functions, where with rituals, collective trust is formed which in turn encourages community resilience. Collective trust has been known to be one of the important factors for creating various aspects of community resilience, such as social ties, neighborly cohesion, community expectations, and commitment in society, which are psychologically important for people facing obstacles in their lives, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Stevenson, Wakefield, Felsner, Drury, & Costa, 2021; Waters et al., 2022; Wijesinghe et al., 2022).

The *Rebo Wekasan* ritual has become an acculturation phenomenon as well as a collective belief that encourages resilience. This phenomenon is a highly fertile ground for examining how non-local communities integrate values, identities, and various individual factors that they have into the sociocultural system that forms this ritual.

Previous research studying *Rebo Wekasan* in other areas such as Kudus, Gresik, Sidoarjo, Bantul, Madura, and Cilacap has focused more on theological aspects (Farida, 2019; Imamuddin & Ali, 2022), or simply describing what is carried out in this ritual (Ikhwanuddin et al., 2022; Zuraidah & Sudrajat, 2022). One study in Magelang tried to approach this phenomenon from a psychological perspective but did not touch on communication issues (Khanifah et al., 2022). Several studies were carried out in the context of COVID-19 but only briefly reviewed it as one of the Javanese rituals performed as a response to the disaster (Puguh et al., 2021) or described it from the perspective of Islamic law (Rosyid & Kushidayati, 2022). So, the current research has not touched on the communication aspect of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual nor has it examined in depth how this ritual can become a coping mechanism for the community in dealing with a pandemic. In line with this gap, this research has a novelty by reviewing aspects of communication in *Rebo Wekasan* and their relevance to the COVID-19 situation.

In line with the existing theoretical and empirical gaps related to this ritual, this study tries to analyze how the myths in the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual can shape health beliefs among the people of Banten during the COVID-19 pandemic era. This is very closely related to the role of local wisdom of the Banten people and becomes something unique because it is considered one of the efforts to deal with the pandemic.

The formulation of the problem in this research is how *Rebo Wekasan*, as a ritual becomes useful in building the collective trust of the people of Karundang as an effort to grow social resilience in the pandemic situation.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture has a major influence in shaping the mindset and behavior of people and is manifested in life. This is supported by Davies, Halpern, Horst, Kirby, & Lewenstein (2019) who stated that "culture is the way a society expresses itself, and the ways that it articulates the human condition". Therefore, culture requires a clear form of delivery so that it can be understood by every member of the community. One effort to be able to convey cultural values is through communication, both verbally and non-verbally, to be able to achieve meaning.

Communication plays an important role in the meaning-making process, in addition to shared meaning, especially in the process of building cultural identity. Understanding communication in the context of the formation and delivery of meaning can be seen from the definition of communication "as a means of engagement that aims – preferably in a two-way manner – at "better access to, greater interest in, and improved

exchange of information, knowledge, opinions, and experiences" (Kumpu, 2022). Meanwhile, the importance of the delivery process is also clearly stated by Davies et al., (2019) who emphasized that "culture is contested and multivalent; to use it as a basis for understanding science communication, therefore, offers multiple ways into it ". Communication has various ways or functions in shaping the meaning of cultural values that exist in society. Davies et al., (2019) offer 4 ways, namely: experiences; identities; fiction, and emotions. Communication as experience sees culture as part of the experience gained through interaction. Therefore, communication focuses on how the experience is formed within the individual. Meanwhile, communication as identity emphasizes how culture provides an identity for the individuals involved. Communication as fiction is more focused on how communication can describe cultural values that appear through parables, feelings, and also concerns in a story related to culture. Finally, communication as emotion focuses on how communication is used to provoke positive feelings regarding interest, curiosity, and enthusiasm for the cultural values shown. These four ways show that communication plays an important role in making the meaning of culture understandable.

In the process, communication is also an integrated part of the culture. This can be seen from Carey's (2008) statement that communication is a culture that becomes a strong adhesive for society in every space and time. Carey also introduced a form of communication that is very closely related to culture, which is known as ritual. As a part that has a close relationship with both communication and culture, the ritual has a cognitive element that arises from the interpretation process.

Rituals in a cultural context require interpretation because they use many symbols, through which this process will produce meaning. Legare & Nielsen (2020) emphasized that rituals are "sequences of action characterized by rigidity, formality, and repetition which are embedded in the system of meaning and symbolism". Thus, the cultural values represented in a ritual are carried out in the form of highly rigid activities to provide an understanding of the meaning of culture through the symbols used in the implementation process. The level of understanding obtained also varies and does not have to be based on facts.

The process of reasoning and understanding in rituals is determined by the culture adopted and is unconditional. Therefore, ritual is woven into culture's meaning-making systems (Helland & Kienzl, 2021). Hornbeck & Barrett (2020) also explained that rituals have a performative contingency that one ritual cannot perform unless another ritual has been performed. The strength of the ritual can be seen from the existence of a strong community belief in the meaning conveyed in the activities carried out in it.

The formation of meaning in rituals requires an important role of communication and the communication process will be facilitated through myths. According to Wibowo, Sugihardjo, & Lestari (2021), the ritual has a close relationship with myth, and myth plays a role in explaining and preserving the ritual. So, it seems that myth is very helpful for rituals which are usually in the form of stories that are not always related to reality. However, myth plays a very important role in giving meaning to rituals.

The understanding of myth is not simple and has various approaches. Myths in the form of stories are not related to reality and are also supported by a few clear facts that allow myths to be interpreted and viewed from multiple angles (Morales, 2013). The understanding of myth according to Balogh (2022) is a "narrative in which those who adhere to it find some aspect of truth (although not necessarily universal Truth) about the nature of their experience, often by appeal to supernatural events or beings." Morales (2013) added about the use of myths as a form of mythical narrative that serves to overcome anxiety and an uncertain situation. Thus, the use of myths in rituals can be a tool to communicate messages in the form of narrative stories as an effort to build trust in overcoming pressure both on individuals and on society.

Myth and ritual are complementary. This connection is reinforced by Morales (2013) that "Myths are the mental supports of rites; rituals are the physical representations of myths". The use of myths in rituals can be considered a 'guarantor' so that the meaning conveyed is related to the cultural values and traditions of the community. So, it can be seen that myth provides an explanation of what and how from what is displayed by rituals so that although they are different, both myths and rituals are complementary, especially in building individual and collective beliefs.

A collective trust is highly influential in shaping the beliefs and behavior of individuals in a community group. Gilbert (1992) stated that "in principle, someone could be motivated by his understanding of what his group's goals are". The use of myths in forming collective beliefs is the ultimate goal that groups due to individuals regarding the formation of behavior. This is also reinforced by Aguirre (2020) who asserted the cascading and self-reinforcing process of collective belief formation. Likewise, after trust is formed, individuals must be bound and act following beliefs (Gilbert, 1992). It appears that there is an obligation that must be obeyed by the individual as a form of commitment as a member of the collective belief that is believed. Thus, collective trust encourages individuals to have a feeling of unity because they have become the same community.

The collective belief is then framed by the constructed reality. The individual consists of various semi-identities that a person attributes to his existence (Unger, 2020). For the individual to be mentally stable and continue to feel a continuous sense of existence, these identities must be verified in a social context by others. An aspect that needs to be verified in this social context is knowledge. This happens in such a way that the relationship between humans, knowledge, and reality is reciprocal (Unger, 2020). This reciprocal nature means that humans live together and form society as knowledge so that knowledge becomes a reality which then shapes humans. Together, all individuals in society form their social constructions of reality to maintain mutual identity and social integrity. In turn, this social construction is used to understand the phenomenon, and the impact of the phenomenon, and connect the phenomenon with the norms that form the construction of reality.

The social construction of collective trust that is formed in society as part of culture is often used to deal with difficulties or obstacles that arise and have the potential to disrupt the integrity of the socio-cultural system of society. For a community, collective trust creates cultural resilience, which is a fortress for the community to maintain the integrity of the socio-cultural system. Brown et al., (2022) tried to explain cultural resilience as everything related to culture such as customs, rituals, values, and beliefs that are used to deal with adversity. This is confirmed by Dasai, Setiawan, & Adishakti (2017) who emphasized that cultural resilience is the ability to prevent, adjust and cope with socio-cultural changes that occur in society. Thus, cultural resilience is seen in the behavior, knowledge, and social cohesion shown by members of the community as a form of cultural identity.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach because this approach is considered the most appropriate to be able to explore issues related to culture. Therefore, the method used is ethnography. The definition of ethnography according to Varese (2022) is "a method of data collection that involves spending extensive time in the field and conducting prolonged observations and interviews with the subjects of the research." This is relevant to this study because the research carried out concerns the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual held by a small group of people in the Banten area. In addition, this study also focuses on the behavior shown by community members in carrying out religious rituals.

The sampling carried out in this study was purposive. Purposive sampling is selecting informants who are considered appropriate and understand the topic and purpose of the research (Audemard, 2020). The selection criteria were based on the depth of information held by the informants regarding the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual. The informants who participated in this study were:

1. Muslih : Leader of the Neighborhood Association.
2. Ustad Baedowi : Religious Leader
3. Yeni : Daughter of Traditional Leader
4. Ita : Citizen

The information obtained from these four informants will then be categorized and classified through the coding process as material for analysis.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Reality Construction of Rebo Wekasan

Reality construction describes how individuals understand and interpret an event in the existing reality. In this study, the event is the ritual of *Rebo Wekasan*. The informants' narratives about the meaning of the ritual are shown in the following table 2.

**Table 2.** Diversity of Reality Construction of *Rebo Wekasan*

Muslih	Yeni	Ita	Ust. Baedowi
What is meant by <i>Rebo Wekasan</i> is the last Wednesday. Now it's called <i>Adat</i> . So, the implementation at our place is still rampant with the <i>dudus</i> ritual. The <i>dudus</i> ritual, is carried out as a joint prayer and <i>riungan</i> . A prayer to repel evil. So, the Ustad states that thousands of diseases strike us, that's what he said. As Muslims, we can only implement the law as in the Book. When it comes to the term <i>dudus</i> , well, the females when they finish praying, do the ritual.	<i>Rebo Wekasan</i> is a ritual to repel evil. Avoiding disasters like floods, or earthquakes	It is a ritual to repel evil. The people here call it <i>Rebo Wekasan</i> . At first, we didn't want to do it, but because the females here said "It's okay, don't lose it" Well, we do it because I was told to.	<i>Rebo Wekasan</i> is asking for safety from God. To be delivered from evil, held every last Wednesday. Here the prayer is in the congregation
Traditional reality	Functional reality	Pragmatic reality	Functional reality

From the narratives presented by the four sources, there are different degrees of how they construct reality. The resource persons Yeni and Ustad Baedowi have the strongest construction of reality by seeing that *Rebo Wekasan* is an effort to prevent disaster. Muslih sees it more as a custom or something that characterizes his area culturally. This is evidenced by the phrase "still rampant" in Table 3. This orientation towards custom is also shown in the following quote:

Well, the urban village, supports it, because here the Ustad and Kesepuhan (traditional leaders/elders) play a role. So, it's been passed down from our ancestors, so we, the umpteenth generation, just follow it, the point is to just do the prayer against evil on the last Wednesday. It was done in the last Wednesday so it's called *Rebo Wekasan* (Muslih).

In the quote above, the informant reaffirmed that *Rebo Wekasan* is a tradition passed from their ancestors. This emphasis indicates a different reality from the reality of Yeni and Ustad Baedowi, who view *Rebo Wekasan* as something real to avoid evil. In contrast, someone who believes that a *Rebo Wekasan* is truly a functional endeavor when it fails, will quickly locate the fault and correct it. On the other hand, someone who only believes in *Rebo Wekasan* as a tradition will continue to do *Rebo Wekasan* regardless of its functionality. The non-functionality of *Rebo Wekasan* is understandable because it is a tradition, not something that is based on contemporary realities.

Ita constructs a more extreme form of reality. For her, and her colleagues of "mothers" (married women), *Rebo Wekasan* is not only a tradition, but one that they control and realize that they are non-functional. That is why there is a contradiction in her statement. On the one hand, the informant, Ita, said that *Rebo Wekasan* is a belief of the community in avoiding danger, while on the other hand, she also said that the community did not want to hold it, but the women said that it should not be eliminated. That is, it almost disappeared but was re-established not because of its function, but because of the pragmatic values that are in the hands of "mothers". These values can be the value of togetherness, joy/excitement, social status, or any pragmatic values that differ depending on the intentions of each woman who wants it back.

Thus, there are three constructions of community reality regarding *Rebo Wekasan*. First, as something truly functional to avoid the dangers that befall society. Religious leaders and youths embrace this reality. Second, as a hereditary tradition in their village. The group of government officials holds this reality. Third, as an activity along with faded functional values, replaced by pragmatic values. This reality is held by the group of women.

## 4.2. Impact on Collective Resilience

The perception of benefits expressed by the informants was relatively similar because all of them emphasized the danger prevention aspect. The leader, community member, and the ulama, all three stated that the benefit obtained is safety from danger. The meaning of safety is assumed because previously there were unsafe situations, which became safe because of the ritual. However, it is how safety is attributed that makes a difference. The source person with the reality of tradition sees this salvation as something that comes from God. On the other hand, the source person with non-traditional realities, both functional and pragmatic realities, refer to the benefits of traditional sources. The three sources stated "according to our ancestors", referring to those who believed in it, but alluding that they do not necessarily believe it themselves. In this case, all sources other than the leader have opinions that are no longer functional about the benefits of *Rebo Wekasan* but are more social in nature because they refer to other people.

From the discussion above, a pattern emerges that relates to the constructed reality of rituals and beliefs about the benefits of the ritual. When someone views the ritual as merely a tradition from the past, then their attitude towards the benefits of that tradition tends to be neutral. They attribute these benefits to God, which means that the ritual can be effective or ineffective, depending on God's will. On the other hand, when someone views the ritual as functional either according to its designation (*tolak bala*) or according to their pragmatism, then the benefits will be attributed to the tradition. In this case, they are not neutral because they assume there are benefits and these benefits are believed by everyone. This reflects the existence of a collective effect of functional and pragmatic reality. As long as the ritual has a specific purpose, not just a legacy of the past, then the ritual can be justified socially. This social justification forms collective resilience in society as a cultural resource in the face of a pandemic, whether it's through functional coping by genuinely believing that *Rebo Wekasan* can repel danger or using *Rebo Wekasan* as a socio-psychological coping to keep the social environment running despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic.

**Table 3.** Diversity of Construction of the Benefits of *Rebo Wekasan*

Muslih	Yeni	Ita	Ust. Baedowi
If it has a benefit, well thank God, we just have to deal with it, because the benefit comes from the Almighty	Yes, according to our ancestors, so that we are safe	Yes, in the <i>selamatan riungan</i> , then the prayers in the <i>raja</i> are put in water so that it's safe. Well, I don't know, it's according to our ancestors so that we are safe.	Yes, it's especially asking to be delivered from evil. It was said that people in the past were not <i>ketadahan</i> , it's been written in the Qur'an. From the Book of Sheikh Jawalih, every final Wednesday there will be a disaster. So, before it happens, we do the prayer on the final Wednesday
Divine Reference	Social reference	Social reference	Social reference

## 4.3. Belief Shaping Benefit

The above justification in turn raises the question of whether *Rebo Wekasan* is a myth or not for the community. In this case, the difference, in reality, is seen to also distinguish the perception of *Rebo Wekasan* as a myth. It can be assumed that the leader has an opinion in line with the reality of tradition, namely referring to the past. The resource persons with functional reality denied that *Rebo Wekasan* is a myth while the resource person with pragmatic reality simply stated that she did not know. However, this reflects what Morales (2013) calls the function of myths to overcome anxiety and a state of uncertainty, in this case, a threat to public safety.

## 4.4. Conformance to the Wider System of Norms

Islamic religious norms form the wide-ranging cultural framework that overshadows the people of Banten, including the community in the village that organizes *Rebo Wekasan*. The conformance of *Rebo Wekasan* with the system of Islamic religious norms also determines how people use it as a psychosocial means of dealing with a common problem. In this case, the source in the traditional reality referred to conformity with the traditional norm system, as mentioned by the community leader, in this case, Ustad Baedowi. The resource

person with the functional reality confirmed her attachment to the existing system of norms while the resource person with pragmatic reality explicitly said that there was no relationship between Islam and *Rebo Wekasan*. Again, this emphasizes the sharp characteristic difference between traditional reality, functional reality, and pragmatic reality.

**Table 4.** Diversity of Construction of the *Rebo Wekasan* Myth

Muslih	Yeni	Ita	Ust. Baedowi
In the <i>Rebo Wekasan</i> the prayer of repelling evil, we send prayers. It was said that in the past there were many diseases such as today's COVID. So, we asked the Almighty to deliver us from disease, or repelling evil. As far as I know, that's about it	Well, if it's said to be a myth, it's been like that for years. Then we were safe, there was no misfortune whatsoever, thank God. So it's not a myth. Anywhere else, there were disasters, floods. Here we believe in God, it's our effort, right?	I don't know, it's just I am told to do it so we do not lose the custom	It's not a myth. That's what the friends of the Prophet did too. The Prophet approved.
Traditional reality	Functional reality	Pragmatic reality	Functional reality

**Table 5.** Diversity of Correspondence of *Rebo Wekasan* Construction and Religious Norms

Muslih	Yeni	Ita	Ust. Baedowi
<i>Rebo Wekasan</i> is related to the evil-repelling prayer, it's in the book. That's what Ustad said	Yes, it's possible, it's been done for a long time. How could it be done if there's no relation? But I don't know, I wasn't born in the past, so I don't know	That is. It's got nothing to do with it. It's just a custom. That's the custom of Muslims	It's not against Islamic law.
Traditional reality	Functional reality	Pragmatic reality	Functional reality

The purpose of this study was to find out how *Rebo Wekasan* as a ritual creates collective trust in the face of a pandemic. As previously mentioned, a ritual is a form of communication that is closely related to culture and contains cognitive elements that arise from the interpretation process (Carey, 2008). In line with this, current research looks at how people interpret the rituals that exist in their culture and are communicated to them.

Interviews with four interviewees showed that three mechanisms form collective trust in dealing with a pandemic, namely the traditional mechanism, functional mechanism, and pragmatic mechanism. The traditional mechanism is formed in community groups that are found in structural positions such as village government, hamlet head, RW, and RT. Their paradigm is the tradition paradigm, where the *Rebo Wekasan* activity is seen as a purely cultural heritage regardless of whether this ritual is effective or not in repelling evil, as claimed as a function of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual. The traditional reality does not directly shape collective trust in dealing with the pandemic because the ritual is seen as something separate from the government's grand narrative regarding the correct ways of dealing with the pandemic. If examined closely, the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual can potentially spread the pandemic because it is a gathering. However, government support in the form of attendance at the ritual provides psychological support to the community that the activities they do have more or less functional benefits because they are not prohibited by the government. The presence of the government is indicated in the following quote:

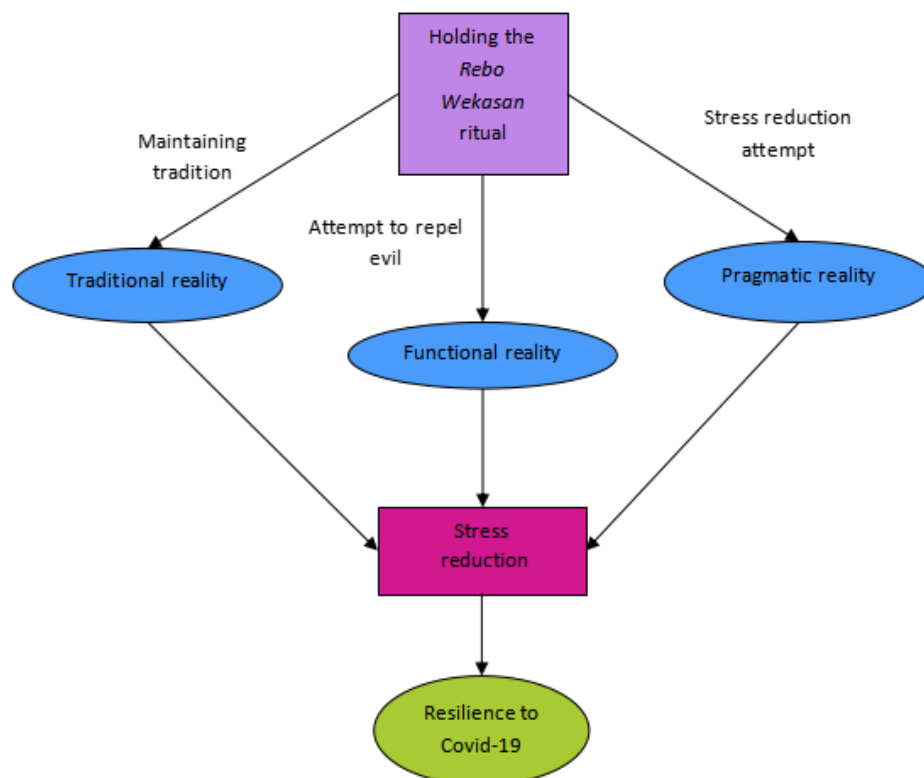
"There are those who control. There are officials. Maintaining the health protocols, the officials. Right, every urban village here has officials who wear military-like uniforms or police uniforms " (Ustad Baedowi)

The second mechanism is the functional mechanism. Functional here means that it is following the core purpose of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual, which is to repel evil. The functional mechanism occurs with the belief in the community, especially the younger generation and ulama, that *Rebo Wekasan* is truly capable of resisting calamities, including the COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by community observations that so far there have been no cases of COVID-19 in Karundang Tengah Village:



"Thank God no one got sick. The point here is that if someone is sick, just stay at home and be aware of that, be diligent in sunbathing, so thank God it's not there " (Yeni)

With this belief, the community's collective trust is built in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. As long as they adhere to health protocols, holding the *Rebo Wekasan* will strengthen themselves supernaturally in overcoming the pandemic. This supernatural reinforcement is a kind of psychological coping that reduces stress and improves people's welfare which is important to boost immunity against COVID-19 infection (Ranasinghe, Ozemek, & Arena, 2020). Studies show that social isolation and inactivity negatively affect the immune system and facilitate the spread of COVID-19 (Simpson & Katsanis, 2020). The study also found that psychosocial stress lowers the COVID-19 infection threshold so that individuals become more susceptible to COVID-19 (Peters, Schedlowski, Watzl, & Gimsa, 2021). The following image (Figure 1) summarizes the three mechanisms regarding the myth of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual in forming collective resilience in the pandemic era.



**Figure 1.** The Mechanism of Formation of Collective Resilience against COVID-19 through the *Rebo Wekasan* Ritual

The third mechanism is the pragmatic mechanism. The pragmatic mechanism is held by people who do not believe in the effectiveness of *Rebo Wekasan* in resisting disease, but they see other benefits from *Rebo Wekasan* that can support efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, women think that *Rebo Wekasan* activities can bring social groups closer to each other so that they can be happier. This is important to relieve their stress in a pandemic situation, where activities to gather together are limited and there is suspicion among neighbors regarding who has the potential to infect and who has the potential to be infected. Research shows that pandemic conditions cause high social stress in society (Bates, Nicholson, Rea, Hagy, & Bohnert, 2021; Mattos dos Santos, 2020). The pragmatic mechanism allows collective trust to be formed to overcome the pandemic through non-supernatural channels, namely sociopsychological pathways.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There is a construction of the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual as a repellent of reinforcements, a preserver of traditions, and a stress reducer that produces the community's collective resilience through traditional, functional, and pragmatic mechanisms. All constructions that uphold the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual in Banten society need to be understood and appreciated as a form of cultural resilience that needs to be preserved as a socio-psychological

protector in the face of disaster. This appreciation is critical because it is closely related not only to disaster resilience but also to the recognition of the cultural diversity of the community and the role of the community in maintaining harmony and tolerance. Furthermore, the various existing constructs and mechanisms need to be seen as a wealth, rather than as a disruption to conventions regarding the meaning of ritual. It is important to understand that this diversity of constructs and mechanisms is a necessity in a culture that is constantly evolving and trying to adapt to changes at a more macro level such as the global environment. This understanding, appreciation, and conservation action applies not only to the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual in Banten but to all parts of the archipelago.

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