Kampung Budha Sodong’s Local Wisdom: The Symbolic Forms of Covid-19 Traditional Ritual, Its Internalization and Comparing to the Villagers’ Educational Backgrounds

M. Hanif¹, F. Chasanatun², and H. E. Rudyanto²

¹ Social Sciences Education Department, Madiun, Indonesia
² Primary Education Department, Madiun, Indonesia

fidachasanatun@unipma.ac.id

Abstract. This research is aimed to describe and explain: (1) the symbolic form meaning of ritual materials held in Kampung Budha Sodong, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia; (2) the internalization of its villagers; and (3) the comparison of their act to their educational backgrounds. This research was conducted for 17 months using an ethnographic approach. The research data was taken by interview and observation. In getting data validity, the triangulation is applied. The valid data were then analyzed using an interactive model of qualitative analysis. From the research carried out, it can be explained that the materials used in the Covid-19 Tolak Balak ritual contains the meaning of vertical and horizontal human relationships. The seven kinds of boreh flowers, frankincense/kemenyan, red incense/Dupa, rice ambeng, rice golong and chicken ikung show the relationship between humans and God. Meanwhile, boiled eggs, urab vegetables and plantains contain the meaning of human relations with themselves and with each other. This symbol implies that human in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic must be prepared carefully, must be able to adapt and share benefit to the environment, so it must be fair and wise.

Keywords: Traditional Ritual · Symbolic Forms · Internalization

1 Introduction

Culture is a way of feeling and thinking that expresses itself in all aspects of human life community that form social unity in space and time. One of the most prominent elements of Javanese culture is Kejawen customs or traditions. The basic thought and cultural history that is typical of Javanese culture is the use of symbols or symbols as a means and media to leave messages or advice for the nation. The history of Java shows the use of these symbols in the actions, language, and religion of the Javanese that have been used since prehistoric times. The uniqueness of a Javanese tradition is that it is a religious tradition that is passed down as a religious tradition that is passed down from generation to generation. The tradition is the embodiment of a strong belief in customs and the community’s response to the forces of nature and supernatural powers.
to find out the meaning contained in the ceremony. Every traditional ceremony has a religious meaning for its supporters, where the community will get a sense of security and inner peace if they have carried it out. All customs that have developed in people’s lives until now are still preserved, because they contain teachings or knowledge that contain norms, values and regulations in regulating people’s behavior while still having faith in supernatural powers.

One of the elements of culture that has attracted the public attention during the Covid-19 pandemic is religion in all its manifestations. Religious traditions by most people are considered to hold an important key in relation to people’s lives. The community seems to continue to increase the splendor and solemnity, both in the form of traditional rituals and socio-religious. The spirit of carrying out religious traditions also occurred in the Buddhist Village of Sodong Hamlet, Gelang Kulon Village, Sampung District, Ponorogo Regency, East Java Province. The residents of this village held a Covid-19 Tolak Balak ritual at the village maid named Sela Bale.

Community members in carrying out the Tolak Balak ritual are those who carry out independently and some are carried out together with other community members. Residents of the Sodong Buddha Village community held a mass COVID-19 pandemic Tolak Balak ritual in the months of Shawwal 2020 and 2021. The residents together with religious leaders, hamlet leaders, and hamlet officials held various ubo rampes, and held reog at the Sela Bale punden. Ubo rampe is a set of tools or others used for rituals. Many community members take part in the ritual of Tolak Balak the balance but not a few people who do not understand and understand the meaning contained in the ubo rampe. This will result in a loss of meaning and ultimately become unsustainable and the emergence of social problems that are motivated by the degradation of values and morals. In fact, the ritual of Tolak Balak balance in Indonesia generally contains noble symbolic values and has the potential to be a source of community survival. Therefore, this research is interesting and needs to be carried out with the aim of describing and explaining the symbolic meaning of ubo rampe in the ritual of Tolak Balak the balance of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kampung Buddha Sodong. The results of this study are expected to be used as a source of education and inspiration for the community.

2 Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Symbolic Forms

The Tolak Balak ceremony is one of the components in religious rituals. This ritual is in the form of various human activities to communicate and carry out worship to God, ancestral spirits, and other supernatural beings [1]. The goal is to be safe and avoid danger and interference from evil spirits. This is what the Acehnese people have done in the face of the Covid-19 outbreak [2]. This ritual of Tolak Balak of balance in the lives of people in various parts of Indonesia has become a traditional ceremony and is carried out regularly and in an orderly manner according to custom. The usual reject-balak ritual consists of a combination of one or more activities, such as prostrating, praying, offering sacrifices, eating together (Kenduri), fasting, and meditating [3].

In the implementation of traditional ceremonies such as the ritual of Tolak Balak reinforcements, offerings are needed. The offerings and ubo rampe are the actualization
of the thoughts, desires, and feelings of the perpetrators to get closer to God [4, 5]. Ubo rampe is also a symbolic discourse that is used as a means of spiritual negotiation for the unseen. This is done so that spirits above human strength do not interfere [6]. By symbolically feeding the spirit, it is hoped that the spirit will be tame, and willing to help human life.

In ubo rampe implied messages from the community in the form of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and values. The values of these symbols aim to be conveyed to the community to be understood and understood by the community itself (Susanti, R.P., Salam, 2018). The meaning of symbols as the meaning of messages is a must for a group of people towards religious activities and the belief system they adhere to. In the procession of each tradition there is always the meaning of certain symbols on the stages and processions of carrying out the ritual of the tradition [7].

Symbolic meaning in cultural studies is associated with “signs” with various perspectives and with different theories. Morris [8] explains that a symbol is a picture of a real or imaginary object that evokes feelings or is aroused by feelings. The symbols in ubo rampe are connotative in that they contain various potential meanings that appear associatively in their use and interpretation. In this context the “sign” in question is a sign on the environment that is given a certain meaning by the community so that it affects human behavior or the meaning given.

The relationship between human actions and symbols according to Blumer’s theory of symbolic interaction rests on three premises, namely (1) humans act on things based on the meanings that exist for them, (2) these meanings come from one’s social interactions with other people, and (3) these meanings are perfected during social interactions [9]. Ritzer also said that; (1) humans live in an environment of symbols and respond to these symbols, (2) through symbols humans are able to stimulate others, (3) through communication symbols can be learned a large number of meanings and values so that they can be learned the ways in which other people act [10]. Thus, ubo rampe as a symbol system functions as a means of structuring ritual activities. For citizens of a society, understanding the symbol system allows them to behave in accordance with what is expected of them by their fellow citizens.

2.2 Internalization

A cultural value system becomes a world view for the supporting community. As a world view, it usually contains some values adopted and selectively chosen by individuals or groups in society. So the system becomes a strongly participatory formed activities that people build their society and identity. Culture itself grows side by side with the community supports. Culture and humans as society here have an inseparable relationship. Therefore, culture will not stand without humans, and there are no humans uncultured in living with community. [11] Here said that culture is the result of learning which shares and provides knowledge and experience. Both of them are stayed in value interpretation and showed in attitudes, behavior, and group of similar behavior. These values are considered good, right, wise and upheld so that they need to be inherited and internalized to the next generation.

Internalization of cultural values is essentially an effort to present cultural values that originate from the external world into internal property for a person or group of people
The value of the external world in question can be in the form of universal values, absolute values, and objective values. Internalization of this value in the language of psychology is an adjustment of beliefs, values, attitudes, behavior, practices and standard rules in a person [12]. The cultural values that are internalized in this context are the objective values that exist in the locality of the Sodong Hamlet community.

The process of internalizing values usually begins with the delivery of information (introducing a person or group to the internalized values. The formulation of values conveyed can be in the form of standards, norms, or formulations of stories of moral dilemmas. Whether or not the value information is received is determined by the value content, the agent or the information conveyer, and the media used. Value information submitted will be responded to cognitively and affectively. If the new value information is in line with and expands the existing value in a person or group, the information will be accepted easily and integrated with beliefs (cognitive resonance), but if the new value information is not in line, there will be rejection [13, 14]. This value in time will become a belief and then affect attitudes, act and behave. Values that have become beliefs and encourage attitudes and actions become self-principles and continue to become character and personality.

The process of internalizing cultural values generally goes through three stages [15], that is; (1) Value transformation stage. At this stage, only verbal processes occur, only touching the cognitive domain, and only transferring messages from the transmitter of value information to the recipient of value, (2) The value transaction stage. At this stage, there is a process of exchanging views about a certain value from the transmitter of information with the recipient of the information actively. In this stage, one can feel the influence directly, (3) the stage of transinternalization; In this stage there is a deeper discussion process and is accompanied by personal communication between the giver and the recipient of the information. The giver of information through example, habituation, conditioning, the recipient of information will behave in accordance with the expected values [12, 16]. [17] emphasized that through this stage of internalizing cultural values, a person or group of people not only knows and knows but understands and becomes a source of motivation to act and act. So that people who have lived it can be encouraged to practice values. The internalization process experienced by individuals is not always the same because the internal values of a person are not always the same and the phases of life they go through are different [10]. This study is limited to the internalization process that occurs in children, adolescents, and adults.

3 Research Method

This research was conducted in Sodong Hamlet, Bracelet Kulon Village, Sampung District, Ponorogo Regency, East Java Province from April 2021 to August 2021. The research approach used was ethnographic qualitative[18], namely an attempt to examine a particular cultural group in data processing, since reduce, present and verify and conclude the data but emphasize more on interpretive studies. The informants of this research are Ledug art artists, community leaders, youth leaders, government officials. While the determination of the informants by purposive sampling technique. The data sources used are; (1) Primary sources in the form of information or facts obtained from
informants and events or activities related to the Covid-19 outbreak and their meaning,
(2) Secondary sources in the form of documents and object profiles, news in the mass
media, and other relevant data.

Data collection techniques used are interviews, observation, and document record-
ing [19]. The main instrument of this research is the researcher himself using logic and
analytical thinking so that he is able to verify or conclude. While the auxiliary instru-
ments are writing instruments and audio-visual recordings. The data obtained were
validated by source triangulation technique. While the data analysis using interactive
model qualitative analysis techniques.

This study is an ethnographical research, a technique in exploring occurred behaviors
naturally in a specific culture or social community [20]. This study set in Sodong hamlet
for more than 2 years. As the authentic and indigenous reasons of the type in which the
researcher have to stay in with the social community area in a long period of time [21],
the staying has held for one year (June 2020–May 2022). Data sources use primary data
directly from the villagers and a staying observations, as secondary sources; the related
documentation, activity reports, and others in term of an eclectic approach [18]. The
participants chosen by purposive sampling technique and the data validity checking by
triangulation technique. The data analysis is using the active interactive model analysis
technique.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Sight View of Kampung Budha Sodong

Sodonsg is one of the hamlets in Gelang kulon Village, Sampung District, Ponorogo
Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia. This village is located at coordinates 111° 17’–
111° 52’ East Longitude and 7° 49’–8° 20’ South Latitude with an altitude of 1,153 to
1,263 m above the sea level and has an area of 3,780 km². it is located on the slopes
of Mount Dieng and Bukit Sangha and has 1.1 km² living area while 2,680 km² are
surrounded by fields and forests.

The area is separated from the centra of Gelang Kulon and the surrounding villages.
There are only two access roads to get to this village, namely the north road and the
south. The population mobility in and from the Sodong Hamlet is regularly through
the northern route to the nearest Pagerukir Village as the road is paved and some of it
cemented (Fig. 1).

The population of Sodong Hamlet is 465 people, consisting of 226 men and 239
women. In terms of formal education, the residents of Sodong Hamlet are listed in the
Table 1.

From the Table 1, it can be seen that the majority of the population has primary
school education and their current age ranges between 50–75 years.

4.2 The Meaning of “Tolak Bala” Ritual Materials

The leaders together with the community members carried out community service to
clean the Dayang Sela Bale environment before the time for the ritual. In the implementa-
tion of this community service, funding and consumption are shared and voluntary.
Residents are aware of bringing food and drinks to Danyang Sela Bale.
Fig. 1. Dusun Sodong Map, Gelangkulon Village, Sampung Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia (Hanif Properties, 2021)

Table 1. The Sodong Villagers based on the Educational Backgrounds (20 April 2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Mounts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not School Yet</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Primary School Grads</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior High School Grads</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Junior High School Grads</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Postgraduate Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resource Tim (2022)

At the appointed time, the month of Shawwal (Javanese calendar) around 7.30, leaders and community members began to arrive at Dayang Sela Bale carrying ubo rampe in the form of seven kinds of boreh flowers, red incense, incense, rice ambeng, rice golong, inkung chicken, with various side dishes. Arriving at Sela Bale, residents
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Fig. 2. Sodong Community was holding Covid-19 Tolak Balak ritual in danyang dusun Sela Bale

put ambeng rice, golong rice, and other food in the lady’s yard. Residents then one by one to the altar while carrying red incense, frankincense and flowers of seven kinds. Seven kinds of flowers are sprinkled on the Sela Bale stone, incense is sprinkled on the stove, incense is burned and stuck around the stone, then sit cross-legged and say a mantra (prayer). After that, the residents went to the Sela Bale yard to carry out a feast in a position around the food (rice ambeng, rice golong and others) which were arranged in a central way (Fig. 2).

The event was hosted by Mulyono (Kamituwo Dusun Sodong). The activity began with Buddhist and Islamic greetings. Furthermore, the hamlet elders Rev. Dhammaratna Saimin (93 years old/RT 001 RW 001), Siman (66 years old/RT 002 RW 001) and Junari (64 years old RT 001 RW 00) conveyed the intent and purpose of holding the ritual of rejecting the balance and giving advice (advice). The advice contained the need to maintain harmonization in life, how life should be and how life should be lived, including responding to Covid-19. After the advice from the village elders was finished, it was followed by a prayer led by Suratno (52 years old/RT 001 RW 001). After that, it was continued with a feast.

The Ubo rampe in the pandemic time tolak bala ritual started by the people of Kampung Buddha Sodong has a symbolic meaning in pre-modern Indonesian culture, not just referring to a slogan, it is absolute, transcendent, and supreme matters. The reference symbol is not the opinion connotation as rational do, and human memories (feel), but the real of supernatural powers. Symbols which are set signs of absolute/transcendent matters. More than that, the symbol of the ubo rampe above does not only have a horizontal-immanent dimension, but also a transcendent dimension, so it contains both horizontal and vertical meanings. This ritual makes the beliefs feel secure, happy, and safe in passing their life peacefully so that increase their immune in preventing their health from Corona disease [22].

The Ubo rampe in the Covid-19 start-up ritual at Kampung Buddha Sodong Ponorogo consists of seven kinds of flowers, frankincense, incense, rice ambeng, rice golong, ingkung chicken, urab vegetables, boiled eggs, and plantains. The Ubo rampe contains a symbolic meaning in dealing with Covid-19, humans need to harmonize their relationship with the supernatural and with each other (vertical and horizontal relationships). Ubo rampe gives guidance to humans to avoid Covid-19 by getting closer and asking for protection from God. In addition, humans are reminded to be introspective, care for
others, be fair and wise in responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic. These kinds served also in many tribes in javanese people though the completions are varied. In meaning, all thing is meant much for getting closer to The Almighty and hopefully make them live in peace and secure.

4.3 The Process of “Tolak Bala” Ritual

The Sodong local wisdom is essentially a cultural value manifestation lived in the midst of the community and is guided their way in the Covid-19 disease mitigation. This condition carried out by the sodong society to be a reflection of their attitude, affords, creativity, and local philosophy and a prerequisite for recognizing, understanding, and determining the Covid-19 pandemic. It is the replacement of hayuning pekerti (himself), memayu hayuning kulawarga (family), memayu hayuning sasama (among others), memayu hayuning bawana (universe). This also is the philosophy guided by the Javanese people in the past [23].

Praduli sasomo means the spirit of helping and caring each other in the Sodong community. They share mutual assistance together such as food, clothes, medicine, and others lead by the elder and religious leader to the sick people or needed person in breaking the Covid disease chain in their society. This act is set as a culture heritage when growing and existing for generations and interpreted the same way by society members. This also is implemented by other Indonesian people from different area for Covid sick people. This what the so called Gotong Royong shows solidarity in living harmony. Protecting each other and respecting to complementing, loving and nurturing one to another [24].

Gotong royong is one of Javanese valued words which has two main word meaning. Gotong is related to lifting or carrying something big, while Royong means together. So, the word can be freely translated as doing some trouble, big, hard together for good. They work together targeting one goal after a consensus and deliberation. This predisposed mutual doing shows awareness, social enthusiasm, consequent bearing work, togetherness, society care simultaneous, profitless, but set mutual happiness [25]. The local wisdom in society cooperation is a strong source for mutual life conducively, both for individual human life as well as human community.

There are some conditions that make the valued Praduli Sasomo (care as human life), Praduli Tonggo Teparo (care neighbors), Gotong royong, and Padasan realized properly. Those are [12] their spirit of sincerity, will, togetherness, tolerance and also their trust. This similar to what Gotong royong showed, that is a joint effort, a charity, a co-work, and help life struggling. Gotong royong is also an act of sharing charity in helping hard time into a bright living. This is underlined by [12]. Here, awareness comes from both spiritual and physical work which shows villagers’ respect and attitude as a complement and adornment of life. Its principles contains the wisdom values in the substance of divine values, deliberation and consensus, kinship, justice and tolerance (humanity) becoming Indonesian community philosophy.

Tapa Melek Ngalong, is a ritual that held by the elders and community leaders for staying awake during regulated nights. This activity is providing the beliefs that the spirit blessings, God, and nature will be received when human himself stabilizing his behavior, clean heart, and mind. In granting this, the elders told the villagers to stay awake at night
in pray or Terakat. This hopefully relates to avoid the disasters. It is conducting in 7 days, done by male. They stay awake at night and are allowed to sleep at the day, and also they have to stay silent, peace and avoid crowds. They sentence the phrases as “telek dibuntal klaras, sopo sing betah melek sugih waras”.

**Padasan** is setting a water jar made from clay, the so called *Gentong*, in front of each house to use in washing hands and foots every time before entering the house. Besides giving local values predisposed and human health, padasan is also a symbol of human in noble his social life. *Padasan* shares a learn and philosophy that human has to use water wisely, care of other health as virus, dirt, and so on can be a bridge of disaster. Regularly, *Gentong* is water full filled so that any ones can wash the hands and foots without asking permission to the owners. Though, no strict rules applied in this activity, the *Sodong* villagers obeyed this as the education of the ancestors.

**Diang** is a ritual that related to fire. There is no previous research that states the virus killed by heating. The villagers do this activity in purpose as an alternative in killing virus, germs, and also arise the body temperature. It is also implemented by Gayo Community (Nazaruddin et al., 2020). They also belives that this activity can avoid them from bad luck. Every time they entering the house especially from the fields or forests, they put their hands and foots into the flame of fire in the kitchen. Despite of the sun burning, this activity can be as an inspiration of heating body as a responding to the disasters.

Taking a deep look at their process of internalizing the local wisdom values, it goes through three stages. First, the value transformation stage, which is the process carried out by traditional, religious, youth, hamlet governments, and family heads (parents) in informing valuable values to be used as references and guidelines in mitigating the Covid-19 pandemic. Such as greetings/lectures at celebrations, social gatherings, sermons, posters, and the like. Second, the value transaction stage, namely the process of internalizing values through communication and interaction between community leaders and community members. In addition, leaders and parents are trying to be examples (modelling) in mitigating the Covid-19 pandemic. Third, the trans-internalization stage, namely the process of internalizing values not only verbally but also accompanied by personality communication displayed by community leaders through exemplary, habituation, and conditioning to behave wisely as expected by the values of local wisdom. The internalization process carried out by the community is in line with learning theory, namely providing understanding, habituation, modeling, and strengthening (Skinner, 1996).

The internalization of local wisdom in the mitigation of Covid-19 that occurred in Sodong Buddha Village can be said to be successful. This is demonstrated by the ability of citizens to know, understand, appreciate and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the indicators is that the community members do not experience excessive anxiety and not a resident of Sodong Hamlet who has been exposed to Covid-19. This success cannot be separated from the role of traditional leaders, religious leaders, and other community leaders. They play an important role in fostering and controlling the attitudes and behavior of the community members to comply with the provisions of the values they believe. Community members follow it and make models because they believe that community leaders have knowledge (mind and knowledge), understand, apply values and
norms that apply in the social structure. This is in line with the description of traditional society as conveyed that traditional communities consider traditional/community leaders to be all-knowing people so that all their actions are patterns of rules that should be followed (Damayanti, N.R., 2020). [1, 3] asserts that traditional communities have high loyalty to indigenous community leaders because they are seen as someone who is smart, knowledgeable, does not keep his knowledge and expertise for himself, but tries to spread it to others, and is wise.

5 Conclusion

Relying on the philosophy “memayu hayuning pekerti, memayu hayuning kulawarga, memayu hayuning same, memayu hayuningbawana” as their way of life, the villagers are coping the Covid 19 disaster successfully (universe harmony). This local wisdom is implemented by handling some various activities, such as: held the rituals (Nyadran Danyang Gadung Melati, Tapa Melek Ngalong), in concering villagers to be peace-ful, spiritual strengthening and releasing them from stress, panic, and anxiety; Praduli Sasomo as an attitude to care of others, help each other, mutual cooperation sharing, and strengthening their love and care one another; restoring Padasan in educating the villagers to live clean, giving a share for living health, and generous; carrying out Diang in the kitchen specifically in a villager who has a celebration in order to stay warm actually in a storm and cold weather.

Sodong Local wisdom has reduced the Covid-19 Pandemic and inspired others. As there will be a good deed with contemplating it and realizing how important local wisdom is in dealing with Covid-19.

Kampung Budha Sodong’s Covid 19 Tolak Balak ceremony contains both the meaning of human each other relationship, and with the supernatural (both vertical and horizontal). It shows the vertical relationship between humans and supernatural powers that have and will provide protection, peace and prosperity in their lives. Meanwhile, boiled eggs, urab vegetables and plantains contain the meaning of human relations with themselves and with each other. Humans are remembered with this symbol that activities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic must be prepared carefully, must be able to adapt and benefit the environment, and must be fair and wise.

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References


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