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The Meaning of Rebo Buntung for Pringgabaya Villager, East Lombok During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Rebo Buntung is a Sasak cultural tradition performed on the island of Lombok in Indonesia, primarily aimed at preventing disasters. Although the government warned people in Lombok to engage in social distancing and to reduce activities outside to reduce the risk of infection associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Rebo Buntung was carried out by Sasak people amid the pandemic. This purpose of this paper is to describe results from qualitative research, framed within religious theory and structural-functional theory, that explore the meaning of Rebo Bunting in the village of Pringgabaya, East Lombok and its role during the COVID-19 Pandemic. For villagers, Rebo Bunting reflected a request to God for protection from the dangers of the pandemic and an expression of gratitude to God for the sustainability of social lives and environmental conditions that continue to provide support for the village. Rebo Buntung was also practiced by the Pringgabaya villagers during the pandemic because of its potential to contribute to the sustainability of their tourist-dependent economy, whose condition had worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords

Rebo Buntung, ritual, Pringgabaya Village, COVID-19, qualitative research

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The Meaning of Rebo Buntung for Pringgabaya Villager, East Lombok During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Rebo Buntung is a Sasak cultural tradition performed on the island of Lombok in Indonesia, primarily aimed at preventing disasters. Although the government warned people in Lombok to engage in social distancing and to reduce activities outside to reduce the risk of infection associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Rebo Buntung was carried out by Sasak people amid the pandemic. This purpose of this paper is to describe results from qualitative research, framed within religious theory and structural-functional theory, that explore the meaning of Rebo Buntung in the village of Pringgabaya, East Lombok and its role during the COVID-19 Pandemic. For villagers, Rebo Buntung reflected a request to God for protection from the dangers of the pandemic and an expression of gratitude to God for the sustainability of social lives and environmental conditions that continue to provide support for the village. Rebo Buntung was also practiced by the Pringgabaya villagers during the pandemic because of its potential to contribute to the sustainability of their tourist-dependent economy, whose condition had worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Introduction

The *Sasak* ethnic people are the native people of Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. They have unique and specific cultural forms. Their cultural wealth cannot be separated from the local people's religious development. Hinduism was the first religion and was introduced before Islam which has now spread almost all over Lombok Island. Islam in Lombok Island can be grouped into two types; they are (1) Islam of *Watu Telu* as the cyclization of Hinduism and Islam, animism and Islamism; (2) the *Alquran* Holy Book and *Hadist Nabimuhamad*-based Islam (Muhammadah and Saputra, 2019; Sinartha, 1986, p. 84; Ruastiti, 2019a).

The *Sasak* society in Lombok are strong adherents to their belief system. The essential elements of this system have been maintained and strengthened from generation to generation (Munoz et al., 2020). In addition to from performing Islamic practices, the *Sasak* society in Lombok Island also has a local tradition known as the Rebo Buntung. Rebo Buntung is an ethnic Sasak ritual that is traditionally intended to prevent distress. This ritual is carried out through multiple ceremonial facilities which involve fruit and vegetables, buffalo and chickens as sacrificial animals, and engage many participants including local elites and traditional leaders. The Lombok society performs the ritual at several places such as *Dasan*

Agung Mataram City, Gili Trawangan North Lombok, Tanjung Menangis Beach, Ketapang, Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok and Kuranji Village, Labuah Api District, and West Lombok.

The Rebo Buntung is organized as the tradition of an exorcism “ritual” performed by the people living in East Lombok. Pringgabaya Village is the center where it is performed. It is performed for three days, starting from the last Wednesday of the *Safar* month, a sacred period in the Islamic calendar. Cultural activities have endured through the support of many people (Koonce & Lewis, 2020; Meihami & Rashidi, 2020; Arniati et al., 2020; Ruastiti & Pradana, 2020). As an enduring cultural program, the Rebo Buntung has involved different parties, including sponsors. The sponsor banners are used to decorate the village’s street which leads to the beach where the “ritual” is performed.

Although the people living at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok have entered the modern era of the 4.0 industrial revolution, they continue widespread participation in the Rebo Buntung. Attendance at the Rebo Buntung procession has grown and typically includes tourists those from outside Lombok Island, although tourism declined after many governments, including the Indonesian government, established social and physical distancing policies and instituted lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rebo Buntung is a critical part of Islāmic religious practice in Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok. In fact, the Alquran as a holy book does not exist, it requires followers to do a ritual called Rebo Buntung. Thus, similar ritual practices are not only carried out by Muslims on the island of Lombok but are carried out by Muslims in Indonesia as part of their faith and practice of their religious teachings.

Several prior scholars have explored the practice and role of similar ceremonies in the region. Suprianto and Anam (2016) investigated the Islamic Cosmology of Gunung Kidul Beach. They concluded the various traditions and rituals were originally offered to the magical powers which were believed to influence the local people’s lives, although with contextualized within the Islamic belief system, the traditions, rituals and cultures performed by the coastal society of Gunung Kidul substantially contradict Islamic norms as these rituals acknowledge power which is not included in the power of God. Although these traditions and rituals contradict Islamic norms, they are still maintained as they do not breach what is in Islam referred to as *maqashid syari’ah*.

Setiawan (2009) explored the myth of *Nyi Roro Kidul* in the life of the people living in South Cianjur. The South Cianjur society, which administratively occupies the beach of Cianjur Regency performs a ritual intended to respect *Nyi Roro Kidul*. The South Cianjur society shows respect to *Nyi Roro Kidul* by performing the *Nyalawena*, *Syukuran Pasisiran* and *Ngaruwat* rituals. However, they are prohibited to do several things which *Nyi Roro Kidul* dislikes. For example, the myth of *Si Pacul*, describes suffering which results from engaging in behavior prohibited by *Nyi Roro Kidul*. This myth is celebrated every time the *Nyalawena ritual* is performed.

As a cultural product, a myth has some basis in truth, and often can be analyzed based on the physical condition and current ethics. The myth of *Nyi Roro Kidul* is believed to be associated with the physical condition of the south beach of Java Island; cultural scholars now believe stories about the anger of *Nyi Roro Kidul* are related to the history of big waves and tsunami which have occurred along the South Beach of South Cianjur.

Other scholars have explored aspects of rituals with respect to tourism. For example, Gottowik (2018) explored the role of Islam and sexuality in Java, in connection with traditional ritual practices and reported a substantial increase in the number of cases of sexuality at gravesites of holy men, which is a stark contrast to the achievement of Islamization in Central Java, which is already predominantly Muslim. Cases of sexuality during grave pilgrimages in Java have been associated with religion and religious tourism,

directed toward redeeming wishes that have been fulfilled and expressing new hopes. Individuals engaging in sexuality during grave pilgrimages have included not just married couples but also unmarried pilgrims and prostitutes.

Taufiqurrohim (2020) investigated the role of Islamic youth in festivals, rituals and traditional cultural attractions in Central Java. The participation of Islamic youth in rituals and traditional cultural attractions in Central Java has contributed to increasing the theological, multicultural, social and economic understanding of participants in the context of religion, tourism, and the preservation of local culture.

Rahayu (2016), like Setiawan (2009), described above, investigated the local wisdom of South Beach and the Myth of Nyi Roro Kidul, and concluded that Ratu Harbor Beach has multiple aspects which are potentially appealing to tourists. These include the appealing myth of the existence of *Nyi Roro Kidul*, which is aligned with local knowledge, local values, local skills, and local resources. All these aspects contribute to the appeal of Ratu Beach as a tourist village which enables it to contribute to the local economy. Setiawati (2018) additionally explored the *Larap Slambu*, a cultural tourism attraction on Mount Kemukus developed from the Javanese cultural heritage of Kejawen. Larap Slambu has traditionally been performed by tourism actors in commemoration of the prince of the ocean and the Javanese New Year. According to Setiawati (2018), participation in Larap Slambu contributes to a local sense of togetherness and social solidarity and encourages tourist interest in sexual rituals and other religious tourism at historical sites on Mount Kemukus.

Despite the number of research studies that have explored various historical and contemporary aspects of these rituals and their enduring co-existence with the currently dominant Islamic belief system, no previous authors have explored in detail the Rebo Buntung ritual performed in East Lombok. The Rebo Buntung is a cultural phenomenon which has been inherited from generation to generation through internalization, socialization, and enculturation by the people living at Pringgabaya village, East Lombok. The *Sasak* people believe that *Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala* blesses the people with *tetulaq tamperan* rituals. Specifically, individuals believe by disposing of offerings into the ocean or river where they bathe together, as a part of the procession of the *tetulaq tamperan* ritual they can avoid misfortune.

Rebo Buntung is not only intended to carry out religious ceremonies by offering something to God Almighty, *Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala*, but also to intensify cohesiveness between people in East Lombok. There are two critical elements of the Rebo Buntung as practiced in East Lombok. These include their belief in the strength of the Almighty God which is vertical in nature and the relationship among human beings which is horizontal in nature. It is interesting to note that in the *Alquran*, no verse requires Muslims to do Rebo Buntung.

In recent years, Rebo Buntung practiced in Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok has been promoted by the local government as a tourist asset. Rebo Buntung is increasingly open to the public and is listed on the regional tourism event calendar. The Covid 19 pandemic impacted multiple aspects of individuals' social lives and routine practices, including tourism (Pradana, 2021). However, despite the impact of COVID-19 on travel and activities, the residents of Pringgabaya Village continued to engage in Rebo Buntung. Given this and the lack of prior research on this ritual, we conducted this current study in order to investigate the following questions: (1) What were the elements of Rebo Buntung performed at Pringgabaya Village, Pringgabaya District, East Lombok during COVID-19 Pandemic? (2) What was the particular meaning of Rebo Buntung during Covid 19 Pandemic? Through this study we expect to contribute both to preservation and deeper understanding of the meaning of religious traditions among the people living in the Archipelago in general and those living in

West Nusa Tenggara in particular, and to better understand the role of this tradition during a time of global disruption.

Material and Methods

This paper is a report of our research about the meaning of Rebo Buntung as carried out by residents of Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was conducted around the Ketapang beach, Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok because (1) Rebo Buntung is known as a traditional Sasak ethnic culture on the island of Lombok; (2) Rebo Buntung is known as a cultural tradition in the people of Pringgabaya, East Lombok; (3) Rebo Buntung was carried out by residents of Pringgabaya Village on the Ketapang beach of Pringgabaya village during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study were successfully completed through the preparatory stage of research and data analysis conducted by Ida Bagus Dharmika (1st author) and data collection stages and scientific publications done by Gede Yoga Kharisma (2nd author). We engaged in this research due to academic and professional interests. Academically, we value the research output in the form of this article for its potential to strengthen and complement lecture materials in the study of religious anthropology and cross-cultural understanding. In practical terms, the research output in the form of this article is useful for us to enhance our reputation as scholars in this discipline through providing additional opportunities to review our peers' work and to attract potential future colleagues for our ongoing research efforts.

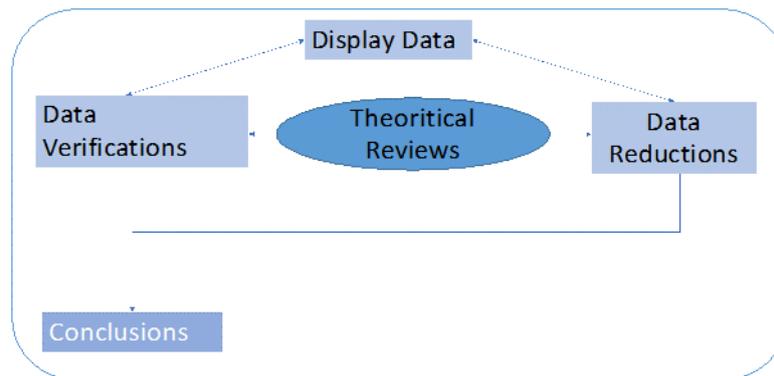
Qualitative methods were used in this research. The qualitative method is a scientific way to solve descriptive problems (Lune & Berg, 2018). This qualitative method was chosen as part of how to solve the main research problems because the main problems in this study require primarily visual and descriptive data. In other words, we need descriptive data to solve research problems and provide sufficient explanation about the participants, properties, visual performance, and structure elements of Rebo Buntung implementation and the meaning of Rebo Buntung for the perpetrators.

All primary data were collected through observation and interviews with informants with the help of stationery, interview guides, and photo cameras. The use of a photo camera can optimize observation performance in the application of qualitative methods (Miles et al., 2020). The application of qualitative methods gets better when the interview process is accompanied by interview guidelines and stationery (Patton, 2015).

Participants who serve as primary data sources in qualitative research can be called informants (Lune & Berg, 2018). The base informants in this study were obtained through purposive sampling in Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok with consideration of these criteria: ethnicity, authority and willingness to provide data. The informants totaled 12 people. They consisted of observers of Sasak culture and custom leaders in Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok. Those who are willing to provide some data were considered additional informants, while those who have provided the most data are categorized as key informants. We were able to find key informants and additional informants through snowball, or referral sampling based on the information provided by the initial Pangkal Informants.

All secondary data were collected through literature studies of books and scientific articles relevant to religion, Sasak rituals and culture and COVID-19. Secondary data from literature studies can strengthen and optimize primary data sets (Bernard, 2013). Our literature study was carried out before and after this research was completed. Meanwhile, the dominant data about Rebo Buntung were obtained through field studies.

Figure 1
Qualitative Data Analysis Process



Our qualitative data analysis was framed within religious theory and structural-functional theory. Religious theory can be useful in understanding the combined concept of belief patterns in order to understand spiritual nature (King, 2017). Structural-functional theory is needed to describe the usefulness of each structural component of existence (Kalu, 2019).

Religious theory and Structural-functional theory each make useful contributions to reducing and verifying data to derive findings and conclusions. Data reduction, display and verification are required in qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2020). Data reduction is the act of deleting or disposing of data in qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2020) and data verification can be accomplished by use of cross-checking and sorting (Lune & Berg, 2018). We employed data reduction measures at the beginning of the study and at the end of the research in literature studies and field studies. We applied data verification measures at the end of the study based on the results of field studies and literature studies. Our verification and reduction processes, informed by theoretical reviews, enabled us to develop conclusions from our findings.

We present our findings as an integrated narrative in two parts. In the first part, we describe the appearance of Rebo Buntung Procession and associated activities and their meaning. In the second part, we describe the three primary components: *hablummiannas*, *hablumminalm*, and *hablumminannas* which comprise the philosophical aspects of Rebo Buntung.

Results

The Rebo Buntung Procession at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok

The tradition of the Rebo Buntung is performed every year by residents of Pringgabaya Village, Pringgabaya District, East Lombok Regency. The village is approximately 65 kilometers from Mataram City so takes two hours to get there by motorcycle. The village is located close to a beach with fertile soil. The villagers generally earn their living by working as fishermen, farmers, and traders. The most villagers are Muslims, and the village population is roughly 13,000. The village is popular for two things: *sarikaya* fruit and the Rebo Buntung.

The local people gather at Ketapang beach starting two days before the ritual to prepare everything needed; they erect stages, tents, and stalls. At the same time, they prepare offerings and slaughter the buffalo whose head will be disposed of into the ocean. In addition to slaughtering the sacrificial animal, the local people also prepare the offerings which will be

offered at the sea and cook what will be consumed together when they prepare and perform the Rebo Buntung.

These activities are consistent with the theory of structural functionalism, which posits that what man does is voluntaristic and based on the motivation of achieving what is desired by incorporating previously agreed upon values, ideals, and norms (Atmaja et al., 2019; Dharmika et al., 2020; Pradana, 2016). Specific activities reflect the intersection of the condition or environment and the society's values and norms.

In general, the Rebo Buntung procession can be described as follows. First, performing the Rebo Buntung means performing a ritual in which houses are left unoccupied for one full day in order to avoid disasters resulting from the epidemics carried by the magical power. The local people intentionally leave their houses unoccupied at the end of *Safar* month to go to the beach to purify themselves by bathing as a symbol of the purification of their bodies and souls. It is believed that in this way they can purify themselves from the sins they have made so far and are forgiven by the Almighty God (see Picture 1).

Picture 1

The Tradition of Leaving Houses Unoccupied to Ward Off Misfortune



Note. (Documentation: Pradana, 2020)

Along with this, performing the Rebo Buntung means performing a “ritual” in which the local people say their prayers together at Tanjung Menangis Beach, Ketapang led by their religious and customary leaders. They sit facing the blue sea and proffer offerings arranged on trays completed with the head of a cow, the head of a goat, and a chicken as the sacrificial animals. The residents say their prayers before the offerings which they offer to the sea for controlling the potential of disaster.

The next component of the Rebo Buntung involves washing away offerings and sacrificial animals into the sea. After individuals finish saying their prayers together, the offerings arranged on the trays are carried to the middle of the sea where they are washed away by boat. The offerings are made up of white rice, yellow rice, cakes, fruits, and

different outfits. During 2020, these offerings specifically symbolized people's thanks to God for safety and livelihood in the COVID-19 pandemic (Picture 2).

Picture 2

Carrying Offerings to Tanjung Menangis Beach as a Part of the Rebo Buntung



Note. (Documentation: Pradana, 2020)

After washing away the offerings into the sea, the residents eat a blessed meal together to signify the end of the Rebo Buntung. To express their happiness for having been blessed so far, they eat what they have cooked, namely rice and the meat of the sacrificial animals whose heads have been offered into the sea. They express their gratitude for the safety they experience as a result of performing the Rebo Buntung.

Concurrent with the Rebo Buntung ritual, residents take part in local art amusements and hold a market for three days at Tanjung Menangis Beach, East Lombok. Ruspawati and Ruastiti (2019), Pradana (2016), and Ruastiti (2020b) state people often express their happiness and gratitude by performing "rituals." The people living at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok, do too. The tradition of performing the "ritual" is made to be lively by holding different competitions, performing different art amusements and attractions such as *Kendang Beleg*, *Jangger* and *Ale-Ale* Dance. The Rebo Buntung, which involves different components and layers of society, turns out to contribute to the local people's economy as the "ritual" inspires them to build stalls where they sell crops, foods and beverages, clothes, and toys for children.

The Rebo Buntung at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok has been intentionally designed as a form of cultural commodification. Any fascinating cultural element has the potential to be developed into a tourism product (Pradana, 2019; Pradana & Arcana, 2020), and Rebo Buntung been used as a component of a travel package for tourists. It has been commodified as a cultural product with standardization and commodification (Adorno, 2002; Pradana, 2018). Additionally, the commodification of the "ritual" enables the local people to improve their economy. During typical years, when the "ritual" is performed, there are so many traders at Ketapang Beach, Pringgabaya Village that the beach looks like the atmosphere when a public festival is held. During 2020, the stalls where the local people sell crops, foods, beverages, clothes, toys for children were fewer than before the COVID-19

pandemics, and the contribution of tourism was greatly reduced. However, Rebo Buntung performed at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok has become a unique cultural event, and was still help during the pandemic because of its cultural significance.

The Philosophical Meaning of the Rebo Buntung at Pringgabaya Village

A culture functions as a means of fulfilling what is needed by human beings or its supporting community (Arniati et al., 2020; Atmaja et al., 2019; Pradana & Arcana, 2020a; Rai et al., 2019; Ruastiti & Pradana, 2020; Santos, 2020). It is used to fulfil the ritual, religious, social, and economic needs, political identity; therefore, it contributes to the creation of well-behaved human beings. As a specific cultural ritual, the Rebo Buntung at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok has three meanings: (1) it expresses the people's gratitude and prayers to God (*hablummiannas*), (2) it expresses the people's harmonious attitude to the ocean (*hablumminal alm*), and (3) it expresses the harmonious relationship among human beings (*hablumminannas*).

First, the Rebo Buntung performed at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok is a general expression of the local people's gratitude for God's mercy and abundant blessing. Attention should be paid to them to keep the relationship between people and their surrounding environment balanced. Therefore, they always keep their lives balanced through the offerings and sacrificial animals they offer to the sea controlling the potentials of disaster (Pradana, 2018a; Ruastiti, 2017; Ruastiti et al., 2018). The Pringgabaya villager, East Lombok strongly believes in the existence of plague and magical powers that cannot be missed by God's will. In addition, the residents strongly believe that there are potential disasters around them associated with COVID-19 Pandemic. The importance of implementing Rebo Buntung during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized by Mahfuz (52), the Head of Pringgabaya Village as follows:

... It is true that most of those who live in Pringgabaya Village work as fishermen, they usually go to sea. However, three years ago, there was a disaster after we never had worked on Rebo Buntung; One of the villagers drowned ... Recently, many villagers died and fell ill, which is not clear. To avoid increasing casualties this year, we are conducting Rebo Buntung ... (Interview, 30 April 2020)

The testimony in COVID-19 Pandemic given by the informant above describes the importance of performing Rebo Buntung rituals that include offerings made up of the head of a cow, the head of a goat, and chicken which are disposed of into the sea. According to Pradana (2018a), an offering is something that cannot be neglected. In this specific context, the participant described how offerings were also proffered for social protection and harmony to other magical powers that were believed to be hostile during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rebo Buntung is completed with the *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual*, namely a ceremonial procession which is in this instance was intended to avoid the attack made by an epidemic. The Rebo Buntung performed at Tanjung Menangis beach with the aims that those involved in the ritual intend to purify themselves, to propose that God forgive their sins, and to express their gratitude to the sea for the blessing in COVID-19 Pandemic. Participants strongly believe they should pay attention to the magical powers surrounding them to facilitate a balanced relationship between them and the surrounding environment. This is accomplished through offerings and sacrificial animals.

Second, the meaning of the Rebo Buntung is that human beings should be in harmony with nature to make their lives more perfect. In relation to this, those living at Pringgabaya

Village, East Lombok, who are mostly fishermen, respect the sea. They perform the Rebo Buntung by bathing in the sea as a type of exorcism ceremony which functions to purify and prevent all diseases. As an exorcism ceremony, the Rebo Buntung is completed with the *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual* which is intended to purify human beings and the universe.

The Rebo Buntung and *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual* are two tangible forms of the cultural tradition inherited from the ancestors of the *Sasak* ethnic people living at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok. These traditions suggest there are magical powers around them, and it is necessary to perform the *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual*. This ritual requires residents to leave their houses unoccupied for one full day and go to the sea and bathe to purify themselves and to avoid epidemics. The “ritual” which is always performed at Tanjung Menangis beach functions to ward off misfortunes, and to enhance prestige and social comfort. The Rebo Buntung and *Tetulaq Tamperan* rituals are believed to enable the local people to recover from the diseases resulting from the magical power at the end of the *safor* month. According to Ruastiti (2017; 2020b) and Rai S. et al. (2019), although God creates epidemics, He also creates the medicines for healing them. The local people believe that the medicines are created in the sea, at the precise location of the Tanjung Menangis beach. These beliefs inspire continuation of the Rebo Buntung and the *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual* at the end of *safor* month every year.

The Rebo Buntung with *Tetulaq Tamperan ritual* is usually performed by involving all layers of the society of *Pringgabaya* village. The “ritual” strengthens the power of the supporting society’s faith (Rai S. et al., 2020a; Ruastiti, 2020a; Sudarsana 2002). Those living at Pringgabaya Village believe that those who are involved in the performance of the Rebo Buntung will have privileges, and they believe that by performing the “ritual,” they can fulfil their physical and mental well-being (Putra, 1982; Ruastiti, 2005, 2010). This belief is perpetuated by knowledge regarding the meaning and use of the “ritual” acquired before actively participating in the ritual. The expectation that participating in the ritual will result in inner peace then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Sanderson, 1993).

Third, the Rebo Buntung strengthens the relationship among human beings (*habulumminannas*). Hundreds to thousands of people come to Tanjung Menangis beach, Pringgabaya Village every time the Rebo Buntung is performed. The performance of the Rebo Buntung, which starts with the *Tetulaq Tamperan* seems to result in collective awareness which contributes to the harmonious and dynamic relationship among the people in every part of East Lombok (Khan, 2002).

Social harmony includes the dominant basic values such as the religious, aesthetic, solidarity, and harmonious values as the people’s adaptive and cultural identity (Dharmika & Pradana, 2020; Ruastiti et al., 2019; Ruastiti et al., 2020; Swandi et al., 2020). If the social sentiment of the society supporting a ritual is strong, it can contribute to the social harmonious relationship among its members. The colossal performance of the Rebo Buntung contributes to togetherness and strengthens the relationship among those involved in the “ritual.” A cultural event which is regularly held can contribute to new brotherhood (Pradana, 2016, 2018a; Ruastiti, 2011, 2016) by strengthening the sense of togetherness among those involved in it. This sense of togetherness begins with initial preparations, lasts through the event, and encourages a sense of collective awareness. Despite the challenging circumstances, Rebo Bunting participants had the same basic aims during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they had prior to the pandemic: namely performing rituals to avoid epidemics, social crises, and grand disruptions. Therefore, those living at Pringgabaya Village, East Lombok still performed the Rebo Buntung in East Lombok during the pandemic, and the ritual continues to strengthen the social ties among those living at Pringgabaya Village.

Discussion

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the world has been profound and the pandemic has infected many aspects of community life that were routinized in their respective cultures (Pradana, 2021; Ceukelaire et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has also presented public health challenges in various parts of the world that have in turn created challenges for public activities and events and had economic impacts (Qureshi et al., 2020). Emergent problems can lead to social transformation (Dyatmikawati & Ruastiti, 2020; Pradana, 2012, 2019; Pradana & Parwati, 2017). In the instance of the COVID-19 pandemic, some existing values and norms had to be reorganized and modified for different social conditions.

The implementation of Rebo Buntung by the people of Pringgabaya, East Lombok was carried out to reduce community anxiety because of the increasing number of casualties due to unclear illness. The implementation of Rebo Buntung also aimed to strengthen social protection through fostering social solidarity and harmony during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, they have expectations of privacy, privilege, prestige and comfort that are difficult to materialize in the COVID-19 pandemic which through the implementation of Rebo Buntung can be more easily realized.

Rebo Buntung can be seen as a tradition of rejecting disasters in the *Sasak* cultural tradition of Pringgabaya village, which is multifunctional amid the modernization of Lombok society. Rebo Buntung in Pringgabaya village, East Lombok has a socio-religious function - the preservation of *Sasak* culture, and an economic function for tourism amidst the dynamics of social development. Interestingly, the people of Pringgabaya continued to implement Rebo Buntung because of the religious, social interests and preservation of the *Sasak* culture during the COVID-19 Pandemic, even given pandemic-associated reduction of tourism.

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