

Coping With The Pandemic: Cultural Approach In Recovering Tourism In Bali, Indonesia

Dewa Agung Gede Agung^{1*}, Arif Subekti², Grace Tjandra Leksana³,
I Gutu Ngurah Adi Pangestu⁴

History Departement, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
dewa.agung.fis@um.ac.id^{1*}; arif.subekti.fis@um.ac.id²; grace.leksana.fis@um.ac.id³;
i.gusti.2107316@students.um.ac.id⁴

*corresponding auhtor

Abstract:

This study analyzes a distinct approach used by the Balinese community in coping with the decline of the tourism sector due to the pandemic. Using a qualitative method with descriptive analysis, this research employed Social Capital Theory, focusing on the local Balinese culture practiced as a response to the global pandemic. Meanwhile, data collection was carried out through interviews and analysis of written sources such as newspapers, journals, websites, and social media. As Bali promotes cultural tourism, the Balinese adopted a cultural approach to handling COVID-19, using sekala or niskala. Sekala refers to anything observable and tangible, such as the implementation of government regulations, the use of traditional medicine, engagement of art like kakawin (sung poetry), traditional dance, and ngenang-ngening (community activities restriction). Meanwhile, niskala means anything abstract and invisible, such as the performance of Balinese religious ceremonies. During one of those ceremonies, the Balinese pray to Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God) through mecaru (a ceremony to deal with the balance between man and nature) at Pura Khayangan Tiga (a Hindu temple in Bali). In the long run, this article illustrates the development of health policies incorporating local cultures.

Keywords: COVID-19, Local Cultures, Balinese Hindu, Indonesia tourism, indigenous communities.

I. Introduction

WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 first emerged in Wuhan on 30 January 2020 before spreading globally (Lupia et al., 2020; Omrani et al., 2013). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in March 2020. Thenceforward, the Indonesian government has continuously anticipated cases of COVID-19 through health protocols, including social distancing, the use of hand sanitizer, as well as community lockdown. In March 2022, Indonesia recorded the second

highest number of Covid deaths in Asian countries, reaching up to 150.000 lives from around 6 million cases (BBC News Indonesia, 2022).

During the pandemic, one of the sectors that were highly affected was the tourism sector. In Indonesia, Bali is the leading tourism destination which contributes around 50% of Indonesia's revenue (around US\$20 million) per year (Yanwardhana, 2021). Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 drastically transformed the situation. The Provincial Statistic Board of Bali recorded a steep decline of 81.86% of foreign tourists in Bali from 2019 to 2020 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2022). Further, as the Indonesian government has managed to survive during the pandemic, the number of foreign tourists has started to increase. In May 2022, the Provincial Statistic Board recorded a total of 115,611 foreign tourists coming to the island.

Apart from the national policy during the pandemic, local communities in Bali also carried a role in reviving their tourism industry. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the Balinese cultural practices as a response to a global pandemic. Cultural practices have also been observed in other areas since each region, country, or area has its unique analysis and cultural approach to surviving the outbreak that sometimes appears irrational (Žižek, 2020; Crandall & Libov, 2020). For example, in dealing with Covid-19, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, held a campaign called "Sapa Aruh: Cobaan Gusti Allah" (Greeting from the king: pandemic as God's trial) to promote mental clarity and self-assurance of its residents, so they always stay aware and cautious (eling lan waspada). As previously reported in a study, in a critical situation, broader social ties are required (Kustiningsih & Nurhadi, 2020).

Linearly, Bali also adopted its cultural approach to dealing with the pandemic. Aside from impacting its tourism sector, Balinese culture affects almost every aspect of Balinese people's life. Hence, in overcoming the outbreak, the people adopted Balinese culture by expanding the function of traditional Balinese villages known as Banjar or Pakraman Village. It is a traditional community group living under a village government system with Hinduism hereditary traditions and life customs of the Hindu community. This community maintains and develops the local and customary law based on Balinese Hindu cultural traditions, which are known as awig-awig. Further, this law governs the members of Banjar village. Meanwhile, the membership of Banjar Village is homogenously established based on the concept of a village (place), kala (time), and patra (Gunawan, 2014, pp. 128–129).

This traditional Balinese village has been legalized by the Indonesian government as a traditional administration system stipulated by Law No. 6 the Year 2014 and Regional Regulation of Bali Province No. 3 the Year 2001. Since the emergence of COVID-19 in December 2019 greatly impacted tourism on the island of Bali, the traditional institution

carried crucial involvement in responding to the situation. In addition to the medical approach, this involvement is a unique strategy for handling COVID-19. As summarized by JJ Honigmann (Koentjaraningrat, 2009), local culture can be seen in (1) ideas, (2) activities, and (3) artifacts. In the life of a nation, local wisdom is regarded as the basis and social capital to manage norms in the community. Its roles and functions are embodied in (1) conserving and maintaining natural resources, (2) developing human resources, (3) developing culture and knowledge, (4) becoming a source of rules, beliefs or prohibitions, and literature, (5) being mean to build communal integration, (6) being the basis for ethics and morality, and (7) serving as a political function (Sartini, 2009). In Indonesia, all of those functions are addressed in the national ideology, Pancasila. We inherited Pancasila from our ancestors as our noble values. Therefore, Pancasila serves as the basis for character development, aside from religious values, affection, self-control, communal work, mutual respect, responsibility, and persistence in responding to COVID-19. Thus, the values of Pancasila have been reported to sustain character building (Agung, 2021).

II. Materials and Methods

This research was conducted using the qualitative approach through a series of case studies with three data collection techniques, namely interviews, observation, and documentation (Mulya, 2006; Yaumi, 2016; R. K Yin, 2015; Moleong, 2007; Creswell, 2015). Social Capital Theory was also adopted in this research. According to Bourdieu, social capital is an asset utilized by an elite group, which consists of financial capital, physical capital, human capital, social capital, and cultural capital (Lubis, 2014),(Jenkins, 2013), (Sunyoto,2018). Further, this study adopted descriptive analysis in evaluating relevant cases, along with their detailed setting.

The interviews and observation were conducted in 2021 with local leaders and the Covid task force in Bali. Simultaneously, written sources were also gathered from several newspapers, such as Bali Post and Kompas, from 2020 to 2021. We analyzed and triangulated these data to identify the forms and applications of local culture being adopted to overcome Covid-19 and revive the tourism industry.

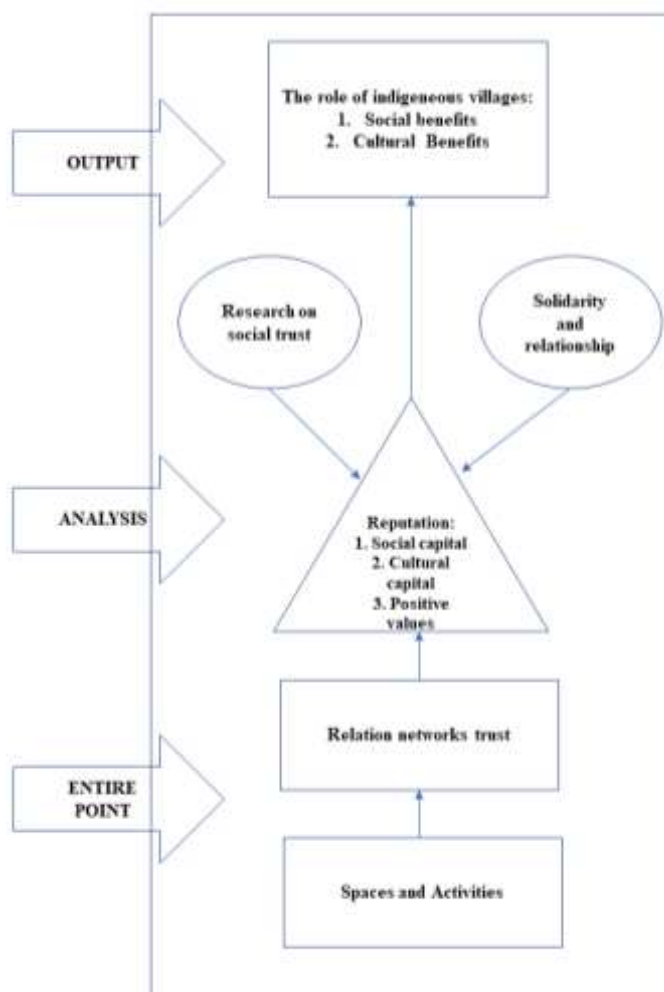


Figure 1.

Sources: rendered from (Usman, 2018)

III. Results and Discussion

Our analysis results suggested that traditional villages, as a part of local Balinese culture, carry an imperative role in responding to COVID-19. Similar to other traditional villages, the most well-known Balinese traditional village, Panglipuran, had also been affected by the pandemic. The village situation, as described by I Nengah Sudibia, one of the village's community leaders, can be seen in the following excerpt.

Since Covid, tourist visits have dropped sharply by 98-99%. We only had domestic tourists, and there were no foreign tourists. Because the tourism sector is our backbone, the situation drove our villagers to turn into farmers or other occupations in order to survive.

Consequently, driven by the desire to revive Bali's tourism, the community fully embraced the government measures in combating the pandemic. The regional government and traditional village institutions presented an immediate response to the central government policy, as evidenced by the issuance of a Joint Decree between the Governor of Bali and Bali Province Traditional Village Council Number

472/1571/PPDA/DPMA and 05/SK/MDA-Prov Bali/III/2020, on 28 March 2020 regarding the establishment of Satgas Gotong Royong Pencegahan COVID-19 or the Collective Unit Force for the Prevention of COVID-19 (Koster, 2020). Despite being formulated speedily, the Joint Decree was not a form of a panic response. It was rather established based on the confidence and trust of the Balinese Provincial Government towards the traditional village. The formation of the collective task unit is perceived as a courteous invitation to Traditional Villages to join the government and other community members in responding to COVID-19 (Indra, 2020). This collective task unit is mainly responsible for empowering the use of village facilities by krama (members of traditional village) to collectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 both through sekala (seen) and niskala (unseen) practices. Their task is in line with the Bali Provincial policy and programs, such as Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali, which is defined as preserving the natural sanctity and harmony of Bali and its habitants through sekala and niskala to realize a prosperous and happy Balinese karma life.

The joint decree illustrates the essential roles of formal and traditional government leaders' collaboration in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. Further, their collaboration also becomes an embodiment of democracy. Globally, this collaboration between formal and traditional government is not commonly observed. A study conducted by Nelson on the Covid-19 response from 150 countries reported that democratic countries have more aggressive policies than authoritarian ones (Nelson, 2021). Moreover, the joint decree of the Balinese government and traditional village authority proves the importance of the traditional authority's roles. However, traditional authority plays a far smaller role in battling the Covid-19 epidemic in other nations. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the authorities hold a very insignificant capacity in regulating the local practices to prevent Covid-19 spread. Zimbabweans have a local custom called kubata maoko that is uttered by the majority of Zimbabweans every time they shake hands. This custom remained practiced during funerals and traditional wedding ceremonies, even if it potentially spread COVID-19 in most local African communities (Dzinamarira et al., 2021)

In addition, our interviews with several informants suggested that Balinese have been accustomed to responding to the spread of outbreaks, including the recent COVID-19. They regarded the outbreak as a part of a natural cycle occurring every decade, century, or even millennia. Besides, decades ago, the Balinese also perceived that outbreaks could be cured through sekala and niskala. These methods put forward the Balinese local wisdom contained in old literature or old Balinese lontar (Palm-leaf manuscript) that is strongly believed by the community. Sekala (seen) represents visible and authentic measures based on a governmental decision or customary behavior in Bali, which

involve education, socialization, prevention, guidance, and supervision in relation to COVID-19. On the other hand, *niskala* (unseen) refers to invisible, abstract, and counterfactual activities practiced through Balinese beliefs. An example of *niskala* is praying to *Ida Batara Sesehuan* (God), led and directed by a *pemangku* (religious leader), in accordance with *Drasta Desa Adat* (governing rules in each traditional village) in every *pura* (place of worship).

Additionally, the Balinese community has been accustomed to isolating themselves through the *catur brata penyepian* (four prohibitions that should be adhered to). It is practiced every year, coinciding with the Balinese Silent Day, through *amati karya* (no activity and work), *amati geni* (no light and fire), *amati lelungan* (no travel), and *amati lelangan* (no entertainment). These cultural traditions are believed to have been implemented since the 15th century, including for combating outbreaks. The ancient book from Bugbug Village (Karangasem) entitled *Anda Kacacar* (smallpox disease) described the curing of smallpox. At that time, people were prevented from performing *salwirning walikrama* (no religious ceremonies) involving many people until the situation returned to normal. Balinese perceived this as a Hindu *swadarma* (obligation) practice, where they adhere to *dharma agama* (obligation to conduct religious or cultural teaching) and *dharma Negara* (obligation to conduct the government policy).

In responding to Covid-19, Balinese *sekala* responses include following all advice and regulations from the national government and the traditional village authority. They follow the suggested preventive measures, such as the 5 M movement, including wearing a face mask, washing hands, physical distancing, avoiding crowds, as well as limiting mobilization and interaction. Balinese community also participated in work from home (WFH) movement. Their loyalty towards the government is demonstrated through their commitment to comply with government policy. However, some people disputed the existence of COVID-19 in Indonesia and contented that the superpower might have purposefully produced it. Thus, the community's culture, religion, values, and behavior affect their response to COVID-19. For example, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of respecting the leaders, family, and social balance while emphasizing harmony and conformity as a mechanism to keep order. In contrast, western countries prefer legalism and seek the truth. The belief in harmony and conformity were reported to facilitate people in China to be more obedient to orders from the authority, resulting in a well-supported health policy in response to COVID-19 (Li & Lau, 2020). Meanwhile, a study conducted by Nelson showed that an authoritarian government tends to have more hesitant policy responses than a democratic government. Nelson also stated that individualistic community regarded themselves as independent entities with less involvement in the community. Nelson concluded that nations

with greater political and civil freedom for their citizens had less aggressive policies during the early stages of the epidemic, but it intensified after three months (Nelson, 2021)

Furthermore, the Balinese community also practices brata (retiring, fasting, and self-introspection) based on jagra (maintaining full consciousness) to cleanse themselves from disastrous situations and any humanitarian issues that require a clear sense and mind. COVID-19 is comparable to a great wave with a storm, forcing people to pull over, slow down and take a break for a while (Putra, 2021). Further, the establishment of the Ngeneng Ngening (be still in silence) collective task force under the regulations of traditional villages was obligatory for the krama adat (members of traditional communities), krama tamiu (a guest from the same traditional community), and tamiu (a guest from a different traditional community) who were in wewidangan (the area) of the traditional village. During the pandemic, all of the community activities under the collective task force should be done between 08:00 – 21:00 Western Indonesian Time, and any activity outside the permitted time was subject to approval from the Bendesa Adat (Traditional Leader)(Arum, 2021). Anyone who violates the regulation will be sanctioned. The policy is regulated in paperaman (regulation) of traditional villages, specifically in the papareman Kawulan Dewa Section VIII, article 26, stating that each krama adat, krama tamiu, and tamiu who violates the rules shall be sanctioned in accordance with the level of violation. The sanction can be in the forms of education, warning, and pamidanda (fine). The pamidanda ranges between akilobaas (a kilogram of rice), or equivalent to Rp10,000.- to selae kilo baas (twenty-five kilograms of rice), or equivalent to Rp250,000.-. Our interview results further indicated that the sanction had never been imposed on anyone because the community abides by the mutually agreed-upon customary rules. The community's compliance was not a consequence of the imposition of sanctions; rather, it was a result of their desire to avoid social sanctions that would damage their family's reputation. Besides, the Balinese community greatly values health, so they adopted various approaches to maintaining their good health. As suggested by Sastry and Basu, through altering behavior, a population should be taught the value of being in excellent health or having access to health care, especially for marginalized groups (Sastry & Basu, 2020). For instance, Singapore employed a top-down policy for marginalized groups, including in the health sector, where they do not see different contexts, conditions, and needs of the group (Dutta, 2021). Additionally, the Parisada Hindu Dharma (PHDI) and Bali Province Traditional Village Council (MDA) issued a Joint Circular Letter No. 076/PHDI-Bali/VIII/2021 and No. 008/SE/MDA-Prov Bali/2021 on 08 August 2021. This letter proposed a limitation in performing Yadnya Ceremony in the Gering Agung period during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pemerintah Provinsi Bali, 2021). The Circular

Letters particularly suggested the limitation of the performance of piodalan (a religious ceremony in the temple) to the pemangku (religious leader) and prajuru pura (carer of the temple) with a maximum of 10 people. Further, the letters also proposed limitations on travel activities and to only travel in emergencies. The implementation of these rules was monitored by pecalang (traditional security officers) (Radar Bali, 2020a). Then, the sharp increase of COVID-19 spread initiated the issuance of Circular Letter No. 12 in the Year 2021 by the Governor of Bali. Such Circular Letter instructed more restrictions to all activities that involve many people, including the obligation to conduct offices and schools remotely (Pemerintah Provinsi Bali, 2020).

In evidence that was aired on Kompas TV Dewata, Prof. Dr. Gelgel Wira Suta stated that COVID-19 might be treated with arak Bali, a typical alcoholic beverage from Bali. The treatment was given to a COVID-19 patient in Serokadan Village (Bangli District). He further explained that this idea came from a senior from Batur Village (Kintamani District) who studied in Bandung with Mr. Wayan Mesin Arya. When his family member had COVID-19, he then prayed and had a dream of his ancestor giving him guidance to cure his family's respiratory symptoms by inhaling arak steam mixed with orange leaf and cajuput oil. The information was then further investigated using an empirical approach, culminating in positive results. In three days, 68 people were claimed to have recovered using this treatment. The therapy started with pranayama (the yogic practice focusing on the breath) while inhaling the steam of the arak mixture. Besides, there were several conventional treatments thought to be effective for preventing COVID-19, such as kuwud (young coconut) that is burnt for eight minutes, added by a slice of ginger and kencur (aromatic ginger), boiled, and drank once it was cold (Sayoga, 2021).

In addition, in its community service program in Nyalinan Village, Banjarnakan, Klungkung, STIKES (College of Health Science) of Buleleng also produced herbal medicine called sari pertiwi (the essence of the earth) (Radar Bali, 2020c). Another empirical approach for curing Covid-19 was carried out through Eco enzyme. It is a fermented liquid derived from organic waste from fruit, vegetables, vegetable stem, and so forth. As organic waste was believed to anticipate the spread of COVID-19, this eco-enzyme liquid was perceived to be effective in killing airborne viruses (Windari, 2021). A similar traditional belief was also reported in Pambotanjara Village, East Sumba, where members of farmer groups, students, and lecturers in Ori Angu Farmer Group conducted socialization for using Malunggay (Moringa) leaves to boost immunity in order to prevent viruses. Further, they promoted that a mixture of tea with malunggay leaves was effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Malunggay leaves contain high nutrition content such as vitamin C, calcium, vitamin A, potassium, and protein (Nganji et al., 2021)

Balinese people also used art as a response to COVID-19. The community of Karangasem, Bali, has a traditional art called Bondres, a form of a comedy play. This comedy was used for socializing government programs, including those in relation to the COVID-19 response. Meanwhile, in Tanah Lot Beach, Bali, an art show called nangkluk merana (facing outbreak) was performed in response to COVID-19. According to a composer, I Gusti Nengah Hari Mahardika, the colossal show of grebeg (a dance to banish diseases) was also performed based on tradition in Kediri Village (Tabanan, Bali). The traditional dance was intended to create harmony and happiness while dispelling the outbreak (Radar Bali, 13 March 2020). Moreover, the Collective Task Unit in Bali also performs kakawin (sung poetry) in the Balinese language shared on social media. The example of kekawin is presented in the following.

Piteked guru wisesa

Mangde state irage meneng ring paomahan soang-soang

Nike banget pinunas titiang sareng ido dane sami

Sampunang sami pengkung

Dumadak-dumadik sangkaning punike mangde gelis virus niki ical

Tumaning irage sareng sami eling ngewajikin tangan antuk sabun,
ngangge masker, miwah jage jarak

Nah..kanggeang irage sami ngastiti bakti ring paomahan soang-soang

Meaning:

A message from the government

To always stay at home

That is their humble request for every one of us

We hope you can obey it

Because it is solely for the immediate departure of the virus

There is not any other way, but we have to frequently wash our hands
with soap, put on our masks, and keep our distance

We must abstain from traveling

Laksanayang peraturan pemerintah

PPKM mangde laksanayang

Sangkaning visrus corona

Dumadak ide metilar

Wantah je gumanti jagate degdeg landuh kerto raharjo

Pariwisatane sido nglimak

Dumadak ide suece

Mangde idedane semeton eling 3M

Meaning:

Please obey the rules of the government

Practice the PPKM (Community Activities Restrictions)

In response to the coronavirus

So that the virus will be gone

All we want is a happy world and its content inhabitants

For our tourism to thrive back

May God (Hyang Widhi) answer our prayers

Everyone must practice 3M

Different from the sekala, the niskala approach was practiced through activities closely related to abstract matters, such as the traditional customs in Bali. The niskala approach was performed to ask for God's intervention in ending the outbreak. People with prosperous and healthy lives without suffering are identified as those who follow and fear God. The concept introduces that those who fear God will get blessings and will be protected from any curses or suffering. Unfortunately, some God believers still suffered (Suratman, 2021), so Balinese people performed matur piuning (starting ritual) to Sang Hyang Widhi Wase (God), pleading for the end of the COVID-19 outbreak. During the ritual, they performed the mecaru ceremony (cleansing the universe) by providing offerings in the forms of pejati (offerings) from their home to relate to Bhatara Hyang Guru through the Sanggah (a holy place to worship God in the household or family) Kemulan. Besides, the community also asked for salvation and Bendu Piduka (forgiveness) in Kayangan Tiga Temple (Three Holy Places), namely Penataran Agung Temple (Lord Barhma), Puseh Temple (Lord Vishnu), and Dalem Temple (Lord Shiva) by obeying to the health protocol. In the temple, the community performs the pemahayu jagad (purification of the universe), guru piduka (asking for forgiveness), and peneduh jagat (securing the world). These rituals were carried out in the temples as spiritual places for Hindu people in Bali. Simultaneously, in Aceh, which is known for its religious people and named "Mecca's Veranda," the community places religious values before any other values in responding to the outbreak in order to gain composure by relying on Allah. They regarded COVID-19 as God's provision, so being religious was deemed essential during the pandemic (Amalia et al., 2021)

In addition, Ganapati Tatwa lontar is an old Balinese lontar (old literature) believed to be able to prevent outbreaks such as COVID-19. This lontar contains medical treatments and wards off various diseases, as signified by our interview results with Agung Tirta Rai on 26 August 2022. People put common bamboo on sanggah cucuk (installation from plaited bamboo) with rarajahan (picture) of Shang Hyang Gana, completed with offerings, water, incense, and takep fire (fire made by lighting coconut fiber). Besides, the community also placed an installation to ward off misfortune (disease) made from pandan leaves,

tridatu thread (a thread with a mixture of red, black, and white), shallot, and chili before an angkul-angkul (house entrance), as illustrated in

Figure 2. Further, the people also recite numerous mantra (spells).



Figure 2. Rarajahan (picture with mystical power) of Sang Hyang Gana (left) sanggah cucuk (right)

Source: personal documentation, 2021

The Mantra:

Pengasihsarwa ala muwang kena tetumpur muah kena grubug agung, sarana, Kamen Putih rajah kadi iki, anggen bendera, bantennya, pras pejati, tumpeng putih 2, kuning 2 meulam ayam putih siyungan mepanggang, unggahan Ring sanggah cucuk, ring sorin sanggah cucuk mesegehan manca warna meulam bawang jahe.

Translation:

The merciful Sanghang Gana that gets rid of bad things and curses, including deadly diseases, rerajahan Sanghyang Gana, on the white fabric used as kober (flag) to ward off bad things. The banten (offering) uses 2 peras pejati tumpeng of white and yellow, roasted Siungan chicken put on the sanggah cucuk, under the sanggah cucuk was placed offerings of segehan manca warna and shallot and ginger.

The Mantra:

MANG Bhatara iswara, ANG Bhatara Brahma, ING Bhatara Mahadewa, UNG Bhatara Wisnu, ONG Bhatara Siwa, ONG ANG UNG MANG, ONG ENG SANG BANG, HURIRAK minA wastu, tabe, metu kita Bhatara Shiwa, Tedun BHATARA GHANA, dewa pada tumurun, tabe, 3 x.

Meaning:

Worship before Bhatara Iswara with the sacred script of MANG, worship before Bhatara Mahadewa with the script of ING, worship before Bhatara Wisnu with the script of UNG, ONG, Bhatara Shiwa script of Ong

Ang Ung Mang, Ong Eng Sang Bang, Hurirak mina wastu, to ask for the presence of Bhatara Shiwa, please come down to earth BAHTARA GHANA, please come down to earth all Gods, we humbly request, cited for three times.

Such niskala activities were performed by all the Hindus in Bali. For instance, in response to COVID-19, the community at Kaliuntu Traditional Village performed angamen tirtha ritual (prayer for holy water) by providing pekelem (sunken offerings) into the ocean or river from the north shore of Bali, containing a black chicken and duck. It was performed by taking the amerta (holy water or living water) from the ocean to home and spread into their yard, hoping that nature would be back in harmony (Radar Bali, 2020b). Meanwhile, the Hindu Dharma Council of Indonesia and the Traditional Village Council of Bulelang performed nyejer (continuous prayer) every purnama-tilem (full moon and new moon), asking God to end the outbreak soon. Moreover, on Chinese New Year, the Buddhists in Bali also prayed at the Dharmayana monastery or Leng Gwan Byo temple of Kuta, pleading for the end of the outbreak (Radar Bali, 2021). In facing various outbreaks, they believe that a mental state of believing in God's will is as important as maintaining physical health. In Taiwan, research conducted on 399 Taiwanese students showed that an individual's mental endurance is related to their belief in the presence of God. Thus, religiosity and emotions towards God or the Almighty hold an essential role in self-endurance and well-being improvement during a crisis, including the current COVID-19 outbreak (Edara et al., 2021)

Additionally, the Traditional Village Council of Bali issued a Circular Letter No. 007/SE/MDA-Prov Bali/VIII/2021 on 02 August 2021 concerning the Aci Pakelem Hulu-Teben ring Panca Segara. The Circular Letter regulated the performance of a ceremony held at beaches on 07 August 2021, starting from 08:00 Western Indonesian Time, by adhering to the health protocol. The Balinese community performed the ceremony to pray to the meraga (whereby God's presence permeates the entirety of the world's substance) God, namely Ida Bhatara Baruna (the God of the sea), for the ending of the COVID-19 pandemic. These religious and cultural Balinese responses toward Covid-received no disapproval, neither from the elite nor the community.

In the pandemic situation, the free culture opens access to publication and scientific data, along with the emergence of creative arts related to science and technology that is critical towards social welfare. Various alternative measures were observed during the pandemic (Reina-Rozo & Medina-Cardona, 2021), involving many assets, such as financial, physical, human, social, and cultural capitals (Field, 2010), (Sunyoto, 2018) (Lubis, 2014). Likewise, Bali presented excellent responses to COVID-19 due to their strong basis of social capital, as the

community holds onto the same values. They tend to work collectively to reach mutual goals (Field, 2010) (Haryatmoko, 2016). Their mutual network and a shared set of religious and cultural values have emerged as the primary guidance of their activities. With *sekala* and *niskala*, Balinese promote positive connections between the state and traditional communities.

IV. Conclusion

Bali tourism sector is one of the highly affected sectors in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Contributing almost 50% of Indonesia's revenue, the island experienced a steep decline in foreign tourists during the Covid outbreak. Interestingly, the situation was gradually transforming once Indonesia had successfully overcome the pandemic. This success was not only induced by the government's comprehensive policy but also by the local cultural practices contributing to the prevention and management of Covid at the grassroots level. According to the ancient *lontar* (literature) of Bali, the term *gering agung* (major outbreak), including the COVID-19 outbreak, is perceived as a natural cycle. This outbreak was perceived as coming from God and may repeat in tens of years, decades, or even millennia, establishing a natural balance between the macrocosm (universe) and microcosm (inhabitants of the universe). As the outbreak is perceived as God's will, it cannot be eliminated or removed but shall be returned to where it came from. Further, the belief was practiced through local approaches known as *sekala* and *niskala*. Accordingly, the state government worked hand in hand with the traditional village authority, known as *Banjar* or *Prakaman* Traditional Village, through a mutual resolution between the Governor of Bali and Traditional Village Council Number 472/1571/PPDA/DPMA and Number 05/SK/MDA-Prov Bali/III/2020 dated 28 March 2020 on the formation of Collective Task Unit for the Prevention of COVID-19 based on Traditional Village.

Sekala means to follow all advice and regulations of the government and traditional village authority, such as *ngenang-ngening* (staying in silence), which is compulsory for all *Krama Adat* (members of traditional communities). In addition, they also used a traditional medicine believed to be able to prevent COVID-19, namely *kuwud* (young coconut). It was young coconut that had been burnt for eight minutes, added a slice of ginger and *kencur* (aromatic ginger), boiled, and drank once it was cold. Also, *sekala* included socialization through traditional art such as *bondres* (a form of comedy), *nangkluk merana* (facing and warding off outbreak), and *kakawin* (sung poetry). Meanwhile, *niskala* includes activities related to abstract objects, such as local beliefs. Examples of *niskala* are the performance of *mecaru* (a ceremony to deal with the balance between man and nature) by providing offerings in the forms of *pejati* (offerings from heart), and

angamen tirtha ritual (prayer for holy water) by providing pekelem (sunken offerings) into the ocean. Moreover, Sekala can also be observed from an installation to ward off misfortune (disease) made from pandan leaves, tridatu thread (a thread with a mixture of red, black, and white), shallot, and chili before an angkul-angkul (house entrance). Our analysis results imply that in the policy-making process, the government should consider utilizing local culture as an instrument to tackle global problems, as Bali did with their response to the global Covid pandemic.

References.

- Agung, L. (2021). Pancasila Values as Strengthening Character Building during the Covid -19 Pandemic. *Social, Humanities, and Educational Studies (SHES): Conference Series*, 4(4), 63–69.
<https://doi.org/10.20961/SHES.V4I4.50587>
- Amalia, I., Suzanna, E., & Adyani, L. (2021). Peran Religiusitas Bagi Masyarakat Aceh dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid- 19. *Jurnal Diversita*, 7(1), 79–84.
<https://doi.org/10.31289/diversita.v7i1.4535>
- Arum, I. D. G. (2021). Interview.
- Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali. (2022). Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali.
<https://bali.bps.go.id/indicator/16/106/1/banyaknya-wisatawan-m mancanegara-bulanan-ke-bali-menurut-pintu-masuk.html>
- BBC News Indonesia. (2022). Kematian akibat Covid-19 di Indonesia tertinggi kedua di Asia, pandemi disebut epidemiolog “masih serius dan genting” . BBC News Indonesia.
- Crandall, C. W., & Libov, C. (2020). *Fight Back: Beat the Coronavirus*. Humanix Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Penelitian kualitatif & desain riset*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Dutta, M. J. (2021). Singapore’s Extreme Neoliberalism and the COVID Outbreak: Culturally Centering Voices of Low-Wage Migrant Workers. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(10), 1302–1322.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642211000409>
- Dzinamarira, T., Journal, G. M.-S. A. M., & 2021, undefined. (2021). When culture, traditions and public health clash: A paradigm shift urgently needed to stem the spread of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe. *Ajol.Info*, 111, 279–279.
- Edara, I. R., Del Castillo, F., Ching, G. S., & Del Castillo, C. D. (2021). Religiosity, emotions, resilience, and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic: A study of taiwanese university students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126381>
- Field, J. (2010). *Modal Sosial . Kreasi Wacana*.
- Gunawan, D. H. (2014). *Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Bali*. Marjin Kiri.
- Haryatmoko. (2016). *Membongkar Rezim Kepastian Pemikiran Kritis Post Strukturalis*. In Yogyakarta : PT. Kanisius.
- Indra, D. M. (2020). *Desa Adat, Cahaya Optimisme dalam Atasi Pandemi Covid-19 di Bali*. <https://www.redaksi9.com/read/1826/Desa-Adat--Cahaya-Optimisme-dalam-Atasi-Pandemi-Covid-19-di-Bali.html#>

- Jawa Pos. (2021, February 13). Berdoa Korona Berlalu di Tahun Kerbau Logam. Radar Bali, 7.
- Jenkins, R. (2013). Membaca Pemikiran Pierre Bourdieu. Kreasi Wacana.
- Koentjaraningrat, K. (2009). Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi. PT. Rineka Cipta.
- Koster, W. (2020). Pembentukan Satuan Tugas Gotong Royong Mencegah Covid-19 Berbasis Desa Adat di Bali. Pemerintah Daerah Provinsi Bali.
- Kustiningsih, W., & Nurhadi, N. (2020). Penguatan Modal Sosial dalam Mitigasi COVID-19. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Li, D., & Lau, C. S. (2020). Combating COVID-19: East meets West. *British Journal of General Practice*, 70(696), e442–e443.
<https://doi.org/10.3399/BJGP20X710753>
- Lubis, A. Y. (2014). Postmodernisme: teori dan metode. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 80.
- Lupia, T., Scabini, S., Pinna, M. P., Perri, G. Di, Rosa, F. G., & Corcione, S. (2020). 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak: A new challenge. *Elsevier*, 21, 22–27.
- Moleong, M. A. (2007). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif, Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya Mulyana, Dedy. 2001. Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Paradigma Baru Ilmu Komunikasi.
- Mulya, D. (2006). Metodologi penelitian kualitatif: paradigma baru ilmu komunikasi dan ilmu sosial lainnya. PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
<https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=661230>
- Nelson, M. A. (2021). The timing and aggressiveness of early government response to COVID-19: Political systems, societal culture, and more. *World Development*, 146, 105550.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.WORLDDEV.2021.105550>
- Nganji, M. U., Lewu, L. D., Jawang, U. P., Killa, Y. M., & Tarigan, S. I. (2021). Pemanfaatan Daun Kelor Sebagai Minuman Herbal Dalam Rangka Mencegah Penyebaran Covid-19. *Jurdimas (Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat) Royal*, 4(2), 189–196.
<https://doi.org/10.33330/jurdimas.v4i2.1072>
- Omrani, A. S., Matin, M. A., Haddad, Q., Al-Nakhli, D., Memish, Z. A., & Albarak, A. M. (2013). A family cluster of middle east respiratory syndrome coronavirus infections related to a likely unrecognized asymptomatic or mild case. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 17(9), 668–672.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2013.07.001>
- Pemerintah Provinsi Bali. (2020). Pembentukan Satuan Tugas Gotong Royong Pencegahan Covid-19 Berbasis Desa Adat Di Bali No. 472/1571/PPDA/DPMA, 05/SK/MDA-Prov Bali/III/2020.
- Pemerintah Provinsi Bali. (2021). Surat edaran bersama parisada hindu dharma indonesia (phdi) Provinsi Bali dan Majelis Desa Adat (MDA) No. 076/PHDI-Bali/VIII/2021-008/SE/MDA-Prov.Bali/VIII/2021.
- Putra, K. A. (2021, July 26). Interview.
- Radar Bali. (2020a). Desa Adat Buleleng Gelar “Nyejer Daksina”, Upaya Spiritual Agar Covid-19 Mereda. Jawa Pos, 4.
- Radar Bali. (2020b). Krama pancasari Tempuh Cara Niskala. Jawa Bali, 4.
- Radar Bali. (2020c). PKM di Desa Nyalian, Banjarangkan, Klungkung di Tengah Pandemi COVID-19 Beri Pelatihan Produksi Jamu Herbal, Edukasi Masyarakat Pasarkan Produk Melalui Online. Jawa Pos, 5.

- Reina-Rozo, J. D., & Medina-Cardona, L. F. (2021). Science, technology and Solidarity: The emergence of a free culture for the future. *International Journal of Engineering, Social Justice, and Peace*, 8(1), 86–104.
- R. K Yin. (2015). *Studi Kasus Desain & Metode*. PT Rajagrafindo Persada.
- Sartini, N. W. (2009). Menggali Nilai Kearifan Lokal Budaya Jawa Lewat (Bebasan, Saloka, Dan Paribasa). *Jurnal Logat*, 5(1), 28–37.
- Sastry, S., & Basu, A. (2020). How to Have (Critical) Method in a Pandemic: Outlining a Culture-Centered Approach to Health Discourse Analysis. In *Frontiers in Communication* (Vol. 5, pp. 8–1). Frontiers Media S.A. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2020.585954>
- Sayoga, A. (2021, August 21). Interview.
- Sunyoto, U. (2018). *Modal sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. <https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=1068513>
- Suratman, E. (2021). Tinjauan Teologis Terhadap Pandemi Coronavirus Desease 2019 Dalam Prinsip Pembalasan. *Manna Rafflesia*, 7(2), 258–278. https://doi.org/10.38091/man_raf.v7i2.145
- Windari, N. (2021). Bali Ditarget Menjadi Pulau Eco Enzyme Pertama di Dunia - *Tribun-bali.com*. <https://bali.tribunnews.com/2021/02/23/bali-ditarget-menjadi-pulau-eco-enzyme-pertama-di-dunia>
- Yanwardhana, E. (2021). Sandi Uno: Bali Penyumbang Devisa Terbesar di Pariwisata RI. *CNBC Indonesia*.
- Yaumi, M. (2016). *Action Research: Teori, model dan aplikasinya*. Prenada Media.
- Žižek, S. (2020). *Pandemic!: COVID-19 shakes the world*. John Wiley & Sons.