

Safeguarding Communities: Exploring the Tradition of Tolak Bala in Nagari Bungus

Resta Lisman¹, Darmaiza², Dwi Wahyuni^{3*}

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: rmamulya23@yahoo.com

² Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: darmaiza@uinib.ac.id

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: dwiwahyuni@uinib.ac.id

* Corresponding author

Received April 16, 2023; Accepted June 28, 2023; Published: July 14, 2023

Abstract

This study aims to examine the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus, including the changes that have occurred, the factors influencing the persistence of the tradition, and the meanings understood by the community regarding the tradition. A qualitative approach was employed, and data were collected through interviews and participatory observation. The findings reveal changes in the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus, encompassing changes in the surrounding environment and social activities of the community. The tradition of tolak bala has had a positive impact on the community, such as improving their relationship with Allah Swt, enhancing economic conditions, and abandoning negative behaviors. Factors influencing the persistence of the tradition of tolak bala include the community's beliefs and knowledge, religious activities, and the roles of traditional and religious leaders. The community understands the tradition of tolak bala as a means of protection from dangers and as an effort to seek help from Allah Swt to avert calamities. This research provides deeper insights into the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus and has implications for social and cultural changes in the community. Recommendations are given to the Bungus community and local authorities to preserve and maintain the tradition of tolak bala as a valuable cultural heritage and to conduct further research on this tradition in other regions.

Keywords: Community; Nagari Bungus; preservation; tolak bala; tradition.

Introduction

Traditions are an essential part of community life and are a cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation (Graburn, 2000; Yang, Shafi, Song, & Yang, 2018). One of the traditions still practiced in Nagari Bungus, West Sumatra, is the "tolak bala" tradition. This tradition is believed to have the power to protect the community from various calamities and disasters that can threaten their lives.

Nagari Bungus, a region located in West Sumatra, has a long history of preserving the "tolak bala" tradition. However, in recent years, significant changes have occurred within the Bungus community. The impacts of modernization and external influences have affected the perspectives and behaviors of the people towards the "tolak bala" tradition. Therefore, it is important to understand the changes that have taken place, the factors influencing the continuity of the tradition, and the meanings attributed to this tradition by the community.

Currently, in the western part of Bungus, specifically Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced by the local community due to the passage of time. However, in the eastern part of Bungus, specifically Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur, this tradition is still being observed. The traditions that have disappeared and those that have endured are influenced by social factors, particularly the people surrounding the

community, such as family and social roles/status, and possibly economic factors or changes. The inability of community members to meet their basic needs has led to social disparities, prompting people to think rationally.

The "tolak bala" tradition is a traditional ritual that has been performed since ancient times and is practiced in many cultures. Its purpose is to ward off disasters, both personal and those affecting the village. The "tolak bala" ritual is referred to by the community as an activity to preserve and heal the village. Previous research can be categorized into two main areas: the meanings and significance of the "tolak bala" tradition and the religious aspects within the tradition.

The first category of research focuses on the meanings and significance of the "tolak bala" tradition (Hasbullah, Toyo, & Awang Pawi, 2017; Mustamin, 2017; Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Rahmawati, Nurhadi, & Suseno, 2017). This category emphasizes that the "tolak bala" ritual is still performed in various regions because it is considered to have important functions and meanings for the community. The ritual is seen as a way to preserve and heal the village, protect oneself and the community from disasters, maintain balance and harmony in community life, and express gratitude to God for the blessings given. Additionally, these studies highlight that the "tolak bala" tradition is the result of acculturation between Islam and the existing local beliefs, as well as a form of religious expression and plea for assistance from God.

The second category includes research on the religious aspects of the "tolak bala" tradition (Madriani, 2021; Nurozi, 2016; Sairaji & Muslimah, 2020; Syahrin, Bakar, & Ghafur, 2021). These studies show that the religious aspects play a significant role in the "tolak bala" tradition, both in the spiritual, theological, and Islamic educational contexts. This category consistently demonstrates that the religious dimension has a profound impact on this practice. The research findings reveal that the "tolak bala" tradition is not only seen as a cultural ritual but also has a spiritual depth that connects it to beliefs and religious practices. Madriani (2021) explores the theological aspects of the "tolak bala" tradition in Parit Setia Village, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, while Nurozi (2016) examines the Rebo Wekasan ritual in Sitanjung Village, Tegal Regency, Central Java, in a social and religious context. Sairaji and Muslimah (2020) examine the Islamic educational values contained in the "tolak bala" tradition in Mendawai, Palangka Raya City, while Syahrin, Bakar, and Ghafur (2021) discuss the social and religious perspectives of the "atib ko ambai" ritual in Rokan Hulu. Overall, these studies provide a deeper understanding of the importance of the religious dimension in preserving and perpetuating the "tolak bala" tradition.

Dengan kategorisasi ini, penelitian sebelumnya telah memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai makna dan signifikansi tradisi tolak bala serta aspek keagamaan yang terlibat dalam pelaksanaannya. Namun, masih diperlukan penelitian lebih lanjut untuk melengkapi pemahaman tentang tradisi tolak bala dalam konteks budaya dan masyarakat yang berbeda.

This research aims to gather further information about the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. In this study, we will explore the changes that have occurred in the "tolak bala" tradition, the factors influencing its continuity, and the meanings understood by the community regarding this tradition. Data will be collected through interviews with community leaders, participatory observations, and analysis of documents related to the "tolak bala" tradition.

This research is expected to provide a better understanding of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. The findings of this study are anticipated to offer deeper insights into the social and cultural changes that have taken place within the Bungus

community. Furthermore, it aims to provide recommendations to the community and local authorities for preserving and safeguarding the "tolak bala" tradition as a valuable cultural heritage. Additionally, this research can serve as a basis for further studies on the "tolak bala" tradition in other regions.

Research Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach through field research methods. Through interviews, primary data is obtained from informants such as Mr. Lurah Efendi Rostam, Datuak Ependi, Datuak Syamsudin, Mr. Iza, Datuak Ali Mual, and Datuak Rais. Additionally, secondary data is acquired from relevant literature. This research focuses on Nagari Bungus, with specific attention to two different areas regarding the continuity of the "tolak bala" tradition: Bungus Barat in Labuhan Tarok (vanished tradition) and Bungus Barat in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur (persisting tradition).

The data collection technique used is interviews, employing a semi-structured or guided approach. The interviews are conducted in a relaxed and spontaneous atmosphere, with the assistance of recording devices such as mobile phones to facilitate note-taking. The obtained data will be analyzed using Miles and Huberman's data analysis techniques, involving data reduction, presentation of data in tables and narratives, and drawing conclusions based on the analyzed findings.

Results and Discussion

1. History of "Tolak Bala" in Nagari Bungus

In this research, we traced the history of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. Based on information obtained from local informants, the "tolak bala" tradition has been passed down through generations and has become an integral part of the Bungus community's life. This tradition is believed to have existed since ancient times and has been preserved until the present day. Along with the changes in time, some adaptations have occurred in the practice of the "tolak bala" tradition, but its essence remains intact.

The "tolak bala" tradition is commonly observed among the Bungus community with the aim of warding off disasters or seeking protection from harm. The community responds to various disasters in different ways. One of the phenomena is through the "tolak bala" ritual. The community performs the "tolak bala" ritual and prays for the safety of the entire village. The "tolak bala" ritual is a longstanding tradition in the Bungus community and continues to be maintained to this day.

This ritual is carried out with the intention of rejecting calamities or disasters, both at a personal and village level. The "tolak bala" ritual is also known as an activity to preserve and heal the village. This indicates that the "tolak bala" ritual is the result of acculturation between Islam and the ancient beliefs present in the community.

This phenomenon is also carried out by various ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, with the progress of time and technological advancements, the tradition of the "tolak bala" ritual is either still preserved to this day or gradually being abandoned. The practice of the "tolak bala" ritual is considered important and irreplaceable for the Bungus community. Although some Muslims may not believe in this practice, it continues to persist until now.

The origin of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus, according to the Ninik Mamak or the elders, is described as a history that cannot be considered as an actual event

because it has been passed down from person to person through oral tradition. Therefore, the "tolak bala" tradition has long existed in Nagari Bungus and is still maintained to this day.

The history of "tolak bala" in the areas where it is still practiced involves conducting rituals to ward off calamities or misfortunes. The initial emergence of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus in the past was due to the frequent occurrence of calamities in the area. The people had forgotten about God, ignored the words of the ulama (religious scholars), and sidelined religious matters. Religious obligations, such as performing the five daily prayers, were rarely or never fulfilled as people were preoccupied with their respective worldly activities, including playing dominoes, engaging in cockfighting, rampant gambling, adultery, and more. Consequently, various diseases and a prolonged drought season plagued the community, resulting in failed harvests, natural disasters, and barren fields. These challenges or problems that befell the Bungus community were referred to as "Penceklik." The term "Penceklik" signifies.

apo yang di tanam urang disiko, ujung-ujung e akan mati sadualah e, indak adoh tumbuhan tumbuhan yang iduik, paneh kancang melebihi dari pado biaso, rumpuk-rumpuk mati, tanaman mati indak adoh yang jadi atau iduik ciek alah e do, sehingga urang disiko manyabuik e dengan istilah "Penceklik". Terjadinyo penceklik di masyarakat, sebagian urang disiko banyak yang marantau, dan kehidupan urang di siko alah mulai payah. Akhirnya yang tadi nyo dima-dima ba ampok (main domino), dima-dima ba judi, tu urang tu alah mulai indak main itu lai do. Katoanlah urang ko indak bisa mengadoan judi lai karena perekonomian urang di siko indak adoh yang iduik lai atau bisa di kecean perekonomian urang disiko alah mati (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

What people plant here, in the end, will also die. No plants can survive, the condition is worse than usual, the grass dies, the plants die too, nothing grows or thrives well here. Therefore, people here call it 'Penceklik'. The occurrence of 'Penceklik' in the community has led to many people migrating, and life here has become difficult. Eventually, what they used to spend on playing dominoes, gambling, now people here no longer engage in such activities. We can say that they can no longer gamble because the economy here no longer grows or can revive the stagnant economy here.

So, the term used by the Bungus community for "Penceklik" is that whatever is planted by the people will all die, no living plants, the intense heat surpasses the usual, the grass dies, the plants die, nothing grows or survives, hence the community refers to it as "Penceklik". The occurrence of "Penceklik" in the community led to many people migrating, and life became difficult here. Eventually, people everywhere used to play dominoes, everywhere they used to gamble, now no one wants to play anymore. Let's say people can no longer engage in gambling because the economy here no longer exists or can be said to be dead.

The Bungus community sees the calamities that occurred at that time and calls it "Penceklik". Since the occurrence of "Penceklik," many people migrated, and life here became difficult, many people became unemployed. Eventually, the economy here died, and there is nothing left alive.

Because of the hardships of life at that time, a dream came to one of the ulama or commonly known as Angku or Tuangku, a person considered knowledgeable in religious studies. Tuangku explained that the purpose of the dream was to hold the tradition of

"tolak bala," a way to restore Nagari Bungus by rejecting calamities or what is commonly known as the "tolak bala" tradition, as it can ward off disasters. If we do not perform the "tolak bala" tradition as shown in the dream, it will result in a prolonged drought, and the calamities that befall the community will not cease, or what the community commonly refers to as prolonged "Penceklik".

Eventually, Tuangku, who received the dream not just once but three times in a row, conveyed the message and handed it over to the Ulama, the traditional leaders (Petinggi Adat), the Niniak Mamak, and the mosque committee members. They gathered to discuss and organize the "tolak bala" event. They also advised the community to abandon negative practices such as cockfighting, gambling, playing dominoes, and disregarding the prohibitions of Allah, among others. Whatever Allah commands should be followed, and people should draw closer to Him.

In the past, information was not conveyed through written letters but through oral communication or word of mouth. The decision to follow the "tolak bala" tradition was first conveyed to the mosque or prayer hall, and then a letter was prepared to be shown to the village chief, the LPM (Community Empowerment Institution), and all the mosque and prayer hall committee members. Detailed data was collected, including the implementation process, gathering points, and conclusion. For example, the community would gather at a designated location, such as an event held in Bungus Timur, Kalampaian. The Bungus community would arrive before Maghrib prayer and then perform Maghrib prayer together at the mosque. The event would commence after Maghrib prayer. It would start with burning the kumayan, which has become a tradition. The kumayan is not meant to be requested but rather to signify the start of the main event. After that, prayers would be conducted at the mosque or prayer hall, followed by reciting takbir and immediately commencing the event. Finally, the community would gather in a field.

Therefore, an agreement was reached that when organizing the "tolak bala" tradition, the community should purchase buffaloes instead of cows. This is because buffaloes and cows have different behaviors. Cows do not like water, while buffaloes are fond of it. Thus, through discussions with the Ulama, the traditional leaders, the Niniak Mamak, and the mosque or prayer hall committee members, an agreement was made to conduct "tolak bala" by following these steps:

Mandabiah kabau di kapalo banda dan mandoa di ikua banda" artie mamotong kabau di Tabek atau Looah (namo tampek dulu) dan bardoa di Koto Gadang. Sebab tersirat kabau yang awak potong darah e akan mengalir dari ujung bukiak ka ujung sungai hingga sampai ke bawah. Baa kok harus kabau yang awak dabiah?, sebab kabau ko lebih suko jo air, kalau sobok jo air dak ka bisa kalua lai do. Baa kok awak harus mangharoan air, di karanokan airlah yang penyubur tanaman. Jadi dapek kesepakatan itu yang harus di sembelih di atas dan di bawah lanjut samo mandoa (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

Cut the buffalo at Kapalo Banda and slaughter it at Ikua Banda. The reason behind this is that the blood of the buffalo, when it is cut, will flow from upstream to downstream of the river. Why does it have to be a buffalo that is cut? Because buffaloes are more fond of water, and when they come into contact with water, their blood will flow smoothly. Why use water? Because water is a substance that nourishes plants. So, after reaching an agreement, the buffalo must be slaughtered both upstream and downstream, followed by prayers..

The initial practice of "tolak bala" by the community involved cutting the buffalo at the head of the banda or at the end of the banda, and praying below the banda, which means cutting the buffalo at the top or end of the hill, such as in Tabek or Looh (place names), and praying below in Koto Gadang (place name). Implicitly, when the buffalo is cut at the top of the hill, its blood will flow down to the end of the river. Why did the community use buffaloes instead of cows? It is because buffaloes are fond of water, while cows do not prefer water. Why do we rely on water? It is because water is what nourishes plants. The community agreed that the animal used for slaughter would be a buffalo, starting from the top of the hill to the end of the river, and then it would be brought down, followed by a collective prayer below. If there were no buffaloes available or if the community could not afford to buy them, they could be replaced with other animals such as goats.

Pada masa dulu hewan kerbau yang di pakai untuk acara tolak bala akan tetapi kalau sekarang masyarakat memakai hewan kambing di karenakan hewan kerbau sangat susah di dapat dan harganya terlalu mahal dan masyarakat tidak mampu membeli hewan kerbau karena untuk mendapatkan uang masyarakat harus bergotong royong untuk mencukupi dana. Karena itu masyarakat tidak sanggup membeli hewan kerbau dan diganti dengan hewan kambing, karena kambinglah yang mudah dicari dan mudah didapat dan harganya juga tidak terlalu mahal. Pada masa dulu rangtuo kita sangat mudah untuk mendapatkan kerbau. Kalau kini awak mambuek acara ataupun tradisi awak yo harus bagotong royong mencari dana, karano semua panitia yang ikuik serta ikuik manyumbang lo untuk mencari dana, kalau dari panitia pasti indak ka sampai pitih ko do, atau bantuan lain. Jadi di ambiaklah kesepakatan panitia ko untuk bagotong royong ka musajik dan masyarakat satampek ko untuk mencari dana, kalaupun kurang juo dana yang awak cari, tapaso awak mamintak ka tampek yang lain. Kalau lah salasai mencari dana dan dana yang awak cari ko alah cukuik baru di mulai acara tradisi tolak bala (Rais, Personal Communication, June 13, 2021).

In the past, buffaloes were used for the "tolak bala" event. However, nowadays, the community uses goats because buffaloes are difficult to obtain and their prices are too high. The community cannot afford to buy buffaloes because they need to work together (gotong-royong) to raise funds. Therefore, goats are used as a substitute because they are easier to find, more accessible, and more affordable. In the past, parents could easily acquire buffaloes. However, now, if the community wants to hold an event or tradition, they need to work together to raise funds because all the organizers need to contribute and share the burden of fundraising. If they rely solely on the organizers, it is highly likely that the funds will be insufficient, and assistance from others will be needed. Therefore, the organizers agreed to collectively raise funds from the local mosque and community, and if the funds raised are still insufficient, they will seek assistance from other parties. Once the fundraising process is completed and the required funds are obtained, the "tolak bala" tradition can begin.

In the past, the community or "ranguo" used buffaloes because they were easy to obtain and their prices were not as high as they are now. However, nowadays, the community uses goats because they cannot afford to buy buffaloes due to their high prices. The community purchases goats through collective efforts, as goats are easily available

and more affordable compared to buffaloes. Therefore, the community now prefers to use goats instead of buffaloes. Prior to organizing the event or tradition, the community works together to raise funds, starting from the mosque and extending to the community, going from one village to another.

Until now, the community continues to practice the "tolak bala" tradition. In the past, the "rangtuo" mentioned that the last step of the "tolak bala" ceremony should involve sacrificing a goat. During the "tolak bala" ceremony, there is no provision of food or offerings, but some community members take the initiative to offer drinks to those participating in or following the tradition. This is because many people do not bring anything during the journey, as some may only observe the "tolak bala" tradition from their homes, while others provide drinks and food along the way.

When the community passes a bridge, it is considered a crossing point for "dubillah" or jinn. At that point, the community loudly recites the takbir or monotheistic declaration in unison, so that it can be heard by the "dubillah" or jinn, urging them to leave that place and not return. The intention behind this practice is:

Pas awak lewat di simpang atau jambatan kan di situ banyak basarang dubillah atau jin tu, jadi awak manyabuik e harus jaleh kancang, dan kompak bia inyo pai jauh dari situ dan bia inyo dak baliak ka tampek asal e. baa cro e awak bisa tau kalau di situ basarang dubillah? kan hewan-hewan yang lewat atau yang alah disitu pasti nampak dek e kayak buruang bekonyo babunyi dan tabang e kalau nampak dan hewan anjing juga pasti mengonggong kalau nampak dubillah atau jin tu, bia di suruh pai lewat gonggongannyo yang kancang tu. Jadi secara tersirat tolak bala itu menyuruh pergi dubillah jin atau setan. Karano dubillah dan jin atau setan acok bana yang berlawanan dengan perintah allah swt, apa yang di perintahkan oleh allah swt pasti di larang dubillah. Itu ilmu yang pasti, apa yang di larang pasti di suruh, apa yang di suruh pasti di larang itulah sifat dubillah. Makanya kalau dilarikan ke perintah allah SWT sudah jelas itu di nyatakannya apa yang di larang pasti di suruh (Rais, Personal Communication, June 13, 2021).

So the term is that the community is expelling "dubillah" that reside in places like trees, bridges, and wherever there are no inhabitants. The community mentions and recites takbir or monotheistic declarations during the "tolak bala" tradition to make the "dubillah" go far away from that place. The community recites takbir from the beginning until the end or the final destination of the "tolak bala" tradition. And the "dubillah" is disposed of in the sea so that they do not return to their original location, done by sacrificing a buffalo. That's why the community accompanies the buffalo until the last day, where they then sacrifice a goat, which has already been slaughtered, and its carcass is floated in the sea so that the "dubillah" can feast on its blood and be carried away by the current. The act of floating the carcass signifies that if there are any "dubillah," they will consume the blood and the goat's body, and they are instructed to go far away from Nagari Bungus and not return.

So, "tolak bala" is about sending away the demons or evil spirits that exist in Nagari Bungus, and it is done by using a goat and floating it in the sea on the final day of the "tolak bala" tradition. However, nowadays, it is rare for the community to use a goat for floating or sacrificing. Now, the community primarily focuses on prayers from the beginning to the end of the event, as we no longer use goats for floating in the sea.

The annual implementation of the "tolak bala" tradition is not determined by the

start of the month. However, the specific days for its implementation are fixed for three consecutive days, namely Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, as those were considered the most auspicious days according to the community's belief in the past. The chosen days for "tolak bala" cannot be changed or altered since they have been established long ago and are not subject to questioning. The "tolak bala" event involves everyone, including the ulama, community leaders, particularly the Niniak Mamak or Datuak KAN, and all the participants from the community. The event takes place for three consecutive days. The implementation of the "tolak bala" tradition in Bungus begins with the first day after performing the Maghrib prayer, starting from Tanah Sirah or the hilltop to Jaruai. The second day starts from Jaruai to Simpang Empat, and on the final day, it continues from Simpang Empat to Muaro, which is the final location for expelling the calamity. It is there that the community sacrifices a goat and throws it into the sea. This ritual serves as a means to reject misfortune.

Now, when starting to implement the 'tolak bala' tradition, the community makes prior agreements and consults with the people. 'If there are no disasters or unresolved issues affecting the community, should we still carry out the 'tolak bala' tradition this year?' That's what I asked Mr. Datuak Ependi. Because it is the community that participates and follows the 'tolak bala' tradition, if no one joins the event, it won't be fulfilled. The community also agrees to carry out the 'tolak bala' tradition. There was a time when I asked the community about it, and they remained silent, so an agreement was reached not to perform the 'tolak bala' tradition that year. The 'tolak bala' tradition is not conducted every year; sometimes the community expresses a desire to organize different traditions or events before implementing the 'tolak bala' tradition (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

Nowadays, whenever an event is organized, it must be discussed with the Niniak Mamak first before involving the community. For example, if there is a disaster affecting the community, such as extensive crop damage or economic difficulties due to earthquakes, the community will consider initiating the "tolak bala" tradition. However, the "tolak bala" tradition is not carried out every year. It is discussed with the community to determine whether they want to perform the tradition or not. There have been instances where the "tolak bala" tradition was not conducted in previous years because if the community can resolve the issues or disasters without it, there is no need to perform the tradition. It is only when the problems cannot be resolved that discussions take place, leading to an agreement to carry out the "tolak bala" tradition.

The timing of the "tolak bala" tradition is not determined by the month, but the specific day must be adhered to. If there is a new disaster or calamity, the tradition is initiated. However, even if there is no immediate threat, the tradition may still be observed depending on the willingness of the community. If the community wants to perform the "tolak bala" tradition, it is organized accordingly, but if the community does not wish to participate, the tradition is not forced upon them. It is ultimately the community itself that participates and enlivens the tradition.

The history of the "tolak bala" tradition in the area that no longer practices it, such as Labuhan Tarok in Nagari Bungus, is still the same as the history of the tradition in the areas that continue to practice it. In Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition merged with Kayu Aro in Bungus Barat. Specifically in Labuhan Tarok, the tradition is no longer observed, as it joined forces with Kayu Aro and Jaruai. However, in Bungus Barat, particularly in the Kayu Aro sub-district, the tradition is still being practiced to this day.

In Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition has indeed not been carried out for the past six or seven years, as some of the Bungus community has joined the Bungus

Barat community in Kayu Aro and Jaruai. The majority of the people in that area are traditional and religious figures who always participate in various traditions and events. As a result, many people from Labuhan Tarok participate in the traditions held in Kayu Aro, which is why the "tolak bala" tradition and other traditions are rarely practiced in Labuhan Tarok (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

The "tolak bala" tradition has existed for a long time in Nagari Bungus, including Labuhan Tarok. The term "tolak bala" refers to the entry of calamities that have occurred frequently in Nagari Bungus. These calamities have caused various problems, such as widespread pests, difficulty in managing crops resulting in many plants dying or not growing, undesirable occurrences within the community, natural disasters, failed harvests in the fields, and the depletion of fish in the sea. Immoral activities and adultery have also become prevalent everywhere. All these calamities that occur in the community are often attributed to "tolak bala."

To counter these calamities, the "tolak bala" tradition is carried out by reciting the words of Allah, engaging in remembrance and prayers along the way. Before performing the "tolak bala" tradition, the community assesses the prevailing conditions, such as prolonged drought affecting crops and causing economic difficulties for the people. The purpose of conducting the "tolak bala" tradition is to reject disasters, avoid problems, and seek protection from Allah SWT against the calamities that befall Nagari Bungus.

Generally, people in Labuhan Tarok are aware of the "tolak bala" tradition. However, only a portion of the community in Labuhan Tarok is willing to participate in the tradition. Therefore, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced in Labuhan Tarok because it is challenging to encourage the community to engage in acts of goodness such as rejecting calamities. Some individuals are only interested in the results, while in Bungus Barat, particularly in Kayu Aro, the tradition of "tolak bala" is practiced every year without fail. The response from the Bungus community varies.

In the Labuhan Tarok community, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced because it is already carried out in Kayu Aro. Therefore, the community can observe the "tolak bala" tradition in Kayu Aro and does not need to perform it in Labuhan Tarok. Not practicing the "tolak bala" tradition in the community also ensures protection against calamities and disasters. Even if any disasters occur, the community can effectively resolve those issues (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

That's the response from the Labuhan Tarok community, and there are also some community members who are not aware of this "tolak bala" tradition, such as:

Is there a 'tolak bala' tradition in Labuhan Tarok? Isn't it the one carried out in Kayu Aro? And some people say, what is 'tolak bala' actually? And there are also those who know and associate it with the Tabuik tradition in Pariaman. However, there are those who know but remain silent and prioritize their own affairs (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

In Nurul Hidayah Mosque in Labuhan Tarok, the mosque committee always receives an invitation letter directly from the village's customary leader, which is then distributed to the mosque committee members, including in Labuhan Tarok, to participate in the "tolak bala" tradition. The committee has also informed the local community and made announcements in the mosque after each prayer, encouraging them to join or carry out the "tolak bala" tradition that will also take place in Labuhan Tarok.

The announcements are made after each morning, noon, and evening prayers, as well as after Friday prayers, as these are the times when many people attend prayers at the mosque. However, while some people listen and are willing to participate, others remain silent and hold their own opinions, such as:

Why should the community perform the 'tolak bala' tradition? Labuhan Tarok is safe and nothing happens even if we don't perform the 'tolak bala' tradition. If there are any calamities that occur, they are surely the will of Allah SWT, not because of 'tolak bala.' Why should we believe in myths? (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

The mosque committee in Labuhan Tarok also wants to carry out the "tolak bala" tradition in their area because they believe that all the necessary facilities are already in place. However, they face challenges in getting the community to cooperate in performing good deeds for the village and themselves. The responses from the community vary, with some expressing doubt and questioning the significance of the "tolak bala" tradition. They wonder why it is necessary to believe in myths and rituals when Labuhan Tarok is considered safe and there have been no major calamities. Despite these differing opinions, the "tolak bala" tradition is still carried out in Labuhan Tarok, with many individuals actively participating.

The mosque committee receives invitations directly from the village's customary leader, which are then distributed to the mosque committee members in Labuhan Tarok. They inform the local community and make announcements in the mosque after each prayer, encouraging people to participate in the upcoming "tolak bala" tradition. However, not everyone in the community is receptive to the idea. Some are skeptical of the tradition and prefer to focus on their own personal matters.

The mosque committee acknowledges the challenges and limitations they face, as their ability to organize and carry out the tradition largely depends on the willingness and participation of the community. They emphasize that their role is to inform and announce the tradition to the congregants, but ultimately, it is up to the individuals to decide whether or not to participate. The committee members themselves, including the narrator, express their personal commitment to the "tolak bala" tradition and mention that they continue to participate in the tradition held in Kayu Aro. However, in Labuhan Tarok, the tradition has not been observed for a long time (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

Overall, the community's response to the "tolak bala" tradition in Labuhan Tarok varies, with some showing interest and participation while others remain skeptical or uninformed about the tradition.

The community in Labuhan Tarok no longer practices the "tolak bala" tradition due to the difficulty of engaging the community in acts of goodness such as warding off disasters. The community tends to focus solely on the end results and is hesitant to participate in the tradition. This is partly because the tradition is already being observed annually in Kayu Aro. It is believed that some of the misfortunes that befall the community, such as accidents, crop failures, and fishermen facing challenges due to storms or bad weather, are consequences of not performing the "tolak bala" tradition. However, the enthusiasm for the tradition is lacking in Labuhan Tarok, as the community remains silent when the announcement is made.

The community's reluctance to participate in the tradition is not without reason. They prioritize their personal and occupational responsibilities. The predominant occupations in the community include laborers, fishermen, and farmers. While there is a small

percentage of individuals engaged in trading, civil service, and private employment, many residents of Bungus work as laborers at the fishing port and the port connecting Padang and Mentawai. They engage in small-scale trading around the port and work as manual laborers. Local residents involved in various businesses are unable to participate in the "tolak bala" tradition as they prioritize their economic activities.

The livelihoods of the community depend on these occupations. The wages earned by laborers are not high, as they are affected by the prevailing circumstances. When many people travel to Mentawai and goods are unloaded, such as bananas or other products from Mentawai to Padang, the highest wage an individual can receive is around 200,000 Indonesian Rupiah. However, if fewer people travel to Mentawai, daily wages can be as low as 30,000 to 50,000 Indonesian Rupiah, and in some cases, individuals may not receive any wages due to the lack of work.

In Labuhan Tarok, there is a shortage of religious and traditional leaders, and the current generation lacks individuals who can be relied upon to engage in acts of goodness. Even if there are individuals in the current generation who are willing to do good, they are usually already married and prioritize their families. However, such individuals are rare, and most of them can be found in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur.

2. Changes in the Tolak Bala Tradition in Nagari Bungus

In this study, we examined the changes that have occurred in the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus. The research findings indicate that there has been a shift in the implementation of this tradition. Some Tolak Bala practices that were once regularly performed by the entire Bungus community are now only maintained in certain specific areas. This shift can be attributed to factors such as urbanization, changing mindsets, and the influence of external cultures. However, despite these changes, the Tolak Bala tradition continues to hold significant importance for the Bungus community as a means of protection and reverence for their ancestral traditions.

The changes observed in the areas where the tradition persists have gradually brought about positive transformations in the surrounding environment. This includes the organization of religious and social activities within the community. Following the observance of the Tolak Bala tradition, the Bungus community has been able to ward off the misfortunes that were prevalent at the time. The impact of this tradition has been highly beneficial for the community, as they have started to grow closer to Allah SWT, forsaking prohibited activities such as cockfighting, gambling, and intoxication. Moreover, the community's agricultural yields have improved, and they no longer experience crop failures.

The changes that have occurred in the community since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus have resulted in the community being protected from impending disasters. This is because the people here have started to develop a fear of Allah SWT and have begun to draw closer to Him. They have also begun to forsake activities that are prohibited by Allah, such as gambling, dominoes, and the like. Although there are still some who do not pay heed to these changes and continue to persist in engaging in activities that are forbidden by Allah SWT. The community recognizes the preservation of the Tolak Bala tradition up until this day, and during its observance, it is always accompanied by good intentions and does not violate or compromise religious values (Rais, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

When we observe the changes that have occurred in the community, we can see that things have started to improve, and there is a decrease in the occurrence of calamities.

The rice harvest and plant growth have improved, and there are noticeable changes before and after the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition. The results are apparent, and the community is willing to participate in the Tolak Bala tradition. The Niniak Mamak (traditional leaders) and the community now conduct the Tolak Bala tradition annually or once a year. This practice is considered obligatory because the community believes that performing Tolak Bala can prevent the occurrence of calamities or disasters in Nagari Bungus.

We perform the Tolak Bala tradition to prevent the occurrence of future disasters. We are unaware of the specific calamities that may unfold in the future, but it is better to take preventive measures beforehand. The Tolak Bala tradition serves as a means of prevention. Furthermore, we have witnessed improvements since we began practicing the Tolak Bala tradition. The community does not rely solely on this tradition, as calamities or disasters come from Allah SWT and are unpredictable. Therefore, the community conducts the Tolak Bala tradition annually to safeguard against potential disasters. Since implementing the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus, there have been noticeable improvements, and the community has moved away from prohibitions (Ali Mual, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

The Tolak Bala tradition is conducted to prevent the occurrence of future misfortunes or disasters within the Bungus community. Since the community is unaware of the specific calamities that may arise in the future, it is best to take preventative measures by performing the Tolak Bala tradition once a year. The community does not solely depend on the Tolak Bala tradition, as future misfortunes are determined by Allah SWT, and the exact nature of these misfortunes is unknown to the Bungus community.

It can be seen that since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus, there has been an improvement, with no prolonged calamities occurring. If a calamity or disaster can be resolved effectively within the community, there is no need to carry out this Tolak Bala tradition. The community has resumed their usual activities such as farming, agriculture, gardening, and fishing. Anything that is forbidden by Allah SWT and considered harmful has been abandoned, although there are some members of the community who may violate these prohibitions or do not believe in the significance of the Tolak Bala tradition. This may be due to a lack of religious understanding or knowledge. However, the tradition of Tolak Bala is still being observed by the community to this day” (Ali Mual, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

Nagari Bungus has begun to improve, and the community has resumed their regular activities. The prohibitions that were forbidden by Allah SWT have started to be abandoned since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition. However, there are still individuals who violate Allah's commands and do not believe in the significance of the Tolak Bala tradition, considering it as mere mythology.

The changes that have occurred in the lost areas of the community have led to a more rational approach in dealing with calamities or situations that arise, such as crop failure, farming, fishing, and other disasters. The community does not consider these issues to be related to the absence of performing the Tolak Bala tradition in that area. Tolak Bala is not considered essential as the community is more focused on their economic livelihoods. Problems related to crop failure and similar issues are not seen as taboo but rather as a form of calamity that comes from the Creator.

The community in Labuhan Tarok sees no connection between the Tolak Bala tradition and the calamities or disasters that befall them. They have more faith in Allah than in this tradition, as they believe it to be a mere myth. The community prioritizes their own affairs and work. The calamities that occur in Labuhan Tarok, such as crop failure or not catching fish in the sea, are considered afflictions that come from Allah Himself, not from their own actions. The changes that have taken place in Labuhan Tarok regarding the Tolak Bala tradition are regarded solely as myths (Syamsudin, June 12, 2021).

In Labuhan Tarok, the Bungus community perceives no connection between the Tolak Bala tradition and the calamities that befall them, as they have greater faith in Allah SWT than in this tradition. According to the locals, the Tolak Bala tradition is considered merely a mythical belief, and they prioritize their own affairs and other matters. Hence, the changes that have taken place in Labuhan Tarok regarding the Tolak Bala tradition are solely related to mythical beliefs, as the community has more trust in the Almighty Creator, Allah SWT. The disappearance of the Tolak Bala tradition can be attributed to factors such as education, economy, and social influences from people in their surroundings, including family and societal roles. Economic factors and changes may also have played a role. The community's inability to fulfill their basic needs and the resulting social disparities have led people to adopt a more rational perspective in their beliefs and practices.

3. Causes of the Loss and Survival of the Tolak Bala Tradition

The Tolak Bala tradition persists in Nagari Bungus due to the community's high regard for religion and existing traditions in the area. Therefore, the Tolak Bala tradition continues to be upheld. The community in Bungus Barat, including Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur, has many traditional and religious figures.

To maintain the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus, it is performed annually or once a year to ensure that the community always remembers the traditions in Nagari Bungus. Other religious activities, such as Quran recitation competitions, Quran study sessions, and religious gatherings, are also conducted. In places where the tradition is preserved, it is usually because the community strongly adheres to the tradition and performs it consistently every year. These areas are often closer to nature and rely on agriculture as their primary economic activity. Additionally, there are numerous community organizations in the villages, and many individuals actively participate in these organizations, such as managing mosques or other community roles, which further contributes to the preservation of the Tolak Bala tradition and respect for other traditions in Nagari Bungus.

The community in Bungus places a high value on religious beliefs and knowledge, and religious activities are always conducted. Due to their strong religious knowledge and beliefs, the community preserves various traditions and events in Bungus. They always consider the situation and discuss the preservation of traditions in Nagari Bungus, including ongoing discussions about Tolak Bala. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to hold the Tolak Bala tradition, as it has affected all activities and the local economy.

For devout individuals who adhere to religious and traditional practices, not participating in the Tolak Bala tradition may bring a sense of shame among their

community members and raise concerns about potential future calamities. Those who do not perform the Tolak Bala tradition may believe that they will face misfortune and calamity.

Factors that influence the community's participation in the Tolak Bala tradition include the annual or once-a-year practice of the tradition. Several factors contribute to the community's adherence to the tradition. Firstly, the community has a strong belief in and knowledge of religion, which they hold in high regard. Secondly, religious activities are prioritized, and the community has a strong faith in seeking Allah's blessings, such as good health, prosperity, strength, and protection from harm. Thirdly, there are many influential figures in the community, including religious scholars and traditional leaders. The community is also willing to participate in other traditions and events.

The disappearance of the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus Barat, particularly Labuhan Tarok, is due to the lack of religious knowledge and the absence of traditional and religious figures in the area. The majority of such figures are found in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur.

The primary reason for not practicing the Tolak Bala tradition in Labuhan Tarok is the lack of religious knowledge and the absence of traditional and religious figures. The community there rarely participates in local organizations as individuals prioritize their personal affairs and work. People in Labuhan Tarok tend to adapt to the changing times and the current millennial generation. Furthermore, Labuhan Tarok is close to a main road.

The reasons why some community members do not participate in the Tolak Bala tradition are social factors influenced by people around them, such as family, roles, social status, and possibly economic factors or changes in the economy. The inability of community members to meet their basic needs results in social disparities that lead people to become more rational in their decision-making.

In Labuhan Tarok, fewer people engage in local organizations, as many individuals work as laborers or motorcycle taxi drivers. Moreover, people in Labuhan Tarok tend to adapt to changing times or imitate the urban lifestyle, including clothing, lifestyle, and changing professions. Discussions in Labuhan Tarok rarely revolve around the Tolak Bala tradition but rather focus on personal affairs and work. Additionally, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has made activities and the local economy challenging for the residents.

The factors contributing to the lack of participation in the Tolak Bala tradition include diminished religious belief and knowledge among the community. In the past, there was a strong belief in seeking blessings from Allah. Secondly, the current generation and society are difficult to engage in traditional activities or seeking blessings from Allah. Thirdly, religious activities have been abandoned, whereas they were once prioritized. Fourthly, Labuhan Tarok has sufficient facilities and easy access to funding due to its proximity to the main road. However, there is a lack of driving forces or motivators. Even if one or two individuals take on this role, it is unlikely to be sustained as they prioritize their own families. Finally, there is a lack of cultural transmission from the older generation to the younger generation, resulting in a lack of knowledge about the Tolak Bala ritual among the younger generation.

4. Meanings Understood by the Community Regarding the Tolak Bala Tradition

This research also discusses the meaning understood by the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition. Through interviews with local informants, we gained insights into the community's understanding and beliefs about this tradition. The meanings understood by the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition include self-protection and protection of the village from disasters, seeking help from God, maintaining the balance of nature, and honoring ancestors. The Tolak Bala tradition is seen as an expression of religious and cultural beliefs that are ingrained in the identity of the Bungus community.

The meaning attributed by the community to the Tolak Bala tradition is one of seeking protection from danger and offering prayers to Allah SWT through the tradition. It is one of the efforts made by the community to seek help from Allah SWT through the five daily prayers, supplications, and seeking protection from calamities and natural disasters that Allah SWT may bring by conducting the Tolak Bala tradition. In other words, we continue to seek protection from Allah SWT, asking to be kept safe from dangers and calamities that may befall Nagari Bungus. Similar sentiments were expressed by the informant.

According to me, the meaning understood in the Tolak Bala tradition is that we seek protection from Allah SWT, asking to be kept safe from dangers and calamities. Through this tradition, we offer prayers to Allah SWT and seek His help to ward off any impending disasters (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021)

That is the meaning according to the informant above regarding the understanding of the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition. However, the manner in which the tradition is carried out varies. Some perform the Tolak Bala tradition by praying in the mosque, while others may follow practices such as the Tabuik in Pariaman and others.

Since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition, the community has become more aware of the traditions in Nagari Bungus. People have started to fear the arrival of calamities because, regardless, Allah SWT will certainly test us through problems or calamities in the form of upcoming disasters. Therefore, we carry out this tradition to reject and repel disaster (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

The community is aware that Allah SWT will test us at some point. All kinds of calamities are considered tests for us, even economic difficulties are considered as calamities. Calamities don't necessarily have to be earthquakes or natural disasters; they can also be things like rice and fields being damaged by rats and birds, resulting in failed harvests, or fishermen not catching any fish, or pests spreading everywhere.

The meaning of the Tolak Bala tradition is a ritual activity aimed at warding off disasters. Tolak Bala can be interpreted as prevention. It can also be understood as a means to ward off disasters. Tolak Bala is usually associated with spiritual and mystical practices. All disasters or dangers are in the hands of Allah SWT, such as diseases, natural disasters, and others. Of course, nobody wishes for calamities to befall them. Calamities can occur at anytime and anywhere without human prediction (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021)

Although we cannot reject what Allah SWT has decreed, as Muslims, we are encouraged to make efforts, pray, and seek safety from all calamities. One way is through

reciting the Tolak Bala prayer to be protected from various disasters, calamities, and other misfortunes. As Muslims, we are allowed to seek safety from all ongoing or upcoming calamities through prayers to Allah SWT. Supplicating and seeking help from Allah SWT is permissible.

Conclusion

The findings of the research indicate that this tradition has a rich and strong history but has undergone changes in its implementation due to the influence of changing times and external cultural influences. The community of Bungus understands this tradition as a means of protection from disasters, seeking help from God, maintaining the balance of nature, and respecting their ancestors. These conclusions can be used to preserve and sustain the tradition of "tolak bala" and provide further insights into the phenomenon of cultural change within the community.

However, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, the research focused solely on Nagari Bungus in the city of Padang, which limits the generalizability of the findings to this specific context. Secondly, this study employed a qualitative approach, and therefore the results cannot be directly applied to a larger population. Additionally, the limited number of informants may affect the representativeness of the findings. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size and including other regions is needed to broaden the understanding of the tradition of "tolak bala" comprehensively.

References

- Graburn, N. H. H. (2000). What is tradition? *Museum Anthropology*, 24(2-3), 6–11.
- Hasbullah, H., Toyo, T., & Awang Pawi, A. A. (2017). Ritual Tolak Bala Pada Masyarakat Melayu (Kajian Pada Masyarakat Petalangan Kecamatan Pangkalan Kuras Kabupaten Pelalawan). *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 25(1), 83–100. <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v25i1.2742>
- Madriani, R. (2021). Living Teologi Tradisi Tolak Bala Bepapas pada Masyarakat Desa Parit Setia Kecamatan Jawai Kabupaten Sambas Kalimantan Barat. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 1(3), 260–285. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.12242>
- Mustamin, K. (2017). Makna Simbolis dalam Tradisi Maccera' Tappareng di Danau Tempe Kabupaten Wajo. *Al-Ulum*, 16(1), 246. <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v16i1.28>
- Nurozi, A. (2016). Rebo wekasan dalam Ranah Sosial Keagamaan di Kabupaten Tegal Jawa Tengah (Analisis Terhadap Ritual Rebo wekasan di Desa Sitanjung Lebaksiu). *An-Nuha: Jurnal Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Budaya Dan Sosial*, 3(1), 125–136.
- Qodim, H., & Hernawan, W. (2023). Azan Pitu: The Pacification of Plagues rituals during the COVID-19 pandemic. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 79(2). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8432>
- Rahmawati, R., Nurhadi, Z. F., & Suseno, N. S. (2017). Makna Simbolik Tradisi Rebo Kasan. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi*, 20(1), 61–74. <https://doi.org/10.20422/jpk.v20i1.131>
- Sairaji, A., & Muslimah, M. (2020). Nilai Pendidikan Islam Ritual Budaya Tolak Bala Pada Masyarakat Mendawai di Kota Palangka Raya. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Al-Affan*, 1(1), 75–83.

- Syahrun, N., Bakar, A., & Ghafur, A. (2021). TOLAK BALAK: Tinjauan atas Ritual Atib Ko Ambai di Rokan Hulu. *Nusantara; Journal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies*, 16(2), 63. <https://doi.org/10.24014/nusantara.v16i2.13632>
- Yang, Y., Shafi, M., Song, X., & Yang, R. (2018). Preservation of Cultural Heritage Embodied in Traditional Crafts in the Developing Countries. A Case Study of Pakistani Handicraft Industry. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1336. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051336>



© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

This page is intentionally left blank