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The Philosophical Meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition from the Cultural Perspective of the Bekasi Community

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Abstract
The Rebut Dandang tradition is a cultural practice of the Bekasi people that holds layers of meaning deeper than just a communal ceremony. This study aims to interpret the philosophical meaning of this tradition and explain its relevance to modern social life. The study uses a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach with data obtained through literature studies, cultural observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of symbols and practices of traditional implementation. The results show that the dandang does not only function as a ritual object, but also symbolizes sustenance, life's struggle, blessings, and social ties. The process of fighting represents human hard work in obtaining life, while the distribution of the results emphasizes the values of solidarity, cooperation, and social justice. This tradition also contains spiritual values through expressions of gratitude to God and respect for ancestors as guardians of cultural memory. Thus, Rebut Dandang remains relevant as a medium for character education, strengthening local identity, and preserving Bekasi's cultural wisdom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local culture is one of the main foundations that shape the identity, value orientation, and character of a society. In the context of Indonesia, a country with diverse ethnicities, languages, and traditions, local wisdom is understood not only as a cultural legacy passed down from generation to generation, but also as a knowledge system that guides how society interprets the relationships between humans, nature, and the spiritual dimension of life (Widodo & Hamzah, 2024). Therefore, the existence of local traditions cannot be positioned solely as cultural artifacts, but rather as social mechanisms that maintain the continuity of values while strengthening the collective identity of society amidst changing times (Nurdin et al., 2024).

The development of globalization, increasing social mobility, and the acceleration of technological transformation have brought fundamental changes to the way society views tradition. On the one hand, these changes have opened up wider spaces for cultural interaction. On the other hand, modernization also presents challenges to the sustainability of various local cultural practices, as some people, particularly the younger generation, have begun to view tradition as a ceremonial activity detached from its underlying philosophical meaning. This situation has the potential to shift the function of tradition from a space for transmitting values to merely symbolic cultural events without adequate understanding of their substance (Batubara et al., 2024). Several recent studies also show that the sustainability of tradition is determined not only by the preservation of its ritual form, but primarily by the community's ability to maintain the living cultural meaning behind the

practice so that it remains relevant to contemporary social dynamics (Cao et al., 2024; Zayadi, 2023).

From a cultural studies perspective, tradition is understood as a space for the production of meaning that is continually interpreted according to the social context of its supporting community. The values contained within a tradition are not static entities, but are continually reproduced through social practices, intergenerational communication, and the collective experiences of the community. Therefore, research on tradition is not sufficient to stop at describing ritual implementation, but needs to uncover the symbol systems, worldviews, and philosophical values that enable the tradition to persist amidst social change (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025). This approach is gaining increasing attention in various cultural studies because it can explain the relationship between cultural symbols, community identity, and local cultural resilience in the modern era (Reza et al., 2024; Suyitno et al., 2023).

Among the various cultural expressions still preserved by the Bekasi community, the Rebut Dandang Tradition holds a unique position because it combines ritual, social, and symbolic dimensions in one cultural practice. This tradition not only presents a communal activity passed down from generation to generation, but also reflects how the community interprets hard work, togetherness, gratitude, and intergenerational relationships through cultural symbols that are continuously practiced. The Dandang, as the main medium in this tradition, is not only understood as a household item, but also presents as a representation of abundant sustenance, collective hope, and blessings built through the cultural experiences of the Bekasi community.

Over time, the Rebut Dandang tradition has persisted despite rapid social change in Bekasi society due to urbanization, industrial expansion, and increased interaction with global culture. These dynamics place local traditions in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, traditions are still maintained as a cultural identity for the community. On the other hand, the process of passing on their philosophical meanings is beginning to face challenges because public attention often focuses more on the performance aspect than on understanding their inherent values. A similar phenomenon is also found in various local traditions in Indonesia, where social change shifts the orientation of society from the meaning of culture to the consumption of culture as a spectacle or social attraction (Wardhana et al., 2024; Ghafur, 2024).

Numerous studies on Betawi and Bekasi culture have shown that various local traditions serve functions beyond the ceremonial dimension. Traditions not only serve as a medium for preserving cultural identity but also play a role in strengthening social cohesion, expanding intergenerational communication, and maintaining local values amidst societal change (Ali et al., 2022; Damayanti et al., 2023; Poetra & Zahra, 2022). Research on Palang Pintu, for example, shows that cultural symbols contain philosophical messages that shape Betawi identity (Sihombing, 2023; Reza et al., 2024). Similarly, studies of various traditional rituals in Indonesia show that symbolic meaning is a key element that keeps a tradition alive and relevant in modern society (Suyitno et al., 2023; Nursalam et al., 2024). However, studies that specifically place the Rebut Dandang Tradition as an object of philosophical analysis are still very limited. Most studies focus more on historical aspects, ritual implementation, or cultural preservation, while readings regarding the structure of meaning, symbolism, and their philosophical relevance in contemporary social life have not received adequate attention (Kebingin et al., 2024).

These conditions indicate a research gap that requires attention. First, there is still little research examining the Rebut Dandang Tradition through an interpretive approach that focuses on the philosophical meaning behind the symbols, practices, and social interactions that shape the tradition. Second, the relationship between the values of struggle, social

solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors as a unified value system has not been comprehensively explained in the available literature. Third, discussion of the relevance of these values in addressing the challenges of contemporary society is also relatively limited. Thus, a study is needed that not only describes how the Rebut Dandang Tradition is carried out but also explains why the tradition remains meaningful and how the values it embodies continue to be reproduced in the lives of Bekasi people today.

Several previous studies have shown that local traditions are an important space for the transmission of values, the formation of cultural identity, and the strengthening of social cohesion within a community. Studies of various traditional rituals in Indonesia generally position tradition as a medium for the internalization of moral values, solidarity, and the continuity of culture passed down through generations (Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024; Kebingin et al., 2024). Other research also shows that local cultural practices have the ability to maintain community identity when faced with the dynamics of modernization and globalization (Widodo & Hamzah, 2024; Nurdin et al., 2024). In the context of Betawi and Bekasi culture, several studies have uncovered the symbolic meaning of various traditions, such as Palang Pintu, Nyorog, and other traditional rituals, demonstrating that cultural symbols function as a medium for communicating social, religious, and cultural values (Sihombing, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2021; Reza et al., 2024). These findings show that traditions not only function as cultural heritage, but also as a mechanism that maintains the continuity of society's collective memory.

However, previous research tends to focus on historical aspects, descriptions of ritual implementation, social functions, or cultural preservation. Studies specifically interpreting the philosophical meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition as a system of symbols representing the Bekasi community's outlook on life are still relatively limited. Yet, each cultural symbol not only has a practical function but also contains a structure of meaning formed through historical experiences, beliefs, social relations, and values that exist within its supporting community (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025; Nursalam et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding tradition is not sufficient through mere descriptions of rituals, but requires an interpretive reading of the symbols, actions, and values that shape the entire cultural practice.

Conceptually, this study views the Rebut Dandang Tradition as a symbolic system that represents the social reality of Bekasi society. A cultural studies perspective positions tradition as a social text that can be interpreted to reveal the meaning behind the actions, symbols, and social practices of society (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025). Within this framework, the concept of local wisdom is understood as a collection of collective values, knowledge, and experiences that develop through historical processes and are continuously reproduced in community life (Widodo & Hamzah, 2024). Meanwhile, character education theory provides a foundation that cultural values have a strategic function in shaping attitudes, morals, social responsibility, and collective awareness of individuals towards community life (Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024). Thus, the philosophical meaning contained in the Rebut Dandang Tradition is understood not only as a cultural symbol, but also as a source of social learning that strengthens the values of struggle, solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors.

Based on this review, the novelty of this research lies in its attempt to integrate symbolic analysis, philosophical meaning, and social relevance of the Rebut Dandang Tradition within a coherent cultural studies framework. Unlike previous studies that tended to describe the form of the tradition or its social function, this study seeks to explain the relationship between cultural symbols, philosophical values, and the continuity of Bekasi community identity within the context of contemporary social change. Thus, this research not only enriches the body of local cultural studies but also offers a perspective on tradition as a space

for the reproduction of values that remains adaptive to the development of modern society (Suarminiati & Subanda, 2025; Saputro, 2024).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the philosophical meaning contained in the Rebut Dandang Tradition, analyze the cultural values represented through traditional symbols and practices, and explain the relevance of these values in the social life of Bekasi society in the contemporary era. The results of this study are expected to expand academic studies on local culture while providing conceptual contributions to the development of cultural preservation based on local wisdom and character education in Indonesia.

Based on this description, this study starts from the assumption that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is not simply a cultural practice maintained as a local heritage, but rather a symbolic system that embodies the Bekasi community's outlook on life. The values of struggle, social solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors embodied in each stage of the tradition not only reflect the community's historical experiences but also serve as an ethical foundation that is continuously reproduced in social life. Therefore, understanding this tradition requires an approach that goes beyond describing the ritual implementation and seeks to interpret the meaning behind the symbols, actions, and social interactions that make up the entire cultural practice (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025; Suyitno et al., 2023).

Based on this framework, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Rebut Dandang Tradition, uncover the philosophical meanings represented through cultural symbols and practices, and explain the relevance of these values in the lives of Bekasi people in the contemporary era. To achieve these objectives, the study uses a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach that allows for the exploration of meaning based on the experiences, interpretations, and cultural contexts of the tradition's practitioners (Annisha, 2024; Creswell & Poth, 2018). With this approach, this study is expected to not only contribute to the development of local cultural studies but also enrich the discourse on tradition as a source of knowledge, character education, and strengthening cultural identity amidst dynamic social change (Suarminiati & Subanda, 2025; Saputro, 2024).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approaches and Types

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive approach to examine the philosophical meanings contained in the Rebut Dandang Tradition as a form of local wisdom of the Bekasi community. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand tradition as a cultural practice containing symbols, values, and collective experiences that cannot be explained solely through quantitative measurements. The focus of the research is directed at interpreting the meanings constructed by the community towards the cultural symbols present in the implementation of the Rebut Dandang Tradition (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Research Location

The research was conducted in Bekasi City and Regency, where the Rebut Dandang tradition is still preserved as part of the community's cultural life. The location was selected purposively, taking into account the tradition's continuity, community involvement in the ritual, and the availability of informants knowledgeable about the tradition's history, development, and cultural significance. This location selection was expected to provide rich data in line with the research objectives (Patton, 2015).

Research Informants

Research informants were determined using purposive sampling techniques based on their level of knowledge, experience, and involvement in the Rebut Dandang Tradition (Etikan et al., 2016). Informants consisted of traditional leaders, community leaders, cultural

figures, tradition practitioners, and community members who actively participated in the tradition. The informant selection process was carried out in stages until the information obtained showed a recurring tendency (data saturation), thus the collected data was deemed sufficient to answer the research focus.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using four complementary techniques, namely observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and literature studies.

Observations were conducted to directly observe the Rebut Dandang tradition, the use of cultural symbols, interactions between participants, and the social context surrounding the tradition. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore informants' understanding of the philosophical values, history, and changes occurring within the tradition. Documentation in the form of photographs, archives, cultural records, and supporting documents was used to strengthen the results of the observations and interviews. Meanwhile, a literature review was used to build a theoretical foundation and strengthen the interpretation of the research findings (Bowen, 2009).

Research Instruments

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, who played a role in designing the study, collecting data, interpreting it, and drawing conclusions. To maintain consistency in the data collection process, the researcher used observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guidelines, and a documentation format developed based on the research focus on the philosophical meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). All interviews were transcribed and then coded to identify themes emerging from the field data. These themes were then grouped based on their relationship to the meaning of struggle, social solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors. The interpretation process was carried out by combining empirical data and cultural studies perspectives to produce a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition. The analysis also referred to the principles of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ensure a systematic relationship between data and interpretation.

Data Validity Test

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants, while technical triangulation was conducted through comparisons of observations, interviews, documentation, and literature studies. Furthermore, interpretations were reconfirmed with several key informants through member checking to ensure that the meaning formulated by the researchers aligned with their experiences and understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. Before data collection, each informant received an explanation of the research objectives, the form of participation, and their right to provide voluntary consent. The informant's identity was kept confidential throughout the research process, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. The researchers also respected the norms, customs, and cultural values of the Bekasi community during the data collection process, ensuring that the research did not disrupt the continuity or significance of the Rebut Dandang Tradition as a local cultural heritage.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Brief History of the Boiler Grab Tradition

The Rebut Dandang tradition is a cultural heritage of the Bekasi people, still preserved as part of social life and local identity. This tradition's existence is inseparable from the development of an agrarian society that for many years depended on agricultural produce, community togetherness, and a spiritual connection with the Creator. In this context, the tradition emerged not as a cultural performance, but as a collective expression that captures the community's life experiences and serves as a medium for transmitting values between generations.

Along with social changes occurring in the Bekasi region, the Rebut Dandang tradition has undergone various adaptations without losing its fundamental meaning. While some elements of its implementation have adapted to the dynamics of modern society, the values underlying the tradition remain intact as part of local cultural identity. This phenomenon demonstrates that tradition is not a static practice, but rather possesses the ability to adapt to social change without abandoning its underlying values. This finding aligns with studies on the dynamics of Betawi and Bekasi culture, which demonstrate that the sustainability of tradition is strongly influenced by the community's ability to maintain its symbolic meaning amidst the process of modernization (Reza et al., 2024; David et al., 2024; Wardhana et al., 2024).

The Process of Implementing the Boiler Grab Tradition

The Rebut Dandang tradition begins with communal preparations by the community. The steamer used is filled with various foods, agricultural products, or other symbols of good fortune prepared by the organizers. Once all preparations are complete, the community gathers at the location to participate in the open procession, which involves people of all ages. The large attendance demonstrates that this tradition is understood as a shared responsibility, not a specific group activity.

The most prominent stage is the process of the participants competing for the steamer. At first glance, this activity appears to be a form of competition between participants. However, observations show that this struggle is not intended to create conflict or individual domination. Rather, the process is a symbolic representation of the dynamics of human life in obtaining sustenance through effort, hard work, and active participation in social life. After the procession concludes, an atmosphere of togetherness re-emerges through interactions between members of the community who share their harvests, strengthen social ties, and reinforce a sense of belonging to traditions passed down through generations.

The implementation of this tradition demonstrates that the Bekasi community views togetherness as an inseparable element of social life. Tradition serves as a space for interaction that brings together various levels of society in a shared cultural experience, thereby strengthening community social cohesion. This finding aligns with research by Isra et al. (2025), which explains that participatory cultural practices contribute to the formation of social solidarity, while strengthening interpersonal relationships within the community. Similar results have also been found in various local traditions in Indonesia, indicating that communal rituals function as a mechanism for maintaining social integration and the continuity of cultural identity (Hasan et al., 2023; Riyadi et al., 2024; Maharani & Illiyyun, 2025).

The Symbolic Meaning of the Boiler

In the Rebut Dandang Tradition, the dandang is the central symbol that builds the overall cultural meaning. Functionally, the dandang is used as a container for food or agricultural produce. However, for the people of Bekasi, the dandang's meaning extends beyond its material function. The dandang is understood as a representation of life, abundance of sustenance, gratitude, and hope for blessings bestowed upon the community by God.

These symbolic meanings do not stand alone, but are shaped through the collective experiences of a community, passed down from one generation to the next. When people fight over a steamer, what is being fought over is not merely a physical object, but a symbol of struggle, opportunity, and hope for a better life. Therefore, the act of fighting is not understood as an expression of social conflict, but as a cultural metaphor for human endeavors to navigate life within a framework of togetherness and solidarity.

This interpretation demonstrates that cultural symbols function as a medium for communicating values, simultaneously connecting the material, social, and spiritual dimensions. This perspective aligns with various studies on symbolism in Nusantara traditions, which demonstrate that ritual objects serve as representations of collective values that are continuously reproduced through cultural practices (Sihombing, 2023; Nursalam et al., 2024; Karimah & Sari, 2024). Thus, the dandang serves not only as a ceremonial tool but also as a symbol representing the Bekasi community's outlook on life regarding hard work, togetherness, gratitude, and cultural sustainability.

The Philosophical Meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition

The Rebut Dandang tradition not only represents a cultural ritual passed down through generations, but also embodies a value system that reflects how the Bekasi people interpret life. Based on observations, interviews, and literature reviews, the philosophical meaning of this tradition is constructed through a close relationship between cultural symbols, social practices, and the community's collective beliefs. The Dandang, the process of seizing it, and community involvement in every stage of its implementation form an inseparable unity of meaning. From a cultural studies perspective, these symbols function as a medium for transmitting life values from one generation to the next, ensuring that the tradition remains relevant amid ongoing social change (Suyitno et al., 2023; Nursalam et al., 2024).

The Value of Struggle

One of the most prominent philosophical meanings of the Rebut Dandang Tradition is the value of struggle. The process of seizing the dandang represents the community's view that life is not achieved through luck alone, but through effort, hard work, perseverance, and courage in facing various challenges. This symbol stems from the historical experience of the Bekasi people, who have long relied on the agricultural sector for their livelihood. In this context, success is always understood as the result of earnest effort.

Interestingly, the value of struggle displayed in this tradition does not lead to destructive competition. Instead, the community views the struggle as part of a social learning process about the importance of honest effort without neglecting the ethics of togetherness. Thus, the symbol of the struggle for the steamer becomes a metaphor for the dynamics of human life, namely that every individual must struggle to obtain a decent living, while remaining within the corridors of humanitarian values and respect for others. This interpretation aligns with various studies on Nusantara cultural symbols, which show that traditional rituals often represent a community's work ethic, resilience, and fighting spirit as part of its cultural identity (Jaya & Sulyani, 2025; Tanjung et al., 2020).

Social Solidarity

Although the Rebut Dandang tradition demonstrates elements of competition, its essence is actually aimed at strengthening social solidarity. Observations show that after the procession is over, community interaction doesn't stop at ownership of the acquired goods. Instead, practices of sharing, mutual assistance, and strengthening relationships emerge, as part of the values deeply rooted in Bekasi society.

This phenomenon demonstrates that society interprets success not solely as an individual achievement, but as part of shared well-being. The values of cooperation, togetherness, and a sense of community ownership remain the primary foundations of tradition. Therefore, the Rebut Dandang Tradition serves as a social space that strengthens community cohesion

while renewing collective commitment to living together. This finding corroborates the research of Kebingin et al. (2024), which states that local wisdom plays a crucial role in building social harmony and strengthening intercommunity relations. Similar findings were also reported by Maharani and Illiyyun (2025) and Hasan et al. (2023), who demonstrated that communal rituals contribute to the formation of mutual trust, solidarity, and collective identity in the community.

Spiritual Values and Blessings

The spiritual dimension is an integral part of the Rebut Dandang Tradition. In the Bekasi community, the dandang not only symbolizes the abundance of the earth's produce but also represents the sustenance believed to come from God. Therefore, the tradition is understood as an expression of gratitude for the blessings received and a reminder that every form of human success is always connected to the transcendental dimension.

This perspective fosters an awareness that blessings are not solely measured by the quantity of goods obtained, but rather by the manner in which they are obtained, appreciated, and shared with others. Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition serves as a medium for internalizing religious values, fostering gratitude, sincerity, social awareness, and moral responsibility. This connection between cultural symbols and the spiritual dimension is also found in various local traditions in Indonesia, where rituals are seen as a means of strengthening the relationship between humans, nature, and God within a unified life (Sohrah et al., 2023; Ubaidillah & Marpuah, 2021; Halim et al., 2025).

Respect for Ancestors

Another prominent philosophical meaning is respect for ancestors as inheritors of cultural values. For the people of Bekasi, the continuation of the Rebut Dandang Tradition not only demonstrates an effort to maintain a ritual but also reflects a collective awareness of maintaining historical connections with previous generations. Ancestors are viewed as sources of wisdom who pass on life values through cultural practices that continue to be maintained today.

Preserving traditions serves as a form of respect for a community's collective memory and acknowledges that cultural identity is built through intergenerational continuity. From this perspective, the Rebut Dandang Tradition serves as a mechanism for transmitting values, not simply a repetition of an annual ceremony. Each tradition renews collective memory regarding the importance of maintaining ethics, solidarity, and togetherness inherited from ancestors. These findings reinforce various studies explaining that the sustainability of local traditions depends heavily on the community's ability to transmit cultural values to the next generation through ongoing social practices (Allolinggi et al., 2020; Karimah & Sari, 2024; Nuraini et al., 2025).

Overall, these four philosophical values demonstrate that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is a cultural system that unites the dimensions of struggle, solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors into a single, meaningful whole. These values do not stand alone but rather reinforce each other, ensuring that this tradition maintains its social, moral, and cultural function in the lives of the Bekasi community. Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition not only maintains the continuity of a ritual but also reproduces a worldview that serves as the foundation of the community's cultural identity from generation to generation.

The Relevance of the Rebut Dandang Tradition in Modern Life

Social changes triggered by globalization, technological developments, and increased social mobility are often viewed as threats to the sustainability of local traditions. However, the results of this study indicate that the Rebut Dandang Tradition still retains strong relevance in the lives of the Bekasi community. This relevance is not only evident in its continued implementation as a cultural ritual, but also in its ability to transmit social, moral, and spiritual values that remain essential in contemporary life. In other words, the Rebut

Dandang Tradition not only preserves past cultural memories but also continues to function as a social learning space capable of adapting to changing times without losing its fundamental meaning.

Character building

One of the important contributions of the Rebut Dandang tradition to modern life lies in its function as a medium for character education. The values of struggle, hard work, togetherness, responsibility, and gratitude reflected in each stage of the tradition constitute relevant social capital for shaping the character of the younger generation. Unlike purely conceptual learning, these values are learned through cultural experiences that involve direct community participation. This process allows for deeper internalization of values because individuals not only understand their meaning cognitively but also internalize them through social practices.

These findings demonstrate that local traditions have an educational function that cannot be replaced by formal learning alone. Traditions provide a space where communities learn about life ethics, social responsibility, and the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with others. These findings align with those of Jayanti and Wulandari (2024), who emphasized that local wisdom is an important resource for character education. Similar findings were also presented by Allolinggi et al. (2020), Wibawa and Awaliah (2023), and Aldi and Khairanis (2025), who demonstrated that local cultural values can be integrated into the educational process as a means of building character rooted in the community's cultural identity.

Strengthening Cultural Identity

Amidst increasingly intense global cultural interactions, the Rebut Dandang tradition plays a strategic role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Bekasi community. This tradition provides a collective space that brings people together to recall the history, values, and cultural experiences that are part of their identity. Through repeated implementation, the community not only maintains the ritual but also reproduces the cultural knowledge passed down from previous generations.

Strengthening cultural identity becomes increasingly important as communities face the process of cultural homogenization due to globalization. In such conditions, local traditions serve as identity markers that distinguish one community from another while simultaneously strengthening a sense of belonging to the region's cultural heritage. The results of this study align with Widodo and Hamzah (2024), who emphasized that preserving local wisdom is a crucial part of maintaining a community's cultural identity. Research by Reza et al. (2024) on the dynamics of Betawi culture and Poetra and Zahra (2022) on the preservation of Betawi culture in Bekasi also demonstrate that the continuity of traditions significantly contributes to strengthening local identity amidst rapid social change.

Cultural Tourism

In addition to its cultural value, the Rebut Dandang Tradition also holds the potential to be developed as a sustainable cultural tourism attraction. The unique symbols, ritual processions, and community involvement in the tradition are cultural assets capable of attracting wider public attention and introducing Bekasi's rich cultural heritage to the public. However, developing a tradition as a tourist attraction cannot be solely oriented towards economic aspects. The philosophical values, social functions, and cultural significance inherent in the tradition must remain a priority to ensure that commercialization does not diminish its authenticity.

This approach demonstrates that cultural tourism should be understood as an instrument for cultural preservation, not simply a means of exploiting culture for economic gain. When communities remain the primary actors in managing traditions, the economic benefits gained can go hand in hand with efforts to maintain the sustainability of cultural values.

This view is supported by research by Astina et al. (2021), Suardana et al. (2022), Ginting et al. (2025), and Pugra et al. (2025), which emphasize that culture-based tourism development will be more sustainable if it is based on community participation and respect for local values.

Cultural Preservation in the Era of Globalization

Preserving the Rebut Dandang Tradition in the era of globalization involves not only maintaining its ritual form but also ensuring that its values are understood by future generations. Research shows that the Bekasi community views tradition preservation as a dynamic process. Traditions are maintained, but their implementation can adapt to social changes as long as they do not lose the philosophical meaning that underlies the tradition.

This understanding demonstrates that cultural sustainability does not depend on rejecting modernization, but rather on the community's ability to integrate tradition with the needs of contemporary life. Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition serves as an example of how local wisdom can adapt without losing its identity. This finding reinforces the argument of Zayadi (2023) regarding the dialectical relationship between tradition and modernization, as well as Wardhana et al. (2024), who point out that adaptation is a crucial strategy in maintaining cultural heritage amidst technological developments and social change. The results of this study also align with those of David et al. (2024), who assert that cultural preservation will be more effective if carried out through strengthening cultural meaning, increasing community participation, and continuously passing on values to the younger generation.

Overall, the relevance of the Rebut Dandang Tradition in modern life lies not only in the continuity of a cultural ritual, but also in its ability to serve as a medium for character education, a reinforcement of cultural identity, a driver of tourism based on local wisdom, and an instrument for cultural preservation amidst globalization. These four dimensions demonstrate that tradition has a function that continues to evolve with the dynamics of society, while maintaining the philosophical values that underpin its existence as part of the cultural heritage of the Bekasi community.

DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is a cultural practice that not only maintains the continuity of a local ritual but also represents a value system that is continuously reproduced through social interactions within the Bekasi community. The values of struggle, social solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors do not emerge as standalone elements, but rather form an interconnected cultural construct. From a cultural studies perspective, this condition demonstrates that tradition is a space for the production and reproduction of meaning, where symbols, actions, and collective experiences serve as the primary media for maintaining community identity. Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition not only preserves historical memory but also functions as a social mechanism that enables communities to negotiate their cultural identity amidst ongoing social change (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025; Hobart, 2022; Rappleye, 2020).

Relationship of Findings to Cultural Theory

From an interpretive cultural perspective, symbols do not possess inherent meaning but acquire meaning through the interpretive process undertaken by their supporting communities. The Dandang, the process of fighting for it, and the distribution of the harvest in the Rebut Dandang Tradition demonstrate that cultural meaning is constructed through repeated social actions passed down through generations. Therefore, cultural symbols in this tradition are not merely ritual complements but serve as a medium for communicating values that connect the material, social, and spiritual dimensions of Bekasi society. This finding reinforces the view that cultural practices are social texts that can be read to understand how a society interprets life, social relations, and the sustainability of its culture (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025; Andersen, 2020).

On the other hand, research results also indicate that the Rebut Dandang Tradition has a pedagogical function because it serves as a space for learning values through cultural experiences. The value of struggle is learned through participation in rituals, solidarity is built through communal interactions, while spirituality and respect for ancestors are internalized through symbols and practices passed down through generations. These findings reinforce the view that local culture is an effective source of social learning in shaping community character (Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024; Allolinggi et al., 2020; Wibawa & Awaliah, 2023; Yacek et al., 2020). Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition functions not only as a cultural expression but also as a vehicle for cultural pedagogy that maintains the continuity of values within society (Kadir & Rosmini, 2025; Apriana et al., 2025).

Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study share several similarities with various studies on local traditions in Indonesia that position cultural rituals as a medium for transmitting social values and strengthening community identity. Research on the Palang Pintu Tradition of the Betawi people shows that cultural symbols function as representations of courage, respect, and collective identity (Sihombing, 2023; Handayani et al., 2021; Wibowo & Ayundasari, 2021). Similarly, research on the Nyorog Tradition in Bekasi reveals that cultural practices serve as a medium for strengthening social solidarity and religious values in community life (Hidayat et al., 2021). These findings align with the results of this study, which demonstrate that the Rebut Dandang Tradition not only maintains ritual aspects but also transmits values of struggle, togetherness, and spirituality to the next generation.

Despite these similarities, this study offers a different perspective than previous research. Most previous studies have focused more on the historical aspects of tradition, social functions, cultural preservation, or semiotic analysis of specific symbols (Reza et al., 2024; Karimah & Sari, 2024; Nursalam et al., 2024). This study, however, demonstrates that symbolic meaning cannot be understood separately from the overall cultural practices that surround it. The Dandang, the process of seizing it, the interactions between participants, and the distribution of the proceeds form an interconnected system of meaning. Therefore, the philosophical meaning of the Rebut Dandang Tradition is more accurately understood as a cultural construct born from the relationship between symbols, actions, collective experiences, and the social memory of the Bekasi community.

The findings of this study also confirm various international studies stating that the sustainability of traditions is greatly influenced by the community's ability to maintain cultural meaning, not merely its ritual form (Cao et al., 2024; Charina et al., 2022; Ghafur, 2024). In the Bekasi context, the sustainability of the Rebut Dandang Tradition demonstrates that the community does not merely preserve cultural processions but continues to reproduce the values contained within them to maintain their relevance to contemporary social life. Thus, adaptation to modernization does not eliminate cultural identity, but rather demonstrates the tradition's ability to evolve without losing its philosophical substance (Wardhana et al., 2024; Zayadi, 2023).

Contribution to Cultural Studies

The primary contribution of this research lies in strengthening the perspective that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is a cultural system that integrates symbolic, social, and spiritual dimensions into a single, meaningful whole. This research broadens the study of local culture by demonstrating that cultural symbols cannot be understood solely as material objects or parts of rituals, but as media that transmit a community's outlook on life, moral values, and collective identity. This perspective enriches cultural studies, which have so far focused more on describing the implementation of traditions than on analyzing the relationship between symbols, social experiences, and the reproduction of cultural values.

In addition to providing conceptual contributions, this research also has practical implications for the development of cultural preservation policies. The results indicate that the preservation of traditions will be more sustainable if directed at strengthening public understanding of the philosophical meanings contained within the traditions, rather than simply maintaining their ceremonial forms. This approach allows traditions to remain alive as a source of character education, strengthening cultural identity, developing community-based tourism, and as a strategy for maintaining cultural resilience amidst globalization (Widodo & Hamzah, 2024; Poetra & Zahra, 2022; David et al., 2024; Ginting et al., 2025).

Overall, this research demonstrates that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is not simply a cultural heritage preserved for historical reasons. It is a cultural mechanism that continuously generates, transmits, and renews the values of the Bekasi community. From this perspective, the continued existence of the Rebut Dandang Tradition demonstrates the adaptive capacity of local culture to respond to social change without losing the identity or philosophical meaning that underpins its existence.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Rebut Dandang Tradition is not merely a ceremonial practice of the Bekasi people, but rather a symbolic system encompassing the life views, social values, and spiritual orientation of its supporters. The dandang, as the central object in the tradition, represents the source of life, sustenance, prosperity, and blessings. Meanwhile, the process of seizing the dandang cannot be read as a conflict, but rather as a cultural metaphor for the human struggle to attain a livelihood through effort, hard work, and social engagement.

The philosophical meaning found in this tradition encompasses four main values: struggle, social solidarity, spirituality, and respect for ancestors. These four values are interconnected and form the ethical foundation of the Bekasi community in maintaining interpersonal relationships, relationships with God, and relationships with past cultural heritage. Thus, the Rebut Dandang Tradition holds strong relevance in modern life because it can function as a medium for character education, strengthening cultural identity, developing cultural tourism, and as a strategy for preserving local wisdom amidst globalization.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its interpretation of the Rebut Dandang Tradition as a system of meaning that connects symbols, social practices, and philosophical values within a single framework of cultural studies. This research enriches the study of Bekasi culture and local Indonesian traditions by emphasizing that cultural preservation is not simply achieved through the repetition of ritual forms, but also through a deep understanding of their values.

Practically, the results of this research can serve as a basis for communities, cultural institutions, local governments, and educational institutions in designing cultural preservation programs based on meaning, not just performance. The Rebut Dandang tradition can be integrated into character education, regional cultural activities, and cultural tourism development while respecting the authenticity of local values.

This study is limited by its location and the number of informants, which were limited to specific communities in Bekasi. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ a more in-depth ethnographic approach, involve more young people, and compare the Rebut Dandang tradition with similar traditions in the Betawi region or West Java. Further studies could also explore the transformation of this tradition in the context of digital cultural tourism and local wisdom-based education.

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