



EMPATHY AND TOGETHERNESS IN THE ROISAN KONDANGAN TRADITION IN DEPOK, WEST JAVA

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the meaning and role of the Roisan Kondangan tradition in strengthening social solidarity and preserving local wisdom values in the community of Depok, West Java. This tradition is a form of reciprocity in community events, involving contributions from residents as a manifestation of mutual aid and solidarity. This research is qualitative type. A qualitative approach was employed through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with thematic analysis to uncover its social and symbolic meanings. Interviews were conducted with H. Muchtar, a Betawi traditional elder and Mrs. Jumiati, a PKK chairperson who doubles as an RT head in Limo, Depok. The research findings indicate that despite adjustments in the form of assistance, such as a shift from goods and cash to the use of digital technology, the Roisan Kondangan tradition remains relevant as a means of strengthening social bonds and fostering closer relationships among residents. The values of solidarity and empathy remain at the core of this practice, demonstrating adaptation to modern social dynamics without losing its collective essence. The main conclusion indicates that this tradition functions as a social medium that strengthens a sense of togetherness and collective awareness among the community, while also serving as an instrument for preserving local culture that remains relevant in the contemporary era. The implications of this research are significant in supporting efforts to preserve traditions and local wisdom as part of the cultural identity of the Depok community and Indonesian society in general.

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Keywords:

Empathy; Roisan Kondangan; Togetherness

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami makna dan peran tradisi Roisan Kondangan dalam memperkuat solidaritas sosial serta menjaga nilai-nilai kearifan lokal di masyarakat Depok, Jawa Barat. Tradisi ini merupakan bentuk timbal balik dalam acara hajatan yang melibatkan sumbangan dari warga sebagai manifestasi gotong royong dan kebersamaan. Penelitian ini berjenis kualitatif. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan melalui observasi langsung, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi, dengan analisis tematik untuk mengungkap makna sosial dan simboliknya. Wawancara dilakukan kepada H. Muchtar, sesepuh adat Betawi dan Ibu Jumiati, seorang ketua PKK yang merangkap sebagai ketua RT di Limo, Depok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terjadi penyesuaian dalam bentuk bantuan, seperti pergeseran dari barang dan uang tunai ke penggunaan teknologi digital, tradisi Roisan Kondangan tetap relevan sebagai sarana memperkuat ikatan sosial dan mempererat hubungan antarwarga. Nilai solidaritas dan empati tetap menjadi inti dari praktik ini, serta menunjukkan adaptasi terhadap dinamika sosial modern tanpa kehilangan esensi kolektifnya. Kesimpulan utama menunjukkan bahwa tradisi ini mampu berfungsi sebagai media sosial yang memperkuat rasa kebersamaan dan kesadaran kolektif masyarakat, sekaligus menjadi instrumen pelestarian budaya lokal yang relevan di era kontemporer. Implikasi penelitian ini penting dalam mendukung upaya pelestarian tradisi dan kearifan lokal sebagai bagian dari identitas budaya masyarakat Depok dan masyarakat Indonesia secara umum.

Kata Kunci: Empati; Kebersamaan; Roisan Kondangan

Introduction

Indonesia has a wealth of diverse social and cultural traditions. One such tradition is the practice of *kondangan*, which is a form of reciprocity practiced in celebration events. *Kondangan* is a community habit of helping each other voluntarily, where neighbors or relatives make donations to the party organizing the event to ease the burden of costs borne by the host. This tradition is commonly found in various types of social events, such as weddings, circumcisions, *ruwahan*, and housewarmings. In various regions in Indonesia, this practice is known by different names, such as *buwuh* or *buwuhan* in Java, *ondangan* in the Sundanese region, *marsiadapari* among the Batak community, and *mahosi* in Maluku (Suharto, Maula, Nuril, & Fikriyan, 2023). The essence of this tradition lies in the spirit of gotong-royong, which is the value of togetherness and mutual assistance that plays an important role in strengthening solidarity between community members. As an illustration, the indigenous community in Kampung Naga applies the value of gotong-royong as a way to build and maintain a sense of unity and social solidarity in their environment (Rolitia, Achdiani, & Eridiana, 2016).

A number of studies have discussed the social and cultural dynamics contained in the *kondangan* tradition. Suharto et al. (2023), for example, researched the practice of *kondangan* in the Central Java region. The results of his study show that although this tradition initially emerged as a form of mutual cooperation to help the owner of the event, in its development, some people now interpret it as a form of borrowing that creates an obligation to return in an equal form. A similar situation is also found in the *buwuh* tradition in Malang, East Java. The results of their research show that there are two different views among the community. Some residents consider donations at weddings as a sincere and non-binding gift, while others see it as a debt that must be repaid at a later date (Saputri & Ashari, 2019). There is also a *buwuh* tradition in Surabaya practiced as part of social interaction which, in certain contexts, is understood to resemble a debt system when viewed from an Islamic economic perspective (Rachmawati & Anwar, 2022).

Several other studies have shown that although the form of donation has changed, it does not necessarily reduce the value of solidarity in it. For example, in the *nyumbang* tradition in North Sumatra, people now make contributions in the form of money or goods. However, this tradition is still believed to be able to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and foster a sense of social care among citizens (Manik, 2021). In general, previous studies have highlighted that the main values in this tradition are the spirit of gotong-royong, kinship relations,

and mutual assistance, although the application may vary depending on the social and cultural context in each region.

Although a number of studies have discussed the phenomenon of *kondangan* or similar practices in various regions, especially from an economic and legal perspective, studies that specifically examine the practice of recording and returning celebration donations in urban areas such as Depok are still very limited. One of the typical practices of the Depok community known as *Roisan Kondangan*, namely the system of recording the amount of contribution and its return, has not been the focus of much academic research. This research is important and interesting because it highlights the socio-cultural dynamics unique to Depok and illustrates how the tradition functions as a form of modern reciprocity in urban life.

This research also began with an interview with a Betawi traditional leader, H. Muchtar (interview, 20 Mei 2025). He explained that the *kondangan* Raisan tradition is a form of social practice that is full of meaning in the lives of rural Javanese communities, especially in areas that still maintain strong kinship ties and local cultural values. Based on the results of preliminary observations and interviews with H. Muchtar, it was found that this tradition is not only a place for providing assistance or donations in celebrations, but also a symbol of empathy and local wisdom that has been passed down from generation to generation. Raisan or voluntary donation is not merely a material value, but more than that, it is a representation of a sense of care, emotional involvement, and social responsibility among citizens in the same community.

Still according to H. Muchtar (interview, 20 Mei 2025), in this context, empathy is not only understood as an emotional response, but as a real action realized through participation in the burdens and happiness of others. This tradition is also an informal educational space, a place of virtues, such as sincerity, mutual cooperation, and social civilization. Thus, *kondangan* Raisan is not just a cultural practice, but a living value system that plays an important role in shaping the social cohesion of the community.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the sociocultural approach in understanding the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition in Depok and the role of the tradition in preserving local culture. It is also important to maintain cultural identity and traditional values, although the *kondangan* tradition has undergone various forms of change or adjustment over time (Rahman & Yafie, 2023). This research is expected to explain how the practice of recording and returning donations functions as a form of solidarity in modern society, as well as a means of maintaining the values of mutual cooperation that live in local culture. Therefore, the findings of this study can be the basis for providing

recommendations related to efforts to preserve local wisdom, in line with the direction in various previous studies regarding the importance of revitalizing the kondangan tradition.

Referring to the background that has been explained, this study aims to examine the meaning of the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition in Depok and its role in strengthening social ties and maintaining local wisdom values in the modern era. The main focus of this study is how the people of Depok understand and carry out the practice of recording and returning *kondangan* donations, including the socio-cultural dynamics that develop from the tradition. A qualitative approach is used so that this phenomenon can be examined in depth in framing contemporary Betawi culture. Thus, this research is directed to explore. (1) how the implementation and meaning of the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition by the Depok community, and (2) how this tradition plays a role in maintaining social solidarity and preserving traditional values in the midst of ongoing social change.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach because it aims to deeply understand the meaning and social meaning of the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition (Yuliani, 2018). This approach is naturalistic and descriptive, with more emphasis on interpretation according to cultural context than on numbers or statistical generalizations. The data collected will be presented in narrative form and analyzed to find patterns of meaning, so as to describe the overall picture and experiences of the participants (Malahati, Jannati, Qathrunnada, & Shaleh, 2023). With this approach, the research seeks to describe the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition as it is in the field, based on the point of view of local culture in an interpretative and holistic manner (Situngkir & Prasetyo, 2012).

This research involved purposively selected informants, namely those who have a direct role and a good understanding of the *Roisan kondangan* tradition, namely H. Muchtar, 65, Betawi traditional leader and Mrs. Jumiati, 55, head of the PKK and head of the RT in Limo, Depok. The focus of the research lies on the *Roisan kondangan* tradition itself, including the procedures for implementation, symbolic meanings, and forms of social interaction that arise in these activities. Data collection was conducted using field observations and in-depth interviews with a semi-structured format (Waruwu, 2024). Primary data sources came from interviews with H. Muchtar and Mrs. Jumiati. Secondary data were obtained through literature studies and relevant documents.

Instruments used in data collection included interview guidelines designed based on the concept of local wisdom, field notes, digital voice recorders, and

cameras or cell phones as visual documentation tools. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach combined with cultural analysis, through the stages of coding, identification of main themes, and interpretation of symbolic meanings within the cultural framework of local communities (Khusnul et al., 2025). To maintain data validity, researchers applied triangulation of methods and sources, and verified data through member checks with key informants. Throughout the research process, researchers adhered to ethical principles, including obtaining informants' consent, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and respecting the cultural norms and values of the local community.

Results and Discussion

A. Empathy

Carl Rogers viewed empathy as a key element in building authentic human relationships. In short, an empathic individual seeks to deeply understand the inner experience of another person, as if he or she were experiencing it themselves (Yao & Kabir, 2023). The therapeutic approach developed by Rogers, client-focused therapy, emphasizes three key conditions that must be present to support positive change in interpersonal relationships, namely authenticity (congruence), unconditional acceptance, and accurate empathy. Accurate empathy, according to Rogers, means the ability to truly understand another person's point of view with sincerity, without judgment or prejudice. This understanding is also in line with the general definition of empathy, which is the ability to recognize and feel what others feel (Suhardita et al., 2024).

Analytically, the theory of empathy developed by Carl Rogers emphasizes the importance of sincere and honest relationships between individuals in order to create a deep mutual understanding. In a social and cultural context, this suggests that interactions built on empathy can strengthen a sense of togetherness and solidarity within a community. The findings in the field show that the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition reflects these values, where the practice of helping each other and giving reciprocity is the basis for the formation of trust and a sense of belonging among residents. In other words, this kind of collective activity is a tangible form of social empathy, which prioritizes the principles of justice and maintaining social harmony (known as *suminggal rasa sama*) (Demel et al., 2025). Overall, Rogers' empathy theory can be linked to the value of mutual cooperation in the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition, which shows that genuine interpersonal understanding and authentic relationships are the basis for the creation of social solidarity and togetherness, especially in the context of Depok society (Zhou & Dong, 2023).

B. Roisan Kondangan

The results of the field research show four main themes that reflect how the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition is carried out and interpreted by the people of Depok. First, the practice of Roisan Kondangan is still actively preserved and organized (interview with H. Muchtar, 20 Mei 2025). Each family that holds a celebration records in detail the contributions made by invited guests in a special *Roisan* book. After the event is over, the family will return the contribution in the same amount to the guest who was previously given, as a form of reciprocity that is considered fair. Second, this tradition is understood by the community as a form of social solidarity that strengthens the sense of community (interview with Mrs. Jumiati, 21 Mei 2025). The majority of residents interpret it as a form of gotong royong, where the assistance provided is considered a social debt that one day needs to be returned when another party holds a similar event. Third, the community shows an adaptive attitude towards changes in the form of donations. In the context of modern life, contributions in the form of goods or food began to be replaced by cash, still paying attention to the value of fairness (interview with H. Muchtar, 20 Mei 2025). Fourth, there is a shift in the meaning of the value of reciprocity in *Roisan Kondangan*. Some people begin to see this practice not only as part of gotong royong, but more as a personalized system of reciprocity. This means that the assistance given or received is based on the needs and abilities of each family, no longer solely for the sake of collective solidarity (interview with Mrs. Jumiati, 21 Mei 2025).

The results of this study show that the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition still plays an important role in maintaining the spirit of gotong royong and social solidarity at the local community level. The practice of recording and returning reflects the collective awareness of the Depok community to apply the principle of justice by deliberation. This is in line with the notion of gotong royong as a form of selfless joint cooperation that strengthens the sense of community among citizens (Hermanto, 2021). As explained by Khusnul (2025), gotong royong means working together on the basis of solidarity and mutual help. In the *Roisan* tradition, these values are realized through fair reciprocity mechanisms, which indirectly help maintain social balance in daily life (Sudrajat et al., 2024; Hafifah, et al., 2024).

The view of the people who have the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition with the value of solidarity is in line with the results of previous research. For example, Hermanto (2021) shows that the practice of gotong royong in cultural activities in Manyarejo Village is able to strengthen togetherness and a sense of mutual need between residents. Similar findings were also put forward by Marhadi et al. (2023) in a study of the *Sinoman* tradition, which concluded that active

participation in traditional gotong royong activities can strengthen social solidarity between groups. In the perspective of social solidarity theory developed by Durkheim, social ties are formed through mutual trust and shared values. In this context, *Roisan Kondangan* shows that despite economic changes, the community still maintains social responsibility and traditional values as the foundation of togetherness.

Although the spirit of *Roisan Kondangan* is still maintained, the results of the study show that there is an adjustment in the form of contributions over time. People tend to accept cash rather than goods, as long as the reciprocal value is considered balanced. This pattern reflects a modern form of gotong royong, similar to the concept of peer-to-peer digital assistance such as the Bagirata platform. Faedlulloh et al. (2021) explain that digital innovation allows new ways to help others, especially during a pandemic, without losing the value of solidarity that is the basis of gotong royong. The findings in Depok show the same thing: The form of assistance may change, but the principle of mutual assistance and the value of togetherness are maintained according to the needs of today's society.

On the other hand, the emergence of a community view that considers *Roisan* as a form of social debt indicates a change in the way this tradition is interpreted. In the old view, gotong royong was done voluntarily without expecting an imbalance (interview with Mrs. Jumiati, 21 Mei 2025). However, when some respondents referred to the obligation to return donations as a personal responsibility, this reflects the economic pressures that influence people's mindsets. This finding is not entirely in line with the altruistic concept of gotong royong, but it is quite relevant to the current socio-economic conditions of society. This change is similar to the results of research by Rosyani et al. (2019), which shows that technological and economic developments have changed the form and motivation of gotong royong in rural areas.

In general, the results of this study show compatibility with several previous studies. The community's understanding of the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition as a form of social solidarity is in line with findings that emphasize the importance of gotong royong in strengthening relationships between citizens. In addition, the change in the form of contribution to cash supports the emergence of digital-based mutual cooperation practices in the modern era. However, the findings on the community's view of *Roisan* as a personal social debt have rarely been discussed in previous studies, so it can be considered a new contribution in expanding the understanding of the value of gotong royong in the midst of social change. The results of this study make an important contribution in expanding the

understanding of the theory of local wisdom and social solidarity in the present. First,

the findings show that the spirit of gotong royong derived from tradition is still relevant and can be applied in modern society, as long as its form is adjusted to the needs of the times, in line with Durkheim's view of adjusting shared values. Secondly, the emergence of reciprocal practices in the form of money indicates a new way of internalizing the value of gotong royong as social capital that has an economic impact, especially in small urban communities (Noviyanti & Sudrajat, 2021). This confirms that traditions such as *Roisan Kondangan* are not only culturally valuable, but also have the potential to be a means to strengthen collective economic empowerment. Thus, this study shows that local wisdom can still survive and provide tangible benefits in the midst of social change and modernization processes.

1. Meaning and Origin of the Term Roisan Kondangan

The term *Roisan Kondangan* is thought to be a local term that refers to the practice of *arisan* in celebration events, especially weddings, which is influenced by *Betawi* culture and elements of Sundanese culture. This tradition reflects strong values of mutual cooperation and togetherness (Halim, 2020). In *Betawi* culture itself, the term *arisan kondangan* is known, which is a routine contribution activity aimed at helping each other with the costs of organizing events. The term *roisan* most likely comes from the pronunciation of the local word "*arisan*" which is then combined with the word *kondangan*, which means attending a party (Kurniawan, 2020). This concept reflects the spirit of mutual help among citizens, where every family holding a celebration will receive support from the surrounding neighborhood (Setiawan, 2022). It also reflects the values in Islamic teachings regarding the long term. As a form of local wisdom, *Roisan Kondangan* can be understood as a social system based on the principle of reciprocity, not just giving without return, but a form of balanced mutual assistance between community members.

2. Technical Process of Roisan Kondangan

In the implementation of the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition, the family holding the celebration usually prepares a special book called the *roisan* book, which functions similar to a guest book, but is used to record donations. Every guest who attends and gives an envelope will be directed to a special table to write their name and the amount of money donated. At the table, there are usually two officers: one is in charge of opening the envelope from the guest, and the other records the information into the *roisan* book. The recording process is done

immediately after the envelope is given, even before the guest leaves the table, so that all data is recorded immediately without interrupting the flow of the event.

At the next celebration, the family of the guest who had previously made a donation will reply with a comparable or the same amount as recorded in the *roisan* book, this is done so that there is no inequality or bad feelings between residents (Fathurohman & Zahra, 2023). In other words, the value contribution given will "rotate" in turn among residents, so this tradition is often also called *arisan kondangan*. This recording system helps maintain the principle of social justice, because anyone who has received assistance is expected to give back in the same amount when their neighbors hold a celebration. Functionally, *roisan kondangan* can be understood as a form of local social security, where the cost of the celebration is shared, and all transactions are recorded as a form of shared responsibility. Technical processes such as manual recording, book storage, and donations are usually shared informally by the celebration committee so that the data remains accurate and in accordance with the agreement.

3. Social Context of Roisan Kondangan Tradition

The tradition of *roisan kondangan* is not only carried out during weddings. Based on various field findings, the practice of conveying each other or also known as *arisan kondangan* is also carried out in other events, such as circumcision, *tahlilan*, joint prayers, to death commemoration or *selamatan* (Ayuwandani, & Tondok, 2023). This means that every family that organizes traditional activities usually also involves participation from relatives and neighbors through voluntary donations. In Javanese culture, for example, the tradition of *nyumbang* is present in all phases of life, from birth, marriage, to death. The continuation of this practice is based on the values of gotong royong, a sense of community, and a system of reciprocity between residents. Conference activities in rural communities are a form of social solidarity that aims to ease the burden on event organizers and is based on a system of reciprocity.

This tradition also serves as a way to maintain social relations between residents. Families who have received assistance at one event will provide similar assistance when a neighbor or relative holds a celebration. This pattern keeps family relationships and social networks intact. *Nyumbang* or *kondangan* activities are usually in the form of giving money or goods, and have a strong relationship with solidarity in the community. Thus, *roisan kondangan* not only acts as an economic activity, but also as a tangible form of the spirit of gotong royong and the habit of helping each other that has been passed down from generation to generation.

4. Implementation and Organizational Structure of Roisan Kondangan Tradition

In the implementation of the *roisan kondangan* tradition, there is no formal organizational structure or official governing institution. This activity runs in mutual cooperation and on the basis of volunteerism between residents. Generally, the family organizing the celebration event organizes the *roisan* with the help of the closest neighbors or community leaders such as the Head of *RW* or local religious leaders. There is no obligation to pay dues or binding legal rules. Residents' participation comes entirely from the awareness of helping each other. Although there are no official sanctions for non-participation, it is considered socially inappropriate. Similar to the practice of Andilan, (2019) in the Betawi culture of Depok, the tradition of *urunan* to buy buffaloes, residents work together to ease the burden of the event regardless of social background, so that cohesiveness within the community is maintained.

In theory, the *roisan kondangan* tradition supports the socio-cultural view of the importance of mutual cooperation and reciprocity, especially in a society that lives with economic limitations. This tradition can be seen as a tangible form of social solidarity and mutual assistance system, where the exchange of both services and material assistance occurs in a spirit of togetherness. Although run without a formal organization, this practice is in line with the concept of *taluuq* in the local Islamic economy, which is the principle of mutual attachment and mutual assistance between individuals. Manual recording in the *roisan* book and investment of equal value reflect efforts to maintain a balance between economic aspects and the value of socio-religious justice. Therefore, *roisan kondangan* not only adds to our understanding of Betawi-Depok customs, but also makes an important contribution to the development of local cultural theory and gotong-roiyong as a social system that is able to adapt to the times.

5. The View of Empathy in Roisan Kondangan Tradition

Empathy is a person's ability to understand and feel what another person is experiencing. As a form of caring in social interactions, empathy consists of two main aspects, namely cognitive empathy and emotional empathy. Cognitive empathy, or often called perspective-taking, relates to the ability to think about a situation from another person's point of view. Meanwhile, emotional empathy involves feeling in tune with the emotions that the other person is feeling. In other words, cognitive empathy reflects the ability to understand another person's way of seeing, intentions, or thoughts, while emotional empathy shows the ability to feel the emotions experienced by others, such as sadness, happiness, or anxiety (Nurdin & Fakhri, 2020).

In general, theories on empathy suggest that active involvement in social

traditions such as *Roisan Kondangan* can strengthen both cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy. Through participation in these activities, individuals learn to understand the views and feelings of others (cognitive empathy) by conforming to the values, rules and emotions lived within the community. At the same time, they also share common emotional experiences, such as feelings of happiness or emotion during the event (emotional empathy). A number of local studies reveal that the combination of empathy and collective consciousness is an important foundation in encouraging the emergence of prosocial behavior in Indonesian society (Hayani, 2021). Therefore, looking at the *Roisan Kondangan* tradition from an empathy perspective can provide a deeper understanding of how this cultural practice contributes to building solidarity and a sense of caring among citizens in the Depok community.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Roisan kondangan tradition in the Depok community functions as an effective social vehicle in strengthening solidarity, empathy, and a sense of togetherness among residents. Although it has undergone adjustments in form -from in-kind donations to cash and even digital forms- the values of gotong royong and reciprocity are still well maintained. The practice of recording donations and returning them in equal amounts is not merely a social transaction, but a reflection of collective awareness of the importance of social balance and justice between individuals.

This tradition also plays an important role in maintaining local wisdom and cultural identity, especially in the context of urban communities undergoing rapid social change. On the other hand, the perception of some residents who view personized and economical mechanism of reciprocity. However, this does not diminish the social meaning of the practice, but rather enriches the understanding of the flexibility of tradition in responding to the dynamics of the times. Thus, Roisan kondangan is not only culturally valuable, but also has the potential as a model of social solidarity and collective empowerment that can be adopted in various context of contemporary Indonesian society.

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