



## **MEANINGS AND PRACTICES OF TUESDAY TABOOS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY OF BANTEN**

**Nadya Kharima<sup>1</sup>, Hera Sa'diati<sup>2</sup>, \*Anggun Ryanda Prashe<sup>3</sup>, Dita Audya Rahayu<sup>4</sup>, Siti Khomalasari<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1-5</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

\*Email: [anggunprashe04@gmail.com](mailto:anggunprashe04@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Tuesday taboos remain part of everyday life in several rural communities in Banten, even in areas where formal *adat* institutions no longer exist. This article examines how Tuesday taboos are understood, practiced, and sustained in Pasirgombang, a rural village that does not rely on institutionalized customary authority. The study draws on qualitative fieldwork, including in depth interviews and observation, to explore how community members interpret the taboo and integrate it into daily routines. The findings show that understandings of the taboo vary across generations. Elders tend to explain Tuesday taboos through spiritual narratives, while younger community members often follow the practice without relying on such explanations. Despite these differences, the forms of practice remain relatively consistent, particularly in the avoidance of agricultural work, entering forested areas, and using sharp tools, especially during the first Tuesday of the *Mulud* month. For many residents, the taboo functions as a practical guide related to safety and caution rather than as a strict religious obligation. The persistence of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombang is supported by shared habits, oral transmission, and the moral influence of elders rather than formal regulation. These findings suggest that local traditions can continue to shape everyday behavior through flexible interpretation and social interaction, even in non *adat* rural communities experiencing social change.

**Keywords:** *Tuesday taboos, local tradition, local wisdom, rural community, Banten*

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### **A. Introduction**

Local traditions remain an integral part of everyday life in many Indonesian rural communities, not only as cultural expressions but also as practical guidelines that shape social behavior. In such contexts, traditions often function quietly and are embedded in routine activities, family narratives, and shared assumptions about what is considered appropriate or risky. Rather than being formally regulated, these traditions are sustained through collective agreement and repeated practice, allowing them to persist even as social conditions change (Januardi et al., 2022; Noviana et al., 2023)..

Among the traditions that continue to shape daily conduct in rural communities is the practice of taboos (*pantangan*). Taboos commonly operate as informal restrictions that guide behavior at certain times or in specific situations. Previous studies suggest that taboos are not merely expressions of superstition but serve as practical mechanisms for managing uncertainty and maintaining social order (Firmansyah, 2023; Hamdania & Kumalasari, 2025; Juansah, 2019). In many Indonesian communities, taboos are closely

connected to religious understanding and local moral reasoning, reflecting long term interactions between Islamic values and inherited cultural norms (Maulidin et al., 2024; Humaeni, 2015).

Existing studies on taboos in Indonesia largely focus on communities with strong customary institutions. In such settings, taboos are usually supported by formal leadership, ritual authority, and clearly recognized adat structures. Research conducted in communities such as Kasepuhan Cipinang demonstrates how taboos function as instruments of moral education and social regulation under the supervision of respected elders (Aryadi, 2023). Similar patterns have been identified in studies of taboos related to childbirth, agriculture, and environmental practices, where compliance is closely tied to institutionalized customary systems (Widiyanti & Basyari, 2025; Ningsih et al., 2020; Wadley & Colfer, 2004; Undaharta & Wee, 2020).

While these studies offer useful perspectives, they also leave certain aspects unexplored. By concentrating on communities with formal adat institutions, existing research often assumes that the sustainability of taboos depends on institutional strength. As a result, less attention has been given to communities where such structures no longer exist or were never formally established. This tendency can be observed in studies of local wisdom in Banten, where scholarly discussion has largely emphasized religious ceremonies, symbolic traditions, and kasepuhan based practices such as the Panjang Mulud celebration (Mutaqin et al., 2025; Nugroho & Ribawati, 2025). Several studies have examined taboos associated with Mulud traditions in Banten, including restrictions observed on specific days. However, these studies remain limited to communities governed by structured customary leadership. Consequently, they provide limited explanation of how similar practices persist in villages without institutionalized adat authority. Even when the role of *kasepuhan* is acknowledged, as shown by Sidqiyah et al. (2025), the analysis does not fully address how taboos continue to function in non adat social settings.

Pasirgombang village presents a different social context. The village does not operate under a formal *adat* system, yet the practice of Tuesday taboos remains part of everyday community life. These taboos are observed most strongly on the first Tuesday of the *Mulud* month and involve avoiding activities such as farming, entering forest areas, or using sharp tools. The continuity of these practices relies not on written rules but on shared understanding, oral narratives, and the moral influence of respected elders within the community. The persistence of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombang raises important analytical questions. How can a tradition survive in the absence of formal customary enforcement. What meanings do community members attach to these restrictions, and how are those meanings negotiated across generations. Addressing these questions allows for a more grounded understanding of taboos as adaptive social practices rather than fixed cultural relics.

This study examines the meanings and practices of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombang village by focusing on how the tradition is understood, practiced, and transmitted within a non *adat* rural community. By situating the analysis within a context

marked by social change and the absence of formal customary institutions, this research contributes to broader discussions on local wisdom, cultural continuity, and the everyday mechanisms through which traditional norms remain relevant in contemporary Indonesian society.

## B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive interpretive approach to understand how Tuesday taboos are perceived, practiced, and maintained in Pasirgombong Village. This approach fits the focus of the study on everyday meanings rather than formal institutions, and seeks to capture how local traditions operate within routine social life. The study emphasizes participants' perspectives and lived experiences, allowing the researcher to explore how taboos function as practical guidelines for behavior in a community that does not rely on formal adat structures. Data were collected through in depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation in order to obtain a contextual and grounded understanding of the tradition.

Fieldwork was conducted in Pasirgombong, Bayah District, Lebak Regency, Banten. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who were directly involved in or knowledgeable about the tradition. These included a respected elder regarded as *kasepuhan*, a village official, and a younger community member representing the younger generation. This selection allowed the study to capture variations in interpretation across social roles and age groups. Interviews explored participants' understanding of the origins of the taboo, the forms of restriction practiced, and the meanings attached to compliance or violation. Observation was used to examine how taboos were reflected in daily activities and community interactions, while documentation supported the contextual analysis.

Data analysis followed an iterative process of reduction, organization, and interpretation. Interview transcripts and field notes were reviewed to identify recurring patterns related to meanings, practices, and intergenerational transmission of the taboo. Differences in interpretation among informants were not treated as inconsistencies but as indicators of how the tradition adapts within a changing social context. To enhance credibility, data from interviews were compared with observations and supporting documents, and key interpretations were checked against participants' explanations. This process ensured that the analysis remained grounded in participants' experiences and aligned with the study's focus on everyday social mechanisms rather than formal customary regulation.

## C. Results and Discussion

### 1. Results

The findings discussed in this section are drawn from interviews and field observations carried out in Pasirgombong village. They reflect how residents talk about Tuesday taboos in ordinary situations and how these taboos are practiced in daily life. Attention is given to the ways community members explain the taboo, the kinds of

activities they avoid, and how the practice continues without formal *adat* regulation. Rather than treating the taboo as a fixed belief, the results show how it is shaped through routine decisions, shared experiences, and ongoing interaction within the community.

### 1) Community Understandings of Tuesday Taboos

Understandings of Tuesday taboos vary across generations and social roles. Elders who are regarded as *kasepuhan* tend to explain the taboo through spiritual narratives that emphasize unseen forces and the idea that Tuesday carries heavier risk than other days. These explanations are usually conveyed through short statements, warnings, or references to stories that have circulated in the community for a long time.

“Tuesday is believed to be the day when unseen beings emerge. That is why the energy is considered heavy and people need to be more careful.” (Interview, elder regarded as *kasepuhan*, Pasirgombong, 2025)

This explanation reflects an understanding of time as something that possesses moral and spiritual qualities. Tuesday is not treated as a neutral day but as a moment that requires heightened caution. Such explanations are not presented as formal doctrine but as shared knowledge that guides behavior. Village officials tend to describe the taboo in less spiritual and more descriptive terms. They often refer to the taboo as a result of overlapping traditions rather than a single belief source.

“The origin is not from one source. It comes from a mixture of local beliefs and traditional calculations of days.” (Interview, village official, Pasirgombong, 2025)

This account suggests that the taboo is understood as part of inherited cultural knowledge rather than a clearly defined religious rule. The explanation emphasizes continuity of practice rather than certainty of origin. Younger community members generally demonstrate limited knowledge of the background of the taboo. For many of them, the practice is known primarily through family transmission rather than personal belief.

“The origin is not very clear to me. I only know it from stories told by my parents.” (Interview, youth community member, Pasirgombong, 2025)

The variety of explanations shows that the taboo is not sustained by a single shared narrative. Instead, it continues through multiple layers of understanding shaped by age, social role, and everyday interaction.

### 2) Forms of Practice and Everyday Restrictions

Although interpretations differ, the forms of Tuesday taboo practices are relatively consistent across the community. The taboo is mainly expressed through the avoidance of certain activities that are considered risky. These include agricultural work, entering forested areas, and using sharp tools. Such restrictions are most strongly observed during the first Tuesday of the *Mulud* month. An elder explained these restrictions in concrete terms related to daily activities.

“On Tuesdays, people should not go into the forest, should not dig the land, and especially should not use sharp tools like machetes or knives.” (Interview, elder regarded as *kasepuhan*, Pasirgombong, 2025)

This explanation shows that the taboo is closely tied to physical activities that involve potential danger. The restriction is not framed as a ritual obligation but as practical guidance for avoiding harm. Village officials confirmed that the taboo affects routine economic activities, particularly farming and the use of natural resources.

“Farming activities are usually postponed. Taking natural resources or water from springs is also avoided.” (Interview, village official, Pasirgombong, 2025)

Younger community members described similar practices but tended to frame them in relation to everyday routines rather than belief.

“On Tuesdays, people usually avoid heavy work. Planting crops or cutting trees is postponed.” (Interview, youth community member, Pasirgombong, 2025)

These accounts indicate that the taboo is embedded in ordinary decision making. It shapes when people work, rest, or delay certain activities, making it part of everyday life rather than a separate ceremonial practice.

### 3) Meanings Attached to Observing the Taboo

Participants attach various meanings to their compliance with Tuesday taboos. Elders consistently emphasize protection and safety. For them, observing the taboo is a way to prevent misfortune and maintain balance.

“There is a purpose behind it, which is safety. It is not just a prohibition without meaning.” (Interview, elder regarded as kasepuhan, Pasirgombong, 2025)

This statement reflects a view of the taboo as a preventive measure rather than a symbolic restriction. Safety is understood broadly, including physical well-being and social order. Younger community members often interpret the taboo in more pragmatic terms. While they may not fully accept spiritual explanations, they still see value in the practice.

“Sometimes it is seen as a time to rest, so people do not push themselves too hard at work.” (Interview, youth community member, Pasirgombong, 2025)

This interpretation shows that the meaning of the taboo is flexible. Even when belief shifts, the practice remains relevant because it aligns with everyday needs such as rest and caution.

### 4) Continuity of the Taboo in Community Life

The continuity of Tuesday taboos relies heavily on social interaction and collective memory rather than formal enforcement. Elders play an important role in reminding community members about the timing of the taboo, especially during *Mulud*.

“The first Tuesday of *Mulud* has long been considered a taboo. People already understand this.” (Interview, elder regarded as kasepuhan, Pasirgombong)

These reminders are informal and usually occur through daily conversation or family discussion. Younger community members acknowledge that compliance is encouraged through respect rather than obligation.

“It is usually older people or the kasepuhan who remind us.” (Interview, youth community member, Pasirgombong, 2025)

Although some younger residents express doubt, many still follow the taboo, particularly when stories of past accidents or misfortune are recalled.

“When something happens, people usually return to the kasepuhan to ask for guidance.” (Interview, elder regarded as kasepuhan, Pasirgombong, 2025)

The taboo persists through ongoing negotiation between belief, habit, and shared experience. Its continuity depends on everyday social mechanisms that allow the tradition to adapt while remaining meaningful.

## 2. Discussion

The practice of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombong does not depend on formal *adat* institutions. Instead, the tradition continues through everyday interaction, shared habits, and the moral influence of elders (Vel & Warren, 2024). Much of the existing literature assumes that taboo practices require strong customary structures in order to survive. In Pasirgombong, however, the absence of formal *adat* authority does not weaken the tradition. The taboo remains present in daily life because it is embedded in routine decisions and social expectations rather than enforced through rules or sanctions (Bénabou & Tirole, 2011).

Studies conducted in communities with formal *adat* systems often describe taboos as part of a regulated cultural order. In such settings, obedience is supported by institutional authority and ritual obligation (Aryadi, 2023; Colding & Folke, 2001). The situation in Pasirgombong is different. Here, the taboo is maintained through persuasion and repetition rather than formal control. The social function of the taboo remains intact despite this difference. Instead, it shows that traditional norms can continue to guide behavior even when institutional structures are limited or absent.

The variation in how community members understand Tuesday taboos further illustrates this point. Elders tend to explain the taboo using spiritual language, while younger community members often follow the practice without relying on such explanations. This variation does not suggest that the tradition is losing meaning. Rather, it suggests that meaning is changing in form. Similar patterns have been noted in studies of local traditions where younger generations reinterpret inherited practices in ways that fit their everyday experience (Firmansyah, 2023; Jarosz, 1994). In Pasirgombong, the taboo continues because it no longer depends on a single shared explanation. It survives through multiple understandings that coexist within the community.

The emphasis on safety and caution found in the results also aligns with earlier research that views taboos as practical guides for managing risk. Hamdania and Kumalasari (2025) describe taboos as informal mechanisms that encourage careful behavior and self-control. The situation in Pasirgombong reflects a similar pattern. Restrictions on farming, entering forested areas, and using sharp tools are understood primarily as preventive actions (Jarosz, 1994; Wadley & Colfer, 2004). Even when spiritual explanations are questioned, the practice remains relevant because it is associated with avoiding harm in everyday activities.



The role of elders in sustaining the taboo deserves particular attention. Although elders in Pasirgombong do not hold formal *adat* positions, their words continue to carry weight within the community. Their authority is based on experience, trust, and social recognition rather than official status. This form of moral influence allows the taboo to be reinforced without coercion. Previous studies on local wisdom have shown that informal leadership can play an important role in maintaining social order in rural communities (Januardi et al., 2022). The findings of this study support that observation by showing how elders function as reference points for behavior rather than as rule enforcers.

The persistence of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombong also reflects the way local traditions interact with religious life in Indonesia. Research on Islamic cultural practices emphasizes that religious values often adapt to local contexts through gradual adjustment rather than strict uniformity (Maulidin et al., 2024). In this case, the taboo related to *Mulud* is not treated as a religious obligation, yet it remains closely tied to moral reasoning shaped by religious and cultural experience. This flexible relationship allows the tradition to continue without creating tension with contemporary ways of life.

The discussion of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombong shows that traditional practices can remain socially meaningful even when their original explanations are no longer shared in the same way. The taboo continues because it is woven into everyday life and supported by social relationships (Colding & Folke, 2001). This understanding helps clarify how local wisdom persists within communities that are not organized around formal *adat* institutions, and it highlights the importance of everyday practice in sustaining tradition.

#### D. Conclusion

The practice of Tuesday taboos in Pasirgombong continues to shape everyday behavior despite the absence of formal *adat* institutions. The findings indicate that the tradition is sustained through shared habits, moral influence, and collective memory rather than through written rules or institutional enforcement. Community members observe the taboo not because of obligation imposed by authority, but because it has become part of routine decision making related to safety, caution, and social order.

The study also demonstrates that the meaning of the taboo is not fixed. Elders tend to frame the practice through spiritual explanations, while younger community members often interpret it in more practical terms. This variation does not weaken the tradition. Instead, it allows the practice to remain relevant across generations by accommodating different ways of understanding. The persistence of the taboo suggests that local traditions can adapt to social change without losing their role in guiding behavior.

The case of Pasirgombong village illustrates how local wisdom can survive within non *adat* rural communities through everyday social interaction rather than formal regulation. By focusing on lived experience and ordinary practice, this study highlights the importance of flexible interpretation and moral credibility in sustaining tradition.

These findings offer a grounded perspective on how cultural practices continue to function in contemporary rural settings shaped by change and continuity.

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