

The Integration of Religion, Culture, and Science in the Interpretation toward the Covid-19 Pandemic: *Sapa Aruh* by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X

Agus Iswanto¹, Koeswinarno², Anik Farida³, and Joko Tri Haryanto⁴
{agus.iswanto83@gmail.com¹; koeswinarnowirjosoepo@gmail.com²; anik_farida@yahoo.co.id³;
jejakagama@yahoo.co.id⁴}

Balai Litbang Agama Semarang^{1,4}; Puslitbang Bimas Agama, dan Layanan Keagamaan^{2,3}
Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama

Abstract. The interpretation toward the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the pattern of response that has developed. However, studies about the public response to the Covid-19 pandemic with their various cultural knowledge is still lacking. The present study strives to fill the gap in the relevant literature through a closer examination on the interpretation toward Covid-19 by a cultural figure in the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region namely Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono (HB) X. *Sapa Aruh* text is the main focus of the present study. This article discusses two things: how does *Sapa Aruh* interpret the Covid-19 pandemic? Why did this interpretation appear? The text is not only the read or the written text, but also the viewed and the listened text. It display in the social media channels of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region. Using thematic analysis and hermeneutic method, the present paper confirms that the Covid-19 pandemic does not only invite scientific interpretation but also religious and cultural interpretation. This interpretation does not only appear in separated manner but also in integrative manner. The integrative approach cannot be set apart from the horizon of tradition, knowledge, and culture that opens up the interpretation. The *Sapa Aruh* text by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X becomes the solid evidence of the integrated interpretation.

Keywords: Covid-19, interpretation, science and religion integration, Yogyakarta, *Sapa Aruh*

1 Introduction

Covid-19 Pandemic has resulted in numerous interpretations and responses. These responses can be found in the governments and the societies throughout the world [1]–[3]. The same situation also applies to the Indonesian government and society, which comprise numerous religious and, specifically, social communities [4].

The response of the religious people in Indonesia, which is represented by the religious organizations or assemblies, tend to hold positive view toward the virus-preventing or the virus-handling policy [4]. Various religious attitudes of the Indonesian people towards Covid-19 as well as several policies issued by the government have been shown by several studies; some are resigned, overly worried, and moderate [5], [6].

The studies on the response toward the corona virus have not discussed much about how the society or the local figures interpret the Covid-19 pandemic with their various

knowledges and traditions. A study has been conducted in order to investigate about the local community in Latin America has responded to the corona virus and the results of the study propose the prevention and the prevention of the corona outbreak within the local community, which generally shares the similar characteristics. One of the suggestions that have been proposed by the study is the necessity to consider the language and the worldview of the local community in delivering the information about the virus [7].

However, few further studies have been conducted toward the other communities of local culture or the response of the local culture toward the Covid-19. In addition, in the context of Indonesia, the studies about the response of the Indonesian government and society toward the Covid-19, such as the one conducted by Djalante et al. [4], are still general and have not tried to uncover such response in the level of local government, both in the province-level and the regency/capitol-level which influence of local culture is still strong like Yogyakarta (Javanese culture). Furthermore, the response of the Indonesian government and society in the local level, which has been inspired by the culture and its religious perspective, has not been done.

The interpretation toward the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the pattern of response that has developed. Therefore, the understanding toward the interpretation of the local figures and their society becomes important to study [8]. This aspect has not been much pursued by the studies about the response toward Covid-19 in Indonesia that have been previously conducted. Although there have been the studies about the response of the Indonesian indigenous society toward the Covid-19 [9], the Yogyakarta Sultanate has not been included into such studies.

Departing from the above elaboration, the present study strives to fill the gap in the relevant literature through a closer examination on the interpretation toward Covid-19 by a figure in the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region namely Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono (HB) X. Thus, the focus of the study is on the *Sapa Aruh* (greetings) texts by the Sultan, which have been read and broadcasted by several social media of the provincial government. *Sapa Aruh* is usually interpreted as “greetings” [10]; therefore, “*Sapa Aruh Sultan*” can be interpreted as “Greetings from Sultan.” Within the study, the elements of religion, culture, and science in *Sapa Aruh* will be mapped and the context that displays *Sapa Aruh* will be analysed.

The study toward Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X is interesting because Sri Sultan has two different roles. On the one hand, Sri Sultan is the Governor of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region. This position urges him to adhere to the scientific suggestions from the medical staffs. On the other hand, Sri Sultan is the leader of the Yogyakarta Palace. This position puts Sri Sultan as the leader of people in the Yogyakarta Sultanate and certainly he is influenced by the worldview of the Javanese culture and Islamism. At the same time, the study of the interpretation toward Covid-19, which is influenced by the cultural knowledge, has the potentials to give birth to the cultural strategies for handling the typical epidemic [11].

The present study does not strive to identify the technical response of the Yogyakarta Government through its bureaucracy in preventing, and handling the virus outbreak such as the medical preparedness, the social aid, and the regulations that have been issued. On the contrary, the present study strives to identify the *Sapa Aruh* text as a form of interpretation toward Covid-19. Thus, the main argument of the study is that Covid-19 does not only invite the scientific interpretation but also the religious and the cultural interpretation. This interpretation does not only appear in a separate manner but also in an integrative manner. The integrative approach cannot be separated from the horizon of knowledge and culture tradition that has shaped the response.

2 Method

As having been explained in the previous section, the focus of the study is the *Sapa Aruh* texts by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X from the Yogyakarta Sultanate. *Sapa Aruh* has been considered as an interpretation toward the Covid-19 pandemic in Yogyakarta. The first text of *Sapa Aruh* related to the Covid-19 outbreak in Yogyakarta was first issued by Sri Sultan on March 23rd, 2020, in Kepatihan Hall, the Office Building of the Governor of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region. The first *Sapa Aruh* text was issued by recording the text that Sri Sultan read and the recording activities were performed by numerous media. Then, the *Sapa Aruh* text was broadcasted by the social media channels of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region Channel with the combination of visual pictures, texts, and audio.

The first *Sapa Aruh* text is the main focus of the present study. The text, not only the read or the written text but also the viewed and the listened text, has been widely interpreted, because in the sequence of *Sapa Aruh* the audio-video display in the social media channels of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region also appeared. Because of this finding, the qualitative content analysis in the form of thematic analysis will be implemented in order to uncover the data that answer the three research problems [12].

In the present study, not only the “semantic” (explicit) meaning but also the “latent” (interpretative) meaning will be uncovered. These meanings can be found by uncovering the meanings hermeneutically based on the Javanese culture and the religion, which become the category of the thematic analysis. Therefore, the meaning in the data from the *Sapa Aruh* text will be comprehended by using the hermeneutic method, namely uncovering the tradition and the horizon that becomes the background of the text

3 Result and Discussions

3.1 *Sapa Aruh* Texts

At least there are eleven *Sapa Aruh* texts that have been broadcasted in numerous social media of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region through the Department of Public Relation. The eleven *Sapa Aruh* texts are divided into plain texts and audio-visual texts. Each *Sapa Aruh* text has different themes. Then, the first *Sapa Aruh* text is delivered in two languages namely Javanese and Indonesian (the Indonesian version will be translated into English) while the second until the eleventh *Sapa Aruh* texts is delivered in Indonesian under the tagline “*Greetings from Sri Sultan.*” In each broadcast of *Sapa Aruh* texts, different titles are displayed and the sequence of the *Sapa Aruh* text broadcast by the Province of Yogyakarta Special Government is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Sequence of *Sapa Aruh* Text Broadcast by the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region

No	Title	Date	Language
1	<i>Cobaning Gusti Allah Awujud Virus Corona</i> (The Trial of Allah in the Form of Corona Virus)	March 23 rd , 2020	Javanese and Indonesian
2	<i>Mangasah Mingising Budi, Memasuh Malaning Bumi</i> (Honing the Wits, Cleansing the Earth)	April 14 th , 2020	Indonesian
3	<i>Introspeksi untuk Berbagi dan Bangkit Bersama</i> (Introspection for Sharing and Rising Together)	April 21 st , 2020	Indonesian
4	<i>Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab</i> (Just and Civilized Humanity)	April 28 th , 2020	Indonesian
5	<i>Berkreasi dan Beribadah dari Rumah</i> (Create and Pray from Home)	May 5 th , 2020	Indonesian
6	<i>Terima Kasih bagi Para Patriot Kemanusiaan</i> (Thank You, Our Dear Heroes of Humanity)	May 12 th , 2020	Indonesian

7	<i>Membuka Misteri Illahi, Menggapai Keberkahan</i> (Opening the Divine Mystery, Achieving Blessings)	May 19 th , 2020	Indonesian
8	<i>Dengan Modal Sosial Bangun Tatanan Baru</i> (With Social Assets, Let's Build the New Civilization)	June 2 nd , 2020	Indonesian
9	<i>Menimbang New Normal, Pulihkan Ekonomi</i> (Consering New Normal, Recovering Economy)	June 9 th , 2020	Indonesian
10	<i>Hidupkan Birokrasi yang Melayani</i> (Reviving the Serving Bureaucracy)	June 16 th , 2020	Indonesian
11	<i>Menata Normal Baru Menuju Peradaban Baru DIY</i> (Organizing New Normall into New Civilization in the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region)	June 23 rd , 2020	Indonesian

From all of *Sapa Aruh* texts in Table 11, it is only the first one that has been delivered in two languages and that has mostly referred to Javanese culture both in the form of oral tradition and the manuscript. The complete version of the first *Sapa Aruh* text by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X was been delivered in Javanese and Indonesian on March 23rd, 2020, from Kepatihan Hall, the Office Building of the Governor of the Province of Yogyakarta Special Region.

The first text of *Sapa Aruh* has used two languages. With regards to the statement, there are several sentences or paragraphs that cannot be delivered in the Javanese version of *Sapa Aruh* and this explains why two languages should be implemented in first *Sapa Aruh* text. On the contrary, the Indonesian version of the first *Sapa Aruh* text is not a translation from its Javanese version because there are several additions in certain parts of the text. The two versions of the first *Sapa Aruh* text were delivered in the same place and under the same title. The selection on the two languages can be seen from both the sociological manner and the psychological manner.

The aspects of culture, religion, and science that have been widely distributed in several parts of the first *Sapa Aruh* text can be elaborated further in Table 2 until Table 4.

Table 2. The Aspects of Javanese Culture in the First *Sapa Aruh* Text

Number	Quoted Text	Information	Source
1	<i>Wong sabar rejekine jembar, Ngalah urip luwih berkah</i>	Patient people earn the greatest fortune	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
2	<i>Gusti paring dalam kanggo sapa wae gelem ndalan</i>	God always give ways for those who strive forward	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
3	<i>Sing padha eling lan waspada</i>	Being wise and alert	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
4	<i>Datan serik lamun ketaman, datan susah lamun kelangan</i>	Don't be angry when you are in sorrow and don't be sorry when you are at loss	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
5	<i>Pada hari-hari ini yang sarat akan</i>	In the recent days of uncertainty,	The Indonesian

	<i>ketidakpastian, yang digambarkan oleh Pujangga Wekasan, Ranggawarsito, dalam Serat Kalatidha, suasana tidha-tidha yang sulit diramal, Késandhung ing râtâ, kêbêntus ing tawang.</i>	which has been described by the Last Poet Ranggawarsito in <i>Serat Kalatidha</i> , the situations become difficult to predict	Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
6		Always be careful to wherever we go and at wherever we are	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
7	<i>Agar eling lan waspada</i>	Being wise and alert	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
8	<i>Mangasah Mingising Budi, Memasuh Malaning Bumi</i>	Honing the wits, cleansing the earth	<i>Sapa Aruh 2</i> Text
9	<i>Golong Gilig</i>	The symbol of Yogyakarta Palace which represents the integration of God and His Servant or of the king and the people (the integration of the people and God)	<i>Sapa Aruh 3</i> Text
10	<i>Suwung Hamengku Ana</i>	Emptiness that supports existence	<i>Sapa Aruh 8</i> Text

Table 3. The Aspects of Islamism in the First *Sapa Aruh* Text

Number	Quotation	Information	Source
1	<i>Mugi Gusti Allah tansah paring berkah tumraping kita sadaya</i>	May Allah give His blessings to all of us	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
2	<i>Sabar-tawakal</i>	Be patient and hopeful	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i> Text
3	<i>Islam mengajarkan sebaik-baiknya manusia adalah mereka yang berguna bagi sesama</i>	Islam teaches that the proper man is the one who can be useful for his fellows	<i>Sapa Aruh 2</i> Text
4	<i>Di saat-saat menjelang datangnya</i>	At the coming of the nights of	<i>Sapa Aruh 7</i> Text

	<i>malam seribu bulan ini, semoga keberkahan dan keutamaannya dianugerahkan kepada kita, dengan menyingkirnya wabah ini dari Bumi Nusantara. In shaa Allah, jika kita berikhtiar...</i>	a thousand moons, may His blessings and virtues be given unto us through the disappearance of the pandemic from the Archipelago	
5	<i>Di balik keprihatinan itu semua ada hikmah dari Yang Maha Kuasa,</i>	Every cloud has a silver lining	<i>Sapa Aruh 6 Text</i>

Table 4. The Aspects of Science in the First *Sapa Aruh* Text

Number	Kutipan Teks	Keterangan	Sumber
1	<i>Lan uga wajib ngecakake aturan baku saka sumber resmi pamarentah kang wis diumumke ing masarakat</i>	It is obligatory to pay attention to the official source of the government that has delivered the announcement to the society	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1 Text</i>
2	<i>Waspada kanthi resesik diri lan lingkungane dewe-dewe. Nek krasa kurang sehat kudu ngerti lan narima yen wajib “mengisolasi diri” pribadi sajrone 14 dina.</i>	People should clean themselves and their own environment. In case of being unfit, one should understand and accept that 14-days self-isolation is obligatory for the sake of all people	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1 Text</i>
3	<i>Kanthi jaga, rada ngadohi kumpul-kumpul bebarengan yen pancen ora wigati tenan. Bisa uga kita rumangsa sehat, ning ora ana kang bisa mesthekake yen kita bener sehat. Malah bisa uga nggawa bibit lelara.</i>	The transmission of Covid-19 should be prevented by taking a good care of one’s self, avoiding crowd, and leaving the house if it is only necessary. It is possible that healthy individuals can be the virus carrier	The Javanese Version and the Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1 Text</i>
4	<i>Waspada, melalui kebijakan “slow-down”, sedapat mungkin memperlambat merebaknya pandemi penyakit corona, dengan cara resesik diri dan lingkungannya sendiri-sendiri. Kalau merasa kurang sehat harus memiliki kesadaran dan menerima kalau wajib “mengisolasi diri” pribadi selama 14 hari sama dengan masa inkubasi penyakitnya.</i>	One should be alert through the “slow-down” policy since the policy strives to slowdown the outbreak of the corona pandemic by cleaning the body and the environment. In case of being unfit, one should understand and accept that 14-days self-isolation is obligatory for the sake of all people	The Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1 Text</i>
5	Jaga diri. Jaga keluarga. Jaga persaudaraan. Jaga	Take a good care of yourself. Take a good care of your	The Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa</i>

	masyarakat, dengan memberi jarak aman, dan sedapat mungkin meng-hindari keramaian jika memang tidak mendesak betul.	family. Take a good care of your brotherhood. Take a good care of the society by providing a safe distance and avoiding crowds whenever it is possible. Do not travel if it is not necessary	<i>Aruh 1</i>
6	<i>Bisa jadi kita merasa sehat, tapi sesungguhnya tidak ada seorang pun yang bisa memastikan bahwa kita benar-benar sehat. Malah bisa jadi kita yang membawa bibit penyakit.</i>	It is indeed possible that we are healthy, but no one is able to confirm that we are completely healthy. Instead, it is possible that we become the virus carrier	The Indonesian Version of <i>Sapa Aruh 1</i>

The dimensions of the Javanese cultures in the first *Sapa Aruh* text is apparent from the Javanese proverbs such as: (1) *wong sabar rejekine jembar* (patient people earn the greatest fortune); (2) *ngalah urip luwih berkah* (surrendering your life in faith shall result in more blessings); (3) *Gusti paring dalan kanggo sapa wae sing gelem dalan* (God always give ways for those who strive forward); (4) *datan serik lamun ketaman, datan susah lamun kelangan* (don't be angry when you are in sorrow and don't be sorry when you are at loss); and (5) *kesandhung in rata, kebentus ing tawang* (always be careful to wherever we go and at wherever we are). In addition, Sri Sultan also refers to the "revelation" by the famous Javanese poet named Ranggawarsita about the times of uncertainty which has been described in *Serat Kalatidha*.

On the contrary, the dimensions of Islam that in the first *Sapa Aruh* text are the hope that Allah shall give His blessings and the messages to keep patient and persistent. However, in the second *Sapa Aruh* text, the dimension of Islam appears in the message that people should be helpful to one another. Similar situation is also found in the seventh *Sapa Aruh* text, which was broadcasted in Ramadhan and coincidental with the night of *Lailatul Qadar*. The *Sapa Aruh* text that has dominantly portrayed the integration of Javanese culture, Islam, and science in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic is the first one, both in the Javanese version and the Indonesian version.

Based on the first *Sapa Aruh* text, it can be interpreted that the Covid-19 pandemic has been a trial from God (*cobaning Gusti*), an uncertain situation (*tidha-tidha*), and the disease caused by a virus. This kind of interpretation gives birth to the efforts that should be necessarily performed namely bringing one's self closer to and praying to God, being alert and careful, and following the advice from the health authority of the government, which has been in accordance with the scientific perspectives.

3.2 Horizon Fusion

The next problem is: What has caused the appearance of the Sri Sultan's response in the form of *Sapa Aruh*, which has been full of the dimensions of culture, religion, and science? Referring to the concept of hermeneutics by Gadamer, these causes are proposed as the "forming horizon." Forming horizon is a set of knowledge and ethics that form the experience of an individual when he or she responds to something. The knowledge and ethics come from the past and are recollected when an individual should deal with something that has been considered as disaster like the pandemic. Although the knowledge and ethics come

from the past, both of them are not mere romanticism and useless for the present life. Instead, knowledge and ethics are contextualized into the problems that have been encountered and are fused into numerous solutions that have been offered by the present namely the dimensions of modernity and science.

The forming horizon itself can be viewed from two sources. The first source is the Javanese literature while the second source is Javanese worldview. The first source (Javanese literature) is apparent from the quotation in the first *Sapa Aruh* text. In this text, Sri Sultan mentions the name of the famous Javanese poet, Ranggawarsita, and his phenomenal literary work, namely *Serat Kalatidha*. This literary work is a poetic piece of art that delivers the Javanese cognition system and local wisdom. At the same time, this literary work is also able to shape the character education in relation to religion, ethics, morale, and good leadership [13], [14]. Furthermore, this literary text also delivers the philosophical thinking of the poet [15].

Serat Kalatidha is associated with the meaning of *kalatidha* or uncertainty [16]. The uncertainty is referred by Sri Sultan in the Javanese version of the first *Sapa Aruh* text (“*ing dina kang kebak was-was lan tidha-tidha iki*”) and the Indonesian version of the first *Sapa Aruh* text (“*pada hari-hari ini yang sarat akan ketidakpastian, yang digambarkan oleh Pujangga Wekasan, Ranggawarsita, dalam Serat Kalatidha, suasana tidha-tidha yang sulit diramal, penuh rasa was-was*”) (both versions can be literally translated into English as follows: “in the recent days that have been full of uncertainty”). This situation has been described by the Javanese poet, Ranggawarsita, as the times that are difficult to predict and full of anxiety. Thus, the first *Sapa Aruh* text describes the corona virus as a full-of-uncertainty epidemic because people who have been infected by the virus seem to be uninfected (People Without Symptoms).

As a Javanese literary text, *Serat Kalatidha* is full of the values from Islamic teachings. The reason is that the poet, Ranggawarsita, was a nobleman who used to study in an Islamic boarding school in the past. After learning Islam for several years in an Islamic boarding school, he became a *santri lelana* (a wandering Islamic student) and then entered the world of Javanese literature in Surakarta Palace [17]. In addition, *Serat Kalatidha* itself mentions several idioms or teachings that have been associated with Islamism such as asking for the help from Allah and the Prophet Muhammad in entering the times of uncertainty (“*Ya Allah, Ya Rasulullah kang sipat murah lan asih, mugi-mugi aparinga pitulung ingkang nartani inga lam awal akhir*”; literal translation: Oh Allah, Oh the Messenger of God who is generous and merciful, may You grant us the help to all of us from the beginning until the end”).

The tradition of Javanese literature is not only related to the literary texts such as *Serat Kalatidha* or the *Macapat* verses but also the tradition of Javanese literature in the wide sense. This matter deals with the proverbs that contain certain messages such as *eling lan waspadha* (being wise and alert), *wong sabar rejekine jembar* (patient people earn the greatest fortune), and *paring dalam kanggo sapa wae sing gelem dalam* (God always give ways for those who strive forward). The tradition of Javanese literature also encompasses the stories that have been passed down in the Javanese society.

The reference to the tradition of Javanese literature in the form of tales or stories that appear when social problems or huge disasters take place within the Javanese community is a common thing. For example, when delivering a speech about disaster an individual might tell about the story of Jabang Tetuko who had been tested inside the cauldron of Candradimuka Volcano before rose into Gatotkaca, a very powerful warrior [18]. Such stories are usually used by the Javanese society in order to deliver the message in dealing with disasters or in explaining the disaster occurrence.

Then, the second source of forming horizon is the Javanese worldview. The Javanese worldview is related to the Javanese cosmological view. the Javanese cosmological view ontologically teaches the relationship among individuals, the relationship between individuals and God, and the relationship between individuals and nature based on the existential unity (*manunggaling kawula Gusti*) [19]. Javanese people hold the perspective toward the unity and the harmony among individuals, nature, and supranatural being or God. Therefore, the centre of the Javanese ethics lies in the efforts to maintain the harmony among the society, the nature, and God. Such harmony ensures the condition of being safe that can be perceived. The harmony can be maintained when all elements in the cosmic constellation are put in the right place [20].

The implementation of the harmony is apparent in the integration of the aspects of religion, culture, and science when the Covid-19 pandemic is interpreted. The aspect of religion appears in association with the message that the pandemic disaster is a trial and therefore everyone should pray to God in order that they will be avoided from the virus transmission. Then, the aspect of culture is apparent in numerous quotations from the wise proverbs and the tradition of Javanese literature. Next, the aspect of science is apparent in the suggestion to follow the health protocols that the government has issued. The aspect of science and culture can be categorized as the “realm of mankind,” while the aspect of religion can be categorized as the “realm of supranatural being.” The three aspects are harmonized so that the harmonious condition can be achieved, and people can be avoided from the situations of uncertainty as having been mentioned in *Serat Kalatidha*.

4 Conclusions

The present study confirms that the Covid-19 pandemic does not only invite scientific interpretation but also religious and cultural interpretation. This interpretation does not only appear in separated manner but also in integrative manner. The integrative approach cannot be set apart from the horizon of tradition, knowledge, and culture that opens up the interpretation. The *Sapa Aruh* text by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X becomes the solid evidence of the integrated interpretation.

The present study adds a new perspective with regards to the review on the response toward the Covid-19 pandemic. Up to date, the review of the response toward the Covid-19 pandemic is still limited to the disagreement between religion and science whereas the element of culture can also be implemented as one of the manners for interpreting the pandemic.

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