

Consent and Resistance: Indonesian Corona-Inspired Islamic Music in The Wake of The COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked the production of corona-inspired Islamic music in Indonesia. Interestingly, against the backdrop of chaos and uncertainty, the genre has transcended mere value-added entertainment and can be viewed as a tool that operates with or against power. Using Stuart Hall's concept of culture and power, this study examines how popular culture is utilized by the elites and the ordinary. This qualitative research uses content analysis, and the data were taken from the lyrics and live performances of Bimbo with their song "Corona" and Audul Marom Rebana group with "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye." This research found that corona-inspired Islamic music is not just an aesthetic call to surrender to God in the face of crisis. Instead, it acts as a vehicle for cultural adaptation by authorities and a platform for expressing dissent among the ordinary. Bimbo's "Corona" and its involvement in the government-sponsored fundraising concerts exemplify efforts to mitigate public

distrust during the pandemic. In contrast, the “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” reproduced and popularized by a local rebana group from Demak echoes the plight of the lower classes, articulating the economic burden of the commoners due to COVID-19 measures.

Keywords: Consent, Resistance, Indonesian Corona-Inspired Islamic Music, Popular Culture, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Studies show that the COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on various aspects of the Muslim community in Indonesia, such as the economy,¹ psychology,² education,³ and even religion.⁴ Communal religious practices were immediately constrained as social distancing measures and large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) were officially implemented in March 2020. Adding to the complexity of the situation was the government’s incoherent response to the coronavirus crisis.⁵ The information

¹ Nabila et al. (2021). Peran Baznas Sebagai Filantropi Islam Dalam Menopang Ekonomi Masyarakat Ditengah Pandemi Covid-19. *Ekonomi Islam*, 12(2), 129–148; Rosita, R. (2020). Pengaruh Pandemi COVID-19 Terhadap UMKM di Indonesia. *Jurnal Lentera Bisnis*, 9(2), 109.

² Afifah & Kumolohadi (2022). Hubungan Religiusitas dan Stres pada Individu Muslim Dewasa Awal. *Jurnal Riset Psikologi*, 105–108; Djamal et al., (2022). Ketangguhan Keluarga Menghadapi Pandemi COVID 19: Perspektif Psikologi dan Islam. *Psikologika: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi*, 27(2), 223–242.

³ Prabowo et al., (2020). Peran Orang Tua Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19 Perspektif Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 191–207.

⁴ Sudirman et al. (2021). COVID-19 dan Ibadah: Resistensi Perubahan Hukum Islam dalam Mempertahankan Rutinitas Ibadah. *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality*, 6(1.)

⁵ Jaffrey, S. (2020). Coronavirus Blunders in Indonesia Turn Crisis Into Catastrophe. *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, 9–12; Lusianawati, H. (2020). Inkonsistensi Dan Ketidaktegasan Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam

vacuum was instantly filled with the spread of conspiracy theories justifying civil disobedience to health protocols.⁶ Similar to other regions, the disruption caused by COVID-19 was characterized by chaos.⁷

To cope with the chaotic situations, Indonesian Muslim musicians found creative ways through music. They began to produce Islamic songs that effectively addressed the pervasive issue of the coronavirus. They joined forces with other artists and musicians worldwide in creating the so-called “corona songs.” There is no formal definition of a “corona song,” but it has some identifiable characteristics. In an interview with Annika Essmann for Max Planck Gesellschaft on May 4, 2020, Wald-Fuhrmann, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, stated that “corona songs are mostly cover versions of popular songs whose lyrics have been altered in response to the COVID-19 crisis.”⁸ However, depending on the region, they could also be entirely new compositions with COVID-19 themes, available in various versions.⁹ Jones found that this genre often included funny, fun, but contemplative, insightful lyrics and videos circulating on social media with hashtags like #coronasongs, #quarantunes, and #songsofcomfort.¹⁰

Menangani Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 2(2), 21–39.

⁶ Nadzir, I. (2020). Conspiracy Theories and Modern Disjuncture Amidst COVID-19 in Indonesia. *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 46(2), 150–167.

⁷ Afifa, (2021, June 30). Continuous Chaos in Indonesia’s COVID-19 Mitigation. TEMPO. <https://en.tempo.co/read/1478196/continuous-chaos-in-indonesias-covid-19-mitigation>)

⁸ Essmann, A. (2020, May). Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann on “Music might be systemically relevant.” Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. <https://www.mpg.de/14777336/music-culture-covid19>.

⁹ Hansen et al. (2022). Editorial: Social Convergence in Times of Spatial Distancing: The Role of Music During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13.

¹⁰ Jones, M, (2020). How to Have Humor in an Epidemic: Musicking,

2020 and 2021 witnessed new trends in music creation. Research shows that music persisted during the pandemic despite the challenges faced by the industry. Jurić studied the tropes, themes, and tones of three songs by Western Balkan folk singers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and found a strong message of hope and support for the people, rather than antagonistic sentiments towards the regime, despite the current anti-government stance among them.¹¹ In China, Bienvenu found that rap music was used by the government as a propaganda tool by including images taken from national media in rap music videos, showcasing the courage of Chinese health workers and the unity of Chinese citizens in collective responsibility.¹² In their online interviews with various musicians, Fram et al. discovered not only musicians' emphasis on prioritizing the communal aspects of music making over other factors, even musical styles, but also the increase in socially and politically relevant music making.¹³

Moreover, Thompson et al. analyzed 28 songs about coronavirus in Ghana to understand how music was used to educate and disseminate information about COVID-19.¹⁴ They argued that music as entertainment could complement educational efforts to fight the coronavirus. Corona songs with educational messages could also be found elsewhere. For example, Vietnam's Ministry of Health released a single called "Jealous Coronavirus"

Pandemic Palimpsests, and Public Health Pedagogy in the Age of COVID-19. *Americas: A Hemispheric Music Journal*, 29, 90–98.

¹¹ Jurić, D. (2020). The Heralds at the Bells: Messages of Hope from West Balkan Bards During the Coronavirus Pandemic. *Folklorica*, 24.

¹² Bienvenu, G. (2021). To Craft Modern (Hi) story through Music: Chinese Rap and the Main Melody at the Outset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Popular Music History*, 14(1).

¹³ Fram, et.al. (2021). Collaborating in Isolation: Assessing the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Patterns of Collaborative Behavior Among Working Musicians. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.

¹⁴ Thompson et al. (2021). Communicating Awareness About COVID-19 Through Songs: An Example From Ghana. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 8.

in February 2020, and the song blends humour and good information on how to stop the parade of diseases spreading through droplets. Rijkers & Braas classified sentimental polarity from the lyrics of several cover versions of the 1961 song “Get a shot of rhythm and blues” about vaccinations posted on lyrics.com and YouTube in 2020 and 2021.¹⁵ They found that many rap songs advocated not getting vaccinated.

What needs to be added in a recent study on music during the pandemic is research on corona-inspired Islamic music. Therefore, this study aims to articulate the voices behind the proliferation of this genre in Indonesia and look at its contribution to the broader corpus of corona-themed song. The genre’s popularity soared in 2020 in Indonesia, with several musicians releasing singles centred on COVID-19 themes. Among them were famous bands such as Bimbo and various local music groups. After a long hiatus without releasing any albums, iconic Indonesian band Bimbo released their latest single, “Corona.” Rebana groups¹⁶ such as Audul Marom, who also helped popularize the song “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye.” Their recorded performance at a religious event in Demak was uploaded on YouTube and viewed over two million times.

As mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly affected diverse aspects of life, including religion and music, mainly due to the implementation of social distancing measures. The situation triggered positive and negative responses in Indonesia, with individuals torn between complying with the rules and rejecting them or seeking alternative spaces. With a ban

¹⁵ Rijkers, G., & Braas, O. (2022). "Get a shot of rhythm and blues": Songs on coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccination. *Vaccine X*.

¹⁶ Rebana group is a musical group that uses tambourines or drums to perform Islamic devotional music, especially at religious events in the local community.

on regular face-to-face Islamic gatherings or music concerts and a directive to stay at home, people were increasingly turning to online platforms, spending more time engaging with social media and watching content on YouTube for news and entertainment. Corona-inspired Islamic songs such as Bimbo's "Corona" and Audul Marom rebana group "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" circulated mainly on this platform.

Emerging amidst the tumultuous pandemic, corona-inspired Islamic music has transformed into more than just the creative expression of artists or musicians. Instead, it serves as a means to encourage conformity on the one hand and spark dissent on the other hand. It aligns with the notion by Stuart Hall that "Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance."¹⁷ For Hall, culture is a site of "negotiation," where meanings are not fixed but subject to constant negotiations. Within popular culture, individuals may either passively accept the prevailing cultural narratives or actively resist and negotiate the influences and norms imposed by the authority. Through the lyrics and live performances of Bimbo with their song "Corona" and of Audul Marom rebana group featuring Filda Azatil Isma with their "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye," this research aims not only to understand how the artists creatively expressed their thoughts and concerns on the COVID-19 pandemic through their works but also to examine how the elites and the ordinary people to some extent utilized popular culture such as corona-inspired Islamic music in response to the crisis.

¹⁷ Hall, S. (1981). Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular." In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge & Kegan Ltd.

Method

The research method used for this study is qualitative research, focusing on content analysis. The primary data to be analyzed were taken from Bimbo's lyrics and lived performance with their song "Corona" and Audul Marom rebana group featuring Filda Azatil Isma with their song "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye." Both songs were released and produced amidst the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, when widespread confusion and uncertainty gripped the global population regarding the pandemic.

The data in this research were accessed from YouTube. Regarding Bimbo, the data were extracted from two video sources. The first one was Bimbo's single "Corona", released on April 20, 2020, through their official YouTube channel called Bimbo. The second video was from the concert "Bersatu Melawan Corona" (trans. United against Corona) in Jakarta, which was broadcast live for 2 hours on May 17, 2020, on the BNPB (National Disaster Management Agency) YouTube channel. Regarding Audul Marom, the data were derived from an hour-long video by Anugrah Vision, a local video production company, showcasing the performance of Audul Marom rebana group at a religious event to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the death of Kyai Abdullah Zainuddin and Nyai Siti Alfiyah. This event was held on September 6, 2020, in Karangrejo, Demak. Secondary data included relevant online news articles from BBC Indonesia, Republika, Antara News, KOMPAS, CNBC, and Detik published in 2020, enhancing the depth of research analysis.

Using Stuart Hall's theory of culture and power, this research examined how popular culture became an arena of approval and resistance during the pandemic. According to Hall, culture is not just a reflection of society but is related to power dynamics. On the one hand, popular culture can be used to promote

and perpetuate dominant ideologies and serve the interests of existing power structures. On the other hand, it can be used as a platform to challenge dominant narratives and amplify the voices of ordinary people. Drawing upon this concept, the study encompassed analysis of textual content analysis through the lyrics of Bimbo's "Corona" and "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" from the rebana group Audul Marom, as both texts provide insight into artists' perspectives on the COVID-19 issue, and how they are portrayed aesthetically in their songs.

In addition to the song lyrics, this research analyzed visual elements and auditory components based on YouTube videos. The selected live performances of both artists aimed to capture the essence of the surrounding area of the concert, encompassing the people, their interactions, and the adherence to health protocols, reflecting the situation and context of the event during the COVID-19 outbreak. This research could provide a valuable understanding of the textual, cultural, social, and political dimensions embedded in the production of corona-inspired Islamic music.

Results and Discussion

Corona-Inspired Islamic Music as Indonesian Muslim's Creative Outlet

The discussion on music in Islamic civilization was often overshadowed by the ambiguous position of music in Islam. The ambivalent attitude toward music is expressed in a series of "contradictory feelings and concepts; predilection and mistrust; divine-devilish; exalting-disruptive; admissible-prohibited."¹⁸ Interestingly, however, more recent case studies in different parts of the Muslim world point to the existence and continued

¹⁸ Shiloah, A. (1997). Music and Religion in Islam. *Acta Musicologica*, 69(2), 143–155., p. 60.

development of various forms of music. Much has been written about the permissibility of music in an Islamic context.¹⁹ This research will not go into more detail about the complicated relationship between Islam and music. Instead, it reinforces research findings that highlight how moderate Muslims, who make up the majority of followers of Islam, show tolerance for music, albeit within clear parameters.

This is especially true of Indonesian Muslims. Harnish & Rasmussen learned that Indonesian Muslims had mainly avoided the problematized position of music.²⁰ In all its diverse forms, Islamic music is commonly embraced and welcomed within the Muslim community there. As elsewhere, Islamic music often serves as a means of da'wah,²¹ creatively engaging and entertaining while conveying religious messages. Its distinctive characteristic lies in its powerful and “clean” lyrics,²² They invite their listeners to reconnect with their spirituality and return to God. Regarding the musical tone, artists involved in producing Islamic music are more likely to create gentle and melodic compositions, different from the energetic vibes of hard rock. Their works are characterized by pleasing and easy-listening qualities, but potentially elicit profound engagement and enhance spiritual

¹⁹ See, for example, Louis al-Faruqi, 1985; Amnon Shiloah, 1995; Michael Frishkopf, 1999; Anne Rasmussen & David Harnish, 2010; Jonas Otterbeck, 2014

²⁰ Harnish, D. & Rasmussen, A. (2011). *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia*. Oxford University Press.

²¹ Otterbeck, J. & Larsson, G. (2017). Islam and Popular Music. In C. Partridge & M. Moberg (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (pp. 111–120). Bloomsbury Publishing.

²² (Goshert, L. (2007). *Performing Identities: The Creation of a Popular Muslim Music-culture in the United States*. Indiana University; Morris, C. (2013). *Sounds Islamic? Muslim Music in Britain*. Cardiff University; Sarkissian, M. (2005). Religion Never Had It So Good: Contemporary Nasyid and the Growth of Islamic Popular Music in Malaysia. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 37(September), 124–152.

experiences. As for the artists, they often exhibit good manners and behaviour characterized by piety as they diligently endeavour to serve as exemplary role models within their communities.

During the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, songs like “Corona” and “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” emerged. Both can be classified as Islamic songs as they convey Islam-related messages. While the former was launched just a few days before Ramadan, making it appropriately categorized as part of a Ramadan playlist, the latter was not exclusive to this holy month.²³ However, unlike the former, the lyrics in “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” explicitly indicate Muslim identity as it begins with *sholawat badr*, a distinctive element of Muslim cultural expression. In addition, both songs can be accurately classified as corona-inspired Islamic music, belonging to the broader Islamic music genre, with a particular focus on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic issue. In essence, they contribute to the broader category of corona songs while still emphasizing the religious aspect.

Corona-inspired Islamic music as a genre remains limited within the precise parameters of what is commonly referred to as Islamic music. Both “Corona” and “Sirahku Mumet Sirahku Piye” not only convey the message of da’wah but also feature “clean” spiritual lyrics performed by artists known for their moral integrity. The permissibility of Islamic music does not seem to be influenced by the gender of the singers; Instead, it relies on their adherence to certain courtesy and etiquette. In “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye,” the lead vocalist is a young woman, Filda Izzatil Isma, accompanied by two other female background vocalists. All three wore headscarves, presenting a performance where they remained

²³ Musicians involved in the production of Islamic songs or so-called "religious songs" in Indonesia have the flexibility to release their songs at any time of the year.

seated on stage, singing with minimal body movements.

By and large, both "Corona" and "Sirahku Mumet Sirahku Piye" illuminate the nuanced role that Islamic music plays, both as traditional elements and as contemporary responses to the prevailing global situation. Bimbo and Audul Marom rebana, group showcase musicians who were integral to the phenomenon that Agus Idwar²⁴ refers to as "creativity boom" in religious music production during the pandemic. In a webinar organized by MUI, he explained that this trend was evident in three important events, namely the significant increase in popularity of the song "Aisyah," the proliferation of corona-themed songs, and a substantial surge in the distribution or wide distribution of newly released songs on online platforms such as YouTube.

Bimbo released a song titled "Corona" on April 20, 2020, on their official YouTube channel "Bimbo," a few days before Ramadan. This track was succinct yet potent, provoking deep self-reflection in the listener. The title "Corona" was derived from the name of the virus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. It was common for Indonesians to simply refer to this disease as "corona." The song was concise, consisting of only three unrhymed stanzas, and the accompanying music video's duration was only 1 minute 35 seconds. With a deliberately slow tempo, the song effectively conveys a deep sadness and introspection, skillfully capturing the prevailing atmosphere during the outbreak.

Despite various interpretations of the COVID-19

²⁴ He was the songwriter and producer of several famous Muslim artists, such as Opick, Debu, and the late Jeffrey Al Bukhori. He was one of the speakers invited to a virtual seminar on "Strategi dan Kreatifitas Seniman Muslim Di Tengah Pandemi," held by MUI (*Strategi Dan Kreatifitas Seniman Muslim Di Tengah Pandemi*, 2020) on June 30, 2020, where he described the phenomenon of the "creativity boom",

pandemic, Bimbo chose to attribute divine purpose to the arrival of the coronavirus. The song's core draws inspiration from and resonates with themes articulated in the Quran. This is evident in the first line of the song "Corona", which says, "Corona datang, Tuhan mencuci dunia" (trans. Corona comes, God cleanses the world). Here, the pandemic is seen as a form of divine intervention, a cleansing process initiated by a higher power. It is also mentioned in the second stanza that "Corona datang, bukanlah kebetulan" (trans. Corona comes, not a coincidence). This means the arrival of COVID-19 is not a random event but can be seen as an important event with a purpose or a consequence.

Among the purposes mentioned in "Corona" are "Membungkam kesombongan manusia" (trans. Silencing human arrogance) and "Mendidik kita untuk jadi salah" (trans. Teaching us to be humble.) These lines convey a poignant critique of humanity, highlighting the already widespread human arrogance—echoing sentiments found in Quran 31:18²⁵. The pandemic, which generates fear as it lies beyond control, can be considered God's way of educating people and cultivating humility. It serves as a stern warning from God to show the weakness and helplessness inherent in the human condition. Instead of scientifically questioning the origins of the coronavirus as people grapple with a lack of clarity regarding the nature of the threat, precautions, symptoms and even medical treatments, the song tends to see the pandemic simply as a means for spiritual purification or a test of humanity.

Another gesture conveyed in "Corona" is that everything on earth belongs to God—resonating with the message in Quran

²⁵ "And do not lift your noses unto the people, nor walk proudly upon the earth. Verily Allah does not like anyone who is arrogant, arrogant" (The Quran 31:18)

4:131²⁶. It is stated in the last two lines of the second stanza: "Anak dan istri jabatan kekayaan / Semua itu bukan milik kita" (trans. Children and spouse, position, and wealth / Nothing really belongs to us). The abovementioned valuable possessions also evoke what is described in the Quran.²⁷ It is a common belief that these worldly assets often make people become entrenched and forget to prioritize God. Many have stayed in their comfort zones, but the deadly coronavirus's potential to claim lives indiscriminately underscores the fragility of human existence. This has brought the realization that life is temporary; what comes from God will return to Him.

Bimbo's "Corona" ends with a couplet: "Tangan tengadah, teguhkan hati kami / Ya Tuhan selamatkan kami" (trans. Hands raised, strengthen our hearts / O Lord, save us). In Islam, raising hands is a posture of prayer, symbolizing humility and submission to God. It serves as a profound acknowledgement of human vulnerability, affirming that dependence on God is ultimately paramount. This physical movement signifies an earnest plea to God to bestow upon man the inner strength to overcome difficulties, rediscover the proper path, and firmly uphold faith in the face of challenges. It recognizes that an unwavering commitment is the only path to salvation.

Contrary to Bimbo's "Corona," "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye", popularized by Audul Marom Rebana group, is characterized by a more upbeat and humorous tone. The live performance by the Rebana group was recorded by a local video

²⁶ "And belongs to God what is in heaven and what is on earth. And We have commanded those who were given the Holy Scriptures before you and yourselves to fear Allah" (The Quran 4:129)

²⁷ The pleasures of worldly desires—women, children, gold and silver treasures, fine horses, cattle, and fertile land—had been attractive to the people. This is the pleasure of this worldly life, but with Allah is the best goal (Qur'an 3:14)

production company, Anugrah Vision. It was part of a religious event on September 6, 2020, in Karangrejo, Demak, to commemorate the 38th anniversary of Kyai Abdullah Zainuddin's and Nyai Siti Alfiyah's passing. The entire event spanned over two hours, but the performance of the discussed song was approximately 5 minutes.²⁸ Like Corona's rap song adapted from "Get a Shot of Rhythm and Blues", as in the previous research by Rijkers & Braas, "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" was an adaptation of Nasida Ria's 1980s song "Asyik Santai."²⁹ While retaining the musical style, the lyrics have been modified to align with the COVID-19 condition. The lyrics consist of seven stanzas, each comprising four rhymed lines—adopting the Indonesian *pantun* style characterized by the AABB or ABAB rhyme pattern.

The song title, "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye," is in Javanese and translates to "My head is spinning, how about yours." The title of the song itself resembled a dangdut song, "Ndasku Mumet Ndasmu Piye", written by Harry Clonthong and popularized by a dangdut singer, Safira Inema, which went viral on YouTube in mid-July 2020. However, the lyrics in "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" differ from the dangdut version as that one was not Islamic at all. Here, the phrase "sirahku mumet" does not necessarily indicate a medical problem; On the contrary, it connotatively shows that a person is troubled with life problems or faces challenges. In this context, it refers to discomfort or confusion resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As the impact of the crisis is shared collectively, the song seizes an interactive opportunity to inquire about listeners' well-being during the pandemic, probing whether they have also experienced the same

²⁸ The video segment was posted on YouTube on October 3, 2020, and has since garnered over 2 million views.

²⁹ This song was featured in Nasida Ria's 6th album, titled *Lingkungan Hidup*, released in 1982.

challenges or discomforts. The situation described in the song is relatable to many people.

Another important creative aspect in the song is the utilization of three languages: Arabic, representing the language of Islam; Javanese, signifying ethnic and colloquial language; and Indonesian, serving as the national language. The incorporation of multiple languages weaves together various cultural identities within the song. “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” commences with the recitation of “sholawat Badr”³⁰ in Arabic, saying “Sholatulloh salamulloh/ Ala thohaa rosulillaah/ Sholatulloh salamulloh/ Ala yaasin habibillah.” The devotional song praises the Prophet Muhammad and seeks God's mercy and blessings. This chant is frequently employed in Indonesian Islamic songs and is particularly popular within the Nahdlatul Ulama community. This song's prayer or request for God's protection resonates with the sentiments conveyed in Bimbo's “Corona.” This sholawat is repeated seven times, embodying its chorus or refrain.

The next segment of the song is delivered in Javanese, mainly discussing the financial burden stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The first and third lines of stanza 2 serve as introductory statements.³¹: “Satu tambah satu sama dengan dua” and “Tuku dawet³² nang ngisor uwit,” both crafted to ensure the rhyme. It sets the stage by depicting familiar scenes from the daily life of many Javanese people. Meanwhile, the second and fourth

³⁰ The song was composed by Kyai Ali Manshur in the 1960s in response to the PKI song “Genjer Genjer”. Read the full article on NU Online <https://www.nu.or.id/tokoh/gus-dur-kiai-ali-manshur-dan-shalawat-badar-MqD77>

³¹ This pattern represents a variation of the traditional rhyme structure, with the prefatory statement placed in the first stanza.

³² It is a traditional Javanese drink—affordable and a favourite drink among ordinary people. These are often sold under trees by street vendors, a common sight in Java.

lines encapsulate the core content: “Ra wani metu mergo corona” (trans. Hesitant to go out due to Corona) and “Sirahku mumet ra nduwe duwit” (trans. My head is spinning, no money in my pocket). The two statements are interconnected. As mentioned earlier, coronaviruses were considered highly contagious and deadly. As a result, individuals were reluctant to venture out, aiming to avoid infection. Nevertheless, staying at home meant no income, thus posing financial challenges.

The following two stanzas continue in Javanese, delving further into the economic impact of the pandemic. Stanza 3 follows a regular couplet pattern, while Stanza 4 adopts a structure similar to Stanza 2. The expression such as, “Dompetku cupet dompetmu piye?” (trans. My wallet is thin, how about yours?) accurately reflects the stark reality of the pandemic, especially financial pressures. According to a report by the Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in August 2020, a staggering 29.12 million people (14.28 per cent) of the working-age population were affected by COVID-19. This includes individuals unemployed due to COVID-19 (2.56 million people), those out of work due to the pandemic (1.77 million people) and working individuals facing reduced working hours due to COVID-19 (24.03 million people). The unemployment crisis that made people suffer is portrayed in the next and last segment of the song. Conveyed in Indonesian, it says: “Sana sini gak bisa kerja/ Yang sudah kerja malah di PHK” (trans. Cannot work here and there/ Those who already work get laid off).

Altogether, Bimbo’s “Corona” and Audul Marom’s “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” contribute to developing the corona song genre. Its distinctive characteristics lie in its value-added entertainment, embodying poetic lyrics and melodic compositions that could evoke a wide range of emotions, allowing one to connect with one’s faith—characteristic of Islamic music. With a dynamic interplay between traditional and contemporary

elements, the two songs also exemplify a nuanced corona-inspired Islamic music, Bimbo with a slow tempo and a more serious tone, which is typical to their qasida style, while Audul Marom, with their folk song style featuring witty but cynical lyric. Audul Marom rebana group may draw inspiration from classical Islamic musical forms while incorporating modern instruments such as keyboards, guitars, and violins. In contrast, Bimbo seemingly leans toward a more conventional pop music style.

Corona-Inspired Islamic Music as a Tool for Consent

According to Van Nieuwkerk et al., popular culture is “far more than just mass-produced entertainment” as it may operate with and through power.³³ Here, popular culture is not just a trivial, exuberant activity but also a potential tool to legitimize power and challenge it simultaneously. Additionally, studies show that music has often been used as part of cultural diplomacy.³⁴ The purpose of utilizing culture as soft power is usually to control public perception without the need for coercion or force. This tendency is evident in the production of corona songs. Beyond the inherent textual content, understanding corona-inspired Islamic music as popular culture requires inevitable consideration of the contextual background from which it emerged.

Diverse opinions, perspectives, and speculations about COVID-19 were circulating in early 2020.³⁵ The then Indonesian

³³ Van Nieuwkerk et.al. (2016). *Islam and Popular Culture*. University of Texas Press.

³⁴ Aidi, H. (2014). *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*. Pantheon Books.; Jamnongsarn, S. (2017). Interaction of Music as a Soft Power in the Dimension of Cultural Diplomacy between Indonesia and Thailand. *International Journal of Creative and Arts Studies*, 1(1), 58; Schjønberg, I. (2019). *Soft power to the people: Music and Diplomacy in International History*. University of Oslo.

³⁵ Firmansyah, T. (2020, May). Izin Shalat Id di Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya Picu Kontroversi. *Republika*.

Minister of Health, Dr Terawan Putranto, for example, initially responded to the coronavirus spread casually and tended to underestimate it.³⁶ He claimed that this was just a typical flu and that people just needed to pray to God to be safe. However, by early April 2020, when more and more people tested positive, the government started to show signs of panic. The government's inconsistency and ambiguous policies rendered them unpopular and devised by the citizens. As already stated, the vacuum of trustworthy information about the coronavirus was immediately filled with the spread of conspiracy theories on social media.³⁷ The level of people's obedience to the government's stay-home order varied from place to place. The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) stated that villages in various regions of the country were more successful in implementing PSBB than urban areas.³⁸

The Indonesian government and health authorities began to seek the right communication strategies to help educate and convince the public about the dangers of the coronavirus and the

<https://news.republika.co.id/berita/qagr1v377/izin-shalat-id-di-masjid-al-akbar-surabaya-picu-kontroversi>; Irham, M. (2020, June). COVID-19: Tempat ibadah dibuka, "tentang kekhawatiran terkena COVID-19, ya kita berdoa saja." BBC Indonesia. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-52868562>.

³⁶ Read more on some news reports in early 2020 such as BBC Indonesia "Menkes Tantang Harvard Buktikan Virus Corona di Indonesia" (February 11, 2020), CNBC "Berdoa, Salah Satu Jurus Terawan Tangkal Penyebaran Corona" (February 12, 2020), Liputan 6 "Menkes Ungkap Alasan Orang Indonesia Kebal Virus Corona" (February 15, 2020), Detik.com "Kala Terawan Andalkan Doa Cegah Virus Corona Masuk" (February 17, 2020), KOMPAS "Indonesia Negatif Virus Corona, Menkes Terawan" (February 18, 2020)

³⁷ Aminulloh et al., (2021). Propaganda dan Teori Konspirasi: Wacana Masyarakat terhadap Covid-19 di Indonesia. *Jurnal Nomosleca*, 7(2), 97–106.

³⁸ Zulfikar, M. (2020, July). BNPB: Desa Lebih Berhasil Terapkan PSBB Dibandingkan Kota. Antara News. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1613622/bnpb-desa-lebih-berhasil-terapkan-psbb-dibandingkan-kota>.

importance of implementing health protocols. One of the efforts was to engage celebrities and social media influencers, or micro-celebrities.³⁹ President Jokowi invited a number of Indonesian celebrities, including artists and musicians, on July 14, 2020, to the Presidential Palace not only to formulate joint programs with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to bridge the needs of fellow artists financially affected by the pandemic but also to call upon them to help with the government's strategic vision to safeguard the nation from the looming threat of a pandemic. In an interview with Detik News after the meeting, Butet Kertaradjasa said that the artists were encouraged to communicate with the public and their fans and urged them to adhere to health protocols.⁴⁰

The Indonesian government's initiatives to partner with renowned artists and musicians had started even earlier. Among others was with Bimbo. It was roughly a month before Ramadan, usually the best time to release Islamic songs, and Bimbo was very well-known with their legendary Islamic songs—used to be called “qasidah.” Bimbo's “Corona” was created at the request of Doni Monardo, Director of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB).⁴¹ As a respectable music group, Bimbo maintained close ties with the government, evidenced by the fact that this particular song was commissioned by BNPB. Distinguishing them from many other bands, Bimbo consists of highly educated musicians;

³⁹ See Theresa M. Senft (2013). *Microcelebrity and the branded self*. In: Hartley J, Burgess J and Bruns A (eds) *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 346–354.

⁴⁰ Read more on Detik “Raffi Ahmad, ... Diundang Jokowi ke Istana, Ada Apa?” (July 14, 2020)

⁴¹ Read more on KOMPAS “Viral Lagu Virus Corona yang Dinyanyikan Bimbo 30 Tahun Lalu, Ini Faktanya” (April 10, 2020), Grid “Bimbo Dedikasikan Lagu Corona untuk BNPB” (April 11, 2020), RRI “Karya Bimbo Soal Corona yang Dipesan Kepala BNPB Belum Serah Terima” (May 10, 2020)

for example, Samsudin, the main vocalist, is a Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) graduate. Despite their long absence from the entertainment industry, their respected standing in society remained. They were still sought after for interviews, and their legendary Islamic songs, such as “Sajadah Panjang”, were still played on the radio, in malls, and in mosques, especially during Ramadan and at religious events. Thus, Bimbo had the potential to serve as an ambassador to spread official information.

Just within a month after the release of the single “Corona,” Bimbo was featured in a government-sponsored fundraising concert “Bersatu Melawan Corona.” The event was initiated by the People’s Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (MPR) in collaboration with the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP) and the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). It was live-streamed for approximately two hours on various channels such as TVRI, Metro TV, ANTV, INews, and Detik. In addition to singing performances,⁴² the main part of the event was a fundraising segment where the hosts received calls from citizens from different regions who were willing to donate to help coronavirus victims. It also included the controversial auction of the electric motorbike with President Jokowi’s autograph on it. See below the poster of the event.

⁴² Other than Bimbo, performing artists include Erwin Gutawa Orchestra, Yovie Widiyanto, GIGI, Radja, Rossa, Andien, Via Vallen, Inul Daratista, Dira Sugandi, Yura Yunita, Tompi, and more.

Figure 1. Poster of “Bersatu Melawan Corona” Concert



The concert was extravagantly promoted with Bimbo's name on the poster. However, they just sang three songs, including "Corona," "Rindu Rasul," and "Tuhan", and showed up briefly during the program.⁴³ Beyond the featured Bimbo, over 25 artists, musicians, and politicians were engaged, and a longer duration was allocated for the fundraising and auction. Framed as a charitable endeavour, the concert was designed to showcase the generosity and compassion of the Indonesian people, echoing the fifth precept of Pancasila. The show was crafted as more than just entertainment; it manifested humanitarian care. This concert successfully raised IDR 4.003.357.815 overnight. It was a hybrid event, with some participants performing live in the studio while others appeared via pre-recorded videos. Interestingly, however, none of those in the studio wore masks throughout the show, except in the half-minute scene when the MC, Choky Sitohang, and electric motorbike auction leader, Rosan Roeslani, wore cloth masks while the other MC, Andy F. Noya, did not. Then both of them took their masks off.

⁴³ Only Sam and Acil attended. Iin Parlina substituted Jaka.

Figure 2. A Brief Talk Between Bimbo Members and the MCs after Their Performance



Nevertheless, the presence of distinguished Bimbo did not prevent the show from being heavily criticized afterwards. Several intellectuals, such as Ossy Dermawan⁴⁴ and Rachland Nashidik⁴⁵ viewed the event as hypocritical. When people were urged to adhere to the government's directives, celebrities and politicians such as MPR Chairman Bambang Soesatyo, who was involved in this live event, failed to comply with health protocols as they did not practice social distancing and wore masks.⁴⁶ A senior journalist, Farid Gaban, connected this event to a series of fundraising initiatives previously organized by government officers who, in his view, turned the nation into a charity foundation burdening its citizens. Instead, the authorities should focus more on formulating effective public policies to minimize the impact of the pandemic. The #StopKonserUnfaedah hashtag also became Indonesia's third trending topic, with a total of 24 thousand tweets at that time. Public scepticism regarding the

⁴⁴ Democratic DPP Strategic Communication Agency Head

⁴⁵ Democratic Education Association Founder

⁴⁶ Read more on Detik News: "Corona Virtual Concert Severely Criticized, Bamsuet Apologizes" (May 18, 2020).

government's performance was pervasive and deeply ingrained.

Beyond Bimbo's participation in the concert, another reason why their "Corona" could be viewed as consent is rooted in its intrinsic elements, especially its lyrics, which indicate fatalism. Rather than encouraging critical thinking by examining the unprecedented global emergence of the coronavirus and the government's chaotic and ambiguous approach to addressing the issue, the song tends to direct its audience to view the COVID-19 crisis as a divine means to purify the world. The pandemic is described as the destiny of human fate, a shared hardship that must be endured. Also, the lyrics suggest it is a form of human retribution for past arrogance. Despite the debates over the sudden emergence of the virus, the simplistic idea of accepting this crisis as a divine warning rendered the public passive victims of the prevailing narratives while facilitating the government's greater control over the situation.

To some extent, Bimbo's "Corona" failed to address the harsh reality of the coronavirus proportionately. In real life, the COVID-19 pandemic inflicted a significant blow to the lower middle class, with widespread job losses and economic collapse. While acknowledging the need for lockdown policies and stay-at-home orders to curb the spread of the virus, it was important not to underestimate the other impact, especially the economic. Mere prayers and self-reflection would not bring food to the table of those laid off due to the pandemic or families who relied on daily income. The problems arising from the COVID-19 crisis were complicated, and the song, to a certain degree, ignores the pandemic's profound social and economic implications. In brief, the emergence of Bimbo's corona-inspired Islamic song resonates with research findings by Jurić and Bienvenu, where music can be utilized to impose specific agendas by the government.

Corona-Inspired Islamic Music as a Tool for Resistance

Unlike Bimbo's "Corona," "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" better captures the complexities of everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic, making the song potentially resonant with a broader audience. In a humorous tone, a lighthearted approach to take people's minds off stressful situations, this song touches on themes of personal challenges and financial struggles due to strict health protocols. The couplet "Golek kerjo di angel-angel" (trans. It's tough to find a job) and "Ojo ngasi malah masang togel" (trans. Be careful not to gamble instead) contain dark humour, cynical to the condition of the lower class. Moreover, "Utangku numpuk nang warung warung" (trans. My debts piling up at the small shops) highlights a growing burden of debts. The mention of small shops (warung warung) suggests that these debts are incurred in day-to-day transactions, possibly for basic necessities. "Durung lunas wis utang maneh" (trans. Debts not yet paid, owe another) reaffirms the intricate challenges most people face daily.

Indeed, the lyrics of "Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye" do not seem to take the COVID-19 crisis lightly. Central to the problems portrayed above was the primary measure to curb the spread of the coronavirus, i.e., to limit people's movement and restrict communal activities. Although this step might seem most appropriate, the implementation proved formidable. Indonesia is home to more than 250 million people, including many with lower incomes.⁴⁷ Many, especially those in traditional markets, depend on daily income. With restrictions in 2020 preventing people from leaving, sellers faced a shortage of customers and, consequently, zero revenue for the day. Small businesses, especially those that relied on public spaces such as cafes, had been forced to close due

⁴⁷ According to the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the percentage of rural poor rose to 13.20 per cent in September 2020. Meanwhile, the number of urban poor was 12.04 million people.

to a lack of foot traffic. Indeed, this song highlights the harsh economic impact, especially on the lower middle class, due to the stay-home order that disrupts economic activities. Fewer customers meant less profits earned, leading to the company's inability to pay their employees' salaries. Consequently, many people became jobless. No job meant no income, and to fulfil the daily and basic necessities, people began to take loans, ending up with a pile of debt.

Also, Indonesia is home to around 2 million Muslims who are accustomed to communal religious practices. Many choose to do the prayers at the mosques since congregational prayer (*jama'ah*) carries a greater reward than praying alone. They also regularly organize religious activities, including sermons and Quranic teaching, for children in this place of worship. Some⁴⁸ were outraged when Indonesia's Ulema Council (MUI) advised them not to pray together in the mosques.⁴⁹ The buildings remained open, but with strict health protocols, so fewer people could be accommodated. While some regular mosque attendees insisted on coming, people who lived near the mosques began to worry that the mosques in their neighbourhood would become a cluster for COVID-19.⁵⁰ Indonesian authorities were initially torn between implementing total or partial lockdown. People were defensive over the idea of lockdown, as it could be a disaster for the economy and social life.

⁴⁸ Especially those who still doubted the danger of the coronavirus. They thought it was an effort to undermine religion.

⁴⁹ Affan, H. (2020, April). Virus Corona dan Ramadan: Mengapa Salat Berjemaah di Masjid Masih Digelar, Walau MUI dan Ormas Islam Mengimbau Salat di Rumah? BBC Indonesia. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-52408357>

⁵⁰ Irham, M. (2020, June). COVID-19: Tempat ibadah dibuka, "tentang kekhawatiran terkena COVID-19, ya kita berdoa saja." BBC Indonesia. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-52868562>

Beyond the lyrics of “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye,” Audul Marom rebana group’s participation in the four-hour-long religious event to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the death of Kyai Abdullah Zainuddin and Nyai Siti Alfiyah on September 6, 2020, provides concrete evidence of their resistance. This event is called *khaul*, a long tradition in Indonesia, especially among the NU community. However, between August 31 and September 30, 2020, Demak was under the “tanggap darurat” (emergency) period, in which schools and offices in that region had been switched to online since March 2020. The Indonesian Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) recommends opting for online events. Therefore, such mass gatherings at an offline event can be viewed as a form of defiance.

Figure 3. Audul Marom Rebana Group’s Performance at a Religious Event in Demak



Decree of the Health Ministry No. HK.01.07/MENKES/382/2020 concerning Health Protocols for the Public in Public Places and Facilities was ratified on June 19, 2020. Dr Terawan Putranto said that the risk of movement of people and community gatherings in public places and facilities had considerable potential for COVID-19 transmission.⁵¹

⁵¹ See BKPP Demak news article on “Menkes Teken Keputusan

Consequently, activities in public places and facilities had to be minimized. If they should be in public areas, they had to adhere to strict health protocols by wearing masks, washing hands with soap, and maintaining physical distancing. Interestingly, however, a group of people in Demak held an offline event attended by hundreds of people. Audul Marom rebana group consisted of 14 male members of the rebana group playing different musical instruments and three female vocalists participating in this event. On stage, they looked so engaged in the music, with smiles now and then, seemingly undisturbed by the potential danger of the coronavirus. None of them wore masks during the show. It is also evident in the YouTube live video that more than two hundred people attended the event, and over 80% of them did not wear masks. Some had masks but did not constantly put them on.

Figure 4. Attendees of the Religious Event in Demak on September 6, 2020



tentang Protokol Kesehatan di Tempat Umum” (June 22, 2020), <https://bkpp.demakkab.go.id/2020/06/menkes-teken-keputusan-tentang-protokol.html>



Those participating in the September 6 *khaul* in Demak clearly disregarded the physical distancing measures. On stage, the seventeen performers were seated close to one another. They displayed a lack of concern regarding contracting the virus. Similarly, the religious event attendees failed to observe social distancing measures. They were also seated very close to each other; some were on the chairs, while others were on the narrow alleyways of the crowded residential area. Their actions indicate their shared similar perspective to those who were sceptical of the existence of the coronavirus. According to a survey by the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in September 2020, 17% of 90,967 respondents said it was unlikely to be infected with COVID-19.⁵² An earlier survey by Charta Politika Indonesia in July 2020 also showed that 40,9 per cent of Indonesian citizens did not trust the COVID-19 case report issued by the Indonesian government.⁵³

⁵² Read more on Antara News “Survei BPS: 17 persen masyarakat yakin tak akan tertular COVID-19” (Sep 28, 2020), <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/1752209/survei-bps-17-persen-masyarakat-yakin-tak-akan-tertular-covid-19>

⁵³ Read more on CNN Indonesia “Survei Charta: 40,9 Persen Tak Percaya Data Covid Pemerintah” (July 23, 2020), <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200722190904-32->

Like celebrities and influencers, religious leaders were also regarded as potential government partners to convince the public about the real danger of the coronavirus. It is especially true of the role of *the kyai*, with their exemplary character and profound Islamic knowledge, among the Muslim community, particularly the pesantren. Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, said that *santri* or pesantren students generally submitted to or obeyed their *kyai*; therefore, it was important to call for *kyai* to educate their *santri* about the virus and the importance of health protocols.⁵⁴ However, *kyai*'s stance can be dichotomized into two categories: those who believed that the coronavirus existed and agreed to support the government's program and those who remained sceptical. The latter tended to perceive this issue as merely a political maneuver, attributing it to the agendas of pharmaceutical companies to profit from vaccine sales.⁵⁵

Those participating in the September 6 *khaul* event in Demak are more likely to belong to the sceptic group. The underlying thought that drove their actions could stem from their belief that every living being would succumb to death, whether or not they contract the coronavirus. It was apparent in the sermon delivered by Kyai Mahyan Ahmad,⁵⁶ an invited preacher in the

527807/survei-charta-409-persen-tak-percaya-data-covid-pemerintah.

⁵⁴ Read more on Republika "Kiai Diminta Berperan Edukasi Bahaya COVID-19" (Oct 5, 2020), <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/qwpbe1409/masih-ada-kyai-tak-percaya-covid-kala-ratusan-ulama-wafat>

⁵⁵ Read more on Detik News "Pesantren dan Narasi Konspiratif Corona" (July 30, 2020), <https://news.detik.com/kolom/d-5113982/pesantren-dan-narasi-konspiratif-corona>.

⁵⁶ He is the caretaker of Al-Mansyur Purwodadi Islamic Boarding School, Grobogan Regency, Central Java. He stated during the sermon that he had been approached by police officers several times, asking him to close his pesantren. He was willing to abide by the rule if the government could care for and feed his *santri*.

event. He suggested that people proceed with their regular daily activities without the burden of undue concern while praying to God for the eradication of the coronavirus. He highlighted the importance of the physical/outer (*lahiriyah*) protocol and the spiritual/inner (*batiniyah*) one. He left the task of implementing the *lahiriyah* protocol through strict COVID-19 measures to the government and let it be the duty of the kyai to carry out the *batiniyah* protocol. The government should not prohibit religious activities to nourish people's spiritual well-being unless they could provide better alternatives.

In short, not endorsed by the elites, “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” adeptly resonates with the aspirations of the lower classes, articulating the economic impact that came from the stay-home order and restrictions for community gatherings in public places. The emergence of corona-inspired Islamic music aligns with research by Fram et al., which observed a surge in the production of socially and politically relevant corona songs. However, slightly different from Thompson's research findings, which saw the rise of corona songs containing education about the virus and health protocols, “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” educates the public about the economic impact of COVID-19 on the lower class. The impact was significant enough that it was no less terrible than the threat posed by the virus itself. Indeed, the September 6 mass gathering where the Audul Marom Rebana group was performing with minimal adherence to health protocols serves as a stark illustration of resistance.

Conclusion

Corona-inspired Islamic music has enriched the growing collection of corona-themed songs which emerged during the pandemic. Its distinctive characteristics lie in its value-added entertainment, a combination of religious and poetic elements, that

remains constrained within the precise parameters of Islamic music but also sheds light on the nuanced role that Islamic music plays in response to the prevailing global situation. In its manner, “Corona” and “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” similarly redirect Corona's global wave of fear by aspiring to return to God. While numerous corona songs pay tribute to nurses, doctors and health authorities, corona-inspired Islamic music offers heartfelt praises primarily to God. Echoing Jones' findings, this genre is adorned with insightful lyrics, encompassing a spectrum of emotions from contemplative and introspective, particularly in Bimbo's “Corona,” to a cynical but humorous which allows the listener to cut loose for a few minutes, as expressed in “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye.”

Produced against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, corona-inspired Islamic music could no longer be viewed simply as a form of entertainment or just an aesthetic call to surrender to God in the face of crisis. Instead, it could be used as a tool for cultural accommodation by the elites to create consent on the one hand and a form of resistance by the ordinary people on the other hand. It aligns with Stuart Hall's concept of culture and power and emphasizes the complex relationship between popular culture and power dynamics. Here, popular culture serves as a battleground where dominant and marginalized groups negotiate their positions. The limited availability of reliable information about COVID-19, combined with inconsistent government responses to the pandemic and worsened by the spread of conspiracy theories on social media, has resulted in widespread public scepticism. To restore public trust, the Indonesian government partnered with artists and influencers, considering their flexible position that allows for interaction with fans in a more relaxed yet impactful manner. The production of Bimbo's “Corona” at the request of BNPB and their participation in the government-sponsored fundraising concert “Bersatu Melawan Corona,” appearing more like token gestures

than genuine support, exemplify this.

On the contrary, not commissioned by any government officials or ministry, “Sirahku Mumet Sirahmu Piye” better portrays the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic and echoes the plight of the lower classes, articulating the commoner’s frustration over the economic burden due to COVID-19 measures, especially the “stay home” and “social distancing” orders. Moreover, Audul Marom Rebana group's performance at the September 6th *khaul* in Karangrejo, Demak, which failed to adhere to health protocols, is clearly a form of resistance. The reasoning behind their negligence was evident in Kyai Mahyan Ahmad’s sermon during the event. With no alternative means to sustain the working class, living at home became a luxury they could not afford, as government subsidies were not enough to meet basic needs. At this point, the once-feared coronavirus seemed less daunting than the devastating economic hardship people encounter daily.

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