

## Rebo Wekasan Festival (Study on Dynamics and Its Implementation for Demak Society)

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### ABSTRACT

The celebration of *Rebo Wekasan* is a part of a vital ritual conducted by collaborative Islamic groups, including Muslims in Demak. They believe in the sacredness of the last Wednesday of Safar month because God sends down 320.000 disasters in the world. This belief leads to them holding a specific ritual to request protection from the tragedies on that day. And this particular ritual is different from what other Muslims do, mainly in Java. That is why the researcher is interested in exploring the phenomena rising by what happens. So it leads to the researcher using the ethnographical approach.

Based on research, the researcher classifies most Muslims in Demak into collaborative Islamic groups. They celebrate the *Rebo Wekasan* with various nuances and forms differently from other Muslim societies in Java, such as in Kudus, Pati, Jepara, and others. However, there are several similarities, like praying *daf'ul bala* (rejecting the dangers) and drinking *wafaq* water (water with tattoo). Apart from those, Muslims in Demak celebrate by reading *al-Barzanji* and *al-Dzibaiyah* texts on the night of *Rebo Wekasan*. Some read it on the morning after the *Fajr* prayer in the congregation. After reading *al-Barzanji* or *al-Dzibaiyah* text, people serve the food with a *talam* (large plate) containing rice, side dishes, *jadah pasar* (traditional food sold in traditional markets, such as *gethuk*, *tayamum* crackers, *bakwan*, fried tofu, *bakpao* and others), as well as drinks with a tattoo. Each family presents the food and drinks to the mosque, *mushalla* or *langgar* to eat together by intention to refuse reinforcements coming down on that day (*Rebo Wekasan*). Besides, their perception and belief also affect their behavior on that day. For example, on the day of *Rebo Wekasan*, they do not leave for traveling, schools (*Madrasah Diniyah*) are closed even without prior notification from the school management, and so on. Furthermore, in celebrating the process of *the Rebo Wekasan*, generally, Muslims in Demak do four rituals: 1) reading a special prayer, 2) drinking amulet water, 3) giving alms, and 4) praying to refuse reinforcements.

**Keywords:**

The Rebo Wekasan procession, Muslims in Demak

### A. Introduction

The Javanese Muslims have several celebrations for Islamic holidays, such as *Eid al-Fitri*, *Eed al-Adha*, *Hijriyah* new year, and Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*

*SAW*) *Isra 'Mi'raj*, and the revelation of Kuran (*Nuzul al-Qur'an*). Still, also they add to other celebrations, like the celebration of 10 Muharram (Muthohar, 2008: 2), *Rebo Wekasan*, and *Nisfal Sha'ban*.

Especially for the celebration of *Rebo Wekasan* as a tradition from the thought that *Rebo Wekasan*, the last Wednesday of Safar month, is a sad day where Allah sends 320,000 reinforcements (calamities) in the form of diseases and others, the Javanese Muslims celebrate this tradition differently from other Muslims. They celebrate it with its dynamic and nuances, since praying together, a specific reading, and others. Even in Java, each region has a particular tradition, such as Kudus, Pati, Kediri, Demak, etc.

Muslims in Demak, a part of the Javanese Muslims, celebrate *Rebo Wekasan* differently from other Muslim societies, although there are several similarities. Apart from praying *daf'ul bala* 'and drinking *wafaq* water (water with tattoo), Muslims in Demak celebrate by reciting *al- Barzanji* and *al-Dzibaiyah* texts on the night of *Rebo Wekasan*, and some read it on the morning after the *Fajr* prayer in congregation. After reading *al-Barzanji* or *al-Dzibaiyah* text, people serve the food with a *talam* (large plate) containing rice, side dishes, *jadah pasar* (traditional food sold in traditional markets, such as *gethuk*, *tayamum* crackers, *bakwan*, fried tofu, *bakpao* and others), as well as drinks with a tattoo. Each family presents the food and drinks to the mosque, *mushalla* or *langgar* to eat together by intention to refuse reinforcements coming down on that day (*Rebo Wekasan*). This ritual practice was inseparable from their perceptions and beliefs about the sacredness of last Wednesday in Safar month. The perception and faith affect the behavior of Muslims in Demak, mainly traditional Islamic groups. For example, on the day of *Rebo Wekasan*, they do not leave for traveling, schools (*Madrasah Diniyah*) are closed even without prior notification from the school management, and so on.

To trace the origin of this celebration with specific ritual sequences is very difficult due to various references. Nevertheless, most Muslims in Demak assume that the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual refers to the classical books' recommendations. Those books are the teachings, guidance, religious knowledge, and so on from previous *kyais* (*alim ulama*) based on the Koran and hadiths written in a book

codification. Based on this description, the *Rebo Wekasan* tradition is fascinating to reveal along with the dynamics of its celebration, which is still sacred to most Muslims in Demak who are known for their religiosity and religious beliefs. Therefore, the problem discussed in this paper is how the origins and dynamics of the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration carried out by Muslims in Demak, including the form and nuances of its implementation.

Furthermore, in general, the purpose of this study is to answer the above problems and provide input on the historical tracing for the origins of the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration and describe the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration for Muslims in Demak with the dynamics and nuances of its implementation.

Meanwhile, the benefits of this research are to contribute to Islamic intellectual treasures related to the history of Islamic culture. This study also explains the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration carried out by some Muslims in Demak, which is slightly different from the mindstream of other traditional Islamic groups.

## B. Research Method

The research's subjects are public figures, mainly religious leaders in Demak who were considered initiators or advocates for implementing the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration. Furthermore, this study uses an ethnographical approach with its general principles focusing on the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration's specific phenomena with its dynamic and nuance in the Demak district. The ethnographical process is a study to describe a culture as it is. Recently this leads to the researcher's role as merely an observer of an event that takes place without the intervention to the event directly (Endaswara, 2006: 50). This research is supported by using in-depth interviews to find out the meaning of symbols (Spradly, 1979: 5), practiced in the celebration of *Rebo Wekasan*.

The researcher uses the data collected by 1) participant-observer method. The observer collects the data through the direct activities' technique as a participant on the object under study. This method explores and appreciates what is happening in the field with the uncontrolled observation model (free

observation), using observation measures without using structured written techniques. 2) Interview method. This method is a dialogue conducted by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee. Moleong said that the interview is a conversation with a specific purpose. Thus the interview method is verbal communication between the researcher and the subject to get an explanation. The process of collecting data is by conducting in-depth interviews with respondents and other parties related to the problem under study (2012: 190). 3) Documentation Method. The researcher views the artifacts or books to trace for *Rebo Wekasan* celebration. The texts read at the celebration moment, such as *Mujarrabat* written by al Dairaby, *al-Jawahir al-Khams* by al-Attar, and *Kanzu al Najah wa al Surur allati Tasyrah al Shudur* by Sheikh Abd al Hamid al Qudsi.

Finally is the data analysis method. The type of research is descriptive-analytical research that describes the phenomenon under study in detail based on the found data, followed by an analysis of existing data.

After the researcher had collected all data, either through observation, documentation, and interviews, the next step is to analyze the data by taking three steps, data reduction, data display, concluding, and verification (Nasution, 2002: 129). However, because the approach of this research is ethnographic, specifically in conducting fieldwork, the researcher concludes human culture from three sources: (1) from what people say, (2) from the way people act, (3) from the used various artifacts (Spradly, 1979: 5). Furthermore, data analysis is a continuous process with regularity patterns, explanation, and proportion. The researcher's activity begins to move with the data analysis component and data collection during the process. The last is data reduction by clarifying and codifying similar data.

### C. Result and Discussion

The discussion of *Rebo Wekasan's* research begins with an overview of Muslim culture in Demak in general, then explains the origins, sources, and dynamics of the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration carried out by Muslims in Demak.

### 1. The Muslim Culture in Demak

The Muslim community in Demak cannot be categorized into the purist Muslims as a whole as Nursyam thesis describes that coastal Islam, included Muslims in Demak, is often classified as pure Islam due to coming into contact with the great traditions of Islam directly (2005: 5). However, they are close to collaborative Islam groups; the pattern of relations between Islam and local culture is civilized due to joint construction between agents (local elites) and society in a continuous dialectical process. Collaborative Islam groups are characterized by a distinctive Islamic structure adopting local elements that do not conflict with Islam. It also supports Islamic teachings through a continuous transformation process by legitimizing a tradition based on Islamic texts according to local elites' interpretations. They respect and appreciate several practices considered the valid Islamic teachings, like the grave pilgrimage, *Ruwahan*, *Shawalan*, *Rebo Wekasan*, *as-Shura* festival, etc. This cultural field is associated with the creations of the guardians or the early spreaders of Islam in Java and then followed up by the *kyais*, *pesantren* leaders in particular (Dhofier, 1988: 23). The motive for taking this action is to gain blessings.

Most Muslims in Demak is collaborative Islamic groups. Burger and Luckman, in the social construction theory of Islamic groups with adaptive moments, stated that collaborative Islamic groups effort to legitimize the ongoing tradition by looking for religious arguments. However, other Muslim groups reject all rules that they think are contrary to Islamic texts (Berger & Luckman, 1990: 28-65). This group will not accept the old or new traditions considered as not the great traditions of Islam. Furthermore, apart from these collaborative Islamic groups, there is still one more group that includes the Abangan Islamic group. It means that they recognize Islam as their religion, but they do not carry out their religious obligations as they should in their daily life practices. The number of this group is quantitatively large, but it does not have the bargaining power to influence social behavior in general.

Based on the description above, in a case for Muslims in Demak, the researcher categorizes it into three groups, a collaborative Islamic group, a purist Islamic group, and an Abangan Islamic group.

Among the three typologies above, only the collaborative Islamic group has the most followers in Demak society. This group grows continuously along with *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) while maintaining the old traditions that are not against religious teachings, such as *Ruwahan*, *Tahlilan*, *as-Shura*, and *Rebo Wekasan*, and others. In retaining the practices, they hold the principle to absorb the new cultures as long as not conflict with religious values. They follow the tenets referred by Nusantara scholars, with the phrase "*al-Muhafadhatu ala al Qadima al-Salih wal Al-Ahdhu bi al-Jadid al-Ashlah*" (keep the good old traditions and take on the new better habits) (Djabir, 2014: 34). By this principle, the followers of collaborative Islamic groups have a grip on dealing with culture. Not all cultures are wrong; as long as those are not against Islamic teachings and contain goodness, it is acceptable and even can be maintained and followed. This principle follows a rule of Islamic Jurisprudence, *al-Adah Muhakamah*, that culture or (right) traditions can become legal considerations (Masyhudi, 2007: 5). In this way, the collaborative Islamic groups are seemingly dynamic in facing challenges even though some are difficult to solve, such as meeting the materialist-hedonistic changes in society, as complained by several Islamic figures in Demak.

Furthermore, the collaborative Islamic groups have been in parallel with the NU socio-religious organization. Most of them settle in villages, farmers, farm laborers, fishers, small traders, and factory workers as the NU organization's prominent supporters.

Based on the above reality, this Islamic group's religious traditions follow NU's patterns and practices, maintaining the old habits filled with Islamic values. There are several NU patterns and conventions which are the great teachings of Islam (Nursyam, 2005: 8), such as the tradition of celebrating *Ied al-Fitri*, *Ied al-Adha*, the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday,

*Isra 'Mi'raj*, *Nuzul al-Qur'an*, and festival of the *Hijri* new year, and some are local Islamic traditions that have the legitimacy of the argument of the Koran and Hadith, such as *Shawalan*, *Rebo wekasan*, *Ruwahan*, *Mitoni*, *Barzanji*, and *Dzibaan*, *Manaqib*, *Istighatsah*, *Tahlilan*, grave pilgrimage, *Talqin*, *Arwah Jama'* and others.

## 2. Rebo Wekasan Celebration Resources

Many sources have been used to legitimize *the Rebo Wekasan* celebration with different motives. There are two motives for celebrating *the Rebo Wekasan*:

The first motive is gratitude to Allah that invites people to give Allah thanks for getting something they want. Generally, it refers to the legends or myths based on folklore which are difficult to trace the origins of resources due to the absence of valid sources. We can appoint the event such as *the Rebo Wekasan* celebration held by Muslims in Bantul Yogyakarta, Gresik, and Cilacap, which is more towards a folk cultural party; however, some are due to religious beliefs and understanding. Today, *the Rebo Wekasan* celebration based on the folklore above is not a pure ritual. Still, it has shifted its value to a culture without *a taabbudi* (worshiping) spirit and the importance of honoring Allah. So people can enjoy more cultural values through the folk culture party instead of gratitude to Allah.

The second motive is a religious belief. In this motive, the sources underlying this celebration of the *Rebo Wekasan* refer to an assumption based on standardized books' arguments as guidelines that in traditional Islamic groups, called *al kutub al mu'tabarah*. At least there are two works referred to by several religious figures (*kyai*) in Demak :

The first work is *Mujarrabat ad-Dairaby al-Kabir Fathu al-Malik al-Majid al-Mu-Allafli Nafi' al-'Abid Wa an Kulli Jabbar' Anid*. This work is written by al Dairaby as stated by *kyais* (religious figures) in Demak, such as Ali Masmu'i and Nur Kamilin Mahmuddun. They referred to *Mujarrabat* for the implementation of this celebration (personal interview, 2018: October 16) by quoting the explanation from *Mujarabat* as follows:

... *Ba'dhul arifin min ahl al-Kasyf wa al-Tamkin* (some the highest knowledge person in mysticism) said that Allah SWT has sent down 320,000 disasters every year on the last Wednesday of Safar month. Thus that day is the hardest day of the year. So Allah will guard people who pray four *raka'ats* (a term of movement and reading in praying) and reads surah *al-Fatihah* then surah *al-Kautsar* seventeen times, *al-Ikhlash* five times and *al-Muawidzatain* (surah *al-Falaq* and *al-Nas*) once in each *rakaat*, throughout the year from all troubles (distress)

The second work is *al-Jawahir al-Khams* written by Muhammad Ibn Khathiruddin Al-'Atthar (d. 970 H). According to the several religious leaders in the Demak region like Kyai Makmun Latif, an Islamic boarding school caretaker in Suburan Mranggen Demak, Kyai Mudatsir et al. *al-Jawahir al-Khams* is the essential book as the reference for the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration (personal interview, 2018: October 20). The contents of *al-Jawahir* are similar to *Mujarrabat al-Dairaby*, mainly the reasons for recommending prayer *li daf'il bala* (disaster rejecting) and its implementation techniques.

Besides, there are several references used for implementing the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration, like *Kanzu An-Najah Wa As-Surur Fi Al-Ad'iyah Allati Tasyrahu As-Shudur* written by Sheikh Abdul Hamid ibn Muhammad 'Ali Al-Qudsi ibn. 'Abdul Qadir al-Khatib ibn' Abdullah ibn Mujir. The content of his work discusses various *wirid* practices, prayer, *dhikr*, and others. Also, there are other books, such as *Hashyah As-Sittin*, and others. But unfortunately, none of the respondents mentioned the two books here; *Kanzu al Najah* and *Hasyah Sittin*. Perhaps these books are not well known to Muslims in Demak and its surroundings, even though *Kitab Kanzun al-Najah* is the work of Sheikh Abd al Hamid from Kudus, an eastern district of Demak.

A few books used by the religious leaders above confirmed that this celebration had obtained arguments to strengthen beliefs of a person's values and behavior on the last Wednesday of Safar month. Suppose we refer to Berger and Luckman's social construction

theory. In that case, these ways are including in the category of moments of externalization (Berger & Luckman, 1990 28-65), moments of self-adaptation in which humans, according to human empirical knowledge, cannot be imagined separately from the continual outpouring of himself into the world he occupies. Therefore, the emergence of activities is a consequence. For example, Kyai Luqman, a religious leader in Wonoketingal village, stated that the *Rebo Wekasan* had gained legitimacy, which comes from normative texts in the Koran or Hadith and the opinions of salaf scholars. On a different occasion, Kyai Mudatsir stated that the *Rebo Wekasan* is a tradition that salaf scholars have long carried out based on *al-Jawahirul Khams* written by Muhammad ibn Khathiruddin al-'Atthar died in 970 H (personal interview, 2018: November 3). This affirmation is the basis of legitimacy for traditional Islamic groups to carry out the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual whose activities are carried out starting from congregational prayers, seeking blessings for drinking water from the kyai's house which is designated as holy water with wafaq amulet (tattoos) and carrying alms with various foods.

This type of *Rebo Wekasan* ritual, besides being carried out by the traditional Islamic group through adjusting to normative texts, the basis for its legitimacy is also obtained through the process of adapting to the old values embedded in the local traditions. Many people practice this type can be seen in several areas like Karanganyar, Gajah, Bonang, Wedding, and Mranggen sub-districts; people practiced those rituals as confirmed by kyai Ali Masmui, kyai Luqman Suadi, kyai Ma'mun Lathief, and kyai Fakhruddin (they are as religious teachers and kyais as community role models). The kyais emphasized that their predecessors had carried out this custom for a long time. The old values that live in society and underlie their awareness of carrying out *Rebo Wekasan* ritual activities are motivated to protect all dangers and preserve (*nguri-uri* in Javanese) the old traditions (personal interview, 2018: November 5). This action is, of course, also adapted to Islamic teachings, especially classical books.

The origins of this celebration for Muslims in Demak before getting legitimacy, both through the basics of Hadith and classical books, some people gain knowledge and cultural heritage from their parents and teachers when studying the Koran at Pesantren (Islamic boarding school). For example, kyai Ali Masmui explicitly said that he followed this ritual when he was a student at the Islamic boarding school Bendo Pare Kediri, which lived up to old traditions. Likewise, kyai Luqman Suadi and the people of Wonoketingal village often hold the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual; he also received the confirmation of this ritual from his teachers at Islamic boarding school Jekulo Kudus.

Thus, it can be underlined that initially *Rebo Wekasan* ritual for Muslims in Demak originated from the previous generations' ritual practices, obtained from the teachings of parents, kyai, previous religious figures and others, even though this ritual was not native to Javanese culture or Hindu heritage. Over time, they gained legitimacy from classical books considered the source and legal basis for their implementation, such as *Mujarrabat* by al-Dairaby, *al-Jawahir al-Khams*, *Kanzun al-Najah*, *Hasyah Sittin*, al-Firdaus by al-Albuni.

### 3. The meaning of *Rebo Wekasan* Celebration

There are at least two meanings behind the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration for Muslims in Demak. The two meanings are sacred and tranquility.

#### a. Sacred Meanings

Muslims in Demak, believe that the last Wednesday of Safar month or *Rebo Wekasan* has a deep and sacred meaning because it is considered an unlucky day, the day on which Allah SWT sent 320,000 reinforcements' (Kyai Ali Masmui, personal interview, 2018: October 10), scary day or *yaum nahs* (a day that could put someone in danger). According to some people, the designation of this unlucky day is based on the interpretation of the Koran in *surah al-Qamar* verse 19 which means: "Indeed, We have blown to them a very strong wind on a continuous unlucky day" (Ministry of Religion, 2018).

The sentence *Yaumu Nahsin* (unlucky day) is understood by some scholars as Wednesday as

Ibn ' Abbas has said it: "Not a people get tormented but on Wednesday" (al-Bantani, 2013: 260). Ibn Abbas's words were quoted several times by religious leaders and associated with a hadith, which means: "In fact, the prayer was answered on Wednesday after the sun had shifted to the west".

Although the validity of the two hadiths is questionable, whether it is a *sahih*, *Hasan* or *dhaif* position, several religious figures affirm this as a reason for carrying out the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual. Then it is strengthened again by quoting the opinion of Imam 'Alim Zakariya Al-Qazwiny,: "Wednesday is a day where there is little virtue, and Wednesday at the end of the month is a continuous unlucky day" (Al-Qazwiny, 1980: 115).

According to the caretaker for Islamic boarding school Suburan Mranggen Demak, Makmun Lathief, stated that when Allah sends down the reinforcements on the day of *Rebo Wekasan*, we are encouraged to pray immediately and ask for protection from Allah using prayer, *zikr*, alms, and others. He added that Wednesday is a sad day, this reason is quoted from *Kitab al-Hidayah* as follows:

No work starts on Wednesday unless it is destroyed (unprofitable) because Wednesday was the day when Allah created light (personal interview, 2018: November 6). Kyai Makmun stated that humans should not be prejudiced against something because everything has its destiny. The human task is only to pray for goodness.

Like other Javanese Muslims, Muslims in Demak also perform special rituals on this *Rebo Wekasan* to avoid Wednesday's dangers by praying four *rakaat*, throwing the tattoo into the well (water source) as a sacrifice to avoid all hazards, reading the specific texts, and doing a charity. Thus, disease and trouble will never come.

#### b. The Meaning of Serenity

After they have performed the ritual as above, they felt a sense of calm in their hearts and are not afraid of the coming danger to them. Other religious figures such as kyai Mastur, a mosque cleric in Gajah Lor village, believe that he feels calm after performing the ritual in all its sequences. After all, he has tried by praying,

praying *li daf'il bala*, doing alms which according to the belief of Muslims is a repellent to lousy luck ' because based on the Hadith, alms will reject all dangers. Also, he tries to drink the water given by *wafaq* or *rajaq* (tattoo) containing the verses of al-Quran, in the hope of getting blessings from the previously written verses (personal interview, 2018: October 10)

These traditions have several legitimacy of the above references. If the customs they do according to the hadith texts are still weak, they consider it as *afdhaliyatu a'mal* worship (the major charities), and of course, they are sure to get a reward yet. From these beliefs, they feel satisfied, happy, calm, and at ease, not scared in living their days on *Rebo Wekasan*

#### 4. Dynamics of Rebo Wekasan Celebration

a. The Shape and Nuances of Celebration  
In general, there are four rituals in celebrating *Rebo Wekasan*, 1) reading a special prayer, 2) drinking amulet water, 3) giving alms, and 4) praying to refuse reinforcements.

However, for most Muslims in Demak, these rituals have been replaced by reading the Koran surah Yasin or reciting al-Barzanji and Dzibaiyah texts. These two texts contain *Salawat Nabi* (prayer of the Prophet), where Muslims believe in it as prayer leading to their salvation and well-being.

1) Reading Surah Yasin, al-Barzanji, and Praying

We can see the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration dynamics because Muslims in Demak prefer to read *surah Yasin* or *al-Barzanji* and *al-Dzibai* texts at the *Rebo Wekasan* night rather than a special prayer for *Rebo Wekasan* in which a traditional Islamic group generally reads it in Java. This particular prayer is quoted from *Kitab Kanzun al-Najah wa al-Surur* by Sheikh Abd al-Hamid al-Quds or from *Kitab Mujarrabat* by Ahmad al-Dairaby. In these books, the authors explained that whoever wants to be safe and protected from calamities, read a special prayer written in *Kanzu al Najah* or *Mujarabat* at the beginning and also on the last Wednesday of Safar month

Nevertheless, not all celebrants of *Rebo Wekasan* prefer to read surah Yasin rather than

a prayer. Still, some of them took one of the prayers written in *Mujarabat* after reciting surah *Yasin* three times. This kind of practice is carried out by residents in Wedung, Bonang, and a small part of the Karanganyar Sub-districts. The villagers in Jungpasir, for example, along with their kyai and religious figure, Fahrudin, carried out the Rebo Wekasan celebration just by reading *surah Yasin* three times, then closing with a prayer for safety and not bound by the prayers written in *Kanzun al-Najah* and *Mujarrabat* (personal interview, 2018: October 9). Likewise, residents and religious leaders in Karanganyar sub-district on Rebo Wekasan's night read *surah Yasin* three times and end with a prayer for protection without mentioning the text of prayer. It differs from people in Kudus, Pati, Jepara, and even people in East Java districts. They always read one of the prayers written in *Mujarabat* above, as practiced by people in Gondoarum and its surroundings Jekulo Kudus sub-district, or people in Margoyoso Pati

According to Kyai Fakhruddin, reading surah Yasin three times will be more valuable than just a prayer even though the prayer is a *ma'thur* prayer (prayer taught by Prophet Muhammad). In *Kitab Bughiyat al-Mustarshidin* on the marginal note (*Hamish*), the author explained that whoever has any desire then reads surah Yasin three times; he will gain his wishes (Sayid Abd al Rahman, t.th: 8). And among the desire is the safety and security of life. The same reason was also conveyed by kyai Mudatsir (a religious leaders in Karanganyar sub-districts), that reading surah Yasin has many functions not only to ask someone's wish to be granted, but also to ask for safety, speed up the death penalty for people who are facing death and others.

Unlike people in other sub-districts of Demak, most of people in Karanganyar sub district - mainly Wonoketingal village with a fairly dense population base, Cangkring Rembang, Ngaloran, and others - Gajah Subdistrict and some Dempet sub-districts celebrate Rebo Wekasan by reading al-Barzanji and al-Dziba'i telling about the life history of Prophet Muhammad SAW from his birth to his death. From a linguistic perspective, the structure and

word diction of al Barzanji and al Dzibai contain beautiful poetic compositions chanted by a *munsyid* (singer). Then, the listeners respond by saying Salawat Nabi (the prayers of the Prophet PBUH). Uzair Dimiyati, a religious leader in Cangkring Rembang, said that by reading Salawat Nabi (the Prophet's blessings) as a series of processions for reading al-Barzanji text, one has the hope of getting intercession (help) from Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Likewise, the intent and purpose of chanting al-Barzanji, al-Dziba'i, and al-Burdah are not merely to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, but have a specific purpose in rituals varieties that accompany one's life cycle, to fulfill vows or ward off danger (Bruenissen, 1995: 169) including the day of the *Rebo Wekasan*.

Meanwhile, the reading of the texts was carried out at night. However, people in Karanganyar and Gajah sub-district generally do it in the morning after the Fajr prayer with the assumption that after the evening calamity 'descends, the morning is rejected by reading *al-Barzanji, al-Dziba'i, and al-Burdah*.

2) Drinking the amulet water

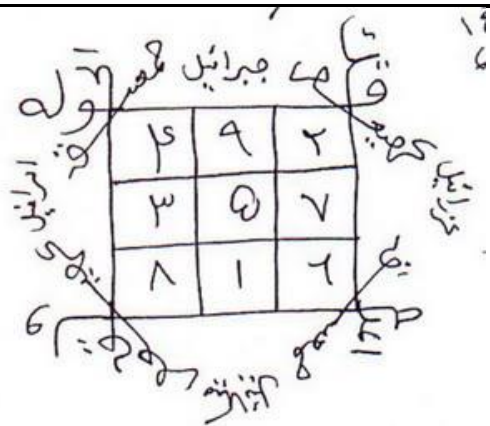
The making of the amulet in the form of *wafaq* (tattoo) is taken from many versions. Still, the charm circulating in Demak society is derived from Kitab *Kanzun al-Najah* written by Syekh Abd al-Hamid al-Qudsi. Oddly enough, the users and even the writers do not realize that the *wafaq* (tattoo) is quoted from that book. For the completeness of *wafaq* (tattoo), several sources mention that it was taken from kitab *Nihayat uz Zain* written by Imam Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani which is an explanation of Fiqh Qurrotul Ain. Al-Bantani in *Nihayat al Zain* said that whoever writes the seven *Salamah* verses (the seven verses of the Koran which begin with the word of *Salamun* (*Salamun qaulan min rabbirrahim, Salamun qaula nuhin fil alamin, Salamun ala Ibrahim, Salamun ala Musa wa Harun, Salamun ala Ilyasin, Salamun alaikum thibtum fadkhuluha khalidin, Salamun hiya hatta mathla'il fajr*), then he immerses that writing in provided water, the water will be blessed and whoever drinks it, he will save from the sent down calamity ( al-Bantani, 1978: 34)

Although talisman's completeness was taken from *Nihayat al-Zain* written by Imam Nawawi, Nawawi himself never recommended celebrating *Rebo Wekasan*. Perhaps Nawawi did not find a good base to legitimize the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration. Nawawi's statement about the functions and benefits of writing the seven *salamun* words above, is a general recommendation and not been devoted to the amulet of *Rebo Wekasan* celebration merely. Thus it can be ascertained that talisman's completeness is the only creation of Sheikh Abd al-Hamid al-Qudsi, considering that Sheikh Nawawi is a generation before. Or perhaps sheikh Abd al-Hamid took a reference from al-Jawahir al-Khams by al-Attar, a generation far above sheikh Nawawi and Sheikh Abd al-Hamid himself. The completeness of the talisman in the form of *wafaq* (tattoo) can be seen as follows:



In addition to the *wafaq* above, there is another version that is not taken from *Kanzu al-Najah* as follows





This *wafaq* has a deep meaning for Muslims in Demak because most of them felt calm and comfortable after drinking the *wafaq* amulet water, even though perhaps some others did not. Kyai Ali Masmui, one of the religious leaders who spread the *wafaq* (tattoo) confirms this feeling and believes that drinking the *wafaq* amulet water contains blessing from Allah because *the wafaq* includes the verses of al Qur'an (personal interview, 2018: October 9). As for the meaning in each sentence and the *wafaq* numbers, most of kyais couldn't answer. Kyai Mudatsir stated that the definition of the sentence in *wafaq* (tattoo) does not need to be known because it will reduce the efficacy of *wafaq* (tattoo). According to him, *wafaq* (tattoo) is similar to other amulets where the user does not even know the meaning of the text written in it.

The procession of writing this amulet is carried out at night, and the writer must be in a pure state of both large and small *hadas* (unclean state). Writing should use ink that can be dissolved in water. Some write on a plate made of ceramic so that the ink dissolves quickly into the water for drinking. Furthermore, this amulet water immersion is drunk together or individually after reading *al-Barzanji*, *al-Burdah*, or *al-Dzibai* texts in the morning of the *Rebo Wekasan*.

### 3) Selametan

*Selametan* is a ritual tradition carried out in Javanese society. This *selametan* is done by sitting cross-legged in a circle, beginning with prayer and ending with eating together. This type of food usually uses *tumpeng* (rice and side dishes in a large container) or carrying

food packages along with side dishes. The tradition of *selametan* varies from one region to another, including in Demak area. In some areas, such as Gresik, the food tradition used is *lontong Ketupat*, Bantul uses *lemper* as its main characteristic, besides using certain tools with the meaning of certain symbols. However, most Muslims in Demak never determine the tools or materials of alms for rejecting the calamity on this *Rebo Wekasan* day. In general, they bring a big plate contains the rice with side dishes to a sacred place like a mosque or a *langgar* to eat together. For anyone who cannot afford to bring a rice container, enough to bring snacks or drinks in the hope of being saved from all forms of reinforcements. They have believed that alms can reject distress with arguments from the Hadith of the Prophet SAW regarding alms' effects.

Psychologically, the meaning of giving alms is making the alms giver feels calm, comfort and safe because they believe that alms can ward off calamity, as stated in the Hadith narrated by Imam Baihaqi. There is no symbol of any kind in this concept of charity, and all alms are considered to have the same meaning, namely to reject the calamity. All these alms are enjoyed together with the amulet drinking water after reading *al-Barzanji*, *al-Dziba'i*, and *al-Burdah*.

### 4) Sunnah Prayers

One way to ward off calamities as written in several reference books, such as *Kanzun al-Najah*, *Mujarrabat al-Dairabi*, *Khazinat al-Asrar*, *Al-Jawahir al-Khams*, *Sharah Sittin*, and others is praying (*salat*) for rejecting the calamity. This prayer is to intend saving from disaster on the day of the *Rebo Wekasan*. The procedures for its implementation as contained in *Mujarrabat al-Dairabi* are as follows:

... Allah will guarantee to save during the year for those who pray four *rak'ahs*. In each *rak'ah*, they read surah al-Fatihah, surah al-Kautsar seventeen times, surah al-Ikhlash five times, and surah al-Muawidzatain (surah al-Falaq and al-Nas) once, then after finishing the prayer, they pray as below. (Al Dairaby, t.th .: 108)

It is considered *ghairu masyru'iyah* (not required by Islam) and even *bid'ah* (the actions committed outside the Prophet's teachings).

Therefore, some pro-*Rebo Wekasan* celebration figures suggest that the prayer is not to intend the calamity rejection. Still, it is categorized as absolute sunnah prayer because Allah has ordered the believers to ask Allah through the media of patience and prayer (Baqarah verse 45). In this way, people have a special ritual performed on the *Rebo Wekasan* in the context of close to Allah in the hope of getting salvation (Syekh Abd al Hamid, 1978 :. 26).

The time for the prayer is different for each region. In Kediri, Banyuwangi, even Jekulo Kudus, people do the prayer at night in the congregation. Meanwhile, in Demak, the prayer is carried out during the day, especially in the morning - between 07.00 - 11.00 PM - and they perform individually and not in congregation. In general, only the groups of older people usually perform the prayer; meanwhile, the young group has never performed for various reasons, one of which is ignorance of this prayer procedure. Some others consider reading *al-Barzanji* and drinking amulet water considered enough to reject the reinforcements.

Of the four ways of repelling reinforcements in the context of the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration; reading a special prayer or reading *al-Barzanji*, giving alms, drinking the amulet water and praying for calamity rejecting, only three ways done by Muslims in Demak, reading prayers (replaced by reading *al-Barzanji* or reading surah Yasin three times), drinking amulet water and alms. Meanwhile, those who pray (*salat*) for rejecting the calamity are only a small part of Muslims in Demak.

**5. The Ritual Symbols**

Muslims carry out two rituals symbolized in the *Rebo Wekasan* in Demak; they read the *al-Barzanji* text and make the *wafaq* (tattoo).

**a. Reading al-Barzanji**

From an anthropological perspective, each ritual contains symbols, including the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual, where Muslims in Demak perform this ritual by reading *al Barzani* to reject calamity. Of course, the reading of *al Barzani*, as a symbol, has a specific meaning.

Empirically, reading *al-Barzanji* is not merely reading the history of the Prophet's life but also

obtaining the Prophet's intercession assumed to help people who have problems. This belief is based not only on *naqli* argument ( the reference to relevant citation and understanding of al Qun'an or Hadith) and the knowledge of the closeness between Prophet Muhammad as creatures, Allah the creator.

The distance between human relations to God, near or far, is not space but a concern for the dimensions of understanding and piety. With such awareness, the relation structure between humans and God has been created. According to the closeness level to God (as the center), humans and God have a space or intermediate layers between them in that structure, fitting to the closeness level to God (as the center).

Allah, as the center, is surrounded in a layered structure. When viewed hierarchically, the system of man (people) - Allah is as follows:

God
Angle
Prophet (the apostles)
Saints (Guardians)
Cleric
Common people

The distinctive thinking patterns, namely the gradation of human proximity to God as above, bring to a concept of *tawasul* (mediation), to be more able to approach God, the prayer heard, and the wishes granted, people cannot rely on their strengths. Still, they should involve other powers to find synergy, and the opposition forces should be rid of so that the antagonistic force becomes weak or defenseless. Thinking patterns like this are so thick in semi-religious ritual activities, including the celebration of *Rebo Wekasan*. We can show an example when the reading *al-Barzanji* reaches the sign "*mahal al-qiyam*" (the time for standing up to all the participants), all the audience should chant with a memorable lyric "*Ya Nabi salam Alaik, Ya Rasul Salam Alaik*" (Hi the Prophet peace be upon you). In this opportunity, some participants imagine and feel as if prophet Muhammad is present in their midst, giving blessings to them as what the Sufi experts practice when chanting the Prophet's birthday. Unfortunately, ordinary people do not know

the purpose of this standing. Here is the meaning of the real symbol in the standing procession of reading *al Barzanji*.

#### b. Making the *Wafaq* (tattoo)

Making the *wafaq* has to follow a unique formula agreed upon by countless Islamic astrologers. It refers to several sources, including *al-Aufaq* described as a shaman reference. Some people think that this work was written by al-Ghazali, although some scholars say that it is not al-Ghazali's writing because it contains shamanism. In the *wafaq*, there are several Arabic letters in which, of course, it has a meaning with specific codes, and each letter has a numeral (Mouinuddin, 2009: 215). It can be seen in *Wafaq*'s writing above. For example, the affiliation system of the word بعباده indicates the number 84. Note how to affiliate Arabic letters into numbers. The word بعباده if parsed in letter units will become:

د - هـ - ب - ع - ب - ا - د

ب has an affiliated value of 2

ع has an affiliated value of 70

ا has an affiliated value of 1

د has an affiliated value of 4

هـ has an affiliated value of 5

Thus, if all the letters add up, the result is 84. This can be seen in the *wafaq* written in the circle (look at the *wafaq* used by Muslims in Demak ). The symbols of the numbers above have a meaning that Allah is the Most Merciful for His servants.

Then in other *wafaq* versions, there are the angels, Gabriel, Israfil (often associated with the Jewish and Christian Angels Raphael), Michael, and Azrael as written in Javanese Primbon (a book used by some Javanese to predict or collection of chants) . The four angels in the term *wafaq* act as intermediaries to Allah, so anyone who drinks the holy water that has been poured with *wafaq* will be saved by Allah. Why in the *wafaq* are only four angels written, not the other? It should be understood that Gabriel is the king of angels, Michael is the angel of fortune distributor, Israfil is the trumpeter on the Day of Judgment and Izrail is the angel of life taker. These four angels have essential roles related to unlucky days, Rebo Wekasan believed to be full of calamities. In this way, all the Rebo Wekasan celebrant

interests, including property, life, family, and others, are protected from disasters.

This symbol of *tawasul* (mediation) shows the closeness of the angels to Allah.

#### D. Closing

This celebration is carried out with a deep concern for the belief that Allah sent down 320,000 disasters on the last Wednesday of the Safar month AH called *Rebo Wekasan*. The reference sources used as a basis for the celebration of Rebo Wekasan are classical books written on average in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These references are the works of scholars who are not from Java. Therefore, the celebration of *Rebo Wekasan* is not a native Javanese culture even though it uses Javanese terms. In contrast, the nuances and forms of the Rebo Wekasan celebration use four rituals to ward off disasters by praying, drinking amulet water, giving alms, and doing prayer calamity rejection. For some Muslims in Demak, prayer readings are replaced by reading Surah Yasin 3 times or reading *al-Barzanji* / *al-Dzibai*. The recitation of surah Yasin has a more substantial meaning.

Meanwhile, the reading *al-Barzanji* or *al-Dziba'i* has a deep meaning for *tawasul* (mediation) through Prophet Muhammad because it contains prayer readings. The goal is to get intercession from the Prophet to avoid all the disasters on the *Rebo Wekasan*. In the implementation of prayer for calamity rejection, Muslims in Demak mostly pray on the morning of Rebo Wekasan individually, not in a congregation, while some others pray at night. This nuance and form distinguish the *Rebo Wekasan* celebration, which Muslims carry out in Demak

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