

## **The Ritual of “Disaster Rejection” as a Prayer of Malay People in Pantai Labu District, Medan, Indonesia**

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**ABSTRACT:** The development of globalization looks like not much influence the ritual tradition of “disaster rejection” are often carried by Malay society especially in Pantai Labu district of Deli Serdang. We still can meet almost all local traditions and “disaster rejection” ritual still implemented. As one of local wisdom, it is necessary for us to we preserve and keep the ritual as Nation assets. For cognitive anthropology, culture is known in two strategies as proposed by Kutowijoyo, first, culture is understood from the outside to inside which is related to the physical environment to the social system and the effect on the system of symbols. Secondly, culture is understood from the inside to outside, it means that the value system influences the system of symbols and will ultimately influences the social system of the society. The opinion is not much different from what was stated by Greetz that divides the two patterns in culture, namely “the model of” in the form of ethical behavior and “the models for” which is related to support aspects to act and behave like values, rules, recipes, instructions and etc. the second opinion is the interesting that both are always trying to find the core of a culture system. The essence of cultural system is the focal point of the cultural phenomenon of society. But the thing to note is that the core of the culture is not a representative of cultural system, but it is centers of cultural system.

**Keywords:** disaster rejection, ritual, Malay people

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Malay culture system is very closely to Islam, and one of the cores of worship Malays are “Disaster Rejection” ritual. There are several things are become background that the core of Malay worship is “disaster rejection” ritual. The first is the fact that the Malays in their daily lives are always trying to get away from disaster. Secondly, the practice of worship Malay aims to avoid disaster. Thirdly, the social system Malays in the ritual of “disaster rejection” is found the structure of social associated with the placement of invitees in the ritual based on social status<sup>[2]</sup>.

Departing from the fact that the Malays in their daily lives are always trying to get away from disaster, to neutralize or reject it can be done in two ways, the first is by the prayers of “disaster rejection” especially for individual disruption. Meanwhile, if the issue or the disaster is communal or public then the ritual of “disaster rejection” is done with the ceremony. The prayer of disaster rejection read out at water brought by the applicant, sometimes, after the theologian recite a prayer and then blow the water for three times aims that the prayer get into the water and it also aims that the water have some benefits that correspond to the wishes of the applicant<sup>[8]</sup>. As a thank you, sometimes the applicants provide an envelope containing money to the theologian who read the prayer, but some give a food to bring, and others are enough to say thank you.

The water that has been recited with the prayers of “disaster rejection”, it is often called by the people as bidder water, because the benefits were neutralize and reject all kinds of problems or disaster suffered by the applicant. Sometimes the benefit of the bidder water was also purposed to the smooth running of a business, to express thankfulness because getting a job, to guard the children in order to avoid the disease<sup>[5]</sup>. Several case studies from the facts that occurred among the understanding of Islam is strongly mixed with cultural, they are doing or using this water in their own way according to what they want, like Mr. Arifin, he splashed the water in front of his stall in order to bring many buyers. Another man is Suherno, a Javanese person who used this water to cure the diseases of his parents by mouth, as well as Pak Rahmat who drank the water with his family as his thankfulness because his son get a good job.

Accordance to the facts, if it is viewed from Islamic teaching, the using of bidder water to reject the disaster is maybe containing the elements of shirk, but for the people of Malay, Pantai Labu district especially for some theologians, they do not protest to the practice of disaster rejection ritual even they are participating. Because the prayer of disaster rejection is no worship or pleading for help to other than Allah, so it can be said

there is no single element of shirk in that prayer. One for the example is Datuk Sauti, a Malay people, said that the water is only an intermediary as an antidote to the disease, even he revealed the medical reasons stating that water basically can nourish the body because it is able to neutralize toxins carried by food. It is viewed from these cases, it also can be said that the benefit of the water that has been recited prayers of disaster rejection will only work depending on the suggestions of the users, between what is desired and the great of belief on the efficacy of the water.

On the other hand, it does not mean that all requests for prayers of disaster rejection can be tolerated by the public, because the prayers of disaster rejection are not only aimed for the purpose of the world, but also for the hereafter. And prayer is aimed as an effort to come closer to God <sup>[4]</sup>.

Other phenomena are quite confused is the theologian who read a prayer of disaster rejection never knows the purpose of the applicant and he was never taught how to use the water. Even there is not being face to face between a person who read a prayer and the applicant. This case explains that every person has the right to interpret the function of disaster rejection ritual in accordance with the wishes of the applicant; there is no special rule and usage of disaster rejection ritual.

## II. PANTAI LABU MALAY RITUAL OF DISASTER REJECTION

The object and purpose of *disaster rejection* in the term of ritual can be understood collectively and constant or will not be change, it is different from *disaster rejection* in the term of prayer that are only meant for personal or private and more limited in scope. Besides this *disaster rejection* in the sense of ritual also has special meanings and addressed to special objects anyway <sup>[10]</sup>.

The ritual of disaster rejection is done at the times that have been determined or at events are strongly related to the cycle life of the Malays, for the time-period that have been determined are usually associated with natural events such as ceremonies of *Jamu Kampung* and *Jamu Laut* which is done by looking at a good calendar, it means that can not be done arbitrary. Such as the ceremonies of *Ajjung* performed on dry season especially if it does not rain in two months, the ceremony of *Mandi Lesung* is done when solar eclipse occurs, and other ceremonies related to natural events. It is also related to the life cycle of the Malays as at the time of birth is usually done by cutting the hair, the circumcision ceremony is celebrated together with Khataman event Qur'an, wedding ceremonies and funerals by the Malays. The whole ceremony either associated with nature and life cycle is very closely to the local culture. The local culture that underlies the ceremonies is connected to the pattern of dependence on natural Malays in daily activities <sup>[11]</sup>.

When the ceremonies come into contact with nature, the elements of animism is occurred as the views of the ancestors, spirits or something other than God. In Malay society is the term "keeper" as sea keeper, forest keeper, house keeper, food keeper and everything that is considered *Betuah* or sacred. The keeper term is conceived as the controlling force, so that if there are people who want to take advantage to what is considered the *Betuah* or sacred have to go through the ceremony and gave the offerings <sup>[7]</sup>.

"Disaster Rejection" as ritual certainly can not be separated by the recitation of prayer, even though the prayer is a small part of a process but it remains an essential part of the ceremony, because prayer of disaster rejection determines it is shirk or not. Like what is conveyed by Tok Sobhi that everything depends on the intention to be delivered and used, there are people who do it with the intention of false starts, but at the end of good intentions or vice versa. This phenomenon is occurred when Pantai Labu people perform the ritual of Disaster Rejection. And they are very sure that there is no supreme power that exceeds the power of Allah.

## III. DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Procession of the Disaster Rejection Ceremony

The ceremony of "Disaster Rejection" brings the local community together to beg or pray to God to be shunned from disaster especially for those who have a need or requirement <sup>[6]</sup>. One by one comes and takes the places that they consider appropriate to their position, here it can be seen the classification of such social caste system in Hinduism, in a ceremony of Disaster Rejection, the classification is based on among virtuous group however, people who are often prayer in a mosque and the opposite one, and also the people who fluently reading of Qur'an or not. The people who are consciously virtuous usually take place inside while the less virtuous take place outside.

The role of women in the social structure ceremony of Disaster Rejection basically is no considerable difference with men. But most women act as preparing a variety of dishes during the ceremony, but it is no specificity. Some of the men also helped prepare the dishes and tools into the success of a ritual requirement <sup>[3]</sup>.

When we see globally, the ceremony focused on the theologian or religious leaders pray for the applicants who come, the theologian lead and run the ritual of "disaster rejection" so the position of theologians are on top of the structure. The social status because of the position or economic power has no effect on the ceremony of "Disaster Rejection. This ritual also can not be separated from the theologian and traditional leaders who hold centralization cultural movement and stability of the state of a village. Generally, the

theologian and traditional leaders have always held opinions or views regarding both the personal lives of citizens and other things that are considered related to disaster or disaster rejection. It will increasingly visible the role of the theologian and traditional leaders spearheading "Disaster Rejection" ritual continuity and preservation of culture.

### **3.2 Importance Of "Disaster Rejection" Ritual To Pantai Labu Community**

Bagan Serdang Malay community in Pantai Labu live simply with the livelihood of fishermen in the sea and there is also a farm, but most were looking for earnings in the sea, then the ritual of "Disaster Rejection" is great significance in people's lives Melayu Serdang in Pantai Labu.

In the culture of the Malay community in Pantai Labu Serdang when something really prop or some kind of disease that attacks the village, it is like the community will hold the ritual of "Disaster Rejection", it is form of ceremony to drive out all kinds of diseases that exist in the community.

One culture of the Malay people in Pantai Labu is a ritual "Disaster Rejection" for the treatment of disease because they believe that spirits (supernatural) was there and the spirits will not be angry at them then the Malay community in Pantai Labu perform rituals "Disaster Rejection" in order *jimbalang* or the spirit will not angry with them and also to protect their health and safety.

### **3.3 Tradition**

The community of Pantai Labu is very rich with various forms of traditional ceremonies and traditions, such as the tradition of planted seed (down rice seed), the ceremony *menubai* (taking honey bee beehive), tradition *julung menuang* (started harvesting rice in the field), and the tradition of disaster rejection (treatment hometown). Each tradition is carried out earnestly according to hereditary customs.

Dr. Safwan Hadi Umry (65 years old) said people in Pantai Labu is very familiar with disaster rejection ritual since time immemorial. The ritual of "Disaster Rejection" is the cultural heritage which is always guard the integrity. Due to the ritual of disaster rejection has several features, including protection and resisting disaster. Therefore, it can be seen as the following discussion:

Dr. Safwan Hadi Umry (65 years old) said that traditional ancestral heritage as disaster rejection ritual has a feature. The feature is able to provide comfort for the Pantai Labu people, addressing the problems or interference of supernatural beings. Disturbances of supernatural beings not only in mere appearances, but more dominant result in a person experiencing sickly, whether it be a mild pain or severe pain. This disease occurs because greeted by supernatural beings.

It is caused of the interference by the occupants of supernatural beings, whether from land or from the sea. While the characteristics of pain experienced by the sick man (humans) such as leg pain, headaches that do not heal, and etc. Therefore, the existance of disaster rejection make the community Pantai Labu is protected from various kinds of diseases caused by these supernatural beings. From a slightly different outlook with Datuk Suyuti (76 years old) said, disaster rejection protection does not necessarily become the most powerful shield, but it is able to reduce and prevent from evil supernatural beings. But if it keeps happening it is not the power of man, but of God's power. Trying to hold disaster rejection ritual to avoid the interference of supernatural beings was better than none at all. It is our understanding to implement the ritual annually.

*...the medium will reveal the name and demands of the spirit causing an epidemic or afflicting a patient with disease so that it can be expelled by the help or advice of a stronger spirit or coaxed out of the sufferer's body either into the shaman's own or usually on to a receptacle that contains an offering of food.*<sup>[9]</sup>

It happens when Pantai Labu people breaks ancestral tradition as a symbol of peace or the boundary between humans and supernatural beings. Datuk Sayuti (76 years old) said that the protection of "disaster rejection" ritual is not susceptible to diseases, especially no submissions from the outside. The message from outside said Datuk Sayuti that nasty stuff who wants to penetrate the home, intending to make a person becomes ill and can be obstructed by a talisman. Therefore, if a person's home is no deterrent cultivated when the ritual is held, they need to have (talisman).

To determine the disease that does not heal normally, Pantai Labu people will see the condition of the patient through the origin of home manufacture. The origin of the house is already together with ritual Disaster rejection by using lime water. If it is not, it will be one of causes. But if the requirements of origin tackles are being implemented there may be other reasons, because life and death are decided by God and human just try the best one.

Furthermore, Datuk Amiruddin from different side said that the implementation of disaster rejection ritual is to protect the village of yore intended to avoid disturbances of wild animals, at that point the famous wild animal is a tiger. The behavior of the tigers is disturbing residents around (the villagers of Bagan), even tigers also had dared to roam in residential areas, and up the houses of local residents. Apart from that, there is also a victim caused by the tiger, and then this is the role of disaster rejection ritual become a symbol of

protection. Datuk Amiruddin said at today tiger does no longer exist, but the spirit of the tiger turned into a disease. Threatening diseases more ferocious than tigers such as people infected with HIV, cholera, and so forth. Therefore, the ritual of “Disaster Rejection” can not be removed because it is a tradition that can not be left behind because it has merit as a helper or protector of various disasters (catastrophe).

### **3.4 The Restrictions That Should Be Adhered In The Ritual Of “Disaster Rejection”**

The ritual of “Disaster Rejection” is a reflection of people's beliefs about supernatural powers beyond the human self. This creature has a life of its own that is difficult to see with the human senses. They also have the belief as well as people, the value of good and bad. Everything went according to its own dynamics. If the pattern of supernatural life is disrupted, so it will affect the layout of their lives. Human in this case is a real creature that can be seen while the creature can not be seen with the senses. So sometimes there is a clash between human beings and spirits. It is accidentally touched or destructive to the lives of these delicate creatures either in the form of speech and behavior such as the use of profanity and arrogant tone similarly with bad deeds / immoral.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Here we can see that the activities of life and culture of the Malays were very closely with Islam as part of efforts to avoid (reject) disaster, for there is something that they expect other than avoid from disaster with various implementations of concepts of disaster for Malay people. From this we understand that the ritual of disaster rejection is the core (main part) of worship system of the Malays.

From there is also the author can give a little bit of feedback that the ritual of disaster rejection in communities wither especially in rural Bagan Serdang District of Pantai Labu Deli Serdang majority in particular figures clerical can tolerate the role and function of ritual significance disaster rejection which have an impact on the existence (presence) and the consistency of the teachings of Islam in the land must be kept implement. If the tradition of ceremonies “disaster rejection” continues until the future, things can be made to deviate from the teachings of Islam as ritual starting reinforcements' should be avoided, the elements of polytheism in decline disaster had to be removed, if it can not directly be done slowly to not disturb the natural events and the life cycle in the Malay community.

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