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LIVING HADITH IN JAVANESE MUSLIM SOCIETY: Studi of *Sesaji Rewanda* Tradition in Semarang

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Abstract

The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition at Kreo Cave, Semarang, serves as a tangible manifestation of Living Hadith, wherein the prophetic value of *ihsan* is actualized within the cultural framework of Javanese Muslim society. This study examines the intersection between local tradition and Islamic textuality, focusing on the ritual of *Gunungan Sego Kethek,* the collective feeding of wild monkeys, as an expression of compassion toward living beings. Employing a qualitative methodology, this research integrates a Living Hadith approach by synthesizing textual analysis of relevant prophetic traditions and classical commentaries (*sharh*) by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Imam al-Nawawī, and Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, complemented by ethnographic observations of the ritual praxis. The findings indicate that the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition represents the principle of *ihsan ila al-ḥayawan* (kindness toward animals), elevating cultural practice into a form of worship (*ʿibadah*) provided it remains within the boundaries of monotheistic (*tawhid*) principles. Furthermore, this study highlights how the tradition creates a harmonious synergy between religion, local culture, and ecological preservation. By contextualizing prophetic values into communal life, *Sesaji Rewanda* functions as a medium for transformative *da'wah* and socio-ecological ethics, proving that the Sunnah can be dynamically preserved through intimate local wisdom and inclusive cultural expressions.

Keywords: Sesaji Rewanda, Living Hadith, *Ihsan ila al-ḥayawan*, Javanese Muslim Culture.

Abstrak

Tradisi *Sesaji Rewanda* di Gua Kreo, Semarang, merupakan manifestasi nyata dari *Living Hadis*, di mana nilai profetik *ihsan* diaktualisasikan dalam kerangka budaya masyarakat Muslim Jawa. Penelitian ini mengkaji titik temu antara tradisi lokal dan tekstualitas Islam, dengan fokus pada ritual *Gunungan Sego Kethek*, di mana praktiknya memberi makan kepada monyet liar secara kolektif, sebagai bentuk ekspresi kasih sayang terhadap sesama makhluk hidup. Menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan pendekatan *living hadis* dengan menyintesis analisis tekstual terhadap hadis-hadis terkait serta syarah klasik dari Ibn Ḥajar al-

ʿAsqalānī, Imam al-Nawawī, dan Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, yang dipadukan dengan observasi etnografis atas praksis ritual tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi *Sesaji Rewanda* merepresentasikan prinsip *ihsan ila al-ḥayawan* (berbuat baik kepada hewan), yang mengangkat praktik budaya menjadi sebuah nilai ibadah sejauh tetap terjaga dalam batasan prinsip tauhid. Lebih lanjut, studi ini menyoroti bagaimana tradisi tersebut menciptakan sinergi yang harmonis antara agama, budaya lokal, dan pelestarian ekologis. Dengan mengontekstualisasikan nilai-nilai kenabian ke dalam kehidupan komunal, *Sesaji Rewanda* berfungsi sebagai medium transformasi dakwah dan etika sosio-ekologis, yang membuktikan bahwa sunnah dapat dipelihara secara dinamis melalui kearifan lokal yang intim dan ekspresi budaya yang inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Sesaji Rewanda, *Living Hadis*, *Ihsan ila al-ḥayawan*, Budaya Muslim Jawa, Etika Sosio-Ekologis.

Introduction

As the second source of law in Islam, the Hadith holds an important position in shaping the religious orientation of Muslims, encompassing aspects of worship, muamalah, and socio-cultural relations. Its existence not only complements the Qur'an, but also serves as the basis for the formation of social ethics and value structures that regulate human relations vertically and horizontally. The influence of the hadith on the formation of Muslim culture is evident in various religious expressions, ranging from individual practices to collective manifestations in the community.

The understanding of hadith is not always textually normative. Many Muslim communities in the archipelago live the hadith through cultural practices that are integrated into local social structures and traditions. Muslim communities in Indonesia, for example, exhibit distinctive dynamics of hadith reception, including in the form of traditional rites, spiritual practices, and ecological relations that are colored by Islamic values (Arifin, 2025). Such integration gives rise to contextualized and organic expressions of religion, keeping the hadith alive and meaningful in the daily lives of Muslim communities (Saputra et al., 2024).

Local traditions, such as offerings, still exist in several Javanese Muslim communities. Their existence not only signifies the enduring power of culture but also

reflects the vitality of spiritual values that are internalized in the social fabric of the community (Schlehe, 2010). Local wisdom in Semarang City is a vital element in the cultural construction of the community, contributing to the social, historical, and even religious development of the region. The collective identity of the community is not formed solely by formal religious texts, but also by cultural practices that have been passed down through generations and are considered to be in harmony with the noble values of Islam.

Cultural reflections are evident in various aspects of local life. Narratives of the city's origins, folk art forms, traditional knowledge systems, ecological relations between the community and its environment, and spiritual practices based on traditional rituals become spaces for the actualization of local values. The tradition not only survives but also undergoes revitalization through the active participation of the younger generation in its implementation. The existence of *Sesaji Rewanda* in the Kreo Cave area, for example, is not only an annual ceremony but also has transformed into a symbol of the meeting between Islamic spirituality and the ecological values of Javanese society.

This cultural reproduction occurs not only ceremonially, but also epistemically. The values contained therein become a means of passing on local morals and wisdom to future generations. This process demonstrates that people possess a collective consciousness that enables them to preserve their identity and values, which they consider sacred and integral to their sense of self. Modernity does not erase local values, but rather enriches the variety of articulations of the community's Islamic expressions (Nuha et al., 2022). The sustainability of this kind of cultural practice is evidence of the ability of local traditions to adapt while maintaining their role as an instrument of identity preservation, as well as a means of transmitting moral values and indigenous civilization (Nursyahidah & Susilo, 2024).

The ritual procession of the Goa Kreo community begins with the creation of a mountain of offerings, a food composition of rice, vegetables, side dishes, and fruits, arranged symbolically in one unit called sego *kethek*, or "monkey rice." This name refers to the primary purpose of the offering, which is to be given to the herds of wild monkeys that inhabit the Kreo Cave area. The *gunungan* procession to the central location involves the community collectively, accompanied by traditional gamelan chants, *tahlil* readings,

Islamic prayers, and local art performances, as a form of respect for the diversity of spiritual expressions within the community (Aini, 2023). The meaning of this tradition does not depart from the logic of syncretism, but from the reasoning of spirituality that blends with the cultural ecosystem. The community views the practice as a manifestation of respect for ancestors, as well as for living creatures created by Allah, and as an expression of gratitude (*ḥamd*), and as a means of fostering *ukhuwah* between humans, animals, and the universe (Ali Mohtarom, 2022) Islamic values do not only exist in verbal form, but also flow through cultural symbols that have been inherited and harmonized by local people.

Emile Durkheim's sociological study can be used to read the meaning structure of this tradition. The sacred dimension is manifested in prayer rituals, *tahlil* recitation, and spiritual symbols on the *gunungan*. Meanwhile, the profane dimension is seen in the accompanying social celebrations, such as folk bazaars, art performances, and local economic interactions. These two dimensions combine in a framework that strengthens social cohesion and emphasizes the religious identity of the community without negating their cultural roots (Setiyowati et al., 2024).

Discussion

Living Hadith as a Theoretical Frame

The *living hadith* frame opens a new space for understanding religious practices that do not always depart from literal quotations, but rather from the embodiment of hadith values in social and cultural behavior. The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition encompasses a socio-religious dimension that is closely intertwined with Islamic principles, including almsgiving, friendship, and gratitude. These values are not explicitly stated in the verbal form of the hadith, but are presented through symbols, collective actions, and harmonious relations between humans and nature (Sarhindi, 2020).

The essence of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on the importance of feeding others, preserving the environment, and fostering unity among people can be found throughout the entire series of traditions. The people involved not only perform rituals but also practice the teachings of compassion, social care, and respect for God's creation

through forms relevant to their local context. This process shows that hadith is not only memorized or recited, but also lived in the social space and environment where people are (Daffa & Purnamasari, 2024) the community's spiritual orientation towards this tradition demonstrates an integrative interpretation of Islam. Their beliefs are not trapped in the dichotomy between tradition and sharia, but rather seek a middle ground in the form of cultural accommodation that still upholds the values of tawhid. This tradition is not presented as a form of syncretism that mixes beliefs, but rather as an articulation of spirituality grounded in and sourced from local reasoning. The cultural context is not ignored, but instead processed into an adaptive and functional medium of da'wah and religious reflection (Adde, 2022).

Various studies show that *living hadith* in Indonesia acts as a bridge between normative Islamic teachings and local cultural practices. This function is essential in a multicultural society that requires an inclusive approach to religion (Mustaghfiroh, 2020)Traditions such as *tahlilan, slametan*, and *sedekah bumi* are clear examples of the articulation of prophetic values into forms that are easily understood, accepted, and collectively carried out by the community. This process does not diminish Islamic values, but rather strengthens social acceptance of Islamic teachings while maintaining social cohesion based on spiritual values (Lensa et al., 2023). The *Rewanda Sesaji* Tradition occupies a similar space, serving as both a medium of religious expression and a vehicle for cultural preservation (Muhtada et al., 2022) Hadiths about social care, generosity, compassion for creatures, and the importance of building harmonious relations between people and the environment receive a strong articulation of space through this procession. More than a ritual, *Rewanda Sesaji* demonstrates how Islam lives socially and blends naturally with the cultural values of the local community.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to reread the dynamics of the community's religious traditions not from the legalistic perspective of *fiqh* alone, but through the hadith approach as a living product that transforms according to the context of the people (Rahman, 2017).The living hadith approach provides a theoretical and methodological framework for exploring the prophetic values embodied in the social structure, cultural symbols, and spiritual practices of the Javanese Muslim community. The local context becomes an important arena for the articulation of hadith, as well as

evidence that sacred texts can be translated into concrete actions that authentically and adaptively touch the social reality of the people (Nggiku et al., 2024)

Furthermore, the *living hadith* approach contributes to the construction of a culturally friendly Islam that is open to diversity of expression and remains faithful to the normative authority of the Shariah. The integration between text and context is the primary feature of this approach, demonstrating that hadith does not only exist in a sacred space far removed from society, but can thrive and evolve amid complex social realities (Duderija, 2017). Local traditions are not viewed as foreign entities, but rather as a space for articulating divine values (Ma'rifatulloh, 2024). Hadith transforms into moral guidance and down-to-earth cultural praxis, addressing reality through symbols, rites, and existing social structures (Widodo & Hamzah, 2024) The dialogue between revelation and culture does not produce conflict, but instead gives birth to a synthesis that enriches the identity of the people(Nurrohman & EF, 2017). Islam is not present as a destructive force against local wisdom, but as a spiritual energy that purifies and revives community culture. The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition in Kreo Cave is proof that Islamic values can be inclusive, symbolic, and contextual. This process shows that religion does not have to be uniform in expression, but can be plural in form, while remaining singular in its universal values. Values such as compassion, gratitude, ukhuwah, and care for the environment serve as a bridge between hadith texts and cultural practices.

This study examines the *Rewanda Sesaji* tradition as a *living hadith* in Javanese Muslim society. The primary focus is on the hadith values that are internalized into the community's symbolic structure and ritual praxis, as well as the way the community interprets and reproduces the tradition as part of its Islamic identity. This approach does not aim to replace classical methods of hadith studies, but rather to broaden the horizon of understanding, so that hadith studies are not confined to formalistic and textual spaces. The author hopes that this study can enrich the scholarship of hadith and offer a new perspective in understanding the relationship between religion and local culture in Indonesia.

Historical and Symbolic Narrative of Rewanda Sesaji Tradition

The *Rewandan Sesaji* tradition in the Kreo Cave area, Kandri, Gunungpati Semarang, is held every 5 Syawal as an expression of community gratitude for the legendary role of a herd of monkeys believed to have assisted Sunan Kalijaga in the construction of the Great Mosque of Demak. This legend is not only part of the local historical narrative but also transforms into a spiritual symbol and the collective identity of the community. The oral and symbolic transmission of the narrative across generations has made the story not just a myth, but a moral and cultural foundation that lives in the minds of the local community.

The *Rewanda Sesaji* procession is inextricably linked to the social structure of society, which values living beings as an integral part of religious life. The presence of the monkey as the central figure in this tradition reflects the community's cosmological perspective on the relationship between humans, animals, and God. This tradition shows that gratitude is not expressed personally, but also through collective actions that emphasize the importance of togetherness, respect for nature, and the preservation of local spiritual values.

The relevance of this tradition lies not only in its cultural aspects but also in the Islamic values that are internalized within it. Respect for monkeys is not a form of worship, but rather a manifestation of love for Allah's creation and a concrete form of implementation of ihsan towards living beings. This kind of tradition reflects the dynamic nature of Islamic culture in the archipelago, which is not rigid but adaptive and local, without losing its Sharīʿī roots (Setiyowati et al., 2024)

Symbolic Dimension in Tradition and Cosmological Meaning

The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition, carried out by the people of Kandri Village every third day after Eid al-Fitr, is an annual ritual rich in symbolic, spiritual, and cultural layers. The procession begins with a large procession carrying four *gunungan*. Each *gunungan* represents an element of the community's rich produce: fruits, *sega kethek* (a type of rice), *potong tumpeng*, and *kupatan*. The *gunungan* is not just an arrangement of food, but a symbol of cosmic balance between humans, nature, and the Creator. This symbolic arrangement demonstrates that food is not merely an object of consumption, but a means of worship and a reflection of the profound value of gratitude (Schlehe, 2010).

Four dancers in red, black, white, and yellow monkey costumes enliven the procession. Each color of the costume symbolizes the character of the ape ancestor believed to have assisted Sunan Kalijaga in cutting down teak wood for the construction of the Great Mosque of Demak. Their appearance is not just a performance, but a medium for passing on history and local heroic values. The ritual stage transforms into a theological theater, where the values of cooperation, spirituality, and respect for animals are brought to life through motion and color.

Local terminology reinforces the depth of meaning of the tradition. The word "*Rewanda*" is derived from the Kinya *rewanda* lexicon, which translates to *"ape,"* while *"sesaji"* means "offering." The combination of these two words conveys conceptual significance regarding the reciprocal relationship between humans and other creatures created by God. Offerings are not understood as worship, but rather as an expression of gratitude and affection towards animals that have a symbolic history in the construction of Islamic civilization in Java. This tradition serves not only as a tool for preserving historical narratives but also emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships among humans, animals, and the environment, reflecting the values of tawhid and ihsan (Fauzia et al., 2022).

An ethnolinguistic study of the terms in the *Rewanda Sesaji* Tradition shows the depth of cultural meaning as well as the preservation of symbolic religiosity. *Gunungan sega kethek* is not just a symbol of feeding the monkeys, but also records the historical traces of interaction between the community and Islamic missionary figures. The rice is believed to have been served to Sunan Kalijaga as a form of respect and spiritual support for his mission to spread Islam. This culinary tradition is then immortalized through food symbols that are not only consumable but also rich in historical and spiritual significance.

The teakwood replica in the procession symbolizes the saka guru, the central pillar of the Great Mosque of Demak. The presence of this element becomes a concrete representation of the value of development, the strength of faith, and symbolizes the continuation of the Wali Songo's da'wah legacy. The narrative combines material and spiritual aspects into a single ritual entity that unites history, culture, and religion.

Other food symbols, such as *jenang abang* and *jenang puteh,* represent human biological elements, namely blood and sperm, as metaphors for life, creation, and

blessings. The presence of these elements reinforces the cosmological dimension of the ritual, emphasizing the importance of respecting the origins of life. *Degan ijo* or green young coconut symbolizes clarity of heart and purity of intention, signifying that each of these processions is carried out not based on empty customs, but from a spiritual awareness connected to the values of divinity.

The colors of the dancers' costumes also have symbolic meanings that cannot be ignored. Red represents courage to face life's challenges, white reflects inner purity, black symbolizes awareness of boundaries and responsibility, while yellow embodies the concept of perfection in the relationship between humans, other creatures, and the Creator. All of these visual, culinary, and symbolic elements form a single cultural narrative that is integrated into the ritual—a meeting point between local values and Islamic spirituality, emphasizing gratitude, environmental preservation, and a balanced approach to life.(Fauzia et al., 2022).

Durkheim's Perspective: The Sacredness and Profanity of Tradition

Emile Durkheim's perspective offers a relevant sociological framework to read the meaning structure of the *Rewanda Sesaji* Tradition. The dichotomy between sacred and profane becomes an analytical tool that explains the complexity of meaning contained in the procession. The holy dimension emerges through the implementation of *tahlilan* and *slametan*, two practices that are rich in spiritual values, strengthen social cohesion, and affirm the existence of a religious space in local culture. These elements create a sense of collective unity that is not only religious but also serves as a social glue, strengthening solidarity among citizens.

The profane dimension appears through the economic activities, social interactions and community cultural performances that accompany this tradition. The celebration does not solely take place as a ritual of worship, but also as a folk festival involving bazaars, entertainment, and local economic transactions. The presence of this element indicates that people interpret the tradition in a multifaceted manner: not only as a spiritual practice, but also as a public space where the community renews social ties and fosters cultural interactions.

The harmony between these two dimensions demonstrates the ability of local communities to integrate Islamic teachings into deeply rooted cultural practices. Tradition does not lose its value due to its interaction with modern culture, but instead experiences revitalization through reinterpretation and a strengthening of its meaning. Religious life does not operate in isolation from the cultural context; instead, it develops simultaneously. The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition is proof that Islamic religious values can be transformed into a form of cultural praxis that is adaptive, tolerant, and responsive to the dynamics of the times (Setiyowati et al., 2024).

Theological Responses to Tradition and Faith

Critical discourse from an Islamic faith perspective on the *Rewanda*n Offering Tradition raises essential questions about the boundary between cultural expression and the purity of tawhid. Some ritual elements, such as the practice of burning incense or making offerings to non-human entities, are seen by some as a form of deviation from the principle of *lâ ilâha illallâh*. This kind of criticism stems from concerns about the potential deviation of faith through practices that contain spiritual symbolism outside the framework of pure tawhid. The emphasis on the aspect of tawhid becomes the primary argumentative basis that worship must be free from elements of shirk, both in explicit and symbolic forms.

However, not all elements of the *rewanda* ritual are considered problematic. The practice of reciting prayers, chanting *tahlil*, and performing slametan is understood as a form of preserving local culture that has been gradually Islamized by scholars and community leaders. These elements reflect a pattern of syncretism that is integrative, combining local expressions with Islamic values without losing the essence of tawhid. Tradition becomes a grounded means of spiritual education, not merely a form of ritual repetition.

The social context of the community is a key variable in understanding these practices. A contextual approach is necessary to avoid a textualist attitude that overlooks the historical and cultural dimensions of society (Hefni et al., 2025). The spiritual life of Javanese society has a strong symbolic character, so that the meaning of an action is not always identical with formal theological interpretations (Kurniaawati, 2021). The

relevance of this approach lies in its ability to bridge between religious texts and local cultural praxis, so that the assessment of rituals such as *rewanda* does not merely fall into the dichotomy of heresy or tawhid. Still, it is seen as an expression of faith bound by space, time, and local meaning (Qomariyah, 2016).

Rewanda Tradition as an Actualization of Islamic Social and Ecological Ethics

A linguistic study of the term "*rewanda* offerings" opens up an understanding of how language reflects the worldview of local communities. This term is not just a lexical combination, but a representation of cultural and spiritual values that are deeply ingrained in community identity. The word *sesaji* semantically refers to offerings as an expression of respect or gratitude towards entities considered to have an essential role in maintaining the balance of life. Meanwhile, the word meaning of word of the *rewanda* is*"ape."* Symbolizes the historical relationship between humans and animals as spiritual and ecological partners.

These semantic relations demonstrate that people do not simply refer to an object or creature, but rather frame it within a complex structure of meaning. The relationship between humans, ancestors, animals, and the universe is established through a living language that continues to be passed down through generations. The process of inheritance is not conveyed through written texts, but rather through oral practices, ritual symbols, and collective expressions that reinforce cultural memory. The continuity of the term reflects the resilience of the local language, as well as the central role of symbolism in maintaining the spiritual and social meaning of the Gunungpati community.

The symbolic and semantic richness of the term "*Sesaji Rewanda*" presents an excellent opportunity for further studies, particularly in the realms of linguistic anthropology, ecolinguistics, and Javanese cultural studies. A deeper exploration of local terms in the context of ritual and religion can reveal the epistemological relationship between Islam, local wisdom, and the cosmology of the local community. This tradition is also a concrete example of intangible cultural heritage that not only needs to be documented but also studied scientifically so that the flow of global cultural homogenization does not erode it.

Interpretation of Hadith and Ihsan towards Animals

The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad which reads:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ: أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ سُمَيٍّ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "بَيْنَا رَجُلٌ يَمْشِي، فَاشْتَدَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَطَشُ، فَنَزَلَ بِئْرًا فَشَرِبَ مِنْهَا، ثُمَّ خَرَجَ فَإِذَا هُوَ بِكَلْبٍ يَلْهَثُ، يَأْكُلُ الثَّرَى مِنَ الْعَطَشِ، فَقَالَ: لَقَدْ بَلَغَ هَذَا مِثْلُ الَّذِي بَلَغَ بِي، فَمَلَأَ خُفَّهُ ثُمَّ أَمْسَكَهُ بِفِيهِ ثُمَّ رَقِيَ فَسَقَى الْكَلْبَ، فَشَكَرَ اللهُ لَهُ فَغَفَرَ لَهُ قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، وَإِنَّ لَنَا فِي الْبَهَائِمِ أَجْرًا؟ قَالَ: فِي كُلِّ كَبِدٍ رَطْبَةٍ أَجْرٌ ."تَابَعَهُ حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، وَالرَّبِيعُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ.

'Abdullāh ibn Yusuf reported: Mālik reported to us from Sumay reported from Abū Ṣāliḥ reported from Abū Hurairah r.a. that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a man was walking, he felt very thirsty. So he went down to a well and drank water from it. When he came out, he saw a dog sticking its tongue out, licking the ground because it was very thirsty. The man said: 'This dog has experienced what I have experienced.' So he filled his shoe with water, bit the shoe with his mouth, then climbed back out of the well and gave the dog a drink. So Allah thanked him and forgave his sin." The Companions asked: "O Messenger of Allah, will we also be rewarded for doing good to animals?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "In every wet heart there is a reward." Hammād also narrated this Hadithibn (Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, 2011, Num. 2363) Salamah and al-Rabī' ibn Muslim from Muḥammad ibn Ziyād.

This hadith contains a profound moral and spiritual message about human relationships with living beings. It tells the story of a man who felt thirsty and went down to a well to quench his thirst. After coming out, he saw a dog sticking out its tongue and eating dirt because of thirst. He then filled his shoes with water and gave the dog a drink. For his action, Allah rewarded him with forgiveness. When the Companions asked if there was a reward for being kind to animals, the Messenger of Allah replied, *"In every wet heart there is a reward* that holds a universal message of human compassion and responsibility towards living beings. This statement not only provides moral advice but

also implies a spiritual ethic rooted in the principles of rahmah and *ihsan* as the foundation of relations between creations. Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī in Fatḥ al-Bārī asserts that the term **"كبد رطبة"** is not limited to humans, but includes all living creatures. This explanation expands the scope of good deeds in Islam, placing good deeds towards animals as rewarding acts of worship, as long as they do not violate the principles of tawhid and sharia.

The example of the adulterous woman who was forgiven her sins for giving a dog a drink is a concrete illustration of how acts of compassion towards animals can lead to divine forgiveness. Ibn Hajar views this story not as an anomaly, but as an affirmation of the principle of *ihsan ilā al-ḥayawan* (doing good to animals) as part of an open, broad, and compassionate prophetic teaching. The value of *ihsan* becomes a bridge between ritual and social ethics, between formal worship and ecological concern (Zuhdi et al., 2024).

Ibn Hajar's emphasis on the openness of rewards for all forms of benevolence to living beings also indicates that Islamic law is not exclusive to humans. Animals, including those categorized as unclean in fiqh, are still entitled to kind treatment and compassion. The moral evaluation of an action is not determined by the type of creature that is the object of the action, but by the intention and conformity of the action to the principles of faith. As long as there is no theological deviation, such as shirk, good deeds to animals are still counted as charity that brings the doer closer to the pleasure of Allah. (Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar *al-ʿAsqalani* 773-852 AH, 1379)

Syarḥ Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī gains relevance when directly linked to the practice of the Rewanda Sesaji tradition in the Kreo Cave area, Semarang. This tradition shows how people have traditionally given offerings in the form of *gunungan sega kethek* (rice for monkeys) and crops to a herd of wild monkeys believed to have been instrumental in helping Sunan Kalijaga's struggle. This act, on the surface, resembles feeding animals in a ritual context. However, the symbolic meaning of the community is not directed towards worship, but rather towards respect for living beings that are considered part of the local spiritual history.

An assessment from the perspective of hadith, primarily through the thoughts of Ibn Hajj, opens space for legitimizing this action. As long as it does not contain elements of shirk or cult, the practice of feeding animals can be categorized as a form of *ihsan ilā al-ḥayawān*, which is doing good to living beings. The position of animals in Islam is not just a passive object in the ecosystem, but also part of God's creation that has the right to compassion and humane treatment. The *Sega Kethek* tradition is one form of actualization of the value of mercy for voiceless creatures, yet it has a place in the spiritual ecology of society.

Good deeds do not always come through Mahdah worship, but can also arise from social and ecological actions that are based on sincere intentions and free from idolatry. The *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition provides a clear example that local expressions can serve as a forum for translating Islamic values, including the values of *mercy* and *ihsan*, into a format that is grounded and acceptable to the broader community. The relevance of this hadith is not only normative, but also praxis, opening space for the reinterpretation of cultural traditions as a contextual, inclusive, and *rahmatan lil-'ālamīn* form of Islam (Muhammad 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb, 1970).

The chapter Faḍl Sāqī al-Bahā'im al-Muḥtaramah wa Iṭ'āmihā in Imam an-Nawawī's Syarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim elaborates on the linguistic and legal meaning of the term كَبِد رَطْبَة (wet heart). The term is used because the heart is the primary symbol of life, and Ruthubah (wetness) represents the biological condition of living beings that still possess consciousness and sensitivity. Every living being that has a heart, a body, and experiences hunger or thirst becomes an object worthy of receiving acts of compassion from humans. His statement ويُسمى كبد رطبة لأنه لا حياة لبعضه إلا بها. Confirms that the life of a creature is very dependent on the existence of the heart as the center of vitality.

Imam an-Nawawī later expanded the meaning of this Hadithto include the recommendation to do good not only to domestic or farm animals, but also to wild animals, unclean animals, or even those that are considered disgusting. Feeding, watering, and other acts of kindness are categorized as good deeds, regardless of the animal's ownership status. The editorial "...والإحسان إليه أيضًا بإطعامه وغيره، سواء كان مملوكًا له أو لغيره

makes it clear that Islam instills the principle of *ihsan* in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner towards all creatures.

Imam an-Nawawī's statement becomes even stronger when he links good deeds towards animals as one of the reasons for the forgiveness of major sins. The story of the adulterous woman who gave the dog a drink shows that a simple act based on empathy and compassion has transcendental value before Allah. The phrase "وفيه أن عمل الخير قد يغفر الكبائر" suggests that Islam places great value on acts of humanity and care for living beings.

This explanation strengthens the ethical and theological relevance of the *Rewanda* offering tradition. The Goa Kreo community's action of giving sega kethek and crops to wild monkeys can be seen as a concrete form of *ihsan* ilā al-ḥayawān, as long as it is free from shirk beliefs or the glorification of creatures. Such charity is Shariah-compliant and may even be worth the expiation of major sins. The local context of this tradition reveals human efforts to maintain harmony with fellow creatures, principle upheld in Islam as part of the universal mercy brought by the Prophet Muhammad.(Al-Nawawī, 1329)

> *Hadith narrated from Shaddād ibn Aws r.a., who said: "There are two things that I have memorized from the Messenger of Allah. He said: 'Verily, Allah has made good upon everything. So, if you kill (in the context of qishāṣ or warfare), be kind in the manner of killing. Moreover, if you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. Let one of you sharpen his knife, and let him give comfort to the slaughtered animal." (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī, 2011)*

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbali makes this hadith the highest ethical foundation in Islam, as well as the basic principle of the relationship between humans and God's creation. In his first explanation (p. 251), Ibn Rajab emphasizes that the wording *kataba* (كَتَبَ) in this Hadith is not just a general command, but implies al-farḍ (legal obligation). This means that doing good to living beings is not just a recommendation, but a moral and shar'i obligation. In this case, the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition can be understood as a form of the community's collective *ihsan* to God's other creatures, the monkeys, the land, the crops, and the surrounding social relations.

Furthermore (p. 252), Ibn Rajab expands the scope of *ihsan* so that it is not limited to fellow humans, but also includes *kullu makhlūq* (كلّ مخلوق), i.e., every creature that Allah created. Ibn Rajab writes:

فظاهر الحديث يقتضي أن الإحسان على كل شيء، يكون على كل مخلوق.

"The external meaning of this hadith indicates that ihsan applies to every creature."

He mentioned that the form of *ihsan* can take the form of food, gentleness, care, and even simply refraining from causing harm. This directly affirms that the Goa Kreo community's action of feeding wild monkeys in the *Rewanda* tradition is a concrete manifestation of this hadith.

Further on page 253, Ibn Rajab asserts that:

فالإحسان في الإيمان والنية والباطنة، والإيمان بها على وجه كمال واجباتها، فهذا القدر من الإحسان فيها بإكمال واجب.

"Ihsan applies to faith, intention, and the heart; and the completion of all obligations; and to a certain degree, it becomes obligatory." (Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, 1997)

Conclusion

The Rewanda offering tradition at Kreo Cave, Semarang, represents a profound manifestation of "living hadith," where the values of *ihsan* (excellence) and *rahmah* (compassion) are actualized through the symbolic ritual of feeding wild monkeys via the *Gunungan Sega Kethek*. This cultural praxis transcends mere traditional ritualism, serving as a spiritual expression of the Prophetic mandate for animal welfare, as validated by the theological perspectives of classical scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Imam an-Nawawi, and Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali. By employing a living hadith approach, this study demonstrates that such traditions, when devoid of cultic elements, do not compromise *tawhid* (monotheism) but instead function as a transformative medium for moral education, ecological preservation, and social cohesion. Ultimately, the *Sesaji Rewanda* illustrates how prophetic teachings can be contextually integrated into Javanese Muslim

culture, proving that local wisdom can serve as an effective, inclusive, and legitimate vehicle for channeling the spiritual essence of Islam into socio-ecological praxis.

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