

***Slametan* Tradition in Javanese Society: A Perspective on Qur'anic Interpretation**

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ABSTRACT

The Javanese community in Demak shows that the *Slametan* tradition is a means of social interaction and strengthening interpersonal and social relationships. *Slametan* is a religious and cultural ritual that forms the core of Javanese religious life. The purpose of *Slametan* is carried out for the safety of the Javanese people; this is in accordance with the word “*Slamet*,” which means salvation both physically and spiritually. The *Slametan* ritual on Islamic holidays is performed collectively in the mosque by reciting prayers together. This study aims to explore the *Slametan* tradition from the perspective of Qur'anic interpretation. This article is a descriptive-qualitative research project conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation on the *Slametan* tradition in Demak. This research was conducted on Javanese people in Karangawen District, Demak Regency, Central Java Province. The key finding in this study is that in the *Slametan* tradition carried out by the Javanese community in Demak, both values, practices, and goals have a theological foundation, namely the Qur'an. The findings of this study show that the purpose of Javanese people carrying out the *Slametan* tradition is to get God's blessings.

Keywords: Slametan, Javanese Society, Qur'an Interpretation

A. INTRODUCTION

The religious practice of Muslim communities in Java is a blend of Islam and local traditions. The meaning of religion in Javanese society is something sacred in which cultural values are practiced. Religious practice is understood syncretically by blending aspects of local traditions with Islamic teachings. The Muslim community in Java, modifies the view of religion with local traditions by accommodating theological values with Javanese culture (Izzuddin et al., 2022) In ethnological studies, especially those by Clifford Geertz, it was revealed that Javanese people embraced Islam seriously only in the lay community and divided Javanese society into three groups: *Santri*, who are orthodox Muslims; *Priyayi*, a nobility influenced by Hindu-Javanese traditions; and *Abangan*, villagers who still believe in animism (Geertz, 2014; M. Woodward, 2004).

In the contemporary era, traditions in the *Abangan* community in Java are still going on. Islamization in the sense of social change in Javanese society is an adaptation of pre-Islamic culture or local culture into Islamic teachings, so that local traditions and Islam have become hybrids in the religious practices of Javanese society (Pabbajah, 2021). The traditions carried out by the Javanese people will certainly shape and influence the actions and mindsets of both ethnic and religious identities. Local traditions that have been acculturated with Islam will shape Islamic character because, in the implementation of traditions, there are Islamic values. So that through tradition, the Javanese people can practice Islamic teachings in social life (Suratman & Arif, 2020; Suratman & Kurniawan, 2019)

The positive and creative elements of local cultural traditions that collaborate with Islamic values are part of the process of Islamizing Javanese society. Before the arrival of Islam, the cultural traditions of the Javanese people greatly respected the spirits of their ancestors who had passed away. The process of Islamization does not abolish these cultural traditions but still preserves them by incorporating elements of Islamic values.(Arif, 2015) Local cultural traditions in Javanese society based on Islamic values are very important to support building sustainable character in Indonesia (Agus et al., 2021)

Acculturation between local traditions and Islamic teachings is still ongoing today, one of which is *Slametan*. In Javanese society, *Slametan* is a communal custom and ritual performed to mark important events in one's life. In general, *Slametan* aims to create conditions of safety, prosperity, and freedom from all threats and disturbances (Sumbulah et al., 2022) *Slametan* carried out by

Javanese people is generally the same as that carried out by Javanese people in Demak, Central Java Province. Based on observations made by the author, in Javanese society in Demak, there are at least several *Slametan* practices that are routinely carried out, namely: *Slametan* on 10 Muharram (Hijri Calendar), *Mawlid* Prophet Muhammad, *Nuzulul Qur'an* in Ramadan (Hijri Calendar), 1 Shawwal (Hijri Calendar), and 1 Dhul-Hijjah (Hijri Calendar).

Current studies look at the *Slametan* tradition as part of the religious practice of Javanese society and as a religious identity. The beliefs of the Javanese people in carrying out the *Slametan* tradition have been widely studied by researchers. Based on existing studies, there are at least three trends that can be mapped in the literature. First, the exploration of Javanese beliefs in the *Slametan* tradition, which is a tradition found in various regions of Indonesia, Second, *Slametan* increased religious tolerance and social harmony. Third, the researcher discusses the relationship between Islam and the *Slametan* tradition (Anshori et al., 2021; Awal, 2018; Haryanto, 2015; Kholil, 2008; Kurniawan & Suratman, 2018; Mamahit, 2021; Puspita, 2018; Seise, 2021; Susilo & Syato, 2016; Syahdan, 2021; M. R. Woodward, 1988).

While this study is a response to existing studies and complements other studies with the concept of the *Slametan* tradition from the perspective of Qur'anic interpretation, Thus, two questions were formulated, namely, first, how to implement the *Slametan* tradition in the Javanese community in Demak. Second, how is the *Slametan* tradition from the perspective of Qur'anic interpretation?. This research was conducted on Javanese people in Karangawen District, Demak Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia, where in practice they still carry out the *Slametan* tradition.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *Slametan* Tradition in Javanese Culture

Slametan in Javanese society has become a lot of study material in research. *Slametan* has become a character as a religious ceremony in Java (Newberry, 2007). In Javanese society, *Slametan* is the most dominant tradition. *Slametan* is done to ask for salvation which is the basis of Javanese life. Some *Slametan* traditions are carried out by Javanese people at the time of birth of children, namely, the tradition of *neloni*, *mitoni*, and *tingkeban*. *Slametan* is also related to the cycle of life, marriage, and death (Panuntun et al., 2023). *Slametan* is a religious and cultural ritual that forms the core of Javanese religious life. The purpose of *Slametan* is carried out for the safety of the Javanese people; this is in accordance with the word "*Slamet*," which means salvation both

physically and spiritually. The *Slametan* ritual is carried out by the Javanese community collectively in the mosque by praying together. In practice, there is no difference between Javanese Muslims and all other communities gathered together in the mosque. Through the *Slametan* ritual, we will increase religious tolerance and social harmony (van den Boogert, 2017). In addition, the tradition of *Slametan (Kenduri)* is carried out by Javanese people at night, after Isha prayer. *Slametan* is also done when someone dies; in this case, the family performs *Slametan* by adjusting the number of days calculated from the day of the relatives deaths. In this case, the event of death is a sacred stage of life for Javanese people because it is considered a stage of migration from the world to the spiritual world. The purpose of the *Slametan* ritual in this case is for the spirits to be able to go safely to the afterlife (Setyawan et al., 2022).

2. Qur'anic Interpretation and Culture

Interpretation of religious texts must be able to answer social conditions that occur in society and not only focus on linguistic aspects of religious texts. Therefore, contextual interpretation is needed in religious texts to overcome issues in religion. Some contemporary Muslim thinkers, such as Abdullah Saeed, are discussing the relationship between a social interaction. According to Abdullah Saeed, the reinterpretation of the verse is very important because it will deal with the reality of life (Herlambang, 2022; Saeed, 2006). In the Indonesian context, the interpretation of the Qur'an is very important in answering the actual issues and problems that arise and develop in society. In this case, the interpretation of the Qur'an at least answers socio-cultural issues, including traditions that exist in Indonesian society. Therefore, the interpretation of the Qur'an must be based on human values, especially in the socio-cultural context that exists in a society (Herlambang, 2020; Herlambang & Juliandi, 2018).

In the context of this study, *Slametan*, which is a tradition in Javanese society, is considered an act of heresy and shirk by certain Muslims, including other traditions in Indonesia, because it is not in accordance with Islamic teachings. In fact, according to Imam Muhsin, in the context of Javanese traditions, there are social values contained in the Qur'an such as, *lung-tinulung* (mutual help), *gendhon rukon* (harmony of life), and *saiyeg saeka-praya* (one word and one purpose) in various lives. This is in accordance with the explanation of the word *matsâni* found in Surah al-Zumar, verse 23. The word *matsâni* translates as “*rinakit ngloro-ngloro*”. The intention of being

repeated is for the understanding to be reasonable, or for it to be understood constructively, effectively, and positively (Muhsin, 2010).

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study discusses the *Slametan* tradition among Javanese people in Karangawen District, Demak Regency, Central Java Province. This study aims to explore the *Slametan* tradition from the perspective of Qur'anic interpretation. This article is a descriptive-qualitative research project through interviews, observations, and documentation on the *Slametan* tradition in Demak. This research was conducted in 2022, when the author visited Demak Regency. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with Javanese communities in Demak Regency that carry out the *Slametan* tradition. Interviews were conducted with Javanese people and religious leaders at the location where this study was conducted. To strengthen the data, the author searched relevant literature to explore the *Slametan* tradition. In data analysis carried out using data condensation, the author adjusts the data without having to reduce it because all the data obtained by the author is important (B. Miles et al., 2014) Finally, the author also verifies the data in this study by interpreting the data with the research questions in this article.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Forms of *Slametan* Tradition in Javanese-Demak Society

Based on research conducted by the author on the Javanese community in Demak, there are at least three forms of *Slametan* tradition that are routinely carried out on Islamic holidays. First, it is performed on the day of *Ashura*, which coincides with the 10th of Muharram (Hijri Calendar). The tradition of 10 Muharram (Hijri Calendar) is also widely practiced by Muslims in Indonesia, for example in Makassar with the *Mappasagena* tradition carried out by the Bugis community. The purpose of the tradition, carried out on the basis of the belief that doing good on that day will benefit from their efforts in the following year (Miswar et al., 2022). Based on the results of interviews that the author conducted with Javanese people in Demak about the tradition of *Slametan* on the day of Ashura 10 Muharram (Hijri Calendar), the following follows:

Table. 1: Slametan Tradition: 10 Muharram According to Javanese-Demak Society

No	<i>Slametan Tradition According to Society</i>	Coding
1.	“ <i>Slametan ingkang dipun laksanaaken dening masyarakat Jawi, salah satunggalipun inggih menika dinten Asyura, kita ngumpul wonten masjid mriki kangge nindakaken Slametan ba’da sholat Isya</i> ” (An interview with MN, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Held in the mosque
2.	“ <i>Salebeting ngawontenaken kegiatan menika kita mbeta bancaan (sekul, gudangan, mi, kering tempe, lan ayam) ingkang dipunsaosaken wonten ing papan saha dipunbekta dhateng mesjid kangge dipunwaos saha dipundhahar sesarengan kaliyan warga ing mriki</i> ”. (An interview with ST, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Food alms
3.	“ <i>Pelaksanaan tradhisi Slametan diwiwiti kanthi ceramah saking Kyai ing mriki, sawise maos tahlil, donga, lan Maudihoh Hasanah, inggih meniko dhahar sareng-sareng wonten ing nampan</i> ”. (An interview with ALR, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	The process of implementing Slametan 10 Muharram
4.	“ <i>Tujuwan kula nindakaken tradhisi menika supados pikantuk barokah saha keslametan kangge kaluarga, desa lan kula piyambak</i> ”. (An interview with DT, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	To get blessings

According to the four sources, one of the *Slametan* performed by the Javanese people is carried out on the day of *Ashura*, which coincides with the 10th Muharram (Hijri calendar). The *Slametan* tradition is carried out in the mosque and is followed by the whole community, both children and adults, gathered to read prayers and eat together. The purpose of this *Slametan* is to get blessings from Allah and to build harmony in society. For Javanese people, welcoming the month of Muharram, or “*Suro*,” is a tradition that is carried out regularly every year. The month of Muharram for the Javanese people is one of the holy months because the Prophet Muhammad commanded Muslims to do self-introspection (*muhasabah*) from the previous year and prepare themselves to worship the following year. Javanese Muslim belief in the month of Muharram is

decisive in the journey of life for one year (Hijri calendar) to strengthen spirituality in worship of Allah (Sholikhin, 2010).

Second, the *Slametan* tradition is carried out on the Mawlid of the Prophet Muhammad (commemorating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad). The tradition of *Slametan* in Javanese society, carried out on Rabiul Awal (Hijri calendar), is a momentum to remember and glorify the Prophet Muhammad. In Indonesia, the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday is celebrated with various traditions. The Indonesian government makes the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad’s Mawlid a national holiday to appreciate the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad's Mawlid celebration (Nadia, 2011). In the Javanese community in Demak, Mawlid Nabi is carried out by means of the *Slametan* tradition. Based on the results of interviews that the author conducted with Javanese people about the *Slametan* tradition on 12 Rabiul Awal (Hijri Calendar), as follows:

Table. 2: Slametan Tradition: 12 Rabiul Awal According to Javanese-Demak Society

No	<i>Slametan</i> Tradition According to Society	Coding
1.	<i>“Rutin ing mriki kita nindakaken Slametan kangge nyambut wulan Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW kanthi ngawontenaken sholawat wiwit tanggal 1 dumugi tanggal 11 Rabiul Awal sasampunipun sholat Isya dumugi jam 9. Dene ing tanggal 12 Rabiul ‘Awal, sholawat katur dhumateng Nabi Muhammad SAW, maos tahlil, Mawidhoh hasanah, lan dhahar bancaan sesarengan kaliyan masyarakat”.</i> (An interview with MN, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Reading Shalawat
2.	<i>“Wonten ing Masjid Al-Firdaus tanggal 12 Rabiul Awal mbeto bancaan kangge dhahar sesarengan. Ing dinten niku kita masak kangge ing waosaken donga supados pikantuk berkah Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW ing ndalem acara menika”.</i> (An interview with ID, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Aims to get blessings
3.	<i>“Tujuan ingkang utami wonten ing tradhisi menika supados pikantuk syafa’at saking Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad saw kangge ngaturaken dhateng Allah sedaya ingkang kula karepaken, kados kasarasan,</i>	The value of gratitude

dipun paringi rezeki, lan minangka rasa syukur maring nikmat ingkang sampun diparingaken dening Gusti Allah. Kajaba niku, lumantar tradhisi Slametan ing Maulid Nabi Muhammad ugi nggadahi ancas kangge maringi pangerten utawi pendhidhikan marang lare-lare ing lingkungan masyarakat mriki”. (An interview with ALR, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).

According to excerpts from the interview with the informant, the tradition of *Slametan* on the day of the Prophet Muhammad’s Mawlid is carried out by bringing food into the mosque and praying together to get blessings. In addition, in the process of its implementation, it also aims to be grateful for the blessings that have been given by Allah. The tradition of *Slametan* in the Mawlid of the Prophet Muhammad not only has an impact on the aspect of worship but also on the aspect of education, especially for children to know and learn about the life journey of the Prophet Muhammad. Historically, the tradition of Mawlid Prophet Muhammad is one of the means of spreading Islam in the archipelago, so the tradition of Mawlid Prophet Muhammad is still maintained by the community as a means to realize a sense of happiness for the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (Suriadi, 2019).

Third, the tradition of *Slametan* in the *Nuzulul Qur’an* in Ramadan (Hijri calendar). In general, *Nuzulul Qur’an* is performed on the 17th of Ramadan after taraweeh prayers, when Muslims gather in mosques to read the Qur’an together. Then listen to a lecture from a kyai who exposes a discussion of the Qur’an (Purnama, 2021). While the Javanese community in Demak carries out the tradition of *Nuzulul Qur’an* on 27 (*pitu likur*) Ramadan. Based on the results of interviews that the author conducted with Javanese people about the *Slametan* tradition on 27 Ramadan, as follows:

Table. 3: Slametan Tradition: 27 Ramadan According to Javanese-Demak Society

No	Slametan Tradition According to Society	Coding
1.	“ <i>Sejatine Nuzulul Qur’an dilaksanakaken ing tanggal 17 Ramadhan nanging ing mriki kita nindakaken ing tanggal 27 Ramadhan amargi ngepasi kaliyan tradhisi Slametan. Wonten ing Slametan ingkang kita tindakaken menika masyarakat mbekta dhahar sesarengan saksampunipun maos donga. Tradhisi niki ugi nampilake bocah-bocah ingkang sampun pungkasan maos Al Qur’an. Kangge taun Niki wonten 3 ingkang khataman Al-Qur’an</i> ”. (An interview with MN, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Islamic education for children
2.	“ <i>Lare kulo salah satungalipun ingkang khataman al-Qur’an sakwisipun ngaos Al-Qur’an kaliyan ustadz ing desa mriki. Tujuwanipun kangge ngaturaken rasa syukur amargi bisa maca Al-Qur’an kanthi sae</i> ”. (An interview with ST, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	The value of gratitude
3.	“ <i>Lare kula ugi nderek Nuzulul Qur’an dene dhaharan ingkang dibetha inggih menika ingkung, gedhang, mi, lan wedang</i> ”. (An interview with DD, Javanese community of Karangawen, Demak, December 2022).	Implementation of Slametan 27 Ramadan

Based on the three informants, it shows that the *Slametan* tradition carried out is in commemoration of the *Nuzulul Qur’an*, which is carried out on the 27th (*pitu likur*) of Ramadan. In its implementation, it is carried out in the mosque by displaying children who are able to read the Qur’an. In addition, to express gratitude, the community brought food and drinks to read prayers together. After the children read the Qur’an from Surah Ad-Dhua to An-Nas, they continued the lecture delivered by the kyai in the village. After that, read the *sholawat*, *tahlil*, and *Maudihoh Hasanah* prayers and eat together. In this study, the author only took three traditions from Islamic holidays, although in their implementation there are still several Slametan traditions carried out by the Javanese community in Karangawen and Demak.

The Javanese community in Demak shows that the *Slametan* tradition is a means of social interaction and strengthening interpersonal and social relationships. This is relevant to Weber's view that rites and myths are tools of cosmic integration and harmonization (Sumbulah et al., 2022). *Slametan* is an expression of an oppositional view of God, revelation, Islam, and humans' place in the cosmos. *Slametan* illuminates the ways in which multivocal rituals can be exploited in different cultural settings (Muqoyyidin, 2013).

According to Amanah Nurish, *Slametan* not only has the meaning of almsgiving and sharing but also becomes a means of gathering between relatives and neighbors who rarely meet. *Slametan* has a function as a message and a set of values in a social system. In the functionalism approach, *Slametan* is a social system that will always be related to three aspects. First, the concrete structure of the system through social action. Second, there are individual actors in the cultural system built into social action. Third, there are elements that involve individual actors and social action so that they are integrated through culture (Nurish, 2019).

2. Qur'anic Interpretation Of The Slametan Tradition

In the implementation of the *Slametan* tradition, there are at least some Islamic values contained in the verses of the Qur'an that have been practiced by the Javanese people. First, alms will bring mercy and the most perfect reward (Miswar et al., 2022). This explanation is found in Surah an-Najm verses 39–41, which means: “*And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives (39). And that his effort is going to be seen-(40). Then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense (41)*”. In Surah an-Najm, verse 39, in *Tafsir fi zhilail Qur'an*, it is said that the deeds of a person will be calculated based on the effort he makes. Therefore, life on earth is an opportunity given to him to try and do charity. Verses 40–41 show that every effort made by man will be rewarded by God. In this case, the principle of individual responsibility juxtaposed with just retribution is established. This principle embodies human values among mankind and gives them the opportunity to do good deeds (Quthb, 2000).

Second, carrying out the *Slametan* tradition is a form of gratitude to God. In this case, the purpose carried out by the Javanese people to express gratitude by carrying out the *Slametan* tradition in theological foundations is contained in Surah Ibrahim verse 7, which means: “*And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe (7)*”. Based on research conducted by Amelia Dewi and Munirah with the *Ma'na Cum Maghza* approach, a theory initiated by Sahiron

Syamsuddin states that *maghza al-ayah*, or the main message of this verse, is that gratitude has benefits in society. The contextualization of gratitude makes humans try to be consistent in practicing gratitude. In this case, gratitude is a dynamic process as long as the person is alive. The meaning of gratitude in Surah Ibrahim, verse 7, shows that gratitude will have an impact on one's success and happiness (Dewi & Munirah, 2022). In the context of the purpose of carrying out the *Slametan* tradition, expressing gratitude correlates with the hope of getting blessings from God in carrying out the tradition. When a person is thankful, God will add his favor. This is in accordance with the explanation of Surah Ibrahim, verse 7.

Third, Shalawat to the Prophet Muhammad In the *Slametan* tradition, Javanese people always read *Shalawat* to the Prophet Muhammad. The theological foundation, *shalawat*, for the Prophet Muhammad is found in Surah al-Ahzab verse 56, which means: “Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.” In tafsir, Sayyid Qutb explains that Allah has established shalawat in the universe since the time of *azali* (before the creation of humans) and that it is eternal forever. There is no higher favor and glory than the blessing and glory of Shalawat. Actually, the Prophet Muhammad did not need shalawat from humans, but Allah wanted to glorify believers by connecting His shalawat and greetings with shalawat and greetings from humans (Quthb, 2000).

Therefore, the main purpose of the community in carrying out the *Slametan* tradition is to get blessings from Allah. This correlates with the values, practices, and goals of the *Slametan* tradition, which is almsgiving, expressing gratitude, and shalawat, a practice to obtain blessings from Allah. The practice of *Slametan* to get blessings is shown in the following picture:

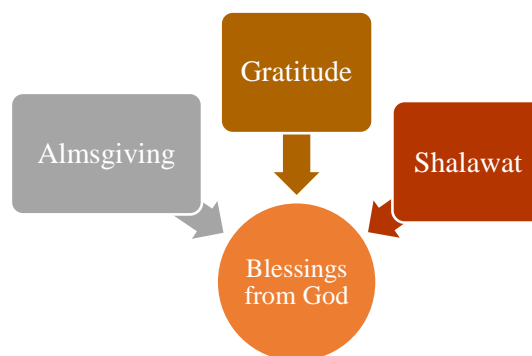


Figure 2. Values, Practices, and Goals in the *Slametan* Tradition

The *Slametan* tradition carried out by the Javanese community in Demak shows that the purpose of almsgiving by bringing food at the time of *Slametan* is to seek salvation and blessings. Alms benefits people socially and spiritually because it brings blessings from Allah (Wibowo, 2023). While gratitude is an expression of gratitude to God, who has given blessings to humans, Thanksgiving in the *Slametan* tradition is done by bringing food to eat together (Mahfud, 2014). The purpose of the *Slametan* tradition is to get blessings carried out by the Javanese people by doing Shalawat to the Prophet Muhammad. When doing shalawat to the Prophet Muhammad, the essence is to connect oneself to the Prophet Muhammad. According to Ibn Qayyim, shalawat is God's command to humans as a compliment to the Prophet Muhammad (Mahfudin, 2020). From this explanation, to get blessings from Allah, there are at least three things that humans must do, namely, almsgiving, giving thanks, and doing shalawat. These three are contained in the *Slametan* tradition carried out by the Javanese community in Demak to get blessings from God.

E. CONCLUSION

The *Slametan* tradition in Javanese society is always interesting and open to being studied from various perspectives. The Javanese community in Demak shows that the *Slametan* tradition is a means of social interaction and strengthening interpersonal and social relationships. *Slametan* is a religious and cultural ritual that forms the core of Javanese religious life. The purpose of *Slametan* is carried out for the safety of the Javanese people; this is in accordance with the word "*Slamet*," which means salvation both physically and spiritually. The *Slametan* ritual on Islamic holidays is performed collectively in the mosque by reading prayers together. The key finding in this study is that in the *Slametan* tradition carried out by the Javanese community in Demak, both values, practices, and goals have a theological foundation, namely the Qur'an. The findings of this study show that the purpose of Javanese people carrying out the *Slametan* tradition is to get God's blessings through almsgiving, giving thanks, and giving shalawat to the Prophet Muhammad. This study has limitations in analyzing because it only discusses the *Slametan* tradition in Islamic holidays and only selects 3 traditions, namely, *Slametan* on 10 Muharram, 12 Rabiul Awal, and 27 Ramadan (Hijri calendar). Further research on a wider scale is recommended because there are still many *Slametan* traditions carried out by the Javanese community in Demak that are not discussed in this study.

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