

# Traditional Tolak Bala Ceremony in Tanah Bara Village, Aceh Singkil from an Islamic Law Perspective

Cut Efia<sup>1</sup>, Dhiauddin Tanjung<sup>2</sup>, Hasan Matsum<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: [cutratu511@gmail.com](mailto:cutratu511@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Long before Islam came, local culture and beliefs of Animism and Dynamism were very close to the community. It was from here that the belief that disaster would occur because of something or a matter came into existence. Tolak bala in the big Indonesian dictionary is defined as an action to reject disaster; an effort to avoid danger; a series of activities carried out by a group of people to hold a kenduri tolak bala. Everyone certainly longs for safety and happiness, so that if a disaster threatens them, they try to ward it off. Islamic law has stipulated that only Allah is the source of salvation, a Muslim must believe that only Allah controls all good and harm, both those that have not yet befallen and those that have befallen. As in surah az-zumar verse 38; in other letters such as surah al-Baqarah verse 45 also emphasizes human dependence on Allah. This research was conducted in Tanah Bara village, Gunung Meriah District, Aceh Singkil Regency using a descriptive analysis method. The practice of tolak bala in Tanah Bara village on every Wednesday at the end of the month of Syafar. Various series are carried out such as, hajat prayer, dhikr and prayer to ward off disaster, bathing to ward off disaster using KASE and smearing betel water on the forehead of family members. There is no practice of ward off disaster in Tanah Bara Village that performs offerings such as throwing food into the river for offerings. The practice of ward off disaster as has been briefly described, is carried out only as an effort to keep away from danger. The practice of ward off disaster in Tanah Bara Village is legitimated by Islamic law, because it still reflects the spirit of Islamic law, meaning that it is permitted in Islamic law for the practice of ward off disaster in Tanah Bara Village. In the practice of ward off disaster that is carried out, there are no acts of idolatry committed, such as throwing offerings into the river, or throwing food with the aim of offerings. Only the essence of the practice of ward off disaster after using KASE, then diving by realizing it like the flow of water with the KASE, then all diseases disappear. This is the point of the problem of the practice of warding off disaster that the author wants to examine further to obtain legal legitimacy, whether it is permissible or not.

**Keywords:** *Traditional Ceremony, Tolak Bala, Islamic Law.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that has many local cultures. And long before Islam came, the beliefs of Animism and Dynamism were very close to the community. It was from there that the belief that disasters occurred because of something or a matter that existed (Syahrizal, 2004:99). This cultural reason is also what often makes the Tolak Bala Silver still exist in Indonesia and in Aceh in particular. This Tolak Bala Silver is 1 of the many doors created by Satan to lead humans into Bid'ah affairs. It can even fall into shirk (Ramli, 2010:29).

Everyone certainly longs for safety and happiness, so that when a disaster threatens them, they try to ward it off. If a disaster has struck, then various ways are

taken to eliminate it. In a situation like this, people who do not have a correct understanding of monotheism are very vulnerable to falling into shirk (Soleh, 1997:37). Misguidance is Satan's merchandise that is peddled to his followers, until a habit that is done is considered as truth or something beautiful without being based on Islamic law. A Muslim must believe that only Allah is in control of all good and bad (harm), both those that have not yet befallen and those that have befallen His creatures. Al-Qur'an Surah Az-Zumar verse 38 explains that humans must eliminate the dependence of their hearts on other than Allah in achieving good or rejecting harm, and shows that dependence of the heart on other than Allah is a misguided act that has associated Him (Jaiz, 2002:17). A person who wants to achieve benefits or reject harm certainly tries to take the cause in order to achieve his desires. In taking this cause, there are three guidelines in Islamic law that must be considered, the cause taken must be permitted by the sharia, both those that are clearly proven in revelation and those obtained based on the understanding of scholars. It is not permissible to rely on the cause, but must always rely on the heart to the creator and master of the cause, namely Allah 'azza wa jalla, by continuing to be enthusiastic in seeking beneficial causes. It must be believed that no matter how strong the cause is, it is still determined by Allah's provisions. It could be that the law of cause and effect is allowed to run as usual and it could also be the opposite (Ramli, 2010:33).

Once the Prophet Muhammad sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam someone wearing a bracelet made of brass, so the Prophet asked him, "What is this?", the person replied, "I wear this because I am sick". So the Prophet said, "Just take it off, because it will not add to you except weakness, indeed if you die while you are still wearing the bracelet, you will not be safe forever." (Narrated by Ahmad).

The lesson that can be learned from this hadith is that people who wear bracelets and the like in order to ward off disaster or eliminate it are included in the act of shirk because the Prophet said, "if you die while you are still wearing the bracelet, you will not be safe forever". The rejection of safety shows that the person who does it will definitely get destruction and loss.

Basically, the practice of warding off disaster is not at all from Islamic teachings. However, by some people, this practice is packaged with various Islamic attributes, and is considered as local content that colors and enriches Islam. In fact, it is the same as mixing the right with the wrong. Local content is allowed, as long as it does not conflict with Islamic law (Pawi, 2017).

The practice of warding off disaster cannot be said to be a mere cultural phenomenon, because from an Islamic perspective, some scholars say it is contrary to faith. In addition, the practice of warding off disaster has become the law of religions outside of Islam, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and so on. Thus, practicing the practice of warding off disaster is the same as carrying out the law of non-Islamic religions. The problem is, by some groups, the practice of warding off disaster is forced to get an honorable place, namely being positioned as a noble ancestral tradition, or as a national culture that must be preserved, and so on. In fact, such practices, apart from draining time, energy and money, also contain the

intention of fooling most of the people (LoisChoFeer, & Darmawan, 2021; Pramayoza, 2022).

If we look at the village of Tanah Bara, the ritual or practice of warding off disaster is that, the community generally gathers in an open place (Pasir Kuta Langlang/Pasir Tanah Bara Kuta Gugung/Lembang), on the last Wednesday of the month of Syafar, in addition to bringing food and drinks that have been prepared since the morning, also bring KASE, namely; ingredients from rice, pandan leaves and others, to be used as a substitute for shampoo when bathing after finishing the prayer to ward off disaster and the prayer to ward off disaster. In addition, the mothers deliberately chew betel until it is slightly smooth then spit it into their hands and rub it on the foreheads of people who are bathing from their closest relatives, this is done in the community's view to ward off disease/ward off disaster.

## **B. METHOD**

This research is included in field research, which is a research conducted systematically by collecting data in the field (Arikunto, 1995:58). The method used in this study is using a qualitative research method. Qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behavior can be observed. This approach is directed at the background and the individual as a whole (Moleong, 1991:3; Nawawi (1992:209). Qualitative research begins by collecting information in a natural situation, to be formulated into a generation that can be accepted by human common sense. Therefore, this qualitative approach was chosen by the author based on the purpose of the research which wanted to get a picture of the process of warding off disaster in Tanah Bara Village.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Definition of Tolak Bala**

In the Big Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, "*tolak bala*" is defined as an action to reject disaster; an effort to avoid danger; a series of activities carried out by a group of people to reject disaster.

Meanwhile, in the views of several customs in Indonesia, there are different sentences in the meaning of the word "*tolak bala*", even though the goal is all towards the same direction. As in the Banyuwangi tradition of East Java, to ward off disaster which is called the "Seblang Ritual" which takes place on the seventh day of the month of Syawal, means to free from danger. This practice is carried out by dancing on stage and throwing scarves to the audience, while the audience is required to sway on stage with the Seblang dancers. This moment of throwing scarves is called Tundik (Nurhikmah, et al., 2021; Uhai et al., 2020).

The practice of *tolak bala* in the Lubuk Kilangan tradition is in the form of dishes eaten together originating from the mothers of the six tribes in Lubuk Kilangan. After eating bajamba, it is continued with a dhikr procession together until morning which is only carried out by the men. In Meloak Village, Aceh, Peraktek to

ward off disaster has become an annual tradition. The procession carried out is to float offerings in the form of a white rooster into the Alas River by the village elders. Similar to the floating offerings procession in Java. They believe that Peraktek can ward off disaster. Meanwhile, to ward off disaster in the traditional terms of Tanah Bara Village, Gunung Meriah District, Aceh Singkil, interprets the word *tolak bala* as 'a series of events/activities to ask for prayers to avoid disaster and disease'. Peraktek to ward off disaster in Tanah Bara Village is usually carried out in an open field with a river for bathing, after bathing, betel water that has been chewed by the mothers is smeared on the foreheads of each family.

## 2. Legal Basis for Tolak Bala

Islamic law has determined that, only Allah is the source of salvation for creatures, Muslims must believe that only Allah controls all good and harm, both those that have not yet befallen and those that have already befallen. The word of Allah in Surah Az-Zumar verse 38:

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

Meaning: "And indeed if you ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth?", they will surely answer: "Allah." Say: "So explain to me what you are calling on besides Allah, if Allah wants to bring harm to Me. Can your idols remove that harm, or if Allah wants to give mercy to Me. Can they withhold His mercy? Say: "That is enough Allah is for me." In Him are those who submit their trust." (QS. Az-Zumar: 38).

This verse eliminates the dependence of the human heart on other than Allah in achieving goodness or rejecting evil, and shows that the heart is dependent on other than Allah. Allah includes the act of associating partners with Allah.

An important principle in taking a cause for someone who wants to gain benefits or reject harm is of course trying to take a cause in order to achieve his desire. In taking this cause there are three guidelines that must be considered:

- a. The cause taken must be permitted by the sharia, either proven by revelation or obtained based on experience.
- b. It is not permissible to rely on the cause, but must always rely on the heart to the creator and ruler of the cause, namely Allah 'azza wa jalla, by remaining enthusiastic in seeking beneficial causes.
- c. It must be believed that no matter how strong the cause is, it is still determined by the destiny of Allah. It could be that the law of cause and effect is allowed to run as usual and it could also be the opposite (Umar, 2007:221).

In another verse, Allah emphasizes the command to ask for help in order to stay safe from the world to the hereafter by being patient and praying. The word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah verse 45:

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

Meaning: "Make patience and prayer your helpers. And indeed that is hard, except for those who are humble". (Al-Baqarah: 45).

While people who ward off disaster by wearing tamimah or amulets are classified as polytheists with the type of shirk ashghor, but their status is still Muslim. Because only the sin of shirk akbar and its equivalent can invalidate a person's Islam. In a story brought by Ibn Abi Hatim, it is told that one time Hudzaifah saw someone using a rope to treat a fever he was suffering from, so he cut the rope while reciting the verse of the Qur'an, Surah Yusuf, verse 106, namely:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

Meaning: "And most of them do not believe in Allah except in a state of associating partners with Him." (QS. Yusuf [12]: 106).

The meaning of the verse above is that they believe in Allah's rububiyah but deny Allah's uluhiyyah. The verse above does not have to be used as a proof (excuse) to deny akbar shirk, but can be used to deny ashghor shirk. This is because Ashghor shirk and akbar shirk are both types of shirk, so Hudzaifah radhiyallahu 'anhu is right to postulate by using this verse.

If you look closely, it turns out that the main key to being free from dependence on other than Allah is to put your trust in Him. That is why Allah commands to put one's trust and always submit one's affairs to Allah Ta'ala. This means that a person who does not put his trust in Him is not called a believer. In fact, he has lost his perfection or even all of his faith, as indicated by Allah in His word Surah At Taubah verse 51, namely:

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Meaning: "Say: Nothing will ever befall us except what Allah has decreed for us. He is our protector, and in Allah let the believers put their trust". (QS. At Taubah: 51).

Whoever entrusts his affairs to other than Him will be humiliated and will not get what he hopes for. Indeed, that is the situation, everything that humans rely on to overcome their problems actually turns into the cause of their weakness unless the one they rely on is Allah 'azza wa jalla, because indeed only Allah is worthy. He is the only One who controls the heavens and the earth, life and death and salvation and destruction. Therefore, let us examine our hearts, whether we have been dependent on other than Him, maybe we are wallowing in shirk but we are not aware and feel safe. In fact, security and guidance will only be obtained if we always maintain our faith so that it is not tainted by shirk.

Reject disasters that are identical to sacrifices and the like. Because truly, sacrifice is a noble and great form of worship before Allah. What mankind should hold on to is Allah's verse in Surah al-An'aam: 162-163, namely:

قُلْ إِنْ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ<sup>ط</sup> وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Meaning: "Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice (sacrifice), my life and my death are only for Allah, the Rabb of the worlds, He has no partner; and that is what I was commanded to do and I was the first to submit myself (to Allah)." (QS. al-An'aam: 162-163).

Allah says in another verse that humans in their activities aim only at Allah as in surah al-Baqarah verse 173, namely:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Meaning: "Indeed Allah has only forbidden you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and animals on which other than Allah has been called. But whoever is forced to eat them, neither desiring them nor transgressing them, there is no sin on him. Indeed Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (QS. Al-Baqarah: 173)

In Islamic legal literature, there is not a single part that is free from regulation, both in the lives of mankind and outside of human life itself. Islam clearly sees disasters as a common thing, but even so, Islam has also regulated how to deal with them as explained in Surah Ali Imran verse 26, namely:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمَلِكِ تُؤْتِي الْمَلِكَ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمَلِكَ مِمَّن تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَن تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Meaning: "O God Who has the kingdom, You give the kingdom to whoever You want and You take away the kingdom from whoever You want. You exalt those you wish and you humiliate those you wish. In Your hands is all goodness. Indeed, You are Almighty over all things." (QS. Ali Imran: 26) Whatever the name or form, reinforcements are not terrible things that come from other than Allah. Good and bad, everything is God's will. This is what we must understand and is the basis of our faith. How to ward off evil as Rasulullah saw taught everything necessary to live life. If he teaches it, it means it will be used and useful. On the other hand, if he doesn't teach it, it means that all the public worship that he left for us to do is already able to answer what we are worried about. So, by being patient and praying, that is the best way to ward off evil.

Another alternative to rejecting evil in Islam is to give alms according to the hadith of Rasulullah saw "Immediately give sadaqah, because the disaster will not be able to overcome it (precede it)" (HR. Thabrani). However, it needs to be understood that; In particular, there are no prayer guidelines for ward off evil in Islamic law (Umar, 2001:23).

It is permissible to pray to face difficulties and hope in Allah to ask Him for a solution. And this will fall into the category of Sunnah Hajat prayers. However, special times, special prayers, special additional practices, reading this and that many times and so on, are not the Sharia that was established by Rasulullah SAW. So you should just be careful not to fall into Bid'ah.

### 3. Tola Bala Practice in Tanah Bara Village

The implementation of the ward off disaster in Tanah Bara village is usually carried out on the last Wednesday of the month of Syafar, because the month of Syafar in the community's understanding is the month of disease, so at the end of the month the ward off disaster ritual is carried out to avoid danger in the future.

The ward off disaster ritual carried out by the people of Tanah Bara village in general is that they gather in an open place (Pasir on the banks of the Cinendang river), on the last Wednesday of the month of Syafar. After all the people have gathered, the implementation of the ward off disaster ritual begins with the ward off disaster prayer (hajjat prayer) in general only men participate in the hajjat prayer, while the mothers are busy preparing food which is usually eaten together after the prayer.

After the prayer is finished, it is continued with dhikr and ward off disaster prayers. After the process of connecting with Allah ends, the community also eats together which has been prepared beforehand. After the meal together is finished, the community continues the ward off disaster practice by bathing in the river using KASE as a substitute for soap/shampoo. KASE is; ingredients processed from rice, pandan leaves and others to be used as shampoo when bathing.

The implementation of the ward off disaster bath requires the community to dive their entire body and hold it for a moment in the water, while diving in the water, the community carrying out the bathing perform the ward off disaster practice, namely, to wash away and flow all diseases with the water. After completing the ward off disaster practice, the bathing process is considered complete if a mark has been given on the forehead from betel water that has been deliberately chewed by the women.

After the ward off disaster bath is finished, the annual ward off disaster practice is considered complete. According to the imam of the Tanah Bara Village mosque, in the 80s after the ward off disaster bath was finished, the community flocked home while carrying plain flour equipment to ward off disaster from the base of the village to the end of the village, in the Acehese Singkil language term, namely; "*Mengusekh bala daksi jehe kampung hingga julu kampung*". After this practice is completed, each resident hangs the plain flour material in front of the door.

### 4. Islamic Law Perspective on the Practice of Tolak Bala in Tanah Bara Village

Whatever the name or form, reinforcements are not a terrible thing. Good and bad, everything is God's will. This is what must be understood and is the basis of human faith. How to ward off evil as Rasulullah saw taught everything necessary to live life. If he teaches it, it means it will be used and useful. On the other hand, if he doesn't teach it, it means that all the public worship that he left for us to do is already able to answer what we are worried about. So, by being patient and praying, that is the best way to ward off evil.

Everyone certainly desires safety and happiness, so when a disaster threatens them, they try to ward it off. And if a disaster has struck, then various methods are taken to eliminate it. In circumstances like this, people who do not have a correct understanding of monotheism are very vulnerable to falling into shirk.

Islamic law has stipulated that only Allah is the source of salvation. A Muslim must believe that only Allah is the one who controls all good and evil, both those that have not yet befallen and those that have already befallen. As explained in the words of Allah, Surah Az-Zumar, verse 38, which was quoted previously.

Verse 38 of Surah Az-Zumar aims to eradicate the heart's dependence on other than Allah in achieving good or rejecting harm and shows that the heart's dependence on other than Allah includes the act of associating partners with Allah.

An important principle in taking a cause for someone who wants to gain benefits or reject harm is of course trying to take a cause in order to achieve his desire. In taking this cause there are three guidelines that must be considered:

- a. The cause taken must be permitted by the Shari'a, either proven by revelation or obtained based on experience.
- b. It is not permissible to rely on the cause, but must always rely on the heart to the creator and ruler of the cause, namely Allah 'azza wa jalla, by remaining enthusiastic in seeking beneficial causes.
- c. It must be believed that no matter how strong the cause is, it is still determined by Qadha from Allah. It could be that the law of cause and effect is allowed to run as usual and it could also be the opposite (Umar, 2007:221).

In another verse, Allah emphasizes the command to ask for help in order to remain safe from the world and the hereafter by being patient and praying. The word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah verse 45:

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

Meaning: "Make patience and prayer your helpers. And indeed, this is very difficult, except for those who are humble." (Al-Baqarah: 45).

From the verses and explanations above, it can be understood that the practices/rituals of rejecting reinforcements carried out by the people of Tanah Bara Village are in line with the spirit of Islamic law, where the practice of rejecting reinforcements is carried out with the prayer of prayer, and continued with remembrance and prayers to reject reinforcements.

Meanwhile, the equipment for the ritual of rejecting reinforcements that is presented, such as KASE, and pesejuk (plain flour tools), bathing to reject reinforcements, and applying chewed betel water to people's foreheads, are only as tafa-ul. In Qamus Idris Marbawy tafa-ul, the root word Fa'l means sempena. Meanwhile, tafa-ul means taking in conjunction with or the opposite of tasya-um (considering bad luck) (Marbawy, 1977:75). Sempena (Malay) means a good sign.

One example of tafa-ul that is permitted is; watering the grave with holy water purifies and cools, this is tafa'ul in the hope of cooling the person in the grave as stated by al-Bakri al-Damyathi as follows: "And (it is sunnah) to water the grave

with water so that the dust of the ground is not blown away by the wind and because the Prophet SAW did so at the grave of his son, Ibrahim, as narrated by Syafi'i. And also on Sa'ad's grave as narrated by Ibn Majah, and the Prophet SAW ordered with him on the grave of Uthman bin Madzh'uun as narrated by at-Turmidhi. And what is mustahab is that the water is holy, cleansing and cool, as a tafa`ul hopefully Allah will cool the grave of the dead" (Damyathi, 119).

All actions/pekakas in the ritual of repelling reinforcements are not considered bid'ah dalalah, because the practices in the ritual of rejecting reinforcements in Tanah Bara village have legitimacy in Islamic law.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The practice/ritual of Tolak Bala in Tanah Bara village on every Wednesday at the end of the month of Syafar. Various series are carried out such as, hajat prayer, dhikr and prayer to warden disaster, bathing to warden disaster, using KASE and applying betel water to the forehead of family members and bathing and swimming with makrifat like flowing water, this is where all diseases in the body flow. The practice of warding off disaster as previously described, is carried out only as an effort to keep away from danger.

The practice of Tolak Bala in Tanah Bara village needs further confirmation/research to determine the legitimacy of Islamic law, whether it still reflects the spirit of Islamic law or not. A temporary review, the practice of warding off disaster in Tanah Bara still has something that needs to be straightened out in the context of Islamic law.

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