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Religiosity Messages of *Dikee Molod* Verses during the Celebration of Maulid Nabi in Aceh Besar, Indonesia

(A Case Study of Group *Dikee Molod* of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla)

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Abstract – This study focuses on ritual practice of dikee molod which is played by Group of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla during the events of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad PBUH celebration in Aceh Besar. The study used qualitative method through public opinion survey approach. Data collection was done by comparing the data, categorisation, presenting data and making the inferences toward certain written information. The data validity is validated through reading repetitively (validity semantic), referring to the document sources and colleague discussion. By employing the approach of concept of ritual practice, this study emphasises that the verses (syair) of dikee molod if occasionally is repeated, will produces religious messages such as; first, the utterance of the only god (monotheism), blessing (shalawat) upon the prophet, and the expression of joy and gladness of the birth of Prophet; second, religious messages have been influencing toward the life of Aceh people in terms of faith (iman) enhancement upon Allah and Rasulullah; influence toward the obedience upon the law (syariat) of Allah and sunnah of Rasulullah; and third the art of dikee molod ritual can be preserved not only by the networks of ritual meaning of dikee being recognised in the society that shows the function in a cultural event, but also caused by the reproduction of rituals carried out by interested parties and are rooted in a social system.

Keywords: religiosity, dikee molod, ritual practice, Dayah, Aceh

1. Introduction

Islam is not just simply delivered through conventional media, recitation and discourse in mosques, but also through media of *dikee* (*zikir*) as it is happening in Aceh. *Dikee* is viewed as the ritual practice happened during the celebration of *maulid nabi* (Prophet's birthday), popularly known as *dikee molod*. This kind of activity is held during month of *molod*, technically celebrated in every three months which are Rabiul Awal, Rabiul Akhir, and Jumadil Awal. This ritual practice is showed by the existence of the *dikee molod* Group of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla, as the most popular *zikir* group in Aceh Besar, which is usually invited across villages to present the verses of *dikee molod* during Prophet's *molod* celebration. According to Nurdin, *zikir* has become the tradition functioning as acculturation that is created to spread Islam and at the same time to adapt to the new local culture [1, 14]. Ritual practice here functions as media to introduce the religion because the verses contain strong religious values. *Syair* (verse) also becomes the media for arts and entertainment which is mostly demanded by the society [7, 19].

So far, the study of *dikee molod* talks about three aspects. First, the study that talks about acculturation on Arabic culture into the culture of Aceh emphasising to the presumption that the tradition of *zikir maulid* recitation "barzanji" as the tradition item which is adopted from Arabic culture [1, 8, 19]. Secondly, the review that stated the content of values in "Serat Zikir Maulud" collection script Library of Mutual Pusaka, Mangkunegaran Palace Surakarta numbered A.475. This study revealed that the phenomenon of the birth of Prophet Muhammad has been inspiring the traditions that live in society, immersed as moral values that can be understood and noble values, and it can be beneficial for current society [18]. Thirdly, the study which employed the semiotic approach Roland

Barthes toward the verses of *zikir barzanji* concluding that Abu Ja'far Al-Barzanji wrote this work, not only to express his admiration toward the Prophet, but also tell implicitly the Arabic culture, especially in the Makkah region and the Land of Sham [11]. These three patterns showed the tendency of text studies that ignored the socio-cultural context in which a practice is rooted in a social system.

The purpose of this script is to review the *dikee molod* interactively in which *zikir* as the text that has its correlation with socio-cultural context. In other words, the analysis will emphasise not only toward the influence of *zikir maulid* (*dikee molod*) toward society, but also on how *zikir maulid* is preserved as the treasury of local culture by the people with fundamental motives and strategies. At the same time, there will be three questions that can be proposed. First, how the forms of the messages of religiosity which are mbedded in verses of Group *dikee molod* of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla that has been propounded during the celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad in Aceh Besar. Second, how those religious messages of *syair* of *dikee molod* can provide the influences and impacts in the life of Aceh society. Third, how the existence of *dikee molod* is being preserved by certain people and what kind of strategies and motive to keep the *dikee molod* existed.

This article is based on three assumptions, first, syair of dikee molod contains the "only-one-God" (monotheism) messages and the praises upon Allah, the utterance of blessings (shalawat) upon Rasulullah, and the joy and bliss upon the event of the birth of Rasulullah. Second, the religious messages that are embedded in syair of dikee molod will impact toward Acehnese way of life. Dikee molod also affects the positive effects in form of obedience toward syariat of Allah and sunnah of Rasulullah. Third, the art of dikee molod can be preserved by the role of society and support from village institutions such as keuchik (head of village) and tuha peut gampong (the board of village forum), along with the support of local government and from academic sector, also it is caused by the ritual reproduction which has been done by the particular group of people. These three assumptions are becoming the foundation to discuss this article in several following parts.

7

2. Methods

This study used qualitative method with public opinion survey approach to find out opinions from broader group of people [12]. The object of this study is the Group of dikee molod from Dayah Tgk Chik Digla Krueng Barona Jaya, Aceh Besar. The group was selected as the focus of this study which was motived by several reasons. First, the group is favourite in people of Aceh Besar and invited to perform not only at local performance, but outside subdistrict. Second, it owns an original script of syair of dikee molod, a typical inheritance and far different from the text "Al-Barzanji" which is often used by other maulid zikir groups in Indonesia.

Some fundamental questions that will be answered in this study is first, how the forms of religious messages containing in verses of dikee molod are performed in the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in Aceh Besar; second, how those verses of dikee molod can influence the life of Acehnese; and third, how the existence of dikee molod is being preserved by particular group of people, motives and strategies used in order to preserve it. Data collection was done by observation, interview and document study. Observation was conducted by observing directly the activity of Group dikee molod of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla, for instance, performance at Gla village, Meunasah Baet, Meunasah Intan, Aceh Besar, and Ceurih, Banda Aceh. Interview was conducted with the leader of the group, group members, local people, figures, cultural practitioners, and academics who have deeper knowledge about dikee molod. Meanwhile, document study was done by identifying deeply the script of verses of dikee molod, including the religious messages embedded in it. Document study was used to obtain data related to the theories that related to the research substance, like theory of content analysis study [17]. Data analysis was done by comparing the data, categorisation, data presentation and the making of inference toward the content of certain written information. The validity of data was validated through reading repetitively (validity semantic), referring to the document sources and colleague discussion [15].

3. Results

Messages of Religiosity in Dikee Molod Verses

In comprehending the religious messages embedded in script of *dikee molod* verses of group Dayah Tgk Chik Digla, Krueng Barona Jaya, Aceh Besar, the author showed some efforts to understand it repetitively. This was considerably important to understand and appreciate one text. The script of *dikee*

molod verses consists of four stages; first stage, mukaddimah (introduction), second stage is blessing (shalawat) upon Prophet Muhammad and third stage is the expression of joy of the birth of Prophet Muhammad and fourth stage is prayer (doa). As the verses and scripts are from Arabic language, it was translated by the researchers to Indonesian, and the content was analysed to describe and interpret the religious messages embedded in it. Among those messages, tauhid (monotheism), shalawat upon the Prophet, and the expression of bliss and joy upon Prophet's birth.

The Message of Tauhid

Ritual practice of *dikee molod* at Dayah Tgk Chik Digla is led by an elder sheikh respected by local pe sle. He is a very noble and respected theologian. Ritual of *dikee* is started by the Qur'an recitation of al-Fatihah, al-Ikhlas, al-Falaq dan an-Nas. According to Mukhsin Nyak Umar, the Qur'an recitation during the ritual tradition indicated that the prior activity will begin with *Tauhid* expression, which was the ritual practice that begun by saying the prayer through Qur'an. This is confirmed by the statement of sheikh of the *dikee molod* ritual, Mukhsin Nyak Umar as follows:

From the available texts, I think that those texts dominantly consist of sentences that contain *shalawat*, but in that tex 5 there is a thing called Sirah Nabawiyah which has historical content. Then, it is started by reciting surah al-Fatihah once, al-Ikhlas three times, al-Falaq once dan al-Nas once for each. It indicates the message of *tauhid* (monotheism) which has been summarised. So, it is not simply *shalawat*, those four things can be accommodated there.

Next, in the beginning part of the first stage of script of *syair dikee molod*, started by the utterance of *tauhid* and praises upon Allah SWT who has purified the soul of all qualities that can keep the servant from love for Him. This expression is found in the preamble round:

O God, O Lord, with the glory of Your holy Prophet and Your blessed Apostle. Cleanse our hearts of all qualities that keep us from Your sight and love. And turn us off in the *sunnah wal jama'ah* experts, the Greatest and Most Glorious. And Allah is praying to our Prophet, his family, and his friends. And accept our prayers fully.

The quote above is a very typical expression for a sheikh *dikee molod* when starting recitation of *zikir*. The expression is a form of verbal expression and someone to Allah by means of *betawassul* through the intermediary of the Messenger of Allah, so that God purifies his heart of all qualities that can distance him from the sight and love of God. This expression is attributed to Allah, the Most Hearing and Near to His servants.

Shalawat upon Propjet Muhammad PBUH

At the second of the first stage of the script of poetry in the *Molod*, it is delivered blessings and praises upon Rasulullah which is followed by the body movements of the members. The movement while sitting cross-legged and directing head, looking down to chest, pulling up to the front left and front right and so on. Slightly, the facial expression of the performers looks like they are drunk of ecstasy. Following is the expression of the *shalawat*:

Peace be with you, O most noble Prophet. Peace be with you O leaders of the righteous. Peace be with you, O Sufi leader. Peace be with you, a place of shelter and asking. Peace be with you, O beautiful and perfect. Peace be with you, o erase sins. Peace be with you, very generous. Peace be with you, O beautiful and heed. Peace be with you, callers of success. Peace be with you, morning light.

The above expression is a blessing and expression of praise to the Messenger of Allah. In addition, there was also an appeal to the audience to share their salvation with the Prophet as the phrase "yāman qad hadhar shallû' alâ khair al-basyar (for all attendees to treat the Prophet as well as humans).

The Birth and Joy of the Messenger of Allah (Rasulullah)

At the second stage of script of dikee molod verses explains the birth of Rasulullah, as follows:

A beloved Prophet was born with reddish cheeks. And the light of God, the light of heaven that always illuminates. A beloved Prophet whose birthday is not like others. A beloved Prophet was born with reddish cheeks. A beloved Prophet who was born without him, the purity was not passionate.

Then, in the third stage of script of *dikee molod* verses had the expression of joy and bliss upon the birth of Rasulullah. In this stage, *zikir* was chanted while standing and moving back and forth while embracing, and occasionally stomping to the floor to follow the typical rhythm of this group of *dikee molod*. The joyful expression was expressed through the symbolic narration as follows:

The full moon had risen illuminating us, full moons then faded away. We have never seen beauty like you, O Prophet who has a happy face. You are like the sun, you are like a full moon, you are light above light. You are like priceless gold, you are the lantern of the heart. O my beloved, O Muhammad peace be upon him, O bride of the east and west lands. O strengthened Prophet (with revelation), O exalted Prophet, O two-way Qibla Imam.

The expression above is full of symbolic terms and unique metaphor in both style of language and the typical rhythm. That uniqueness in Arabic literature is also known as *al-Madaih al-Nabawiyah* [1], which means poems that flatter and praise Rasulullah SAW.

The Influences of Dikee Molod Verses toward People's lives

According to the observation and interview between the author and the group leader, group members, public figures, academics and traditional figures (tokoh adat), it was recognised that the recitation of dikee molod verses by Dayah Tgk Chik Digla did not only give the effects in internal values for themselves, but also give the influences to the people's lives. The following is the explanation from author about the influences of dikee molod. At least, there are three effects which relates closely with the lives of Aceh people. First, dikee molod will improve the quality of faith (iman) upon Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW very time it was uttered and listened to. As mentioned by Saiful, an alumnus of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla that by saying tauhid sentence and shalawat upon Prophet will be very soultouching and it led to the inner peace. He commented, "Following dikee molod was very influential for me as personal. First, a very high values effects, especially in curing mental condition. When we do and follow dikee molod, it will touch and embrace our faith, so that it will appease out soul in term of appreciating the majesty of Allah".

A similar idea was also delivered by Damanhuri that the expression of *tauhid* sentences and *shalawat* give the influence and inner comfort, even will cure a physical illness. It can be seen from his statement, as follows:

From what I felts when *zikir maulid*, I was personally enlightened. So, when people were involved in the *zikir*, when people uttered *shalawat* upon the Prophet, their heart would be pleasant. One occasion, when I was not very well, one of the leaders suggested me to follow the *zikir*, then it would cure me and that was exactly what I experienced later. At that time my body was not feeling well, then I followed what the leader said and thank God it was proven. That could make me more active in moving, so it could make the pain decreased.

Second, *dikee molod* verses gave the influence of love upon Rasulullah when *shalawat* was chanted, just like reminding us of his struggles and his mission in delivering messages of Allah. A brother, Ikram M. Amin, the leader of Pesantren Modern Al-Manar Lampermei Cot Irie stated:

For us, especially for people who understood Arabic, the chanting *shalawat* during *dikee molod* would touch every people's heart, especially when prayer (*do'a*) is delivered at the end of *shalawat*. We always felt blissed and enhanced our love upon Rasulullah, just reminding us about his efforts fighting for Islam with a very limited numbers of army. The story was re-told through the verses and we reminded it. Hence, it influenced our hearts, how hard Islam was defended by Rasulullah SAW.

Mukhsin Nyan Umar also stated that by enhancing *shalawat* would affect our love upon Rasulullah, as he stated:

I think it was clear that by enhancing more and more *shalawat* will affect our love upon the Prophet, also affect our daily activities. For group members who always participated during *dikee molod*, they spontaneously would be very more pious and religious by continuously and consistently improving their worship for many years, especially in praying, five times a day based on *sunnah* Rasulullah, and this was one form of showing our love upon Rasulullah.

Third, dikee molod verses influenced our obedience toward syariat of Allah and sunah of Rasulullah as mentioned by Saiful, "Besides that, being known by molod will make us indirectly strengthen worship to and obedience to the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, so the point will be to increase our personal faith and then increase our devotion to Allah". In contrast to the statement above, Yusri Yusuf from Indonesian Institute of Art and Culture, believed that poetry in the molod cannot be an indicator of strengthening one's shari'a. This is because the people of Aceh are already accustomed to living in the village sharia. This is explained in the following interview excerpt:

It does not guarantee that poetry is one indicator for the implementation of the *shari'a*. But they felt like the presence of the Prophet into them. Yes, as I said earlier, adding intimacy, it makes youths become more solid participating during many activities held by the village. And those in the village are inseparable from the condition of the *shari'a*.

The Existence of Dikee Molod in Acehnese People.

In order to preserve the art of *dikee molod* as one of the cultural treasures in Aceh during the celebration of *Maulid* of Prophet Muhammad in Aceh Besar, there are many strategies which need to be done by many people. It necessitates the role of people in village and support from village institutions such as head of village (*keuchik*) and board of village advisor (*tuha peut*), including the support from academics 9university). In terms of role of local village, Muttaqin, one of the members in of *dikee molod* group of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla argued, "First of all, the important role of parents from children who studied here in Dayah Tgk Chik Digla. We tried to persuade the parents to ask their children to support them participate in *dikee molod*. For now, there is no prohibition, but there are some limitations, because of compassion".

In addition, Muttaqin argued that it is also necessary to gain support form village apparatus, especially important figures in the village, he mentioned, "We really hope that some figures in the village could support *dikee molod*. If there is no support, it will be meaningless, as it is not facilitated to do that". Another strategy used to preserve *dikee molod*, the role of local government to perform *dikee molod* in many the cultural event. In this case, Mukhsin Nyak Umar argued:

The government, in Aceh, should have established a regulation (*qanun*) about *dikee molod* preservation, which is equally treated with other arts activities. When there is a cultural event, *dikee molod* needs to included and performed, since lately other arts performance are getting dominant. Besides, in almost every district, they have their own *dikee molod* group, as well as many Islamic boarding school.

Similarly, many academics and scholars are highly required to conduct many studies related to the ritual of *dikee molod* in Aceh and publish them through discussion, seminars, and scientific journal. This statement is confirmed by Ikram M. Amin:

For scholars and academics, it is necessary to conduct research talking about the typical and characteristics of certain *dikee molod* in Aceh Besar. In district of Aceh Besar itself, the sub-districts have nuances *dikee*. The study significantly will tell those difference in many areas, then it should be published through YouTube or other media like journal article and seminars. This will be useful as scholars and intellectual figures can prevent the threat coming from someone (outsider/foreigner) who want to destruct the cultural values and treasures existed in Aceh. If there is no cooperation and teamwork between intellectual figures and figures in religion, the solid support can be barely achieved.

Talking about motivation and the urgency of preserving *dikee molod* as cultural treasure of Aceh, according to Ikram M. Amin will result to the preservation of copyrighted art of typical *dikee molod* in Aceh Besar. He claimed, "It will be much essential to gain support from government to preserve *dikee molod* as the copyrighted arts originally coming from Aceh Besar". Additionally, for Ananda Muttaqin, one of the purposes from preserving *dikee molod* is to uplift and enhance the name of the village in the eye of society, as he said: "... because the final purpose is carrying the dignity of their village, to prosperous their village". Meanwhile, Yusri Yusuf tended to highlight to the importance the empowerment of youths in *dikee molod*, because the content and the meanings are very philosophical. He mentioned, "Well, for not letting young people abandon *dikee molod*, it has been proved that there are some philosophical messages there (*dikee molod*). I think the role of (social) scientists in giving explanation, analysing and reviewing, so that people are informed truly about *dikee molod* as a tradition".

According to critical observation, the researchers also found out two implied reasons related to the causes the survival of *dikee molod* as Aceh cultural treasures. First, a motivation that involves the effort of certain strategic group of people of *dikee molod* at Dayah Tgk Chik Digla to keep their honour and charisma of main figure of the group. In other words, the ritual of *dikee molod* which has been performed on many stages in many *maulid* events are simply to affirm the existence of a *dikee* figure. Second, a motivation that affects the authentic appraisal of the family reputation and dignity of family from figures and person involved in *dikee molod* as the descendant of *ulama*. This becomes a personal pride for the family existence, so the society will popularise and show appreciation toward group of *dikee molod* of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla. Moreover, it becomes a statement upon the existence of family from certain figures in the group, hence they will always be invited by the stakeholders as the treasure of local culture. Therefore, author has spotted that at the end of the *dikee molod* ritual, there are prayers chanted and recited and aimed for the sake of the welfare of the group members and the prayers were also sent to the spirit of the family of important figures in group.

4. Discussion

Acehnese societies are noted for their devotion to their religion and their customs. The integration of custom and religion within them has become their philosophy and way of life [8]. One of the custom is holding dikee molod. By examining a strong construction of religious messages in dikee molod verses which has been giving the influences in the life of Aceh people, there were depicted into three approaches. First, it could be understood by using concept of ritual practice approach, meaning a form of action which is expressive or symbolic [4]. It was said that the ritual practice of dikee molod verses of group of Dayah Tgk Chik Digla, or like other dikee molod groups in Aceh is closely related to the holy and sacred [9]. This ritual practice created the sense of honour, so possible people in one single tradition are able to understand the messages expressed within the dikee molod ritual practice. Therefore, it was believed that verses spoken in dikee molod which was recited repeatedly would result to the religious messages in its order which then created the religious spirit for someone or the members of the dikee group. Then, the ritual also functioned as the religious action which is aimed to obtain the blessing from mythical ritual power, where the symbol and concept used in the ritual would lead to the practical objectives [4]. In relation with the functions of dikee molod described above, similar ritual practice was also found in the tradition of grebeg sekaten in Yogyakarta which related to the value order in the local society which involved the welfare and prosperity among people. In the tradition of Java, it was a common and solid relationship between the value order of the culture and the religious value. Gerebeg sekaten is tradition which has social power from time, which bond the inner connection between people and another social economic sector [19].

Second, the effects of religious messages in *dikee molod* verses toward people's lives could be understood through ritual practice mechanism approach, meaning in this ritual practice, there were two main results mentioned by Marshall. Those were belief and belonging [10]. Belief was the later native way to express the certainty and common belief, while belief which was related to the past belief was commonly viewed as ritual. On the other hand, belonging was the alternative tiers or bigger idea, in this case was ordered through persuasion, identification, and cohesion. Form here, the role of ritual in the creation of the ownership is suggested by the fact that social integration and the sense of unity are one of the outcomes and functions of ritual, and as the proof that the use of ritual is the media for common social bond for many social species. Therefore, it could be assured that the members of *dikee molod* group or people who came and participated during *maulid* event would certainly receive the

influence for their lives. Just like the influence for strengthening the faith upon Allah and Rasulullah every time the *dikee* was uttered and recited, as well as the influence of their loves toward Rasulullah. And lastly, *dikee molod* also affected the obedience upon the laws (*syariat*) of Allah and *sunnah* of Rasulullah.

Ritual is a religious ceremony consisting of a series of action performed according to prescribed order, are the core of the social identity of all communities [4]. According to Durkheim, ritual did not simply create the belief, but also became the source of social energy which was stronger than common faith, because it the collective action done to produce an emotion, hence ritual activity was not only the way to possibly create the group solidarity [6]. However, ritual could be sensed through the meanings contained in it. Thus, it was inevitably denied that the religious messages in ritual conception might influence some local interested people. In one tradition of Muslim people in Java, there is also a ritual, called *slametan* which reflects and symbolise the faith of religion, the principle of *slamet* which means a hope without any trouble and disaster, socially and harmonically united, and the awareness of the importance of appreciating someone else's living. This principle and idealism eventually will contain the sacred and religious tradition which affect the dynamic relationship between individual and other social actors [5].

Third, in term of preserving *dikee molod* along with strategies and motivations, it could be understood through *Functions of Ritual Practice* approach. In which, according to Geertz, ritual was defined as communicative behaviour that serves to ensure mood and religious motivation, and not as a form of human action that builds and changes social relations [7]. Because of that conception, ritual could serve as media for religion [2, 6, 7, 13, 16, 19] which was expressed through various forms like *dikee molod* that was performed on the stage as complement during the celebration of *maulid* of the Prophet. Reflected from this function, there was an effort to preserve it (*dikee molod*) as typical tradition of Aceh with many strategies and motivation. So that, no wonder if people in Aceh Besar needed roles and supports from village intuitions namely head of village (*keuchik*) and board of village forum (*tuha peut*), support from government and from scholars. The main motivation was to protect the trademark or copyright of *dikee molod* art of typical of Aceh Besar, to uplift the village name, admit the authenticity and existence of big family of important figure in group, and even for empowering youth in the preservation actualisation of *dikee molod*.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed that the existence of particular ritual activity like *dikee molod* could not be separated from historical and cultural setting of people of Aceh. Historically, *dikee molod* was the result of acculturation process of Islamic values into tradition of Aceh persuasively since the era of Aceh great kingdom. Meanwhile, culturally, *dikee molod* was the product of creativity in the choreography form which received the influence of Acehnese culture in it. This ritual has been being passed down from one generation to the next one and was believed to contain many norms and the system of cultural values.

This study also showed one difference from previous study which showed the tendency of text study that neglected the context of social culture where a single ritual practice was rooted in certain social system. Through *Concept of Ritual Practice* approach, this study emphasised that the verses of *dikee molod*, if they were uttered repeatedly, so they would produce the religious messages. First, the expression of *tauhid* (monotheism), *shalawat* (blessing) upon the Prophet, and the expression of joy and bliss of the birth of Rasulullah. Second, the religious messages which were contained in *dikee molod* verses have been influencing toward the lives of Aceh people, which were: the effect toward the faith improvement upon Allah and Rasulullah; the effect toward the devotion and love upon Rasulullah when *shalawat* (blessing) were chanted; the effect toward the obedience upon the law (*syariat*) of Allah and *sunnah* of Rasulullah. Third, the art of *dikee molod* ritual could be preserved, as it was caused by networked meaning of *dikee molod* in the society which showed the functions in one cultural phenomenon, also caused ritual reproduction which was done by certain group of people. This study also suggested a further fundamental review that are capable in catching the cultural symbols and the meanings concealed behind the survival of *dikee molod* as ritual of Aceh culture.

8

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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