Pawukon: from incest, calendar, to horoscope

Agustinus Gunawan Admiranto
Space Science Center, LAPAN, Jl. Dr Djundjunan 133 Bandung 40173, Indonesia

E-mail: gunawan.admiranto@lapan.go.id

Abstract. Javanese calendar has several cycles, i.e. 5 days (pasaran), 6 days (paringkelan), 7 days (week), 8 days (padangon and padewan), 30 days (month), and 365 days (year). There is another 210-day cycle called pawukon which divided into 30 part called wuku. This cycle originated from an incest tale about a king named Prabu Watugunung which married his mother named Dewi Sinta and his aunt named Dewi Landep. In this marriage they had 27 sons and all of them are called wukus. In this tale it was told that this incestuous relationship caused some havoc in the world and the gods decided to kill this family. After some struggle, all of them are killed and then the gods brought them up to paradise one by one starting from Dewi Sinta and ended with Prabu Watugunung. This ascension needs 30 weeks (210 days) because to be ascended one wuku had to wait for 7 days, and after one cycle is finished the cycle starts all over again. The establishment of a cycle of pawukon is regarded as an effort to create a cosmos out of chaos (incestuous relationship), and furthermore pawukon is used as a kind of horoscope to determine one’s fate in the future. It is because the cosmos is regarded as a clockwork in which each element of this clockwork works in a predetermined fashion.

1. Introduction
Mankind are heavily influenced by cyclical patterns which occur in nature such as diurnal cycle as manifested in day and night, monthly cycle which can be seen in the changing phases of the moon, and annual cycle of stars. These cycles were then codified and quantified into a system which we call as calendars. The calendar is very useful for the working of the society and it also gives some certainty and standard about some elapsed time and a sense of security to man.

Calendar is a part of human culture that has a very important role in their lives. The existence of calendars is one of the sign of how advanced an ancient civilization is. Calendars are used as a means of calculating the time and the pattern of 24 hours in a day. The division of hour into minutes and seconds is rooted in the culture of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia [2]. The word calendar rooted from Latin word calare which means call or proclaim. In ancient Roman times, every new moon the priests proclaimed (calend) the arrival of the new moon through various rituals and trumpet [3].

In addition to providing a clear benchmark of the passing of an era, calendar also provides a kind of security to human because it provides certainty about time. Therefore, since time immemorial man has always interpreted the passage of time as a cyclical one. The linear passage of time is an invention of monotheistic religions with their eschatological concepts.

This short paper describes a cyclical Javanese calendar, especially to a cycle called Pawukon which is connected with a taboo phenomena in Javanese society i.e. incest. Furthermore, it will be described here how Pawukon developed into a kind of horoscope which described one’s fate based on his or her day of birth.
2. Some cycles in Javanese calendars
Our calendar has only seven-day cycle (week) and thirty-day cycle (month), but Javanese calendar has several cycles, i.e.:
   a. Five-day cycle (pancawara)
      Paing, Pon, Wage, Kliwon, Legi
   b. Six-day cycle (Paringkelan or sadwara)
      Tungle, Aryang, Wurukung, Paningron, Uwas, Mawulu
   c. Seven-day cycle (saptawara)
      Dite, Soma, Anggara, Buda, Respati, Sukra, Tumpak
   d. Eight-day cycle (Padewan or astawara)
      Sri, Endra, Guru, Yama, Lodra, Brama, Kala, Uma
   e. Nine-day cycle (Padangon or sangawara)
      Dangu, Jagur, Gigis, Kerangan, Nohan, Wogan, Tulus, Wurung, Dadi.
In longer time scales there are monthly cycle and cycles called Pranatamangsa and Pawukon. In this respect, the Pawukon cycle will be discussed further.

3. Pawukon

Figure 1. Prabu Watugunung
Pawukon originated from a tale of a king named Prabu Watugunung which married his mother (Dewi Sinta) and his aunt (Dewi Landep) out of his awareness. This incestuous marriage gave them 27 children. Initially, Dewi Sinta was not aware of her incestuous relationship with his son, and when she realized this, she decided to end their marriage.

Because she didn’t dare to ask Prabu Watugunung to end their marriage, Dewi Sinta then asked his husband (his son also) to attack the domain of the gods (Kahyangan). She told Prabu Watugunung that she want the wife of Batara Indra to be the wife of Prabu Watugunung. She asked his husband to attack the Kahyangan with the hope that they will perish during their attack.

The expectation of Dewi Sinta was realized when her husband and their children were perished during the battle with Batara Wisnu. Afterwards, Dewi Sinta asked the gods to take the spirit of her, her sister (Dewi Landep), Prabu Watugunung and their children to Kahyangan.
The gods granted her wish, and all of them were ascended to Kahyangan starting from Dewi Sinta, Dewi Landep, their sons, and this sequence ended with the ascencion of Prabu Watugunung. The ascension of each of them was done each week so this process needed 30 weeks (210 days) to finish. This ascension process is the origin of a cycle in Javanese calendar which called Pawukon in which the date after the ascension of Prabu Watugunung the process was started all over again from Dewi Sinta to repeat the cycle.

4. Closer investigation on Pawukon
In Javanese culture the marriage of Dewi Sinta and Prabu Watugunung is a taboo event and considered as an effort to destroy the existing social structure. The folklore which describe incestuous phenomena is quite common and can be found on other cultures, like Oedipus (Greek), Sangkuriang (West Java), Lumaluindung (North Sulawesi).

There are common ideas in these folklore. The incestuous relationship are established with no awareness of the parties involved, these relationships ended in tragedies, and orders were restored after the ends of these tragedies. In short, chaos which were started during the incestuous relationships become cosmos after the relationships were consummated.

What is cosmos? Cosmos is a state of being in which all events and circumstances are in ordered state and predictable. The predictability of a cosmos can be inferred from its cyclical nature, so this can explain the nature of the ascencion of the family of Prabu Watugunung to heaven which was executed one of a time every week so the cycle of ascencion could be established from this process and a cosmos was restored. A cosmos is a system which works like a clockwork so the future events in this cosmos can be expected to occur bssed of the observed events in the past.

5. Pawukon as a horoscope
Because of its cyclical nature and a part of cosmos in Javanese culture, some people regard that Pawukon can be used to predict one’s future fate based on his or her date of birth. This results in a building of a horoscope no different from western horoscope which based on the passage of the Sun in the stellar constellations.

Pawukon horoscope is a part of a complicated system in Javanese culture called petung to calculate one’s fate, the determination of important events (marriages, house moving, journeys, commemoration of deceased persons, etc), and one’s general predisposition so these events can be conducted properly without any unwanted results caused by the obstruction of predetermined order which exists inherently in the Javanese world.

6. Conclusion
One of the purposes of the establishment of of a calendrical system is to get a sense of security and assurance in the world they inhabit. The cyclical pattern of the calendar give them the assurance that the pattern of all existing events and circumstances are predetermined from the beginning and in order to survive in the world people have to conform with this pattern.

In Pawukon case, the consecutive ascension of the family of Prabu Watugunung which then repeated continuously to be a cycle is aneffort to build a cosmos which was previously destroyed in an incestous relationship between Prabu Watugunung and Dewi Sinta.

In this cosmos, in order to survive, people have to adjust their lives with the life of the world, the microcosmos has to be adjusted with the macrocosmos. This adjustment is accomplished using petung mechanism as described above.

References
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