

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WALI'S TOMB PILGRIMAGE Contestation, Pragmatism and Religious Formalism an Indonesia and Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Even though it is still a long-standing debate within Muslims, visiting the wali's tomb is still a routine ritual. Pilgrimages to the graves of saints in Indonesia and Malaysia present an interesting phenomenon, because both have different principles in applying the law, Malaysia applies sharia law while Indonesia does not. This research seeks to explore the construction of religious piety identity in the tradition of grave pilgrimages, pilgrim behavior and forms of government intervention in the management of saints' graves in Indonesia and Malaysia. This research is a qualitative-phenomenological research, which will reveal the awareness of experiences, social interactions, motives, actions and meanings of the phenomenon of visiting wali's tomb in Indonesia and Malaysia. The results of this research are; First, the identity of religious piety in the practice of visiting saints emerged as a result of resistance from the religious purification movement which often condemned the practice of visiting wali's tomb. Second, religious pragmatism can be seen from the motives of pilgrims who use the wali's tomb as a means of speeding up the fulfillment of their wishes, as well as syncretic behavior by using the burial ground as a means of carrying out all their affairs. In contrast to Malaysia, in Indonesia, the government tends to be responsive to the management of guardian graves by designing them as part of business and tourism. Third, Malaysia uses a sharia law approach to stem deviant behavior from pilgrimage (khurafat), whereas in Indonesia it does not.

Keywords: *Wali's Tomb, Identity of Piety, Religious Tourism, Religius Pragmatism*

ABSTRAK

Meskipun masih menjadi perdebatan panjang di kalangan umat Islam, ziarah ke makam wali masih menjadi ritual yang rutin dilakukan. Ziarah ke makam wali di Indonesia dan Malaysia menghadirkan fenomena yang menarik, karena keduanya memiliki prinsip yang berbeda dalam menerapkan hukum, Malaysia menerapkan hukum syariah sedangkan Indonesia tidak. Penelitian ini berusaha mengeksplorasi konstruksi identitas kesalehan religius dalam tradisi ziarah kubur, perilaku peziarah dan bentuk-bentuk intervensi pemerintah dalam pengelolaan makam wali di Indonesia dan Malaysia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif-fenomenologis, yang akan mengungkap kesadaran pengalaman, interaksi sosial, motif, tindakan dan makna dari fenomena ziarah makam wali di Indonesia dan Malaysia. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah; Pertama, identitas kesalehan beragama dalam praktik ziarah wali muncul sebagai akibat resistensi dari gerakan pemurnian agama yang kerap mengecam praktik ziarah wali. Kedua, pragmatisme agama dapat dilihat dari motif peziarah yang menggunakan makam wali sebagai sarana mempercepat terkabulnya hajat mereka, serta perilaku sinkretis dengan menggunakan makam sebagai sarana untuk menjalankan segala urusan mereka. Berbeda dengan Malaysia, di Indonesia, pemerintah cenderung responsif terhadap pengelolaan makam wali dengan mendesainnya sebagai bagian dari bisnis dan pariwisata. Ketiga, Malaysia menggunakan pendekatan hukum syariah untuk membendung perilaku menyimpang dari ziarah (khurafat), sedangkan di Indonesia tidak.

Kata kunci: Makam Wali, Identitas Kesalehan, Wisata Religi, Pragmatisme Religius

A. INTRODUCTION

Grave pilgrimage remains a valued ritual among Muslims, deeply rooted in the traditions of this religion. This practice involves visiting the graves of holy figures known as *auliya'*, where followers flock from various regions to seek blessings and use these saints as a *wasilah* (pathway) to get closer to God.¹ The phenomenon of grave pilgrimage is not a recent development but has historical roots dating back to the early days of Islam. Although Prophet Muhammad initially prohibited such pilgrimages, he later allowed them, indicating a complex historical trajectory.

However, the tradition of grave pilgrimage has sparked ongoing debate within Islamic discourse. Historically, this practice has faced criticism from certain Islamic scholars who challenge its validity. Notably, Ibn Taymiyyah (12th-13th centuries) and figures such as Abdul Wahab (19th-20th centuries) vehemently opposed grave pilgrimage, framing their arguments around the need to purify Islamic teachings from perceived distortions that threaten the concept of monotheism (*tauhid*), with grave pilgrimage often cited as a form of *shirk*. The Wahhabi movement, which arose from Abdul Wahab's teachings, aimed to purify Islam by eliminating practices deemed unacceptable, including grave pilgrimage. Other prominent thinkers, such as Rasyid Ridha and Sayyid Qutb, also voiced similar criticisms. Despite receiving scrutiny and criticism, the tradition of visiting the graves of saints persists to this day.²

¹ Rita Sintiya Desti, Sri Wahyuni, And Marisa Elsera, "Tradisi Ziarah Makam Pada Masyarakat Melayu Di Desa Bintan Buyu Kabupaten Bintan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi Dan Humaniora* 13, No. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.26418/J-Psh.V13i2.56180>; . Nuruddin, "Ziarah Makam Dan Ritual Besangi," *Sophist : Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam Dan Tafsir* 5, No. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.20414/Sophist.V5i1.85>.

² Siti Muslihatul Mukaromah And Marina Ramadhani, "Tindakan Sosial Santri Generasi Z Terhadap Makna Ziarah Makam Gus Dur," *Ar-Rehla* 3, No. 2 (2023),

This research is conducted in two countries with Muslim-majority populations: Indonesia and Malaysia, where the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah orientation remains the dominant religious identity. In both countries, the practice of grave pilgrimage is common, as many Muslims view the graves of holy figures as blessed places. In Indonesia, the graves of the Wali Songo are among the most respected pilgrimage sites, while in Malaysia, although the practice has not undergone the same commercialization, it remains significant. In both contexts, the influence of Sufism is substantial, emphasizing the importance of spiritual teachers, whether they are alive or deceased³.

This study focuses on two specific pilgrimage sites: the grave of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro in Trowulan, Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia, and the grave of Sultan Ariffin Sheikh Ismail on Pulau Besar, Melaka, Malaysia. The selection of these grave sites is based on historical and methodological considerations. Sheikh Jumadil Kubro is closely associated with the Wali Songo, who played a crucial role in spreading Islam in the archipelago, making his grave a popular destination for pilgrims, often referred to as a site of religious tourism. In contrast, Sultan Ariffin is recognized for his role in disseminating Islamic teachings in Melaka and is acknowledged as a mentor to prominent figures like Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang.

This research aims to explore the construction of religious identity among pilgrims at the graves of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro and Sultan Ariffin, examining the behaviors and motivations of pilgrims, as well as the forms

<https://doi.org/10.21274/Ar-Rehla.V3i2.8320>; Maharani Maharani, Ahmad Asmuni, And Burhanudin Sanusi, "Studi Tindakan Sosial: Tradisi Ziarah Makam Nyi Mas Gandasari Di Desa Panguragan Kabupaten Cirebon," *Jurnal Yaqzhan: Analisis Filsafat, Agama Dan Kemanusiaan* 7, No. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.24235/Jy.V7i2.9374>.

³ Menur Kusumaningtyas, "The Role of Religious Tourism in the Ampel Region in Maintaining the Culture of Pilgrimage of the Wali's Tomb," *MALIA (TERAKREDITASI)* 14, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.35891/ml.v14i2.3863>.

of government intervention in the management of these sacred sites in both Indonesia and Malaysia. This study also contributes to existing literature by providing a comparative analysis of pilgrimage practices in these two contexts, addressing notable gaps in previous research on grave pilgrimage in Southeast Asia.

Several previous journal studies relevant to this topic include: Viola Thimm,⁴ Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulun⁵ Yeoh Seng-Guan⁶ This study is more directed at the graves of guardians as religious tourism commodities. This articles examines pilgrimage practices in Malaysia and how these activities can serve as a space for interfaith dialogue, highlighting the importance of tolerance and mutual understanding among followers of different religions in the context of visiting graves. Furthermore, research conducted by Narimo, et al.⁷ and Mhmudah and Hartono⁸ which discusses the authors explore pilgrimage practices in Java, Indonesia, and how these contribute to the formation of individual and community religious identities. The research emphasizes the significant role of graves as centers for teaching and spiritual practice

⁴ Viola Thimm, *Commercialising Islam in Malaysia: 'Ziarah' at the Intersection of Muslim Pilgrimage and the Market-Driven Tourism Industry* (Institut Kajian Etnik, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2017).

⁵ Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, "Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia," *Bulletin of Education & Research* 30, no. 1 (2008): 1–19.

⁶ Yeoh Seng-Guan, "Religious Pluralism and Pilgrimage Studies in West (Peninsular) Malaysia," in *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies* (Routledge, 2016), 80–100.

⁷ Ragil Narimo, Budhi Setiawan, and Kundharu Saddhono, "The Symbolic Meaning of Lampahan Rituals and Islamic Value of the Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Prince Samber Nyawa in Astana Mangadeg Giribangun, Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia," *LINGUISTICA ANTVERPIENSIA*, 2021.

⁸ Ani Mahmudah and Djoko Hartono, "The Effect of Pilgrimage to Waliyullah's Tomb on the Spiritual Motivation Student of Jagad 'Alimussirry," *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 4, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.52032/jisr.v4i2.120>.

This research highlights novelty through several approaches: First, Contextual Comparison: Comparing pilgrimage practices in Indonesia and Malaysia with a focus on differing social, cultural, and political contexts, providing new insights into the interplay between religion and culture. Secondly, Government Analysis: Examining the role of government intervention in the management of graves and how this affects pilgrimage practices, filling gaps not extensively covered in previous research. Ketiga, Religious and Cultural Identity: Investigating how pilgrimage practices serve not only as religious actions but also as a means of shaping religious and cultural identities in diverse communities.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-phenomenological approach to explore the awareness of experiences, social interactions, motivations, actions, and meanings associated with the phenomenon of visiting saints' graves in Indonesia and Malaysia. Phenomenology serves as a research strategy that allows researchers to identify and understand the nature of human experiences related to a specific phenomenon, focusing on the essence of these experiences⁹.

In this context, phenomenological research requires researchers to engage directly and for an extended period with a select group of subjects, facilitating the development of patterns and relationships in their

⁹ Kirk Reed, "Phenomenology," in *Qualitative Research Methodologies for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy: Second Edition*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003456216-6>; Heath Williams, "The Meaning of 'Phenomenology': Qualitative and Philosophical Phenomenological Research Methods," *Qualitative Report* 26, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587>.

meanings.¹⁰ By immersing themselves in the lived experiences of the participants, researchers can capture the richness of their perspectives and insights.

In qualitative research, it is crucial for researchers to set aside their personal biases and experiences to fully comprehend the experiences of the participants being studied. This reflective approach enhances the authenticity and validity of the findings, ensuring that the participants' voices are accurately represented in the analysis.

In this research on the pilgrimage traditions at saints' graves in Indonesia and Malaysia, the Miles and Huberman¹¹ framework will guide the analysis of interview transcripts, field notes, and other qualitative data. By systematically reducing the data, displaying it in coherent formats, and drawing conclusions through rigorous verification, the study aims to unveil the complex layers of meaning associated with the pilgrimage experience.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Discourse of the Pilgrimage of Saints' Graves in the Islamic Tradition

Ziarah means to visit or visit, in Arabic pilgrimage is the mashdar form of the words zaara-yazuuru-ziyarat. In this terminology, a pilgrimage is a visit to someone's residence or home in a certain place. Another linguistic definition of pilgrimage is coming with the intention of

¹⁰ Kitty Maria Suddick et al., "The Work of Hermeneutic Phenomenology," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920947600>.

¹¹ Michael Huberman and Matthew B Miles, *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion* (sage, 2002).

meeting or encountering¹². In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, pilgrimage is coming to a noble and sacred place such as a grave and so on¹³. Pilgrimage is not just coming to a certain place, but pilgrimage is the activity of visiting with a specific purpose. In the case of grave pilgrimage, the grave in question is the burial place of someone who has died, so the meaning is to visit or visit the place where a certain person is buried. From an Islamic perspective, grave pilgrimage technically means visiting a cemetery with the intention of praying to God, praying for those who have died in the grave and taking I'tibar (learns) from their lives and struggles while they were alive¹⁴.

Grave pilgrimage is an activity carried out by visiting and praying for people who have returned to their origins, namely the land, because people who have died will be buried in the ground. During the visit, pilgrims ask for mercy and forgiveness for the people they visit, as well as serving as a reminder that all those who are still alive will one day experience death. In the traditions of Islamic communities in both Indonesia and Malaysia, in general, grave pilgrimages are carried out by visiting the graves of relatives, family, teachers, ulama, kiai, saints and prophets, who have been instrumental in spreading the teachings of Islam. The tradition of visiting this tomb usually does not have a specific time, the pilgrimage can be done at any time without any time limit, but sometimes it is also done at certain times which are considered good times, whether in the month of Shawwal, before the celebration of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, or at other times such

¹² Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab-Indonesia*, Cet.XIV (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1997).

¹³ KBBI Kbbi, "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)," *Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Budaya*, 2016.

¹⁴ Zaura Sylviana, "Ziarah : Antara Fenomena Mistik Dan Komunikasi Spritual," *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi Dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 10, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.30739/darussalam.v10i1.273>.

as Friday Night or other times, but the determination of this time is not binding.

Even though there has been a lot of sharp criticism from Islamic revivalists, the tradition of visiting the saint's grave continues as normal. In fact, according to the defender, the pilgrimage to the saint's grave has a solid foundation based on the Koran and Hadith. Grave pilgrimages are not only permissible, but these pilgrimages also have virtues, and are even worth worshipping¹⁵. In Sunni Islamic doctrine, it is believed that visiting a saint's grave has the legal status of *sunnah*, that is, if it is done, it will receive priority or reward, if it is not done, no sin will be incurred. According to defenders of grave pilgrimages, the basis of the hadith used is the words of the Prophet: "I used to forbid visiting graves, now make a pilgrimage to visit graves, because this will remind you of the afterlife," (HR. Muslim).

Meanwhile, for his critics, the saint's pilgrimage is a serious violation of the faith. The saint's pilgrimage is considered a form of deviation whose perpetrators have the potential to fall into the mire of *shirk*. For those who think like this, visiting the graves of saints apart from there is no guidance from Rasulullah SAW. It is also an attempt to make things up on the part of the perpetrators in creating something new in terms of religious rites. In a more familiar sense, it is called an act of heresy. This anti-heresy movement is developing dynamically, with one of its doctrines being anti-grave pilgrimage. Grave pilgrimages have received special attention for adherents of this movement—which was propagated by Abdul Wahab—in this modern era. However, this movement did not receive a positive response from the majority of Muslims in Indonesia and Malaysia, only a small

¹⁵ ., "Ziarah Makam Dan Ritual Besangi."

portion of the Islamic community in Indonesia and Malaysia were influenced by Abdul Wahab's propaganda. Even the graves of saints are increasingly visited by pilgrims¹⁶.

Differences in views regarding pilgrimages also occur in Indonesia. The two largest religious-based community organizations in Indonesia; namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have different opinions regarding this matter. For the nahdliyyin (the term for NU members) grave pilgrimages are not prohibited, whether they are pilgrimages to family graves or to the graves of saints (saints)¹⁷. Even the pilgrimage to the grave of the saint is a good ritual and has become a tradition for Indonesian Islam, especially Javanese Islam. The habit of performing Tawassul is a common thing to do, namely by using special people as intermediaries who are close to God¹⁸. Nahdliyyin residents flocked to visit the graves of saints in Java, especially the graves of Wali Songo and the graves of others besides Wali Songo¹⁹.

Muhammadiyah has a different view, this Islamic reformist organization does not want grave pilgrimage rituals, whether family graves or saints' graves²⁰. Muhammadiyah teachings encourage people not to mix local traditions with the noble teachings of religion. However, in the

¹⁶ Syaimak Ismail and Muhammad Saiful Islam, "Unsur-Unsur Mistik Dan Pemujaan Dalam Kalangan Masyarakat Melayu Di Pulau Besar Negeri Melaka," *Jurnal Melayu* 19, no. 2 (2020).

¹⁷ Solihah Titin Sumanti, Hasan Asari, and AlRas yidin, "Modernization of Education Contents of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1900-1942 in North Sumatera," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.14445/23942703/ijhss-v5i1p105>.

¹⁸ Indrawan Cahyadi and Asep Saefullah, "Pilgrimage Tradition At the Tomb of Kyai Ageng Muhammad Besari Tegalsari, Ponorogo: Religious Tourism and Strengthening National Identity," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023).

¹⁹ Sylviana, "Ziarah : Antara Fenomena Mistik Dan Komunikasi Spritual."

²⁰ Bahagia Hadi, "Peningkatan Nilai Spriritualitas Melalui Praktek Ziarah Pada Makam Ulama," *Jurnal Pendidikan Profesi Guru Agama Islam* 2, no. 3 (2022).

following journey, Muhammadiyah revised its views on grave pilgrimages; Muhammadiyah prohibits the pilgrimage of holy people, if pilgrims ask or pray to the saint in the grave, they believe that prayer must be to Allah without an intermediary, especially if what is being asked is someone other than Allah then this kind of teaching must be rejected. However, if the pilgrimage is aimed at praying for people who have died so that their sins and mistakes will be forgiven, then this kind of pilgrimage is not prohibited in Muhammadiyah²¹.

The study of pilgrimages to the graves of saints has proceeded quite dynamically. Nowadays, the discourse about the phenomenon of grave pilgrimage is no longer about halal and haram, whether or not the practice of pilgrimage to saints is permissible, about heresy or not heresy, or about whether or not pilgrimages to saints' graves are guided by the Prophet or not. However, discussions of grave pilgrimages in academic spaces mostly revolve around pilgrim behavior which is analyzed from the perspective of various dimensions and social science disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, and even from critical social theory. From a social science perspective, grave pilgrimage is viewed from various social aspects, for example the practice of grave pilgrimage is a lucrative business tool²². The business chain in the tradition of visiting the grave of a saint can be seen from the provision of transportation facilities (vehicles), sales of food and drinks around the grave area, the movement of people and goods in large quantities around the grave, entrance tickets, cleaning fees

²¹ Sumanti, Asari, and yidin, "Modernization of Education Contents of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1900-1942 in North Sumatera."

²² Mahmudah and Hartono, "The Effect of Pilgrimage to Waliyullah's Tomb on the Spiritual Motivation Student of Jagad 'Alimussirry."

for toilets and so on, making the pilgrimage tradition in the vortex of money circulation. Apart from that, the phenomenon of pilgrimage is also a symbol of piety, a person's Islamic identity²³

2. Historical and Theological Aspect

Pilgrimages to the graves of saints represent a significant religious practice in various regions, particularly within the Islamic world. In Indonesia, this tradition is closely linked to the Wali Songo, Sufi figures credited with spreading Islam across Java during the 15th and 16th centuries. The practice of pilgrimage encompasses two critical aspects: historical and theological.

a. Historical Aspect

Pilgrimages to the graves of saints in the Indonesian archipelago have deep historical roots and are intrinsically tied to the spread of Islam. The following are some important historical dimensions of this practice:

- 1) Role of the Wali Songo: The Wali Songo, or the "Nine Saints," are revered figures in Indonesian history who played a crucial role in the Islamization of Java. They are recognized for their efforts in integrating local customs with Islamic teachings, making Islam more accessible to the local populace. The graves of these saints have become significant pilgrimage sites, embodying their legacy and influence in religious history²⁴
- 2) Spread of Islam: The spread of Islam in Indonesia was characterized by a peaceful approach, often blending with elements of local cultures,

²³ Khairul Azhar Meerangani, Syafiq Akmal Sazali, And Mohammad Hamid, "Pelancongan Islam Di Pulau Besar, Melaka: Potensi Dan Cabaran," *Journal Of Hospitality And Networks* 1, No. 1 (2020).

²⁴ Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (nus Press Singapore, 2012).

- including Hindu-Buddhist traditions and animist beliefs. Visiting the graves of these saints has become a way for adherents to express respect and gratitude for the contributions of these figures in promoting Islam²⁵
- Cultural and Social Heritage: Pilgrimages to saints' graves are part of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, merging religious beliefs with local traditions. At sites like the tombs of Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Ampel, one can observe the influence of Javanese culture manifested in the rituals and practices associated with pilgrimage²⁶
- b. Theological Aspect

From an Islamic theological perspective, visiting the graves of saints is often associated with beliefs in blessings (barakah) and intercession (tawassul). The following theological elements characterize this practice:

- 1) Tawassul (Intermediary): In various Islamic traditions, visiting the graves of saints is viewed as a form of tawassul, where pilgrims pray to Allah with the saints acting as intermediaries. Although the saints have passed away, they are believed to maintain a special closeness to God, and pilgrims hope that their prayers will be granted through this connection²⁷
- 2) Barakah (Blessings): Saints are regarded as individuals close to Allah, and visiting their graves is believed to confer blessings upon the pilgrims. This tradition is deeply rooted in Sufi beliefs, which

²⁵ Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960): 228–49.

²⁶ Robert W Hefner, *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

²⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (Zondervan, 2009).

emphasize the sanctity and moral integrity of the saints as exemplars of piety capable of attracting divine grace²⁸

- 3) Prayer and Forgiveness: Many pilgrims visit the graves of saints to pray for forgiveness or assistance in confronting life's challenges. While only Allah has the power to grant forgiveness, the graves of saints are often viewed as special places where people can offer their prayers²⁹
- 4) Despite the commonality of this practice in certain Islamic traditions, such as those in Indonesia, it has also sparked debate among scholars. Adherents of Salafi or Wahhabi beliefs vehemently reject this practice, arguing that it can lead to shirk (associating partners with Allah). They contend that invoking intermediaries in prayer, including saints, diverges from the pure teachings of Islam. Conversely, within Sunni and Sufi traditions, visiting the graves of saints is generally considered permissible and non-conflictual with Islamic teachings, provided that prayers are directed solely to Allah and not to the saints themselves³⁰

3. The practice of pilgrimage to the tomb of Wali in Indonesia and Malaysia

The tradition of visiting the saint's grave is a routine that is commonly found in Indonesian Islamic society, especially Javanese society. The culture of the Javanese Islamic community, which is predominantly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or close to the NU tradition, is increasingly fostering the pilgrimage tradition. In the NU tradition, respect for religious teachers

²⁸ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Batas-Batas Pembaratan*, vol. 1 (PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1996).

²⁹ Dale F Eickelman and Jon W Anderson, "Redefining Muslim Publics," *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* 2 (2003): 1–18.

³⁰ K S Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

is an absolute thing that must be done, whether the teacher is still alive or dead. The teacher-student or santri-kiai relationship is a strong relationship that is difficult to shake. The loyalty of students to their kiai can also be a form of commitment and piety of a student. Pilgrims believe that the figure visited in the tomb has a special feature or *karomah* as a special gift given to him by God. This kind of belief has a special place in Javanese Islamic circles, because it still receives a portion of attention in the pulpits of religious studies, Islamic boarding schools and the teachings of kiai.

Meanwhile in Malaysia, although there are some similarities with Indonesia, the tradition of visiting saints' graves is not as massive as in Indonesia. Unlike Indonesia, Malaysia does not have a religious organization like NU that cares for and maintains the tradition of holy pilgrimage. However, the practice of carrying out the pilgrimage is carried out by Sufi *tarekat* practitioners. They come on a pilgrimage to the grave because of orders from their Sufi teacher, in order to practice certain *wirids* with readings and a predetermined number of *wirids*. Many local Malaysian pilgrims spend the night at the Pulau Besar cemetery, staying for several days or even months. They also use pilgrimages as a means of *tawassul*, namely getting closer to God through the intermediary of saints. The practice of pilgrimage on the Big Island is not only carried out by Muslims, it often happens that non-Muslims from Chinese and Indian ethnic groups also visit the graves of the Pulau Besar.

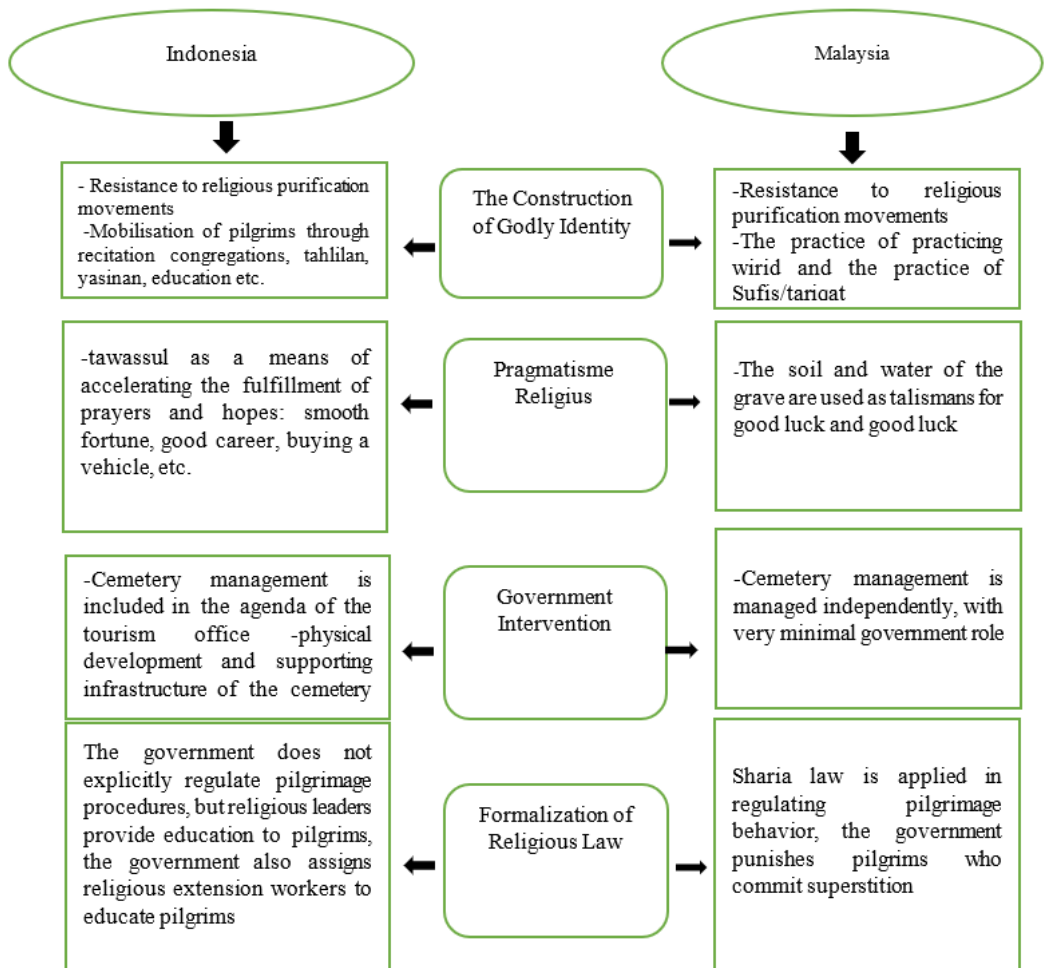


Figure1. The phenomenon of grave pilgrimage in Indonesia and Malaysia

4 Contestation of the Identity of Piety in Indonesia and Malaysia

In Indonesian Islamic society, especially Javanese Islam, visiting the burial places of saints or saints is a form of piety and religious piet. ³¹ The characteristics of Javanese Islamic society are more communalistic—not individualistic—which are united by a common vision and religious

³¹ Narimo, Setiawan, and Saddhono, “The Symbolic Meaning of Lampahan Rituals and Islamic Value of the Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Prince Samber Nyawa in Astana Mangadeg Giribangun, Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia.”

orientation. The same vision and orientation is built and developed through religious congregations, religious congregations and Islamic boarding school education. In the recitation congregation segment, there are quite complex and varied variations and derivations; the joining of individuals in one particular group or group, for example the *Yasinan* congregation, the *tahlil* congregation, the *istighosah* congregation, the congregation for practicing certain prayers, the congregation for reciting the Koran and so on. These congregations are led by an *ustadz*, *gus*, or *kiai*. On one particular occasion, the congregation leader will coordinate members of the congregation to undertake a pilgrimage trip—in its development it is called religious tourism—to visit the graves of saints.³² Activities such as field lectures for students at school or students at college.

In religious community groups like this, visiting a saint's grave is not just visiting the grave to remember death and emulate the struggle of a saint during his lifetime. But more than that, the implementation of pilgrimage is a practical implementation of religious teachings contained in the Koran. Namely in Surah al-Maidah 35 which means: O you who believe, fear Allah and look for *wasilah* (tools, means) to get closer to Him, and fight in His way, so that you will be among the lucky ones. This verse provides a kind of legitimacy that visiting the graves of saints, then offering *Tawassul* (*wasilah*) to the saints, prophets and holy people are religious teachings that should be implemented.³³ In fact, in practicing religion, it would be considered arrogant for someone who worships God without *wasilah*,

³² Maharani, Asmuni, and Sanusi, “STUDI TINDAKAN SOSIAL: TRADISI ZIARAH MAKAM NYI MAS GANDASARI DI DESA PANGURAGAN KABUPATEN CIREBON.”

³³ M.Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol.V (Jakarta: Lentera hati, 2012).

because he considers himself to be good and worthy of visiting God. *Tawassul* is an expression of the humility of a servant, who feels they are not worthy of meeting God directly, they need intermediaries, namely saints, prophets and holy people.

Apart from the legitimacy of the Koran, the pilgrimage to the saint's grave also receives support from the wise advice of Sufi teachers. Wise advice that has become a very popular poem known by the Indonesian Islamic community. The poem is in Javanese:

*Tombo ati iku limo perkarane
Kaping pisan, moco Qur'an lan maknane
Kaping pindo, sholat wengi lakonono
Kaping telu, wong kang sholeh kumpulono
Kaping papat, kudu weteng ingkang luwe
Kaping limo, dzikir wengi ingkang suwe
Salah sawijine sopo biso ngelakoni
Mugi-mugi Gusti Allah nyembadani*

English version:

*There are five things to heal the heart:
First, read the Qur'an and its meaning
, Second, pray at night, establish
the third, gather with the righteous
Fourth, multiply fasting Fifth
, retract the night dhikr One
of them is who can live
May Allah be sufficient*

The poem is entitled *tombo ati* or liver medicine in Indonesian. The poem was created by Sunan Bonang, one of the Wali Songo whose grave is in Tuban, East Java. The poem contains advice and guidance in managing the heart. Sunan Bonang preached introducing and teaching Islam through art. Among the medicines for the heart, in this poem is the third advice,

namely gather with pious people. The connection with the context of grave pilgrimages is very close, in that the saints whose graves are often used as places of pilgrimage are pious people whose quality of piety is beyond doubt.³⁴ \So even though he died tens or even hundreds of years ago, his aura of piety still radiates. Javanese Muslims consider that the piety of the saints is still relevant at all times, visiting their graves in order to get closer and gather with pious people as referred to in the poetry composed by Sunan Bonang.

Meanwhile, in the grave pilgrimage in Malaysia, the dimension of piety is contested among the pilgrims in the form of the practice of prayer and Sufism *wirid-wirid*. At the grave of the guardian of Pulau Besar, there is a surau which is located right next to the grave of Sultan Ariffin. The surau is used to carry out congregational prayers 5 times a day. The pilgrims are pilgrims, both resident and non-resident pilgrims. For pilgrims who stay overnight, they use the area around the surau as a place to sleep and place their daily necessities; starting from clothing, communication tools, prayer facilities to cooking and washing utensils. One of the pilgrims who has lived at the grave of the guardian of the big island is Jamil, he comes from Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. While he was in the cemetery area, he spent his days repeating the wirid reading hundreds or even thousands of times. Visiting the Pulau Besar grave and reading the wirid is the recommendation and teaching of his Sufi teacher. Spiritual experiences have brought him into a mystical world. If he is lucky, Sufi teachers or saints will meet him in a different natural dimension, including Sultan Ariffin who will come to meet

³⁴ Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Wali Songo Buku, Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, vol. 53, 2016.

and guide him spiritually. According to Jamil's statement, his teacher met Sultan Ariffin several times.

The phenomenon of visiting saints' graves in Malaysia is not as widespread as in Indonesia, which has experienced such development, variation and capitalization. Even the saint's grave on Pulau Besar has many pilgrims from Indonesia. Since the Pulau Besar tomb was made popular by the famous preacher Gus Muwafiq, pilgrims from Indonesia have flocked to the burial site of Guru Wali Songo. The presence of Indonesian pilgrims at the Pulau Besar cemetery is usually divided into groups with a large number of participants. Pilgrims from Indonesia are led by an ustadz (*muthowwif*) who guides the pilgrimage and tawassul. Many of these pilgrims come from the island of Java because of their habit of visiting the graves of saints who are considered sacred. Apart from that, many also came from South Kalimantan (Banjarmasin), because it was from this area that the Sufi tradition on the island of Kalimantan received a big welcome with the presence of figures such as Guru Sekumpul and others.

The contestation of piety at the grave of the Malaysian saint makes its presence felt in the quiet chambers of the *wirid* and *munajad* followers and practitioners of the Sufi order. The tarekat practitioners who were present at the Pulau Besar cemetery were individuals seeking peace of mind after previously being mired in the tiring hustle and bustle of the world. Sufism in Islamic teachings is believed to be the deepest dimension of the Islamic religion. Sufism is considered the ihsan layer which is the highest peak in religion, where the outer layer is Islam and Faith. Ihsan is the core of Islamic teachings, because in every human movement there is Allah, the Almighty God, who is always there. Sufism focuses on developing and strengthening oneself in avoiding the worldly dimension which is considered a low

dimension in Islam. Sufism teaches simplicity and breaking away from the shackles of the world; purify oneself, develop noble morals, build the quality of the inner and outer self in order to avoid the happiness of all the worlds and achieve eternal happiness. Like Jamil, the occupant of the tomb, previously he had been changing jobs and pursuing a career. However, he found himself adrift in the uncertainty of life, he divorced his wife, left his job and found a new life full of peace of mind in the grave of Pulau Besar.

Both in Indonesia and Malaysia, the phenomenon of visiting the graves of saints has given rise to a contestation of new religious identities. The identity emerged as a result of resistance or resistance from some ideologies in Islam which forbade, reformed or even disbelieved the practice of holy pilgrimage. The pilgrims seem to want to emphasize that the saint's pilgrimage is not shirk behavior that involves asking for and even worshiping graves. The guardian in the grave is only an intermediary who connects himself to God, this is what is called *tawassul*. *Tawassul* linguistically means taking an intermediary, in terms of *Tawassul* it means praying and asking Allah by using *wasilah* or intermediary. *Tawassul* is believed to be the cause of prayers being granted due to the presence of intermediaries; These intermediaries can be in the form of good deeds and can also be pious people who are considered close to God. So *tawassul* in this context is an identity of piety that differentiates one religious understanding from another religious understanding

5. Religious Pragmatism and Power Intervention

The pilgrims who come to the grave of the saint Sheikh Jumadil Kubro come from various regions, different backgrounds, families, education and social status, even though they come from the same religious

culture. Ustadz Deni, is the leader of the pilgrimage group (muthawif ziarah) who is used to being trusted by the congregation to accompany and guide them during the pilgrimage procession. Ustadz Deni and his entourage made the grave of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro one of their religious tourism destinations. Ustadz Deni constantly gives advice and directions to his congregation to organize their intentions before the pilgrimage; According to him, this is important to do so that the congregation does not get caught in a fatal mistake, namely asking or praying to people who have died or guardians. Ustadz Deni gave his congregation an understanding that the saint being visited is of the same position as a servant of Allah. However, saints have special privileges because of their closeness to Allah, so pilgrims are expected to approach the saints as a guardian to get closer to Allah as their ultimate goal.

Furthermore, Ustadz Deni emphasized that the behavior of pilgrims often shows their pragmatic side in carrying out the guardian pilgrimage ritual. The pilgrims make the guardian of the pilgrimage as a ward to obtain the desires and aspirations of each pilgrim; There are those who are wary because they want to get a lot of good fortune, to be able to buy a vehicle, to get a job, to graduate from college smoothly, and even the desire to quickly find a soul mate. Pilgrims, in the context of this problem, feel that they need "help" from saints so that the prayers offered to God will be answered immediately, they feel less "confident" if they pray alone without using an intermediary.

Meanwhile, pragmatic behavior in visiting the graves of saints on the Big Island of Malaysia can be seen from the syncretic practices carried out by some pilgrims. Saiful Anwar is a resident pilgrim who has lived in the Pulau Besar cemetery for quite some time. He provides a description of the

behavior of various pilgrims on the big island. According to him, pilgrims at this tomb are not only ethnic Malays from Malaysia, but also ethnic Chinese and Indians. Chinese and Indian ethnicities are other ethnicities besides Malays which are an important part of the Malaysian state. Even though they are non-Muslims, they still come on pilgrimages to the grave, but they sometimes take the land from Sultan Ariffin's grave which is used to sell their merchandise, as a talisman for business success and so on. Still according to Anwar, apart from the burial ground, pragmatic pilgrims also often take well water near the grave, which is believed to be water full of blessings, whoever drinks it will receive blessings and benefits. This pragmatic pilgrim behavior is not only carried out by non-Muslims but also by some Muslim pilgrims.

Next, the phenomenon of grave pilgrimages in Indonesia and Malaysia will be seen from the perspective of how the government pays attention to the existence and management of saints' graves as pilgrimage destinations. The first in Indonesia, the tomb of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro. Because of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro's historical background as an ancestor of Wali Songo, the government paid special attention. Apart from that, the intensity and quantity of pilgrims to this tomb is very large, making the government feel the need to step in to regulate and manage the burial area. The government's attention can be seen from the buildings around the cemetery area, many magnificent buildings with Indonesian characteristics adorn the entire area. The government poured large funds through the tourism department, because this cemetery is under the auspices of the tourism department. Apart from buildings, the government's attention is also focused on the management of cemeteries at large; for example, vehicle

parking areas, toilets, arrangement of merchant stalls, *infaq* boxes, and road infrastructure to the grave area.

In contrast to Indonesia, government intervention in the Pulau Besar cemetery was carried out in a different way. In general, the grave of the guardian Sultan Ariffin on Pulau Besar is located on a small island in the country of Melaka. The island is projected as a tourist island targeting both local and foreign tourists to visit this beautiful island, so that the government builds supporting infrastructure, including roads, transportation, lighting, sanitation and so on. However, for burial areas there is not much government intervention, especially in terms of development and management, such as the tomb of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro in Indonesia. The government's attention to the grave of the guardian of Pulau Besar in Malaysia is more directed towards preventive measures so that pilgrims do not practice *syirikan* by making the grave a place to ask or pray. There were lots of writing boards or announcements that would take firm action against perpetrators of *shirk* and *khurafat* at the tomb.

Mujib's study of the commercial dimension in the tradition of visiting saints' graves can be seen from the growing economic growth of local residents due to the massive pilgrim traffic. According to him, pilgrimages are not just about religious rituals, but economic motives appear to be very dominant (Mujib, 2016). The pilgrimage to the guardian's grave also shows another side, namely the management of tourism sites, because the pilgrimage to the guardian's grave has been managed with professional management under the auspices of the government. So the dimensions of religious rituals in the tradition of visiting saints' graves are closely related to the management of tourist areas (Rodli, 2018). However, in the author's observation, the increasing quantity of pilgrims from year to year is also

triggered by the factor of pragmatism in religion, namely that visiting the burial place of a saint can speed up the fulfillment of prayers and hopes.

6. *Sharia formalism*

At the graves of saints in Indonesia, generally the pilgrimage procedures, including pilgrimage etiquette, the clothing worn by pilgrims and the readings that are chanted to the *tawassul* format, do not have specific and standard rules. Government intervention in the guardian's grave is only on profane issues such as grave management, physical development and road infrastructure and lighting, pilgrim charity boxes and everything related to it. This has resulted in many variations of *wirid* readings and prayers recited by pilgrims. However, in general readings, prayers and *wirid* include reading *tahlil*, *tawassul*, surah *yasin* and others. To avoid errors in pilgrimage procedures and etiquette, usually the guardian's grave management in Indonesia makes writing or editorial *tawassul* which is posted on a large notice board so that it is easy for pilgrims to read and understand. However, sometimes pilgrims have their own editing when reciting *tawassul*, not following the instructions on the inscription on the tomb. Even though there are slight differences in *Tawassul's* editorial, the substance remains the same.

In contrast to what happened at the grave of the guardian of Malaysia's Pulau Besar, the government expressly made large notice boards around the burial area. This writing will easily be seen by pilgrims because it is in a strategic position for pilgrims entering the tomb area. The article contains a strong warning that any pilgrim who commits acts of *khurafat* during the pilgrimage will receive strict sanctions and punishment from the government. These strict rules are implemented as a preventive measure so

that *khurafat* behavior can be avoided at the tomb. According to Jamil, previously there were often irregularities in pilgrimage procedures. Many pilgrims carry out rituals that they consider to have deviated from the purpose of the pilgrimage, such as burning incense, carrying and scattering various flowers, making offerings at the grave, placing water around the grave and then buying and selling the water because it is considered holy and sacred. Jamil, continued, that the most frequently encountered irregularities are pilgrims taking grave soil to make magic amulets which contain many properties such as selling goods and so on.

This is what differentiates Indonesia and Malaysia in implementing laws relating to the majority religion, namely Islam. As a country with unique characteristics of Islamic law in regulating the daily lives of its citizens, the hand of law in Malaysia reaches matters that are the main issues in implementing sharia-based regulations. Such as gambling, adultery, theft, Islamic clothing and *khurafat* behavior. Meanwhile, Indonesia, as a country that is not based on a particular religion, does not regulate in detail the behavior and practice of visiting graves. Islamic law in Indonesia is not formalized in the form of regulations or sharia law, but the implementation of Islamic law can be carried out by the community without using the hand of the state.

E. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Both in Indonesia and in Malaysia, pilgrimages to the graves of saints still continue to exist even though the onslaught of the Islamic purification movement often comes with accusations of heresy, *khurafat* and even infidelizing the practice of visiting the graves of saints. In Indonesia and Malaysia, resistance from the purification movement has actually made the

pilgrimage to the graves of saints a consolidated form of resistance for adherents and practitioners of grave pilgrimages, to demonstrate the existence of identity, because so far they have often been victims of accusations from puritans. Apart from that, in Indonesia, visiting the graves of saints is a means of confirming religious piety.

The pilgrimage to the saint's grave shows the pragmatic side of religion and the intervention of power towards the saint's grave. In Indonesia, the pragmatic attitude of pilgrims can be seen from the encouragement of pilgrims to use *tawassul* as a means to speed up the fulfillment of prayers and hopes; such as quickly getting a good career, abundant fortune, quickly getting a job, a soul mate and so on. Meanwhile in Malaysia, religious pragmatism can be seen in the behavior of pilgrims who take grave land and water from wells near graves which are believed to contain blessings and amulets, to promote trade, health and a good career. Meanwhile, power (government) intervention in the tomb of Sheikh Jumadil Kubro in Indonesia can be seen from government intervention in the construction and management of the tomb. Meanwhile, power intervention in Malaysia can be seen from the government's preventive efforts against behavior that is considered deviant during the grave pilgrimage ritual: such as the habit of *khurafat* and so on.

Sharia formalism in the form of implementing sharia law through the hands of the government is seen in Malaysia. The government strictly applies sharia law to perpetrators of sharia violations who practice *khurafat* behavior that is considered close to *shirk*; such as burning incense, scattering various flowers and offerings during pilgrimages, making burial ground a lucky medium and grave water for good luck and healing.

Meanwhile, the implementation of sharia which is formalized through official government law is not implemented in Indonesia..

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