

Weaving Holistic Piety: a Study of Gus Mus' Thoughts in His Book "Saleh Ritual Saleh Sosial"

Mukhlas Habibi*, Lailatul Hidayati

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo,
Jl. Pramuka No.156 Ronowijayan, Siman, Ponorogo, Jawa Timur 63471 PO.Box 116
Telp. (0352) 481277 Fax. (0352) 461893.

Corresponding author*

muklashabibi.dsi@iainponorogo.ac.id

Abstract: KH. Ahmad Mustofa Bisri's (Gus Mus) ideas in his book *Saleh Ritual Saleh Sosial* critique the phenomenon where ritual piety is often separated from social piety. This is highly relevant to the condition of modern society, which sometimes tends to emphasize the formality of worship more than religious social values. This study aims to deeply analyze Gus Mus' thoughts on the balance between ritual and social piety and its implications in the context of modern religious life. This research employs a qualitative method with critical discourse analysis as the technique. The primary data source is Gus Mus' book *Saleh Ritual Saleh Sosial*, combined with other relevant literature. The analysis process identifies the main themes of Gus Mus' thought and relates them to the emerging social phenomena. The findings reveal that Gus Mus emphasizes the importance of harmonizing ritual and social piety, reminding that religion not only teaches the relationship between humans and God through ritual worship but also between humans through social charity. Modern society often falls into religious formality, which tends to be individualistic and neglects social responsibility. According to Gus Mus, ideal piety touches two dimensions, ritual and social. His thoughts are highly relevant in the context of modern religious life, which should return to balancing these two aspects to achieve comprehensive piety.

Keywords: Gus Mus, Holistic Piety, Modern Society, Ritual Piety, Social Piety.

Introduction

Today, the understanding of piety or religiosity tends to focus on individual and ritual aspects. Most people perceive piety as limited to ritual activities such as prayer, fasting, and remembrance, which are personal worship between humans and God. (Utami, 2012) These activities are known as *ibadah mahallah* in Islam (Sunardi, 2019) While this aspect is indeed important and commanded by religion, it is not uncommon for individuals who are ritualistically pious to overlook social piety—responsibilities and concerns toward others' rights and welfare, as well as active involvement in beneficial community activities (Riadi, 2014) In Indonesia, there are many cases of individuals who are pious in rituals but lack social piety, due to the belief that social piety is not an essential part of religion. In fact, religion

emphasizes the concept of *muttaqi* piety—a holistic form of piety encompassing the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship among His creations (Islamiyati, 2022).

This reality is evident in daily life, as seen in cases of corruption involving public figures who are known to be devout but are caught in criminal acts that harm society (Detik News, 2019) Additionally, there are individuals actively engaged in religious activities but entangled in cases of infidelity, showing that while they practice ritual piety, they simultaneously betray religious teachings (Radar Kudus, 2024) Intolerance often arises among groups who are diligent in worship but reject diversity and others' freedom of belief (Kumparan, 2024) Finally, public ethics violations, such as littering and parking irresponsibly, are frequently committed by those who are personally

devout, reflecting a lack of social awareness (Detik News, 2022) These cases highlight the need for a balance between ritual and social piety in an ideal religious life.

This discrepancy is an important issue to study, as it demonstrates an imbalance between ritual and social aspects of piety in Indonesian society. Although many individuals are devout in worship and fulfill ritual obligations diligently, their commitment to social values central to religious teachings is often neglected (Bisri, 2019) This phenomenon not only reduces piety to mere formality but also risks damaging social cohesion and eroding moral values essential to communal life (Sunardi, 2019) With increasing cases of corruption, intolerance, and social indifference involving individuals known for ritual piety, concerns arise over a need for a more holistic understanding of religiosity. This study is important as it seeks to deepen the concept of ideal piety in Islam—*muttaqi* piety, which integrates ritual and social piety to build a fair, socially concerned, and morally upstanding society.

For analysis, this study uses the transformative Islam theory of Kuntowijoyo (Kuntowijoyo, 1991). The purpose of this study is to analyze the understanding of piety in the context of religious life, specifically related to the balance between ritual and social piety, namely holistic piety. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of why social piety is often overlooked by individuals who are ritualistically pious. Additionally, it aims to explore Islam's view on holistic piety, emphasizing a balance between the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with others, providing a more comprehensive understanding of ideal religiosity in modern society.

Materials and Methods

This study is descriptive qualitative research using a literature review method. According to Creswell, qualitative research is a method for research that uses texts and images as materials for analysis, involving steps to collect and analyze data (Fadli, 2021) The purpose of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of the

constructed reality to be interpreted. (Rosita, 2024) As one form of qualitative research, literature review research examines, analyzes, and summarizes theories, concepts, and previous research findings relevant to the topic under study. Data collection was conducted from various sources, both primary and secondary sources (Karuru, 2013) The primary data source for this research is the book *Ritual Piety and Social Piety*, a collection of essays by K.H. Mustofa Bisri (A. Mustofa Bisri, 2016) published by Diva Press in 2016. Secondary sources include other relevant articles and books related to the topic. For data analysis, content analysis was used. The steps in content analysis include data collection, data reduction, and conclusion drawing (Ahmad, 2018)

Results and Discussion

This research refers to the theory of transformative Islam put forward by Kuntowijoyo. The meaning of this concept is to emphasize the importance of applying religious values in the social realm. For him, the quality of a person's religious life is not only measured through ritual worship but rather through actions performed by someone that can provide contributions or benefits to society. (Lasijan, 2014) Kuntowijoyo's view of Islam as a tool to improve society aligns with the views of K.H. Mustofa Bisri, which are expressed in his book entitled *Ritual Piety, Social Piety*, which the researcher then explains as follows.

First: Essay titled "Taqwa"

In this essay, Gus Mus emphasizes the importance of holistic piety possessed by an individual. In this essay, Gus Mus warns readers, especially students, as mentioned in the text. Until now, they may have been accustomed to obeying Allah's commands, namely to be pious by carrying out all His commands and avoiding His prohibitions (Kallang, 2018). For instance, by performing prayers, fasting, zakat, and hajj, which are all ritual worship. Gus Mus reminds the students to ask themselves whether Allah's other commands, such as fulfilling promises, paying zakat, helping orphans, and other social worship, have also been carried out. The following is a quote

that explains that Gus Mus invites readers to possess both ritual and social piety:

"Perhaps we have carried out Allah's commands like prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, but have we carried out His other commands like keeping promises, fulfilling trusts, helping orphans and the poor, honoring guests and neighbors. Likewise, we may have avoided His prohibitions such as not committing shirk, not stealing, not killing, not committing adultery, and not drinking alcohol, but can we, and have we, avoided His prohibitions like not lying, not gossiping, not slandering, not betraying, not cursing, not belittling others, not showing off, not being arrogant, not engaging in usury, not acting arbitrarily, not oppressing, not hitting, and so on?"

The quote above shows that Gus Mus re-emphasizes the importance of holistic piety that must be possessed by someone (Sukarman, 2014). This means truly becoming a pious person by carrying out all of Allah's commands, whether it be commands for worship that are purely for Allah and unrelated to social aspects or worship that is closely related to the social community (Islam refers to this as *Ibadah Mahdloh* and *Ibadah Ghoiru Mahdloh*), and also avoiding Allah's prohibitions, whether they relate to associating partners with Allah or prohibitions related to transgressions against other humans.

The quote above aligns with Kuntowijoyo's theory of transformative Islam (Pransiska, 2018). In this theory, Kuntowijoyo states that there are three points that make up the concept of transformative Islam: first, humanization, or calling towards goodness; second, liberation, or preventing wrongdoing; third, transcendence, or faith in Allah (Nur Alim, 2018). The quote above aligns with the concept of humanization or calling towards goodness, as Gus Mus mentions performing several ritual and individual acts purely devoted to Allah, such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj. However, Gus Mus also invites people to fulfill social worship that is closely related to other humans, such as keeping promises, fulfilling trusts, helping orphans, honoring guests and neighbors, and so on. The quote also contains the meaning of liberation or preventing wrongdoing, whether it be

wrongdoing like associating partners with Allah or wrongdoing closely related to Allah's creatures, such as slander, arrogance, tyranny, and so on. Additionally, the quote above also contains the core point of performing humanization and liberation, which is transcendence, meaning having faith in Allah. Through transcendence, a person can practice humanization and liberation, or call towards goodness and prevent wrongdoing..

Second: Essay titled "Ritual and Social Piety"

In the essay titled "Ritual and Social Piety," Kiai Mustofa Bisri emphasizes the existence of total piety, namely piety in ritual and piety in social matters. Gus Mus invites readers to ensure that all human actions, such as prayer, zakat, and fasting, are truly intended to worship and serve Allah. For, if not, all of it would be in vain (Dalam et al., 2019) Then, Gus Mus encourages completing these ritual worship practices with social acts of worship, as stated in the following quote;

"Our movements in it are often just routine actions devoid of meaning. Our dhikr and recitations within them often simply slip off the lips that are used to them, not carried or guided by the meaning contained within them. Thus, it is no wonder if, for instance, prayer, which is supposed to prevent immorality and wrongdoing, does not appear to have a positive impact on the life of the person praying."

In the quote above, Gus Mus emphasizes that every type of worship performed by humans should not merely be a formality, but rather an effort to make worship meaningful, thus providing positive effects on the practitioner (Setiawan, 2015). This point is not without reason, as many people demonstrate ritual piety but violate social values, such as cases of violence conducted in the name of religion. In fact, it is clear in every religion that there is no teaching that allows imposing one's religion on others of different faiths (Suhartawan & Renaldi, 2024). This case is a concrete example when someone dichotomizes piety within themselves, where one side is ritualistically good, but socially it is not.

The essay quote also aligns with the concept brought by Kuntowijoyo, transformative Islam. This concept, in the aspect of humanization,

emphasizes practicing dhikr and prayer with full meaning. Then, in the aspect of liberation, it suggests that if someone practices dhikr and prayer well, it should provide a positive impact on the practitioner, thus preventing immoral acts. As for the aspect of transcendence, it refers to the faith or belief in Allah that underlies the practice of dhikr and prayer..

Third: Essay titled "The Human Prophet"

In this essay, the story of the humanity that exists in the Prophet Muhammad is narrated. This begins when some of the Prophet's companions practiced worship excessively, meaning they worshipped beyond their abilities. In response, the Prophet Muhammad reminded them to worship according to their capacities. Additionally, when a companion was leading the prayer and intentionally chose a long recitation, the Prophet reprimanded him. This is similar to the story of the Prophet's companion named Mu'adh bin Jabal, who was reprimanded by the Prophet Muhammad because his prayer recitation was too long, causing another companion to be reluctant to attend the mosque. (Muhamad Abror, 2023). From the case above, it can be understood that the Prophet Muhammad was a person who was not selfish and was considerate of others' feelings. Many other actions of the Prophet Muhammad were similar to those of ordinary humans, and he lived socially within the community. This can be seen in the following quote;

"So, it is actually very easy to identify the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad from other teachings. If it's something natural for people to do, then it's the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad. If it's unusual or difficult for the general public, it's clearly not or has been distorted from the teachings of the Prophet."

In the quote above, Gus Mus again emphasizes how to become someone who possesses both ritual and social piety. This is reflected in the prohibition of excessive worship and in the egoism that exists in humans. If someone worships excessively, it will certainly result in negative outcomes, both for themselves and for others. The negative impact on oneself could be the deterioration of health, while the negative impact on others may disturb their

peace. Egoism should also be avoided; if someone remains egoistic, they may harm others, which has serious implications for social harmony. For example, in congregational prayers, if someone is an imam, the imam must also consider the conditions of the congregation, both regarding their health and the situation surrounding the congregation. The imam should not be selfish by intentionally slowing down the prayer recitation to feel devout, causing the congregation to feel burdened by the lengthy recitation. Even without extending the recitation, congregational prayers can still be validly performed.

The essay quote aligns with Kuntowijoyo's concept of transformative Islam, which, in the aspect of humanization, is explained through the prayer activities being carried out. Congregational prayer differs from individual prayer; when done individually, it does not relate to other people, but congregational prayer is worship that involves others. Therefore, an imam must be truly wise. In the aspect of liberation or preventing wrongdoing, it is shown through the meaning of congregational prayer; what starts as good may, if performed improperly, harm the congregation, thereby causing various forms of detriment. The third aspect, transcendence, is reflected in the practice of congregational prayer, as those who perform congregational prayers believe that the reward is greater than praying alone..

Fourth: Essay titled "When Allah Loves His Servant"

In this essay, the writer explains the connection between social piety and ritual piety. This connection is seen as the ease of performing social worship after performing ritual worship. This essay emphasizes that someone who can perform both ritual and social worship does so because they are granted Allah's favor. As stated in the following quote:

"A servant who is accepted and loved on earth is indeed someone loved by Allah. Conversely, someone hated by people is someone who is hated by Allah. Or to put it more positively, if we want to be loved by Allah, we must strive to be accepted and loved on earth; otherwise, may Allah protect us from it, it means we are not loved by Allah. To be loved on earth, there are many ways to achieve

this—done by scholars, preachers, and speakers through their words, writings, and examples.”

The above quote illustrates that an action that is favored by people on earth indicates that the person who performs such actions is favored by Allah. Conversely, if someone performs actions on earth that lead to people's dislike, it means that this person is not favored by Allah. Alternatively, we could understand it as follows: to be loved by Allah, a person must do good to Allah's creations. (Balai Litbang Agama Jakarta, 2019)

The essay quote aligns with Kuntowijoyo's concept of transformative Islam, specifically in the aspect of humanization or encouraging good deeds, meaning doing good on earth so as to be loved by those in the heavens. In other words, to be loved by Allah, a person must do good to His creations on earth. As for the aspect of liberation or preventing wrongdoing, this can be understood in the opposite sense: if a person does evil in this world, they will surely incur Allah's displeasure. The aspect of transcendence can be recognized as the underlying force behind both humanization and liberation. The essay excerpt above clearly emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relations with Allah's creations, as by doing so, one will earn Allah's love..

Fifth: Essay titled "Do Not Cause Hardships for Others"

In this essay excerpt, there is a lesson about the importance of social worship performed by someone, illustrated through the behavior of a character named Kiai Basyuni. According to the author, Kiai Basyuni is a religious figure who possesses both ritual and social piety. Besides being diligent in performing ritual worship such as prayer, Kiai Basyuni is very attentive to his neighbors. He often visits his sick neighbors and informs others to visit them as well. Until one day, when Kiai Basyuni passed away, many people attended his funeral and prayed for him. This is conveyed by the author in the following essay quote;

“Kiai Basyuni deserves to be honored in such a way because everyone loves him. People love him because he loves them. People are willing to make sacrifices for him precisely because he enjoys

making them happy. They pray for him sincerely, so blessed is Kiai Basyuni.”

From the quote above, it can be concluded that ritual worship accompanied by social worship, as exemplified by Kiai Basyuni, is essential. Whenever a neighbor was sick, he would be among the first to visit them. When Kiai Basyuni passed away, many people felt a great loss, willingly helping to prepare everything to honor his remains, and they prayed together for him. This shows that the community highly upholds the value of solidarity, where, when someone succeeds in building good relations with society, society will reciprocate such goodness with equal or even greater kindness. (Hidayat, 2016)

The essay quote aligns with Kuntowijoyo's concept of transformative Islam, which includes the aspects of humanization, liberation, and transcendence. In the aspect of humanization, it can be seen that Kiai Basyuni has a high sense of humanity, as he was often the first to visit a sick neighbor, so on the day of his death, many people attended to honor and pray for him. In the aspect of liberation, it is shown that Kiai Basyuni never hurt anyone's feelings. As for transcendence, the social deeds performed by Kiai Basyuni are motivated by the belief that such acts are favored by Allah and bring rewards.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of piety in Islam encompasses not only ritual piety (ibadah mahdlah) but also social piety (ibadah ghoiru mahdlah) requiring active involvement in the community. This research confirms the importance of a holistic approach to piety (muttaqi) that unites the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with others, as a way to achieve a harmonious religious life that positively impacts social cohesion.

This study contributes to Islamic studies and religiosity by offering a more comprehensive understanding of holistic piety. It adds a new perspective on how religious values can support an inclusive and harmonious social life in a multicultural society. These findings support the

theory that ideal religiosity in Islam is not monolithic but multidimensional, encompassing balanced ritual and social aspects. Holistic piety provides a theoretical basis for a religiosity model that emphasizes not only individual worship but also social contributions that build a just society..

The practical implications of this research suggest that religious educational institutions and organizations should emphasize social piety as an integral part of religious education. This is relevant to community empowerment efforts to produce individuals who are not only ritualistically devout but also concerned with the welfare and rights of others. Future research is recommended to explore in more depth the factors influencing the neglect of social piety among individuals who are ritually devout. Additionally, comparative studies among communities with different religious backgrounds could provide a broader perspective on the application of holistic piety in cross-cultural contexts. A deeper ethnographic approach could also enrich understanding of social piety practices in various community groups.

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