

Pure Islamic rationalization of the Muhammadiyah congregation in the hills and south coast of Watulimo-Trenggalek

Rasionalisasi Islam murni jemaah Muhammadiyah perbukitan dan pesisir selatan Watulimo-Trenggalek

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Abstract

The diversity of people of the hills and the coast of South Java has a different style from the people of the coast of North Java. This research aims to explore how Muhammadiyah as a puritan Islamic organization can develop and grow during the culture and habits of the hill community as well as the South coast of Watulimo-Trenggalek, and how the social behavior of Muhammadiyah members and congregation of the Watulimo Branch. This study used a qualitative method with Max Weber's social theory approach regarding changes in society to become modern which looks different between people in the East and West regions. The results showed the success of the Muhammadiyah movement in spreading its teachings in Watulimo using two approaches. The first is by the study route that has been adapted to the cultural context of the south coast community, and the second is by formal education. This study concludes that these two approaches led to the emergence of four Muhammadiyah *jemaah* groups in Watulimo.

Keywords: culture of the hill people; Jemaah Muhammadiyah; pure Islam; rational action

Abstrak

Keberagamaan masyarakat perbukitan dan pesisir Selatan Jawa memiliki corak berbeda dengan masyarakat pesisir Utara Jawa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Muhammadiyah sebagai organisasi Islam puritan dapat berkembang dan tumbuh di tengah budaya dan kebiasaan masyarakat perbukitan sekaligus pesisir Selatan Watulimo-Trenggalek, dan bagaimana perilaku sosial anggota serta jemaah Muhammadiyah Cabang Watulimo. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan teori sosial Max Weber tentang perubahan masyarakat menjadi modern yang nampak berbeda antara masyarakat yang berada di kawasan Timur dan Barat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan gerakan Muhammadiyah menyebarkan ajarannya di Watulimo, adalah melalui dua pendekatan. Pertama melalui jalur pengajian yang sudah disesuaikan dengan konteks budaya masyarakat pesisir selatan, dan yang kedua melalui pendidikan formal. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kedua pendekatan tersebut menyebabkan munculnya empat kelompok jemaah Muhammadiyah di Watulimo.

Kata kunci: budaya masyarakat perbukitan; Jemaah Muhammadiyah; Islam murni; tindakan rasional

Introduction

Pure Islam is a term used to describe the Islamic movement in Indonesia with a mission to unearth and propagate Islam in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. However, over time, Pure Islam has also changed (Mul Khan 2010). This is due to differences from one era to another and differences influenced by geographical, sociological, and other contextual factors. Pure Islam, which has been advocated even in remote villages, has given rise to a new mode of Pure Islam understood by rural communities. This has led to a new religious mode among farming communities, as discussed in Kuntowijoyo's work referred to as "Peasant Theology" (Kuntowijoyo 1995).

The spread of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago over several centuries has given rise to a distinct form of Islam, different from that in the Middle East (Tarigan 2018). This difference can be attributed to the considerable geographical distance between the Middle East (Arab) and Indonesia (Tarigan 2003). Additionally, the differing cultural and geographical characteristics between Middle Eastern

and Indonesian societies have led to variations in the interpretation of the Quran and Hadith in their respective developments (Madjid 2010). This is evident in the emergence of Islamic reform movements (*tajdid*), with some focusing on purifying Islam (Woodward 2017). However, in the context of socio-cultural differences between different regions and the influence of changing times, Pure Islam has also experienced variations in its interpretations. This is exemplified by the emergence of the Muhammadiyah movement in 1912 (Burhani 2005). The expansion of Muhammadiyah into non-urban areas has led to diverse and evolving interpretations by its followers. These differing interpretations of doctrinal texts can be attributed to varying sociological, economic, political, and geographical conditions, such as the distinct interpretations and understandings among Muhammadiyah members in urban and rural settings (Mulkhan 2010).

In its development, Muhammadiyah could only grow rapidly in urban areas and was primarily accepted by students and the *priyayi* class (Geertz 2017). Muhammadiyah could be accepted by the lower-middle class and those living in urban and suburban areas. Rarely did Muhammadiyah's Islamic ideology thrive and gain acceptance in rural communities. This is because Muhammadiyah's ideology has always been associated with the *tajdid* (renewal) movement of syncretic Islamic teachings (Peacock 1978). Consequently, Muhammadiyah's progress has often clashed or conflicted with traditional values. For Muhammadiyah, local traditions are seen as conflicting with Islamic law (Beck 1995). However, this thesis differs from the reality in the Watulimo sub-district, Trenggalek Regency. The Muhammadiyah organization has thrived in Watulimo and is even the largest branch of Muhammadiyah in Trenggalek Regency.

Certainly, the existence of the Pure Islam movement and symbols of resistance against local culture positioned Muhammadiyah as an organization opposed to Javanese traditions (Burhani 2010). Muhammadiyah's persistence in the 1960s to combat TBC (K) (superstition, heresy, and idolatry) made it challenging for the organization to expand into rural, mountainous, and South Coast Java regions (Rahmanu 2018). Furthermore, the hilly and South Coast regions of Java are the bases of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which positions Kyai as a religious authority (Halim 2020). These regions are also syncretic communities where shamans serve as central mediators in addressing various aspects of life, including health, employment, and romance. Therefore, the spread and expansion of Muhammadiyah into the mountainous and South Coast regions of Java, specifically in the Watulimo sub-district, are intriguing subjects for research (Geertz 2017). According to Munir Mulkhan, theoretically, there are four reasons for the growing influence of Muhammadiyah in non-urban areas, including: first, Islamization, which involves the rejection of TBC or resistance to TBC. Second, indigenous adaptation, where pure Islam, as formalized by the *tarjih* institution, is modified and aligned with the traditions of mountainous and South Coast Java communities. Third, negotiation, when both TBC and pure Islam are altered simultaneously. Fourth, conflict, when pure Islam and syncretic beliefs both coexist and contend with each other (Mulkhan 2000).

Among these four elements contributing to the spread of Muhammadiyah in non-urban areas, indigenous adaptation and negotiation seem to be highly relevant to what exists in the Watulimo sub-district, as the Muhammadiyah entities there do not represent a single perspective in understanding pure Islam. This differs from Munir Mulkhan's opinion that only indigenous adaptation corresponds to these elements. The reason for this discrepancy is that Munir Mulkhan's research focused solely on rural communities, specifically farmers in the Wuluhan village of Jember Regency, where the primary livelihood was agriculture. His data collection centered on the origins of farmers' involvement with Muhammadiyah and shifts in their post-Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) inclinations toward Muhammadiyah. In contrast, this study examines Watulimo, a region characterized by hilly terrain and the South Coast of Java. In Watulimo, the Muhammadiyah community engages in a diverse range of livelihoods, including farming, gardening, and fishing. Additionally, Muhammadiyah adheres to various ideologies in this area (Zulia 2017).

The shifting meanings of pure Islam are distinct from the well-established doctrines of Islamic law. Even the application of Sharia law adapted to societal changes is viewed as a threat to Islam (Mulkhan 2000). This argument, in fact, results in limited participation in this movement, particularly among the hillside and South Coast communities of Java. Nationally, this movement consists of 34 regions,

equivalent to provincial governments (Muhammadiyah.id 2022). However, among hillside communities, predominantly composed of farmers, and coastal communities, primarily comprising fishermen, participation is only approximately 30 percent.

A relevant comparative study is Najib Burhani's research (2006). This study employs library research to examine the socio-cultural development and changes within Muhammadiyah from its early establishment by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan to the 1930s. During that period, the Muhammadiyah movement was heavily influenced by Haji Rasul from Padang, leading to some shifts in Muhammadiyah's socio-cultural model. Originally, Muhammadiyah's ethical model was closely tied to Javanese culture, including practices like *slametan* and *sekaten*. However, Muhammadiyah's ethical framework began to change, largely due to the influence of Minangkabau Muhammadiyah members and the establishment of the *Tarjih* Assembly in 1927. Despite its early cultural proximity to Javanese traditions, Muhammadiyah's mission remained focused on the modernization of religion.

As mentioned earlier, Najib attempted to measure and trace the spiritual influence on Muhammadiyah or Muhammadiyah's influence on Javanese culture during its early period. However, in this journal, he does not discuss how the rationalistic Muhammadiyah could be accepted by the hillside and South Coast communities. Furthermore, the ethnography mentioned by Najib as the theoretical basis for his research consists of library research data, not field observations. Another study was conducted by Abdul Munir Mul Khan (2010) in his research on "Islam Murni Di Dalam Masyarakat Petani Desa Wuluhan" (Pure Islam Within the Rural Community of Wuluhan). This article uses a qualitative method with Max Weber's rationalization theory as its theoretical framework. This theory perceives that social facts are significantly different from what is sourced from Weber's rationalization thesis, where society becomes increasingly rational over time. However, this does not apply to the rural community of Wuluhan.

The rural community's reliance on nature has made spirituality and the mystical an integral part of human life. Although the people in the Wuluhan village still engage in TBC(K), there are still members of Muhammadiyah who remain consistent with the ideology of pure Muhammadiyah Islam. In his research, he uses the hypothesis of indigenous adaptation to examine how pure Islam confronts TBC(K). This choice is influenced by the fact that Munir Mul Khan exclusively studied a rural community, which predominantly consisted of farmers in the Wuluhan village of Jember Regency. His data collection focused on the origins of farmers' involvement with Muhammadiyah and shifts in their post-Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) inclinations toward Muhammadiyah. In contrast, this study explores Watulimo, a region characterized by hilly terrain and the South Coast of Java. The majority of Muhammadiyah's congregation in Watulimo engage in various livelihoods, including farming, fishing, and civil servants.

This research aims to understand the response of Muhammadiyah congregants in Watulimo to Muhammadiyah's version of pure Islam and the rationalization of Muhammadiyah congregants regarding the *tarjih* decisions (Muhammadiyah's version of pure Islam). Referring to the Weberian thesis, the participation of hillside and South Coast communities in Muhammadiyah is seen as a result of rationalization leading to the disenchantment of the world, where all forms of traditionalistic rituals disappear. However, the supernatural and traditionalistic aspects of this belief system cannot be separated from the dependence of some farmers and fishermen whose lives are intertwined with nature. Nevertheless, there are still Muhammadiyah congregants in Watulimo who remain consistent in practicing Muhammadiyah's version of pure Islam.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative method with Max Weber's rational action approach. Qualitative research is a method used to understand a phenomenon by delving into it deeply (Nugrahani 2014). This method was chosen because qualitative research aims to explore individual understandings in-depth. The advantages of qualitative research lie in its naturalistic nature, allowing for an objective study of subjective realities. Additionally, qualitative research is characterized by interpretative qualities, providing interpretations of what is seen, heard, and understood (Arikunto 2010).

The research took place on the South Coast of Java, specifically in the Watulimo District of Trenggalek. This area features a geographical landscape consisting of hills and the South Coast. Sociologically, the people of Watulimo are highly multicultural and uphold ancestral values. Consequently, syncretic traditions are still practiced by the local community. Despite the deeply rooted syncretic values in Watulimo society, Muhammadiyah has managed to thrive in the region, becoming the largest branch in Trenggalek Regency. Informant selection in this research follows a snowball technique, determining informants in stages. A total of 10 informants, comprising subject informants, non-subject informants, and other key informants, were required for this journal based on information provided by earlier informants. The selected informants included religious figures, community leaders, and individuals directly related to the research topic (Morissan 2019).

In broad terms, data collection in this research involved primary and secondary data retrieval (Sutinah & Suyanto 2016). The research process encompassed several stages, including research design and data retrieval. Data retrieval consisted of interviews, participatory observations, literature reviews, and documentation. Data analysis employed observation and semi-structured interviews as initial steps in data collection. The collected data was then transcribed to provide a detailed account of what was directly observed, heard, and recorded during interviews. This step aims to gather comprehensive information, which will subsequently address the research focus. The transcribed interview data was then written in accordance with the original informant's data (Sugiono 2011).

The transcribed results were categorized to address the research focus. This data categorization was used to explain the research focus. After categorization, the next step was data analysis. The categorized data was then interpreted in line with Max Weber's social behavior theory. This was done to ensure that the interpretation aligns with the theory and the data, allowing for a summarized presentation of the research focus.

Results and Discussion

This section, discussion focuses on several subsections, including (a) Rationalization of the purification of Islam; (b) Explanation related to Muhammadiyah in the hill and South Coast of Java; (c) How community participation in religious study; and (d) Variants of Muhammadiyah followers in the hill and South Coast regions of Java.

Rationalization in the purification of Islam

According to Max Weber's theory of rationalization, the purification of Islam is often interpreted as Islamization (Mulkhan 2010). However, according to Muhammadiyah, rationalization means practicing Islam with the slogan of revitalization of the Quran and Sunnah (Trigiyatno 2022a). Muhammadiyah's rationalization is more applicable to social services, education, healthcare, the use of technology for missionary purposes, and so on (Nakamura 2017). In religious matters (Sharia), social or philanthropic activities are also seen as theological movements (Aqidah) (Mulkhan 2000). Therefore, social-political policies in this movement are often challenging to understand within Max Weber's theory of rationalization. Therefore, the theory of rationalization can be applied when the interpretation of reality is studied and dynamically translated or seen as a learning process (Siebert 1985). As one informant stated: "Muhammadiyah's missionary work nowadays is more humanitarian, securing Muhammadiyah's assets, caring for and preserving the environment, and establishing businesses, such as cafes and tourist spots, the profits of which will eventually go into the organization's funds." (Informant NUR). The informant's statement explains that rationalization is a rational and efficient process aimed at specific rational goals. Rationalization refers to the universality of a society undergoing modernization (Smart & Ritzer 2012).

Rationalization is divided into two types: instrumental rationality and cognitive rationalization. First, instrumental rationalization relates to ethics, norms, and human relations with God, being strategic, and technical. Second, cognitive rationalization deals with demythologization or the disappearance of myth and magic functions. This demythologization rationalization emerged alongside what Nietzsche referred

Azis & Sudarso: "Pure Islamic rationalization of the Muhammadiyah congregation"

to as the "Death of God" (Zeitlin 1995). Just as social facts and patterns of society always differ from one society to another, the degree of their modernization will also vary. This will affect the process of demythologization and rationalization, which is expected to differ. For this reason, rationalization will undergo gradual processes through dialectics positioned as learning processes (Siebert 1985). There are three stages to connect the dialectics of religion and its dynamics within a society: *first*, externalization when religion is positioned as a worldly expression. *Second*, is objectification, when religion becomes a fact or a reference for action. *Third*, is internalization, when religion is given meaning by its followers (Mulkhan 2000).

Muhammadiyah in the hill and south coast of Java

The understanding of Muhammadiyah has been growing in this region since before independence. In 1964, the branch leadership was officially established in accordance with the constitution. Initially, the Muhammadiyah Branch in Watulimo, according to the constitution, was not under the auspices of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Trenggalek (PDM Trenggalek) but was under the PDM Tulungagung. At that time, PDM Trenggalek did not yet exist, so according to informant SAN, the establishment of a Muhammadiyah organization in a region or district did not start with its regional leadership (PDM) but began with its regional leadership council (PRM).

Muhammadiyah began to develop in the Sukoharjo and Watulimo villages by establishing modern educational institutions in the 1960s, which would later determine the development of Muhammadiyah in this area. In the 1955 elections, there were four major parties: PNI, NU, Masyumi, and PKI. Supporters of PNI came from nationalist and some religious circles. Meanwhile, PKI supporters came from the coastal and nearby market areas. Supporters of the NU party came from traditionalist santri circles and some newcomers with a *pesantren* education background. They settled in the fertile areas in the sub-districts of Watulimo. According to informant MUS, Masyumi followers, in addition to several village heads and sub-district officials, also lived around the sub-district market, much like the concentration of Muhammadiyah followers at the time, who mostly came from merchant backgrounds.

After Masyumi dissolved in the 1960s, the political elites who were originally active in Masyumi shifted to become active in Muhammadiyah's missionary work, and they later became Muhammadiyah elites (Mulkhan 2010). This movement expanded between 1965 and 1970, following the events of G-30-S/PKI, marked by the decline in the political influence of PNI and PKI. Almost all the leaders of these two parties were killed, and some managed to escape to other areas. After Muhammadiyah expanded to rural areas, the tradition of TBC continued to be practiced by some hill and coastal communities that had joined Muhammadiyah. Over time and as the crackdown on TBC subsided (Mulkhan 2000), this factor represented a dialectical stage between pure Islam and local cultural reality. As an informant stated:

"There has been a shift in Muhammadiyah's missionary work. It's hard to find figures like Pak Musreni and Pak Sugito who were so dedicated to promoting Islam through Muhammadiyah. It's hard to find people like Haji Suyoto who always donated his wealth to Islamic missionary work. This is due to changes in dynamics and patterns of understanding pure Islam." (Informant ROJ).

Some of the figures mentioned above were early pioneers of Muhammadiyah in Watulimo. Informants MUS and WAR were missionaries who were always dedicated to spreading pure Islam to remote villages and building schools at their own expense, with the assistance of their congregation's contributions. Similarly, Haji Suyoto consistently donated his land to establish educational institutions and mosques. They were also persistent and determined in eradicating TBC and diligent in conducting religious study sessions, which continue to this day and are organized by the next generation.

As explained above, Muhammadiyah faces two psychological aspects within its organization. On one hand, Muhammadiyah is required to combat TBC as the foundation of belief for farmers and fishermen. However, according to informant WAR, approximately 35% of Muhammadiyah followers from the

farming community and 15% from the fishing community find it extremely difficult to break free from the dependence on TBC traditions, as it is a consequence of their reliance on the natural resources of their livelihoods. Furthermore, another informant emphasized this by stating:

“Some fishermen still use talismans. They use them for safety when they are at sea. Some also use them with the intention of catching more fish. Interestingly, they pray at the Muhammadiyah mosque. They obtain these objects from religious leaders (kyai). They are happy because they get these objects from kyai, not from traditional healers.” (Informant WAR).

As outlined above, the phenomenon of Muhammadiyah among farmers and fishermen can create dialectical conflicts in terms of beliefs within the organization, which pushes for a broader reinterpretation of Islam. This gives rise to a new form of pure Islam that is, in fact, different from the *tarjih* (religious verdict) decisions.

Community participation in religious gatherings

One of the distinguishing factors among Muhammadiyah branches in this district is that every religious gathering is attended by thousands of congregants from various social classes. Thus, those who attend these religious gatherings include not only registered members but also members of the general public sympathetic to the gatherings organized by PCM Watulimo (Branch Leadership) held once a month. According to informant FIK, the religious gatherings organized by PRM (Branch Leadership) with a *Yasinan* format, held every week, also consistently attract large crowds, attended not only by PRM members but also by the general public. What is intriguing is that these religious gatherings no longer primarily focus on eradicating TBC in a blunt manner, but rather emphasize values of tolerance and brotherhood. Furthermore, another informant emphasized:

“Many people here do participate in Muhammadiyah gatherings, but because their background is from rural areas, it’s not possible for them to completely abandon their old habits, such as *Larung Sembonyo*, *Slametan*, and others. Despite that, many people here also study *tarjih* (Islamic jurisprudence), and they come to understand what Muhammadiyah’s Islam is like.” (Informant FIK).

As outlined above, the function of these religious gatherings is to cleanse TBC practices. However, this function is not left unfulfilled but is given a different meaning by some communities in the mountainous and south coast regions, who are accustomed to TBC practices. The participation of farmers and fishermen in these religious gatherings is more significant than their intent to delve into pure Islam. This might be due to the dominance of educated elites who have replaced religious scholars in leading the organization, resulting in the movement becoming more flexible and tolerant towards TBC practices. According to Geertz, mosques and religious gatherings serve as the foundation for communication between elites and the masses, crystallized within small *jamaah* or *halaqoh* (Geertz 2017). During these gatherings, interactions occur, and information, status, and religious advice are exchanged, strengthening interpersonal bonds and redirecting them towards political loyalty (Johnson & Lawang 1994).

The significant role of these gatherings as a forum for socializing and recruiting members is evident from the high attendance. In terms of quantity, this phenomenon differs from Muhammadiyah branches in other districts within the Trenggalek regency. During the course of the research, informant ROJ stated that the community is very consistent and disciplined in attending gatherings, strictly adhering to the schedule from 19:00 to 20:00 WIB (Western Indonesian Time). Muhammadiyah typically divides gathering participants based on gender and age. According to Abdul Munir Mulkhan (2000) in his thesis, Muhammadiyah gatherings typically consist of five groups, each comprising 30-50 individuals. However, according to informant AKH, in Watulimo, these gatherings are divided into branch-level gatherings, each consisting of 15-30 individuals.

Branch-level gathering events are held alternately at the homes of branch members. All participants sit in a circle, with a preacher or *ustadz* positioned in the center, delivering a sermon while participants listen. On the other hand, branch-level gathering events, according to informant FIK, are always held at Muhammadiyah mosques and attended by thousands of people, including members and participants. The themes for these gatherings can be chosen freely by the preacher or based on a predetermined schedule resulting from discussions within the Branch Leadership or Branch Committees. However, according to informant WAR, the themes for branch-level gatherings are usually determined in advance through discussions at the branch level, although there are instances where the sermon does not align with the predetermined PCM.

Religious Study Sessions at both the PCM and PRM Levels commence with the recitation of the Quran. There are differences in the method of Quran recitation between PCM and PRM gatherings. In PRM gatherings, Quran recitation may employ the *talaqi (sema'an)* method, where participants take turns reciting the Quran individually under the guidance of an *ustadz*, or the *ustadz* recites Quranic verses, and then the congregation repeats after them. In contrast, PCM gatherings predominantly use the *darusan* method, where participants collectively recite the Quran.

Following the Quran recitation, the moderator invites a preacher or *ustadz* to deliver their sermon. There are no special indications for the preacher or *ustadz* when they step onto the podium to deliver their sermon, such as wearing specific attire or accessories that signify their superiority over others. After exchanging greetings with a brief Arabic prayer, often only understood by the preacher or *ustadz* themselves, the speaker recites one of the Quranic verses, which then serves as a reference point for delivering the content. Subsequently, according to the account provided by informant SAN, the preacher proceeds to recite a hadith of the Prophet, including the name of the narrator, the chain of transmission (*sanad*), and the hadith number.

The materials used for sermons do not typically include traditional Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*). It is rare for preachers to use books related to *tarjih* decisions as references during their sermons, except for topics related to internal matters concerning the organization's leaders and active members. In some instances, preachers may incorporate opinions from Salafi *da'is* who tend to advocate for a rigorous approach to eradicating TBC. After the study session, a question-and-answer session ensues, along with announcements regarding PCM or PRM programs, both those that have already been implemented and those yet to be conducted.

Upon completing all the sessions, the event concludes with a closing session, followed by a communal meal. Typically, at the branch level, the host provides a spread consisting of soto (a traditional Indonesian soup), tea, coffee, and local snacks as refreshments for the attendees. The costs for consumption are covered by the group's funds or contributions from the congregation. This money is given to the host as a contribution toward covering the costs of the meal. According to informant AKH, after the study session concludes, participants engage in socializing, and the next day, they resume their regular daily activities as usual.

Variants of Muhammadiyah followers

The expansion of Muhammadiyah into the hill and south coastal regions of Java has given rise to diverse interpretations and understandings of pure Islam. These variations in the interpretation of Islam are influenced by several factors, including individual rational thinking, knowledge, environment, and experiences. Consequently, they have led to the emergence of various groups within Muhammadiyah. The formation of these groups within Muhammadiyah cannot be divorced from external conditions that affect them, such as social and political factors. During the early days of independence, the political turmoil in Indonesian state history was closely linked to religious factors. This tendency meant that a political party's influence extended not only to social and economic relations but also to social and religious relations. This gave rise to different variants of pure Islam based on individual influences and experiences.

These various variants within Muhammadiyah can be grouped into four main categories: Moderate Muhammadiyah, Muhammadiyah-Salafi (abbreviated as Musa), Muhammadiyah-NU (Munu), and Muhammadiyah-Nationalist (Munas). These four variants exhibit differences in religious behavior, patterns of social-political relations, and work relationships. These differences in behavior stem from the doctrinal disparities within pure Islamic *tarjih*. Indeed, belief models are no longer tied to the supernatural powers of dukun (shamans) who place *danyang* (guardian spirits) of villages or ancestors as sources of power. Instead, they redirect their faith toward God as the ultimate source of power and information. Consequently, the key actors in this belief system are not dukun or kyai (Islamic scholars), but rather righteous individuals who have a close relationship with God. This is why they believe they can easily obtain His favor.

Righteous individuals, who are viewed as the center of existence, are believed to have the ability to approach God, performing a role akin to a *mursyid* (spiritual guide) in Sufi "*wasilah*" (spiritual paths). This explanation aligns with the role of dukun in syncretic traditions. As one informant stated:

"Some fishermen still use talismans. They use them for safety when they are out at sea. Some also use them to catch more fish. Yet, these same individuals pray at Muhammadiyah mosques. They obtain these items from kyais (Islamic scholars). They are pleased because they obtain these items from kyais rather than from shamans." (Informant WAR).

The above quotations elucidate that the identification of a person's piety is not solely based on their adherence to religious law (sharia), but also on their active participation in community roles such as leading prayers, delivering sermons, and teaching religious studies. After Muhammadiyah underwent a shift in its pattern of purifying Islam, new extremes emerged, especially following the 1998 reform era. As a result, there are four variants, and these four variants fall within the perspective of pure Islam according to Muhammadiyah. However, in practice, the pure Islam referred to is not entirely in line with the understanding of *tarjih* (Islamic jurisprudence) as intended by Muhammadiyah. Within Muhammadiyah, some groups, although involved in its organizational structure and actively participating as members, do not strictly adhere to *tarjih* in their application of Islamic Shariah law or *fiqh*. Instead, they incorporate opinions from Salafi *da'is* (preachers). This is because they still harbor doubts about the purity of their application of Shariah law based on *tarjih*, leading them to seek fatwas (legal opinions) from Salafi sources. This group is referred to as Muhammadiyah-Salafi or abbreviated as "Musa" (Trigiyatno 2022b).

The majority of Muhammadiyah-Salafi individuals are more inclined toward religious education and Islamic boarding schools. However, there is a small subset that teaches in formal Muhammadiyah educational institutions. In economic terms, they often engage in productive agriculture, employing techniques such as grafting and plant breeding. Additionally, some utilize fertile land in forests and gardens to cultivate various crops. Some members of this variant also maintain traditional Islamic values, similar to Munu (Muhammadiyah-NU). However, their spiritual practices do not mirror the comprehensive religious practices of NU. They do incorporate certain elements of traditional Islamic practice, such as reciting specific prayers during prayer and uttering intentions before commencing a religious act. They also partake in *selamatan* (celebrations), *tahlilan* (prayers for the deceased), and *sholawatan* (recitations of blessings upon the Prophet).

Categorizing Munu presents certain dilemmas. According to Munir Mulkhan, neo-traditionalism is a label applied to Muhammadiyah-NU in order to easily identify individuals who follow Shariah laws in a manner akin to NU and engage in economic activities, despite their leaning towards a more modernist education (Mulkhan 2000). However, the current phenomenon shows that the NU organization has started to move into formal education and modern economic activities. Therefore, the Munu group is more appropriately defined as individuals within Muhammadiyah who partially adhere to the Shariah as interpreted by NU. Furthermore, there is a Muhammadiyah group that tolerates symbolic practices of traditional beliefs. This group can be referred to as Munas or Muhammadiyah-Nationalists (Mulkhan 2000).

In terms of employment, the Muhammadiyah Nationalist group is predominantly found in civil service roles, particularly as government employees. During the New Order era, these civil servants leaned towards supporting the Golkar political party. This inclination allowed for discussions surrounding secular Islam. In the realm of education, this group is more focused on educational quality than discussions about pure Islam. Lastly, there is the Muhammadiyah Moderate group. This group is predominantly composed of educators or teachers, both those employed as civil servants and those with tribal affiliations. Regarding Islamic studies, this group is the most consistent in advocating for Muhammadiyah members to consistently study and read HPT (Himpunan Putusan Tarjih), both at the branch and branch leadership levels.

As explained above, the concept of pure Islam according to Muhammadiyah among the communities in the mountainous and south coastal regions of Java varies symbolically and socio-culturally. These variations are influenced by how the mountain and south coastal communities interpret it. While pure Islam is the ultimate goal for the organization, the communities hold idealistic values that they consider important to apply in their lives, even if those values are not explicitly mentioned in religious doctrine.

Conclusion

Muhammadiyah was able to grow and expand rapidly within the cultural context of the Watulimo-Trenggalek mountainous and south coastal communities due to two distinct approaches within the movement. First, through formal education, and second, through religious study sessions (*pengajian*). The approach through formal education is evident in Muhammadiyah's consistent management of the Muhammadiyah Business Endeavors (Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah or AUM), ranging from playgroups to senior high schools (PGA or SMA). Meanwhile, through religious study sessions (*pengajian*), the studies organized by the Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (Pimpinan Ranting Muhammadiyah or PRM) have been adapted to the cultural context of the south coastal communities. This adaptation involves preserving some elements of the traditional spiritual practices during these religious study sessions without completely eliminating them.

The success of the second approach was supported by Muhammadiyah's political involvement in a power structure dominated by the Golkar party. In this context, the focus of the religious activities among individuals, many of whom were civil servants (PNS), leaned more towards social movements rather than the rigid study of Shariah law. Consequently, Muhammadiyah remained flexible and tolerant of local cultural practices. This made the methods more acceptable to the mountainous and south coastal communities, although it led to both pros and cons within the organization itself. It was these two approaches, combined with several factors, that gave rise to a new entity in understanding various interpretations of pure Islam within Muhammadiyah. This led to the formation of four groups: Muhammadiyah-Moderate (Murat), Muhammadiyah-Nationalist (Munas), Muhammadiyah-Salafi (Musa), and Muhammadiyah-NU (Munu).

The existence of these four groups within Muhammadiyah, each with its own interpretation of pure Islam, is a unique phenomenon. The public image of Muhammadiyah is often associated with a modern Islamic organization with puritanical leanings. However, in reality, Muhammadiyah members exhibit a wide range of interpretations of pure Islam. Therefore, sociological studies exploring the variation in the understanding of pure Islam within Muhammadiyah are essential. These studies not only contribute to an awareness of the plurality within the community but also serve as a foundation for the discovery of new approaches to religious outreach in non-urban communities.

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