

Forming Muslim Middle Class' Piety and Identity in Yogyakarta

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Abstract— The identity of community groups is always present in various forms. Those who belong in the middle-class Muslim community form their piety identity differently from others outside the community. This article states that the middle-class Muslim practices various activities such as studying of Holy Qur'an, sacrificing animals during Eid al-Adha, infaq and sadaqah, as well as the going to hajj and umrah. These activities contain motivational values in creating an identity among Muslims. The Muslim communities at Alam Citra Residence, as a middle-class Muslim community, are 'extraordinary' compared to its surrounding poor community members in terms of religious activities and their lives. Their attributes and goals showed a lot of differences from those who were not middle-class Muslim. The researchers applied qualitative research, including interview, literature review, and field observations. Then, the data were analyzed using a sociology-anthropological approach to explain the data found during the investigation.

Keywords— becoming piety, identity, Muslim middle class, differences

I. INTRODUCTION

Made Tonny Supriatma in his article, Hypocrisy and the Middle Class attracts the public's attention to the status of the middle class in Indonesia. Made reveals the hypocrisy of the Indonesian middle class, which appears to be "arrogant" or "snob." They want to distinguish themselves from the majority — their exclusiveness attempt to show how important they are in society. In reality, their activities require the existence of the lower classes. Made Tonny carefully shows the hypocrisy of the middle class because of the assumption that they can stand alone without other classes. The media often control the study of middle-class life behavior and their lifestyle, as stated by Mike Featherstone. (Mike, 1992).

In other cases, the pilgrimage plus and the Umrah of the Muslim middle class are almost the same as those made by Tonny. Moeslim Abdurrahman gives a detailed explanation related to the behavior of the middle-class Muslim who perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina then return to their homeland. The pilgrims often form their entities and compare to those who have not performed Hajj and Umrah in the community. They build their identity with the worn clothes, souvenirs, and stories during the Hajj and Umrah. Such a thing is forming identity and their piety as well as among the middle-class Muslim in Indonesia. The clothing after the pilgrimage is such as a robe, turban, and white cap for men.

Meanwhile, women wear robe as well with hijab. Also, the souvenirs such as pilgrimage dates, zam-zam water, prayer

beads, as well as prayer mats or Turkish recitals, are different (Abdurrahman, 2009). An argumentative position about the middle class is a differentiator from their community to others. (Piere, 1984)

The middle class belongs in the middle of the upper-middle class and the lower class. Not too poor or not too rich is where it is. The understanding of the middle class can be explained through two approaches, namely the relative approach and the absolute approach. According to Lester Thurow (1987), the middle class based on a relative approach in the United States is a group of people who have income in the range of 75% and 125% of the median per capita income. Meanwhile, according to Banerjee and Duflo (2008), based on an absolute approach, the middle-class has two alternative absolute numbers, namely per capita income range of \$ 2- \$ 4 and \$ 6- \$ 10 per day. According to the Asia Development Bank (ADB) (2010), the middle-class has a range of per capita expenditure per day of \$ 2- \$ 20. This range is often used to measure the number of the middle class in Indonesia. The expenditure classification criteria for this group are based on the World Bank categorization standard of US \$ 4-10. In this class, there are many academics, intellectuals, reformers, intellectuals, young entrepreneurs, lawyers, political figures, cultural activists, technocrats, NGO activists, preachers, public figures, presenters, economic observers, etc (Richard, 1997, hal. 60).

Among Muslims, this phenomenon has also happened. They like fashion, post-modern lifestyle. They want to look like a modern Muslim, listen to nasyid songs, use Arabic ringtone, answer phone calls with assalamualaikum, respond to prayer call (azan), say lafadz basmalah, etc. They also sign up for the executive class of Hajj and Umrah and perform Umrah every year. Their children go to expensive private Islamic schools labeled as Integrated Islamic. Those middle-class Muslims also join the majlis ta'lim by inviting celebrities or celebrity ustadz. (Hasan, 2009, hal. 233).

II. RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHOD

This study focused on the questions below using a sociological-anthropological perspective approach. This approach was intended to describe the middle-class Muslim activities and the relations between the middle-class Muslims and others outside the resident. The approach was also to find out how they educated their children and how they thought of the construction for the future. Some questions formed are: (1) What religious activities do the middle-class Muslim families do? (2) How are the middle-class Muslim social relations in society? ; (3) How do middle-class Muslim families educate

their children? ; (4) How do they construct their children's future?

This study used ethnographic method (thick description). It is an approach to reveal the facts in the field by detailing the "small" problems found in the research location. This type of study is often to describe issues related to the daily life of a community with specific characteristics because the construction built is a separate entity. (Creswell, 2014).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. *Middle Class and the Middle-Class Muslim*

Richard Robison, in *The Emergence of the Classes in Southeast-Asia and the Indonesia Cases*, (Richard, 1997), defines the middle class as a group that has social and political interests and forces internally. Meanwhile, Lester Thurow, as quoted by Yuswohadi, represents the middle class in the United States as a group of people who have income in the range of 75% and 125% of the midpoint of per capita income. (Yuswohadi, *Who is the Middle Class?* (2013). As for Indonesia, the definition of the middle class refers to the Asian Development Bank definition (ADB, 2010). It states that the middle class has a range of 2-20 U \$ per day out of the 2-20 range. These U \$ are grouped into three categories, namely the first group with lower-class expenses 2-4 U \$ per day; the second group middle-class with expenses 4-10 U \$; and the third group, the upper middle classes with 10-20 U \$ expenditure per day.

Hasan defines the middle class not only those who have income and expenditure quantitatively but also have a level of education, access to health services, employment and even psychological indicators such as literacy, investment literacy, knowledge insight or even awareness of political participation. Also, if connected with political expression and religious identity in public spaces, there will be an increasing number of middle class in Indonesia. (Hasan, 2009).

The middle-class Muslims fill up religious public spaces such as recitals, majlis of dhikr, orphanages as well as other activities held at mosques. They build a Middle East style mosque and sign up for an expensive Hajj and Umrah tour packages with five-star hotels. They also speak using Arabic as an accent of conversation and listen to qasidah nasyid music. All of them are from the new genre of Indonesian Islamic da'wah. (Hasan, 2009).

According to Pierre Bourdieu, the main focus of the middle class is to show its importance in the consumption and lifestyle. Unlike the old bourgeoisie, the new middle class no longer prioritizes the seriousness in terms of production and capital accumulation, but more concerned with the enjoyment of consumption and lifestyle. They live in a social world driven by new economic phenomena that determine someone's position from consumption capacity, the standard of living and lifestyle, and production capacity. They produce new economic capacity with the symbolic mode of economic post-modernism. Therefore, the society needs to pay attention to economic interests, production, economic capacity, and lifestyle of the middle class in the context of habitus, and concern in risking positions as distinctions in society. (Piere, 1984).

In another dimension, the emergence of the middle class by many experts starts from the trade. The flow of Middle Eastern

trade in the coastal areas influences the economic-trade dimension in Indonesia. The trade becomes a weapon in political infiltration into new regions. The encounter between Arab traders and the local bourgeoisie, which later created Muslim traders settlements on the coast of Java became the beginning of the growth of the Indonesian Muslim middle class dominated by cross-island traders. Furthermore, the post-trade became the fundamental basis for the formation of the Muslim middle class. (Jati, 2017).

The further development of the Muslim Middle Class in Indonesia is a part of the elaboration of the Weberian concept in framing the Muslim middle class, especially in the case of Muhammadiyah and NU in Indonesia. Various scientists such as Lance Castle, Mitsuo Nakamura, Clifford Geertz, and also Howard Dick in *The Rise of a Middle Class and the Changing Concept of Equity in Indonesia*, (Dick, 1985) link the issues of income, economic access, politics and lifestyle into its parts. The dominant Weberian approach in analyzing the Indonesian middle class is more directing the analysis in two studies namely 1) a comparison of the work ethic of the Muslim middle class with the West and 2) the constellation of the state and the Muslim middle class. Another essential note in Calvin's concept, in this case, is that the emergence of the Muslim middle class itself is still partial and not organized at all.

The pattern of dependencies forms the middle-class Muslim in Indonesia either the ulama through syi'ar activities or the elite Muslim bourgeoisie help to create it. This condition indicates that power is intertwined with the formation of a middle-class Muslim in Indonesia. The initial analysis of the emergence of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia can be traced through Mitsuo Nakamura's research, which took place in Kotagede and Kauman as the basis of Muhammadiyah (Nakamura, 2012).

Clifford Geertz's classic work in Modjokuto (Pare, Kediri), *Religion of Java* (1956) is the basis of the Nahdlatul Ulama. Nakamura, as reported in *The Crescent Arise of the Banyan Tree*, (2010) sees similarities between middle-class Muslim with the case of the Western middle class, namely working hard, saving money, and investing. These three values are visible in the work patterns of the silver and batik bourgeoisie in the two regions. It indicates the spirit of encouragement in economic activities as reported by Irwan Abdullah in *The Muslim Businessmen of Jatinom, Central Java* (Abdullah, 1994). The renewal of Islamic teachings helps help to build the spirit of economy and fight the marginalization in Islam. The case of trade in entrepreneurs in Pekajangan is another phenomenon. Prophet Muhammad was once also a trader. There was a romanticization of the idea of the formation of civil society (Qodir, 2002).

B. *The Class Identifiers*

Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 2001), in his book *Modernity and Self-Identity*, discusses the problem of identifiers in people's behavior. For Giddens, people can be categorized in the variant of social behavior to show who they are. If they are ordinary people, they will be different from the wealthy, modern, or upper-class people who have a lot of money.

In such contexts, the difference in social class is noticeable. People in the middle class have different choices in choosing education, occupation, spending funds, doing social activities, and even religious activities. Shopping and spiritual activities, in Giddens' view, can be an essential part to observe the

behavior of the middle-class Muslim. Abdurrahman in Prostration in Baitullah (2008), also agrees with Giddens when observing the phenomenon of hajj and hajj plus in Indonesia in the early 1990s.

Saba Mahmood in *Piety and Politics* (Mahmood, 2005) gives an explanation related to the religious behavior of religious groups that have political relations, not only social issues. Saba Mahmood, observes that many spiritual practices such as Umrah, Hajj, Tabligh in Islam are not infrequently associated with pious-political activities. Performing piety activities connect to political problems as well as socio-economic activities owned by a person or group. Therefore, Saba Mahmood believes that religious activities can also become social-political activities. All of them are identifiers from the lower class, which involves religious practice without political interest. There is no middle-class activity that can only be in a spiritual perspective as a form of "sacrifice," but it can be seen from the standpoint of religio-consumption and religio-politics.

IV. THE RESEARCH SETTING

A. *Alam Citra Bantul Residence as the Arena*

The presence of various types of residence in Bantul Regency highlights the difference between those who are middle class and lower class. Those who live in multiple residences are mostly migrants with higher incomes than the Bantul natives who live outside it. Therefore, if the residents do not have a good relationship with the outside residents, it will create a gap and disharmony between among them.

Alam Citra Residence is located at Jl. Parangtritis km 9. This residence was established in 1999 and inhabited by 297 people. 90% of them is Muslim. It belongs to a middle-class residence in Bantul Regency. The average purchase price of a unit was Rp. 275 million in 1999. Meanwhile, the current price is 550-750-850 million Rupiah per unit if bought from the old owner or pass credit.

Bantul itself is a region located in the southern part of Yogyakarta city with a population density of 1000 / km with a population of mostly farmers (80%), while the rests are civil servants, military, police, construction laborers and housemaids. The poverty level in Bantul Regency is number two after Gunungkidul from all regencies/cities in Yogyakarta Province. (BPS, 2015)

The residents on average work in companies such as Indofood, car dealers, motorcycle dealers, multinational foreign companies such as Slambersi, Exxon Mobil, state-owned PT. PELNI, PELINDO, Pertamina, State, and private banks, lecturers, and artists. The residents' income can be estimated to be higher than the outsiders. Each house has a car and even more than one vehicle, so it creates traffic.

Also, several residents own business units around the house, such as stationery shops, grocery stores, fashion store, and car brokers. During the day, they are outside their house and return home in the evening or at night arrives. Therefore, interaction with fellow residents is less intensive. Individual life is visible in Alam Citra's Residence. All houses have high fences so that other residents do not know what is happening inside the house. If something terrible happens, the neighbors will have no idea.

V. IDENTITY AND PIETY FORMING

Looking into the long journey of the middle-class Muslim in Indonesia, it began in the 1990s as reported by Robert W Hefner (Hefner, 1992, 2000). Then the statements below will show explicit "identifiers" between the middle class and lower class in terms of piety (religious behavior, work, education, and the future of their children).

A. *Behavior of the Middle-Class*

1) *Reading Al-Qur'an regularly*

The residents do evening prayer and do the tartil Al-Qur'an specifically for the congregation consisting of 5-10 male participants. They do this activity because it is necessary to justify reading the Qur'an according to the science of tajweed and nahfu. Reading the Qur'an is part of worshipping, and every correct letter will get a reward from Allah. Blessings for the middle-class Muslim is essential as they do not get enough knowledge about reading the Qur'an properly.

It seems that the middle-class Muslim there do not pay much attention to the Prophet's hadith. When someone stutters in reading the Qur'an, as long as he does it with full perseverance, patience and continuous, he will get double rewards; namely the reward for persistence and the hardships he experiences (Prophet's hadith). The middle-class Muslim is more confident when reading the recited Qur'an smoothly with the correct tartil and tajweed and the mahraj as the rules of tajweed. Of course, reading the Qur'an is indeed more interesting if the recitation is proper.

It is not surprising that the middle-class Muslims do not apply tartil and tajweed. They do not have adequate Islamic knowledge in high school or college level. Their parents are scholars who do not explicitly provide Islamic education.

Meanwhile, nowadays, they are in thirst with Islam, so they start reading the Qur'an in a tartil guided by a qualified teacher.

2) *Qur'an Recitation for Men and Women*

There is also recitation held once a week at the mosque on Thursday evenings and every Sunday from one house to another. The content of the study is related to daily practical worship such as praying in congregation, paying zakat, doing Sunnah prayers, as well as procedures for performing ablution following the Messenger of Allah. They barely discuss social-political behavior, how to deal with globalization, how to deal with election violations, how to keep the environment clean, and keep the environment from the flood.

The residents also do selapanan recitation (35) once a day, for both males and females. The 35 days recitation is to strengthen their faith as they get various information and secular understandings from outside, said someone who has done Umrah

repeatedly. There is a danger that is supposed to challenge a residence with a majority of Muslim.

The researchers asked one about their views on liberal and secular Muslim:

"Secular liberals undermine pure Islam. They claim to be Muslim, belong to Muhammadiyah or NU, but their minds are liberal and secular. Perverse thoughts and corrupting Islam have influenced them. We Muslims must be immune from the influence of the secular-liberal mind that develops on Islamic universities and organizations"(SW).

The residents did not explain what liberal and secular is. However, his ustadz said that liberals were dangerous because they corrupted Islam. They did not believe in Allah, His Messenger, the Qur'an, and they did not pray and fast. He had often listened to this kind of explanation from lecturers, preachers, and religious teachers who criticized liberals and seculars on universities.

Another middle-class Muslim tradition is that they incorporate in the recitation group outside the residence. They always call it Majlis Taklim, Majlis Taklim Dhuha, Majlis Taklim Dhikr, and something similar. The middle-class Muslim in residence have a recitation group separated from their Islamic activities. They feel comfortable by taking part in the recitation outside the residence that teaches about practical Islamic sciences, such as guidance on Mahdhab, ways of dhikr, and giving infaq/sadaqah. This phenomenon is common in the middle-class Muslim in Indonesia, as stated by Noorhaidi Hasan in another part of this essay.

3) *Hajj and Umrah*

Also, the middle-class Muslims aspire to perform Umrah to get closer to Allah and be grateful for the blessings obtained in one year. They will choose a luxurious package for each person (Rupiah exchange rate: Rp. 30-39.5 million). Of course, they will also go with well-known hajj and umrah companions from the city of Yogyakarta. The pilgrimage of Umrah with celebrity ustadz is the main attraction among the middle-class Muslim (Fealy, 2012).

This phenomenon has been discussed well by Moeslim Abdurrahman, who calls this as a class phenomenon, not just an aspect of worshipping. Hajj and Umrah plus are the ideals for middle-class Muslims who live in a residence/mansion. Umrah is not supposed to be an identifier. Moeslim Abdurrahman also calls the phenomenon "the division of worship and social class (Abdurrahman, 2009)."

B. Social Relations of Middle-Class Muslim

The middle-class Muslims of Alam Citra Residence still need social bounding as a method of building social boundaries. To build solidarity, one example is that the

residents sacrifice a certain number of animals every Eid al-Adha.

Then, the meat will be distributed to all residents and the unfortunates.

Also, the residents do zakat, infaq, and sadaqah (ZIS) activities every Ramadan. The money then will be distributed to the outsiders who fulfill the criteria of the ZIS recipients.

After five years of evaluation without distributing the meat to those in need, the residents finally do it. Previously, the distribution was only collected and deposited to those who submitted proposals. Then, the residents re-evaluated it.

The distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah exists in other dimensions as a form of social or individual piety. What they are doing is marketing the godliness. In Kitiarsa Pattana, marketing God happens when the worshippers need recognition from other communities and different social classes as long as it still has a sensitivity to the unfortunates (Kitiarsa, 2008).

People somehow misunderstand what the middle-class Muslims did in regards to ZIS distribution. However, in the perspective of the sociology of religion, they are indeed different from the other social classes (Jati, 2017). According to Marxists, the middle class is a class that benefits from capitalism, compared to those in the lower class. If there is no adequate communication between the middle class and the lower class, what will happen in the field is a social conflict due to the gap in the economic situation. Therefore, middle-class piety does not mean economic blindness (Mahmood, 2005).

With the potential social conflict between classes, the middle-class Muslims should conduct activities as part of social bonding with the wider community. One way to engage the community members is by giving charity to the religious communities. However, everyone has to stop a stereotype where middle-class people do not get along with lower-class ones. If this continues to develop, social conflicts can occur (Woodward, 1997).

Therefore, a charity is essential to avoid people outside the residents to treat the insiders differently. In terms of security, for example, several times, the residents experienced theft, even though they had a security team at the main gate. The thieves entered through the house's fence attached to the outsider's house.

Besides, the residents also find it challenging to have a funeral because there are no graves inside. The graves available belong to the non-residents, and they have to pay for it. However, the problem is that the residents may not use public cemeteries belonging to the non-residents. In the future, it may also be necessary to think about how all citizens can accept the residents as part of the community. This issue should get the attention of residents in order to prepare a sudden death.

If this situation continues, it will grow to a bigger conflict. There is no other way except to negotiate with the outsiders. This kind of social gap happens everywhere, not only in residential locations. Some villages in Yogyakarta now must pay the grave too to get buried in the current location.

C. *The Middle-Class Muslims' Profession*

The residents at Alam Citra residents are mostly private employees (80%). They work in private national companies such as Honda, Suzuki, multinational companies such as Slammers, Chevron, Bank Mandiri, car and motorcycle dealers. Some of them work in BUMN such as Pelindo, Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI), or BRI. The rests work as civil servants and private sectors such as prosecutors and local governments. Job choices seem to provide an identifier with surrounding communities.

Apart from jobs mentioned above, a few of them are lecturers in several Yogyakarta universities such as Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta State University, Universitas Muhammadiyah, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) and Atma Jaya University. In addition, there are also those who work as doctors in the State Hospital (Sarjito Hospital) and Jogja International Hospital (JIH). They even open their own practice in the residence.

Meanwhile, there are also those who work as wholesalers such as batik, fabric, curtains, blankets, even branded bags, hijab, and homestay entrepreneurs. From the professions mentioned above, it shows that Alam Citra residents are different from the residents around the District of Sewon. They work as farmers, uber drivers, vegetable vendors, and salesclerks. This identifier gives socio-economic situation between the residents and people living outside.

D. *The Middle-Class' Education*

Most of the residents send their children to both public and private school. Those who are in primary school age go to SDN Ungaran or SDN Serayu. The favorite private elementary schools are SD Islam Lukman Hakim, SD Budi Mulia Dua, SD Muhammadiyah Nitikan, and SD Muhammadiyah Sapen. Some of these schools are expensive.

For those who are in middle school, they go to SMPN 1, SMPN 5, SMP N 8, SMP N 9. The favorite private schools are BOPKRI and Panghudi Luhur for Christians and Catholics. The Muslim families send their kids to SMPN 1, SMP N 5, SMP N 8 and SMP N 9. The favorite private schools are Abu Bakar IT Middle School, Budi Mulia Dua Middle School. Some of these schools are superior high schools in Yogyakarta.

When the parents want to send their children to senior high school (high school / vocational school), they will send them to popular high schools such as SMAN 8, SMAN 5, SMAN 3, and SMAN 1. Muslim private high schools they send their children to are Budi Mulia Dua High School, Abu Bakar Ali Islamic High School, Al-Azhar High School, Islamic BINA High School (BIAS) and Muhammadiyah I High School. Private Christian high schools are SMA BOPKRI 1, BOPKRI 2, Panghudi Luhur and Stela Duce.

Meanwhile, for universities, the parents will not think twice to send their kids to Gadjah Mada University, UNY, UPN, and ISI. UIN, as a religious university, is not the residents' favorite. Their favorite private universities are UII, UMY, YKPN, USD, and Atma Jaya. In West Java, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Padjadjaran University and the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB) are the favorites. In Jakarta, University of Indonesia (UI) is the most favorite choice.

E. *The Middle-Class' Future*

The residents expect their children will be employees of prestigious banks, BUMN, or private companies. Others want their children to be entrepreneurs, lecturers, employees in the government offices such as Local Government Employees, attorney, Telkom, Pertamina, PT Pos, and Pelni. Only a few expect their children to become educators like teachers at primary to secondary level.

A great job will invite a significant amount of money. It is what Alam Citra residents hope. Money is a measure of one's success in life. Besides that, having transportation facilities such as cars is another thing to achieve. The image of a more prosperous life, of having a good job, good income comes from the middle-class Muslims.

"How can we do infaq, sadaqah, and zakat if we are poor? We must have a good income so that we do it. Hajj and Umrah are also parts of Islam," said W, a member of the Alam Citra study group to me.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the studies above, the actual middle-class Muslims in Alam Citra is no different from other middle classes in Indonesia. Religious behavior becomes an inseparable part of the mechanism of "forming self-identity and differentiation" to poor people. It is clear that the difference between those who are middle class and lower class from their religious behavior.

There are a lot of ways for the middle-class Muslim to form identity through individual pious activities. There is a social bounding motivation with the community outside their bubble because the outside community can trigger social issues. The problems are such as cases of theft, funeral, and other security problems like vandalism.

The residents' professions are far more prestigious compared to the non-residents around. They all want jobs that can buy a house and vehicles. Money is a critical element for residents with various arguments such as zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, as religious motivations. They are closely related to materialistic-world motivation.

About their future, the parents hope their children to get proper jobs. Becoming employees of BUMN, BUMS, office employees such as BNI, BRI, PT Pos, Pelni, and being an entrepreneur is what the parents want.

Everything shows that there are differences in terms of employment, education, and ownership between the middle-class Muslims in residence and the non-residents. This distinction is identity, whether in the form of piety or material. It occurs transparently.

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