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**Living Qur'an and Elderly Piety: A Study of
Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an
Jantiko Matab in Kediri, Indonesia**

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Abstract

This study examines the Living Qur'an phenomenon and its role in shaping religious piety among elderly congregants in two religious groups in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia: Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab. The Living Qur'an concept, as manifested in elderly congregations, represents the embodied and contextual practice of Qur'anic teachings in daily life, fundamentally contributing to individual and collective piety. Through fieldwork utilizing a qualitative methodology informed by Talal Asad's concept of "discursive tradition," this research employs participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis. The anthropological analysis focuses on identifying patterns in Living Qur'an practices among elderly congregants, with particular attention to symbolic reception and sensory engagement in religious practices. The research reveals distinctive manifestations of the Living Qur'an in each group. Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin centers its practice on dhikr (divine remembrance), supplications, and contemplative engagement with Qur'anic verses, fostering spiritual connectivity and emotional resilience. In contrast, Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab emphasizes sustained communal Qur'anic recitation from dawn to nightfall, cultivating devotional practice through extended engagement with sacred text. These complementary approaches demonstrate the versatility of Living Qur'an implementations in enhancing elderly congregants' spiritual well-being. This study contributes to the scholarly discourse on the Living Qur'an among elderly populations, presenting novel insights into Qur'anic reception and pietistic

practices. Furthermore, it establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding religion's role in shaping elderly worldviews while advancing methodological approaches to studying Qur'anic reception in Muslim communities.

Keywords: *Living Qur'an, Elderly Congregants' Piety, Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin, Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab, Religious Practices*

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INTRODUCTION

This research presents a novel analytical perspective on the Living Qur'an phenomenon, specifically examining its manifestation within elderly congregations in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. While existing scholarship has broadly explored the Living Qur'an concept, this study investigates how elderly congregants incorporate Qur'anic teachings into their daily practices and examines the subsequent impact on their spiritual development and quality of life. The research employs Islamic anthropological frameworks, particularly drawing on Talal Asad's (2009) theoretical contributions.

The Living Qur'an has emerged as a crucial paradigm in contemporary Islamic studies, representing a shift from traditional approaches centered on memorization and textual recitation toward lived applications of Qur'anic values (Rafiq, 2021). Recent scholarship by Bazzano (2016) and Nurani et al. (2022) demonstrates how the Living Qur'an strengthens Islamic identity and enriches spiritual experience. However, this study addresses a significant lacuna in current research: the limited investigation of Living Qur'an practices within elderly Muslim communities, particularly in the Indonesian context, with specific attention to dimensions of piety and spiritual stability.

The research advances the hypothesis that Living Qur'an practices within Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab communities simultaneously enhance individual piety and promote spiritual equilibrium, thereby elevating the quality of life among elderly congregants. This hypothesis emphasizes the significance of local traditions in contextualizing and implementing Qur'anic teachings within daily religious practice.

In the Indonesian context, Kediri represents a region with deeply embedded Living Qur'an traditions. Two prominent communities, Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab, exemplify distinct approaches to Qur'anic engagement (Santoso, 2019). Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin conducts regular communal *dhikr* (divine remembrance) sessions, which research indicates substantially benefits elderly participants' mental and spiritual well-being (Akova, 2022). Concurrently, Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab emphasizes Qur'anic recitation and exegesis, providing congregants with comprehensive opportunities for theological engagement and understanding (Wahyudi, 2020).

Methodologically, this study employs qualitative fieldwork informed by Asad's "discursive tradition" framework. Primary data collection encompasses participant observation and in-depth interviews within both communities, supplemented by comprehensive literature review. The analytical framework emphasizes the identification of Qur'anic reception modalities, particularly *dhikr* and communal recitation practices, while systematically evaluating manifestations of congregants' piety. The discursive tradition approach facilitates understanding of how these religious practices are internalized and adapted within specific socio-cultural contexts (Ciesielska et al., 2018).

Research participants comprise elderly congregants from both communities, selected through purposive sampling based on three primary criteria: age exceeding 60 years, sustained participation in *dhikr* or Qur'anic recitation activities, and informed consent for interview participation. These criteria ensure methodological rigor and alignment with research objectives.

This investigation aims to contribute substantively to global scholarship on the Living Qur'an within Muslim communities while advancing academic discourse on Qur'anic reception, symbolic manifestations of piety, and the evolution of Islamic traditions in contemporary contexts.

DISCUSSION

Living Qur'an

Theoretical debate on "Living Qur'an" has been a significant topic in contemporary Islamic studies. The concept of "Living Qur'an" emphasizes the implementation of Qur'an teaching in daily life contextually and in-depth (Saeed & Akbar, 2021). However, the implementation and interpretation of this concept varies in various Muslim communities,

triggering theoretical debate on how Qur'an should be conceived and applied to diverse social context. The concept of "Living Qur'an" originated from academicians' thought emphasizing the importance of seeing Qur'an not only as a sacred text read and memorized but also a life guideline internalized into daily actions (Aji et al., 2021). The pioneer of this research is, among others, Ahmad Rafiq in his dissertation in Temple University entitled "The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: a Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an in a non-Arabic Speaking Community" directing the focus to the reception of Qur'an in non-Arab community. Rafiq criticized atomistic approach to Qur'an seeing each part of Qur'an, including surah, verse or verse fragment to have distinctive meaning inseparable from other context. In his article entitled "*Pembacaan yang Atomistik terhadap Al-Qur'an* (Atomistic Reading on Qur'an)" (Rafiq, 2004), he emphasized the importance of discussing Qur'an in the context of social phenomenon.

On the contrary, contextual approach emphasizes the importance of conceiving Qur'an in the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which it was revealed and applied. This approach sees Qur'an as a living text, the meaning of which develops along with social and cultural changes. This approach's proponents argued that to actually enliven Qur'an, Muslim communities should adjust their teaching with their contemporary context, so that Qur'an teaching keep relevant and applicative (Mattson, 2012).

The debate on "Living Qur'an" not only has theoretical implication but also social implication. How Qur'an is conceived and applied affects Muslims' daily life, including their moral, spiritual, and social aspects. In the context of elderly community in Kediri, the research showed that the implementation of "Living Qur'an" helps improve the congregation's emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. Theoretically, this debate enriches literature about piety and religious community, offers various perspective on how the sacred text can be enlivened in diverse context (Sardar, 2017). Contextual approach in "Living Qur'an" also challenges traditional view on the interpretation of Qur'an and encourages further discussion about this text to keep relevant in modern era.

In addition, this debate also involves the position of symbolization of reception in the discourse of Qur'an Science and *tafsir* (interpretation). Symbolization and typology of reception become important to explain academically to formulate the in-depth methodological concept of each verse of Qur'an comprehended (Saeed, 2014). In this case, the research carried out in Kediri gave insight into how symbol and meaning of Qur'an are

accepted and internalized by Muslim community, being the foundation for developing more contextual and applicative interpretation method. Theoretical debate on "Living Qur'an" reflects complexity in understanding and applying Qur'an in daily life (Khwaja, 2013). Using different (atomistic and contextual) approaches and variation in practice in various communities, the concept of "Living Qur'an" keeps being important topic in contemporary Islam study. This in-depth and contextual research, just like what was carried out in Kediri not only enriches academic literature but also gives practical insight into how Qur'an can be enlivened in various social context and improve the spiritual and social wellbeing of Muslim communities.

Dzikrul Ghofilin Assembly (*Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin*) and *Semaan Jantiko Matab*

In 1964, Gus Miek, a figure respected by his followers, was reported to meet the spiritual figures such as "Prophet Khidir" and "Prophet Ilyas" through supernatural experience (Ibad, 2012). In the meeting, Gus Miek was instructed to perform dhikr rite called Aurot Lailiyah, literally meaning *dhikr* in Arabic at night. In 1965, Aurot Lailiyah was held firstly in Kelurahan Kauman, Tulungagung. Aurot Lailiyah, as explained, involves such elements as *Al-Fatihah*, *Asmaul Husna*, *Ayatul Kursi*, and prayer for *wali* (saints) and *ulamas* throughout world, sent in the form of surah Al-Fatihah. Gus Miek (Usi, 2020) stated that the "elderly *ulamas*" to whom Al-Fatihah is sent by those mentioned in Dzikrul Ghofilin will be our role model in hereafter".

Originally, Aurot Lailiyah was attended by about five congregation members and led directly by Gus Miek. This rite was carried out continuously for five years before continued by his best friends until 1975 (Ibad, 2012). The name "Aurot Lailiyah" was then changed into *Dzikrul Ghofilin*, literally meaning "dhikr for those having forgotten", reminding human beings of limitation and predisposition to forget Allah amid the busy world. The transformation of Aurot Lailiyah into Dzikrul Ghofilin reflected the community's spiritual and social journeys more developing under Gus Miek's direction. Dzikrul Ghofilin not only becomes dhikr rite but also symbolizes the reminder of the presence of Allah in daily life, wherever someone is (Sulaeman, 2018).

The development of Dzikrul Ghofilin is faced with big challenges in getting recognition and support from *kyai besar* (great cleric), just like what occurs in Lirboyo, Ponorogo, Jember, Jombang, and Pasuruan. Nevertheless, Gus Miek could deal with this

challenge with strategy illustrated through the concept of procedure to build the spiritual authority of religious leaders, according to Ismail Fajrie Alatas' theory (Alatas, 2020). The procedure of building the spiritual authority of religious leaders, according to the theory, involves the process in which the religious leaders should pass through a series of procedures to get the people's recognition and legitimacy (Alatas, 2021). In the context of Gus Miek and Dzikrul Ghofilin, this procedure started with an attempt taken by Gus Miek to build relation with religious leaders who are respected and recognized by local community (people).

For example, when Gus Miek moved to Jember, Pasuruan, Kediri, and Magelang by accompanying such figures as KH. Ahmad Shiddiq, KH. Hamid Abdillah, KH. Mundzir, and KH. Dalhar (Ibad, 2010). This step shows that Gus Miek used collaborative strategy with the figures having had spiritual authority and strong effect on the society to expand the effect and recognition of Dzikrul Ghofilin (Setiawan, 2021). Meanwhile, conflict and dispute arising among great clerics (*kyai besar*) are also the part of dynamic in spiritual authority development. Skepticism, envy, or bad prejudice against Gus Miek can be seen as challenge needing to be dealt with in the process of building spiritual authority (Alatas, 2021). Gus Miek should prove that teachings and practice he carries have values and advantages relevant to Islam community at that time.

In 1986, *Semaan Al-Qur'an* (a forum held to read and to listen Qur'an reading) was established using "Jantiko". *Semaan Al-Qur'an* is an activity of reading and listening to Qur'an reading in congregation, while performing compulsory prayers (*sholat wajib*) and other non-compulsory prayers (*sholat sunnah*), starting from Shubuh to khatam Qur'an (reading Qur'an completely). Gus Miek stated that "in Sema'an" there is a reader of Qur'an, Huffazhul Qur'an, and loyal listener of Qur'an (Ariyadi, 2021). As suggested by hadith, both readers and loyal readers of Qur'an get the same reward (*pahala*), even there is an argument confirming that the reward given to the listener is much more because the listener needs more heart, mind, and auditory concentration. The listeners are expected to concentrate their heart and mind in order to get closer to Allah SWT.

Several years later, the term "Mantab" is added to Jantiko. The word "Jantiko" was taken from Javanese language meaning *anti kolik*, meaning the congregation not desperate easily or losing spirit, despite their weakness viewed from economic or mind aspect (fuqoro)(Fuadi, 2022). This proves that although their physical or economic condition was

likely weak, having joined Dzikrul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an, many people did worship diligently. Meanwhile, the word "Mantab" derived from Arabic word "*Mantaba*" meaning those repenting, showing the spirit to keep improving themselves and to get back to the right way (Ulum & Roziqin, 2024). Transformation of Dzikrul Ghofilin and Jantiko Mantab represents spiritual journey and social effect developing continuously under Gus Miek's direction. This also reflects an attempt of disseminating the teachings encouraging togetherness in worship and spirit to keep improving the self and to return to Islam pure teachings.

Gus Miek's sufism teaching was very unique and courage, particularly amid the improvement of *dhikr tarekat* popularity in Indonesia in 1970s. At that time, there were nine Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah (TQN) dissemination centers in Java. If sorted by region, in West Java there were two centers: TQN Suryalaya and TQN Pagentongan Bogor. In Central Java there were three centers: TQN Berjan Purworejo, TQN Mranggen, and TQN As-Shalhiyyah Dawe Kudus. In East Java there were four centers: TQN Rejoso, TQN Cukir, TQN Al-Utsmaniyah Sawah Pulo, and TQN Kencong Kediri. The author added five centers of TQN based on result of Dhofier's research, because they are TQN centers with independent *mursyids* (teachers/mentors) having their distinctive path and members.

Gus Miek could present the teachings of Dzikrul Ghafilin Assembly (thereafter called *Majelis Dzīkruḥ Ghafilin*) and *Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab* as the form of typical *sufism* practice, different from other *tarekat* developing *maqāmat* procedure. Gus Miek explained that *tarekat* in the world is plural, consisting of *tarekat mu'tabarab* and *tarekat ghairu mu'tabarab*. Their implementation also varies; some tarekat are inclusive by restricting their followers from following other *tarekat's* teachings, but some others are open and allow their santris to follow any other *tarekat*.

So many tarekats in the world and particularly Indonesia does not result in the unity of community, their existence instead makes the community fragmented in the presence of inclusive tarekat (Nur & Abdurahman, 2017). The strategy implemented in *Majelis Dzīkruḥ Ghafilin* and *Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab* is to involve almost all *murshid* of tarekat in the world in one dhikr movement aiming to unify the *tarekat* congregation. It is because *Majelis Dzīkruḥ Ghafilin* and *Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab* can be considered as a summary of many *tarekat* and a means of reminding each other aimed at not feeling better

and more superior. This is as suggested by Quraish Shihab that the characteristic of religion is the relation between creature and creator, manifested in the creature's inner (spiritual) attitude appearing in the worship performed. From Quraish Shihab's statement, it can be said that not only religion is vertical in nature, in the sense of only the relation between human beings and God or only limited to worship rite. But religion is also horizontal in nature, meaning that the religion teaches its community how to relate to fellow humans beings and surrounding nature.

Elderly Members of Congregation in Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin and Semaan Jantiko Mantab

In the context of Living Qur'an, Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin offers an in-depth spiritual reality to elderly members of congregation attending this dhikr practice. led by Gus Miek, a unique *sufism* figure, Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin presented an inclusive *sufism* approach open to various tarekat teachings in Islam (Fikri, 2020). Gus Miek created Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin as a response to the split of Islam community due to so many exclusive tarekat. Dzikrul Ghofilin not only becomes a place for practice dhikr, but is also a means of unifying community fragmented previously by the membership of tarekat. This approach reflects Gus Miek's vision about spiritual inclusiveness enabling each individual, without being bond to formal *ba'iat*, to practice dhikr consistently (*istiqamah*) (Sulaeman, 2018). The concept of *ijazab* in Dzikrul Ghofilin becomes an important point, despite more as a spiritual permit than as absolute condition. This indicates that flexibility and adaptability of Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin in accommodating its members' various levels of spiritual engagement. The followers were appealed to practice dhikr with sincerity, without the need for feeling bond to the formal structure of existing tarekat.

The typical characteristic of Gus Miek's teaching is, among others, "*jalan terabas* (shortcut)". Gus Miek taught that there are a variety of ways to go to Allah, and Dzikrul Ghofilin was considered as one of effective shortcuts to get closer to Him (Prasetio, 2020). This concept offers spiritual solution to elders facing physical and emotional challenges in the process toward the happiness hereafter. The elderly members of congregation's experience in Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin indicates the real advantage of this *dhikr* practice. They reported improved soul tranquility, improved faith, and more deeply feeling of being connected to their spirituality. Dhikr is not only a routine worship, but is also a source of

power and happiness in undertaking daily life. In Living Qur'an's perspective, *dhikr* practice in Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin was not only a religious rite but also a process of spiritual transformation bringing blessing and harmony into its followers' life. This reflects an integration of sufism values into daily life context, particularly in meeting spiritual needs of elderlies looking for meaning and tranquility in their old period.

The reality constructed by Gus Miek in creating *majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin* was that the Dzikirul Ghofilin readings are shortcut to get closer to Allah and Dzikirul Ghofilin is a solution to any problems faced by all followers of *Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin*. Gus Miek mentioned that his life journey is *mlaku dalam terabas* (a journey through a shortcut). The shortcut is not defined as merely walking or undertaking life cursorily, but also a human's endeavor to live a life successfully in both world and hereafter. *Jalan terabas* (a shortcut) is the shortest way or the closest way out of a number of ways existing to arrive at a destination (in this case, getting closer to Allah).

Gus Miek had ever said that there are many ways rather than one way to go to Allah. Qur'an calls it *subul* (many ways). Out of so many ways, there are some *terabas* (shortcuts) that can lead an individual to get closer to his/her God more quickly. For an individual to go to God more quickly, according to Gus Miek, he/she should get closer to saints (Allah's lovers). Gus Miek said, *Cedeko karo Gusti Allah* [please, get closer to Allah] (*kun ma'a Allah*), *nek ora iso, cedeko wong sing cedek Gusti Allah* [if you can get closer to Allah, please, get closer to those close to Allah] (*kun ma'a man ma'a Allah*) (Bambang, 2023).

Gus Miek established *Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin* as a unique distinctive spiritual reality in the context of sufism in Indonesia. In his view, Dzikirul Ghofilin was not merely an exclusive tarekat with formal ba'iat, but also more a shortcut to get closer to Allah. The concept of "shortcut" he had developed taught that there are a variety of ways to reach God, but there are also faster and straighter ways, called *jalan terabas* (shortcut) (Khasnan, 2023). This involves not only spiritual aspect but also practical aspect in daily life.

This study reveals that *Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin* group emphasized verily the ritual and spiritual aspects in their daily life. Dhikr, prayer, and full understanding of Qur'an verses are the heart of their routine religious practice. Main informants such as Rokani (2023), Bambang(2023), Nanik Ernawati(2023), and Wahib(2023), constituting the group's active members, confirmed that dhikr practice held together regularly provides inner peace and in-depth spiritual tranquility.

In a direct observation conducted on March 2 to June 19, 2023, we saw how dhikr session was organized in structured manner, started with reading Surah Al-Fatihah and followed with other dhikrs taken from Dzikrul Ghafilin. The members of congregation participated actively in this dhikr, focusing on repeating the sentences exalting Allah. Prayer is also an important practice in the members of congregation's daily life. They pray as the form of in-depth worship and expression of gratitude and a moment of contemplation on their life, rather than a supplication to Allah. These prayers provide a means of expressing individual and collective spirituality in the group.

The appreciation (full understanding) of Qur'an verses is also an essential part of their spiritual life. Through personal contemplation on sacred verses, the members of congregation contemplated the meaning of life and improved their spiritual understanding. Observation on small discussions among the members of congregation shows that this appreciation plays an important role in building strong personal piety. Overall, religious practices in *Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin* not only strengthen spiritual relation to Allah, but also give strong social and emotional supports among its members. They perceived that these practices provide emotional and spiritual stabilities very desirable in dealing with life challenges, particularly in elderlies.

Gus Miek viewed Dzikrul Ghofilin as the solution to any problems his followers encounter. This is not merely a dhikr practice, but a system bringing real benefit both in world and hereafter. Practicing this dhikr routinely and consistently (*istiqamah*), its followers have improvement in soul tranquility and spiritual power, and feel closer to Allah. In *Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin*, Gus Miek puts several famous *sufi* ulamas as guide and role model for his followers such as Rokani(2023), Bambang(2023), Nanik Ernawati(2023), and Wahib(2023). They are considered having perfectness in their worship and the source of inspiration to undertake life well in the world and hereafter. Gus Miek believed that getting closer to the Saints (Allah's lovers) is one of fastest way to get close to Him, and this is reflected on teachings and dhikr practice in this assembly.

The followers of Dzikrul Ghofilin, the majority of which are elderlies, encounter in-depth transformation in their life. They perceive that through this dhikr they could find inner tranquility, deal with restlessness, and find clearer life direction. Gus Miek emphasized that Dzikrul Ghofilin not only taught religious rite but also developed mindset and way of life enabling its followers to achieve spiritual success more easily.

Socially, Dzikrul Ghofilin created an inclusive and open community in which all levels of society, including elderlies, can benefit from it without stringent formal borders, just like those in traditional tarekat. This reflects Gus Miek's vision on sufism that is adaptive and relevant to time challenges, in which spirituality values can be integrated into daily life without separating material world from spiritual search. Informants such as Rokani, Bambang, Nanik Ernawati, and Wahib, constituting the loyal followers of Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin, gave their personal perspective on spiritual experience and benefit they got from this dhikr practice. They described how dhikr in Dzikrul Ghofilin provide inner tranquility, remove restlessness, and strengthen their faith in facing daily life. Thus, Dzikrul Ghofilin is not only a religious practice, but also a community creating spiritual and social identity for its followers. This reality, constructed based on Gus Miek's thought on *jalan terabas* (shortcut) and respect for *sufi ulamas*, enriches the understanding on Living Qur'an in the context of modern life in Indonesia.

This is different from from Sema'an Jantiko Mantab, in which the data found through this research described that Sema'an Jantiko Mantab, as a rite in Dzikrul Ghofilin, has in-depth significance for its congregation members, particularly elderlies. This rite is considered as a profession to communicate transcendently with Allah, enabling them to get closer to Allah (*taqarrub bi Allah*) and reflecting their spiritual life. This process is accomplished through Dzikrul Ghofilin readings and other practices done in the ritual procession.

Respondents, particularly elderlies like Rokani(2023), Bambang(2023), Nanik Ernawati(2023), and Wahib(2023), attended Sema'an Jantiko Mantab with strong internal motivation. They searched for meaning in their spiritual life, as suggested by Rokani thinking of the need for preparing for hereafter and the hope for Allah's forgiveness. Malik who is interested in the peculiarity of Dzikrul Ghofilin practice told by *kyai* figures said similarly. The participants thought that the participation in this rite not only gives soul tranquility and inner peace, but also a means of getting blessing from *aulya'*, particularly Gus Miek.

Normatively, elderlies defined participation in Sema'an Jantiko Mantab as an important part of additional worship to support their spiritual improvement. Their motivation lies on the wish to strengthen their relation to Allah and to prepare for the hereafter life, as suggested by Wahib feeling that his life has been enough to suffice the

secular need, and now focuses on improving worship. In the context of Living Qur'an, the Sema'an Jantiko Mantab rite is not only a religious practice, but also an in-depth endeavor to develop and to increase the spiritual experience of congregation members, particularly elderlies. This rite not only becomes a space for reflection and *taqarrub bi Allah*, but also a means of strengthening *silaturahim* tie and building a solid community in finding spiritual truth and self-authenticity.

In the context of Living Qur'an, Sema'an Jantiko Mantab also shows that religious practice is not only limited to formal rite, but also involves strong social and communal dimensions (Aji et al., 2021). The members of congregation, particularly elderlies, attended this event not only to get personal spiritual benefit but also to strengthen the bond to broader community. This is reflected on the participation of those coming from many regions, even from outside town, in attending this ritual procession together. In addition to being a worship rite, the Sema'an Jantiko Mantab is a moment to celebrate togetherness in building *ukhuwah islamiyah* (brotherhood in Islam). The members of congregation previously not knowing each other have an opportunity of seeing, knowing, and building good relationship (*silaturahim*) with each other. This creates an environment supporting them to strengthening each other in their spiritual journey.

In more depth, Sema'an Jantiko Mantab is also a means of understanding fully (appreciating) esthetical values and spiritual cultures expressed through poems by Gus Miek. These poems not only raises the topics of hereafter and forgiveness, but also is a means of delivering prayer and hope to Allah, as expressed in khatmil Qur'an prayer being the part of this ritual end. Thus, Sema'an Jantiko Mantab is not only a formal worship rite, but also a medium to strengthen the spiritual quality and the relation to God, and to build communities supporting each other in searching for the meaning of life and preparing for hereafter. This is in line with the concept of Living Qur'an associating religious experience with daily life and broader social life. From the description above, it can be concluded that the meaning of participation in the activities of Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab varies, including among others, to get closer to Allah, to arrange the life in the world and hereafter for those practicing it, and to make life more meaningful by practicing it consistently (*istiqamah*) and to build *ukhuwah islamiyah* among the fellow followers of Majelis Dzikirul Ghofilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab.

Discursive Tradition of Piety Created by Living Qur'an Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab

In the frame of Talal Asad's discursive tradition, the religious practice of elderly followers in Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab indicates how Qur'an-and-Hadith-based reasoning is translated into different but complementary daily lives. These two groups reflect flexibility and diversity in Islam tradition and enrich the Islam community's ways of developing piety and spiritual stability. Dhikr and prayer practices in Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin, and Qur'an reading and appreciation in Jantiko Mantab are concrete examples of how Islam basic texts can be interpreted and applied to various social and cultural contexts, and create different but complementary forms of piety (Eko et al., 2019).

Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin tended to emphasize dhikr and prayer as main practice in daily life. Dhikr, constituting the repetition of Allah's names and prayer based on Qur'an and Hadith's teaching, establishes direct relationship between individual and God. This practice reflects Islam community-typical reasoning referring to basic texts, in accordance with Asad's view (Asad, 2009). Gus Miek, as the founder of *Majelis* (Assembly), introduced the concept of "*jalan terabas* (shortcut)" referring to the shortcut to Allah. This concept emphasizes the importance of text-based interpretation and reasoning in creating religious practices that can be followed by the members of congregation.

On the other hand, Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab emphasizes Qur'an reading and in-depth appreciation. The practice of *Semaan* (listening Qur'an reading thoroughly) enables the members of congregation to contemplate the meaning of verses in depth. This reflects the importance of Qur'an as the main source in developing Islam community's piety and specific mindset. Reading and appreciating Qur'an verses, the members of congregation improve their spiritual knowledge and then strengthen their emotional and spiritual stabilities.

Talal Asad emphasized that Islam should be conceived as a discursive tradition, where its adherents always attempt to legitimize their religious practice by referring to the legitimate authority (Scott & Hirschkind, 2006). In an analysis on the elderly members of congregation in Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab, we can see how this concept of discursive tradition is applied to their daily life practice. These two groups show

a different way of implementing the concept of "Living Qur'an." Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin used dhikr and prayer as basic method, while Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab focused on reading and comprehending Qur'an text. In Asad's perspective, this shows variation in Islam discursive tradition, where both groups associate themselves with basic texts in different ways (Asad, 2015).

In analyzing *sufism* tradition practiced by the elderly followers of Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab using Talal Asad's perspective, we should understand how they legitimize and authenticate their religious practices by referring to authoritative sources, Qur'an and Hadith. Asad emphasized that Islam is a discursive tradition always leading its adherents to find the right form of worship and the clear purpose of their religious practices (Sacks, 2018). The elderly followers in Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab always achieve the high sufism level through the implementation of their comprehension on the messages of Qur'an. The practice of *taqarub ilallah* (getting closer to Allah) by means of worship, *mardatillah* (attempting to get Allah's *ridha*), *al-mahabbah* (loving Allah), and *al-ma'rifat* (knowing Allah) are the concrete forms of their endeavor in embodying in-depth comprehension of Islamic teachings (Ibad, 2012).

To comprehend Islam and Muslim community, according to Asad, the researchers must see the role of Islam community's typical reasoning based on Qur'an and Hadith (Hirschkind, 2006). In this context, the elderly followers of these two assemblies show how they practice Islamic teachings through reasoning that refers to the authoritative sources. To them, Qur'an is not only a Holy Book read, appreciated, and interpreted, but also a guidance for daily actions (Mattson, 2012). Qur'an reading applied by these elderly members of congregation has three main objectives:

- **As worship:** Reading Qur'an as the form of worship encouraging them to read as much as possible. This indicates the in-depth spiritual appreciation and the attempt of getting closer to Allah.
- **As a Guideline:** Reading Qur'an as a guidance ensuring the clear meaning of spelling. This describes how they associate their religious practice with authoritative text to ascertain legitimacy and authenticity.

- **As a means of justifying:** Reading Qur'an as a means of justifying to support the spirit in dealing with varying situations. This reflects how they seek for emotional and spiritual supports from the sacred text.

Practicing Qur'an teachings in daily life, the elderly followers translated theological system into the expression of concrete behavior. Asad stated that Islam tradition is not static but is able to adapt to the present demand without losing continuity with the past. The practices done by Majelis Dzikrul Ghafilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab indicate their flexibility and ability to respond to the actual needs while keeping tradition originality.

The discursive tradition indicated by these two assemblies confirms that Islam is a dynamic tradition, capable of transforming and adapting to the changing social context while keeping authenticity and legitimacy. The process of seeking for legitimacy and authenticity in religious practices, according to Asad, involves the attempt of finding *ittisaliyyah* (continuity) to the past' authority (Alatas, 2020). These two groups, through their practices, show how they refer to the past precedent to legitimize their practice today. Both dhikr and *semaan* have strong anchor in Islamic intellectual tradition, accepted by Muslim community during several generations. In addition to looking back, Islamic tradition also has a capability of responding to the demand in the present and the future, indicating that tradition is not static. In this context, Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab show flexibility and capability of transforming. Although they root strongly in the past's texts and practices, they also adjust their practice with social context and actual needs.

This Asad's view contrasts Islamic tradition to Western view, particularly the one suggested by Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1973), often viewing tradition as something static and in contradiction with reason; even he stated that tradition is a product of symbol. Tradition in Islam, on the contrary, is dynamic and can change along with time without losing its authenticity and continuity to the past. Religious symbols, according to Asad, cannot function by themselves. These symbols have efficacy only when there is an actor playing them. Religious anthropology in general and Islamic anthropology in particular, according to Asad, not only see how a religious symbol generates faith and religious practice but also see how powers in social relation make symbols function. Thus, we must see how powers are exercised or make the question of power.

Asad emphasized that there is no pure symbol that is effective; effectiveness and religiosity are always constructed by the actor having power. In addition to seeing how

powers are exercised by the actors to create Islamic discourse and practice, anthropologist should also see the contestation between the owner of power (Asad, 2013). Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Sema'an Jantiko Mantab are concrete example of how Islam tradition can adapt and transform. This indicates that tradition is not a declination against the change, but a process of negotiation between the past's practice and the present's demand. In Asad's perspective, the researchers must see how Islamic discourses and practices in these elderly followers (members of congregation) are connected to the past's precedent and transform to adapt to the actual demand. Dhikr and prayer in Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and *semaan Al-Qur'an* (Qur'an listening) in Jantiko Mantab show how this discursive tradition function, create spiritual piety and stability relevant to the present need and context.

This indicates that the elderly followers of Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab have a unique different way in applying the concept of "Living Qur'an" to develop their piety. Here is the contextual analysis on how these two groups apply five dimensions of religiosity: ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential.

1. Belief (ideological) dimension: This dimension contains expectations where religious people hold tightly on certain theological point of view and believe in the truth of the doctrines. In Islam religion, the belief dimension can be equated with Islam *akidah* (creed), indicating the extent to which Muslims believe in fundamental and dogmatic teachings. The activity of *semaan Al-Qur'an* (Qur'an listening) involving *hafiz* (the ones memorizing Qur'an) reading 30 (thirty) juz completely in Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab is not only a religious rite but also an in-depth experience and real implementation of "Living Qur'an" concept. Through this activity, the elderly followers can strengthen their belief, enrich religious knowledge, feel in-depth spiritual experience, and practice Qur'an values in daily life (Asad, 2010). This practice proves that Qur'an can be relevant and meaningful source of inspiration and life guidance, particularly in building piety and inner peace in elder age.
2. Worship or Religious (Ritualistic) Practice: This dimension involves worship behavior, obedience, and any things done by people to show their commitment to the religion they adhere to. These religious practices consist of two important classes: ritual and obedience. Reading 30 juz of Qur'an completely in turn is not only a rite but also a concrete form of practice (implementation) dimension. The followers not only listen to

but also contemplate the meaning of each verse read. This experience motivates them to apply Qur'an teachings in their daily life. For example, the teachings of justice, affecting (love) and virtue can be internalized and practiced in daily interaction more easily. Listening has epistemological value different from Western ocular-centric epistemology tending to consider that listening is an inferior sensory endeavor (Enayat, 2017). In *Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab*, listening to Qur'an reading together from shubuh to night is the main activity. This process of listening is not only a passive action but also an in-depth active sensory endeavor. The elderly followers involve all of their senses to contemplate each verse read, in turn strengthening their spiritual relation to Allah.

3. **Appreciation and Experience (Experiential) Dimension:** Moments of listening to Qur'an reading is also an in-depth spiritual experience to the followers. Sensation and feeling arising when listening to the sacred verses read in *tartil* (right and clear) way often brings the followers or the members of congregation into solemn and contemplative circumstance (Bazzano, 2016). This experience strengthens their relation to Allah and improves their appreciation of Qur'an. In *Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin* and *Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab*, the activity of listening to Qur'an reading (*semaan Al-Qur'an*) carried out together has in-depth meaning. The members of congregation, majority elderly, assemble to listen to Qur'an read by *hafiz*. This activity not only gives them inner tranquility but also strengthens social and spiritual bond among the members of assembly.
4. **Religious Knowledge (Intellectual) Dimension:** This dimension refers to a hope that people adhering to religion have minimum knowledge on basic beliefs, rites, scriptures, and traditions (Asad, 2010). In *Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin*, religious knowledge is acquired through lectures, Qur'an reading and verse appreciation. This knowledge involves an in-depth understanding on *akidah* (creed) *fiqh* (Islamic law), and *sufism*. Religious education in this assembly aims to strengthen belief and religious practice of its members. The activity of *semaan Al-Qur'an* in *Jantiko Mantab* also plays an important role in enriching the members of congregation's religious knowledge. Through listening to and understanding Qur'an reading, they get an opportunity of improving their understanding on the messages contained in the Scripture. This is in

line with intellectual dimension emphasizing the importance of having in-depth knowledge on religious teachings.

5. Practice (Consequential) Dimension: This dimension refers to identifying the causes of an individual's religious belief, practice, experience, and knowledge from day to day (Asad, 2000). In Islam, experience is equated to *akhlak* (noble character). The implementation in Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin can be seen in its members' daily behavior reflecting spiritual and moral values taught. The assembly's members indicate the piety through such actions as helping their fellows, giving alms, and maintaining good relation with others. Meanwhile, in Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab, the implementation of religious teaching is manifested into social behavior reflecting Qur'an' moral values. The group's members attempt to apply honesty, justice, love, and other values in daily interaction. They build a harmonious community supporting each other, reflecting piety achieved from their spiritual learning and experience.

From the description above, it can be concluded that the deeds of elderly followers of Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab in daily life are not only seen from one dimension, but from all dimensions: belief, worship, appreciation, religious knowledge and experience, in which all of dimensions should relate to each other in creating piety in their daily life. This is based on a consciousness that every Muslim thinks, behaves, and acts as instructed by Islam teachings stating that in doing economic, social, political and any other activities, Muslim communities are instructed to do so in the attempt of worshipping Allah so that that can act perfectly.

In addition, the phenomena of these two groups indicate that the concept of "Living Qur'an" can be applied in different way but still exerts significant positive impact on the life of elderly followers. The practices performed in Majelis Dzikirul Ghafilin and Semaan Al-Qur'an Jantiko Mantab prove that the piety can be built using various approaches, whether spiritual rite or moral value learning and implementation. These two groups successfully improve the elderly followers' quality of life, either personally or socially, despite their age in the end of life. Through "Living Qur'an" practice, the elderly members of congregation (followers) in these two groups find peace, life meaning, and better social relation, all of which contribute to their welfare overall.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the distinctive implementations of the Living Qur'an concept within Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin and Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, illuminating its profound impact on elderly congregants' religious practice and spiritual development. The two communities exhibit contrasting yet complementary approaches to embodying Qur'anic teachings. Majelis Dzikrul Ghofilin emphasizes contemplative practices through *dhikr* (divine remembrance), supplication, and Qur'anic verse meditation, fostering robust spiritual connections and emotional resilience. Conversely, Sema'an Al-Qur'an Jantiko Matab cultivates devotional practice through sustained communal Qur'anic recitation extending from dawn to nightfall, facilitating deep engagement with sacred text through intensive listening and comprehension.

The auditory engagement practiced within Jantiko Matab reveals an epistemological framework that transcends conventional Western visual-centric paradigms. This approach to sacred listening constitutes a comprehensive sensory engagement, enabling elderly congregants to achieve profound contemplation of recited verses, thereby strengthening their divine connection. These findings demonstrate the versatility of Living Qur'an implementations in enhancing elderly congregants' spiritual well-being and quality of life.

This investigation advances academic discourse by expanding the theoretical understanding of the Living Qur'an through detailed analysis of symbolic Qur'anic reception and its influence on religious praxis. The application of Talal Asad's discursive tradition framework illuminates the nuanced dimensions of Qur'anic reception within localized contexts. The qualitative methodological approach, incorporating participant observation and in-depth interviews, facilitates comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic reception practices, revealing the complex dynamics of symbolic engagement within both communities.

The study acknowledges certain limitations, primarily its geographic focus on two communities within Kediri. Future research opportunities include comparative analyses of similar communities across different regions and investigation of Living Qur'an practices across diverse age demographics. Additional scholarly inquiry is warranted to examine the relationship between symbolic Qur'anic reception and pietistic practices, potentially

yielding broader insights into the contextualization of Qur'anic teachings across varied cultural settings. This research thus provides both theoretical contributions to academic discourse and practical implications for enhancing elderly well-being through Living Qur'an implementation.

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