
Another Meaning Of *Ziarah Kubur* In Madura

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Abstract

*In this article I give another meaning of *ziarah kubur* (visiting tombs) always suggested as animistic way because some scholars always question is it suitable for Islam or not. Specifically I will study the worldview of maduranese muslims perceiving death as represented in oral tradition, called *syi'iran* (poem). Leaving the dominant World Religion paradigm and analyzing it using Indigenous Religion Paradigm by applying "personhood" concept like scholars who studied Indigenous Religion, it can be seen that there is interpersonal relation between whom alive and dead because the dead still has human attribute. Also, it is because they are still interdependent and share each other although one of them was death as represented in the poem. So, it can be concluded that the practice of *ziarah* is to recontextualize the relation.*

Keywords: Meaning, Ziarah Kubur, Madura

INTRODUCTION

Ziarah, a term from Arabic, means visiting, *kubur* means tomb. In Indonesia when they want to say *ziarah kubur*, they just say "*ziarah*" that usually refers to religious practice visiting some tombs of families or religious figures. Many muslims in Indonesia practice it. In my hometown, for example, my parents invite me to visit some tombs of families and teachers. This practice mostly is done when after praying Idul Adha or Idul Fitri. So, in Madura, in my hometown, mostly people do such practices: they firstly visit the tombs of their families. Secondly, they meet their lived families. Then, they visit the tombs of their teachers, especially the Kiai before visit the alive Kiai.

The practices of visiting tomb may happen in other places, and also academically many *scholars* have attempted to interpret what the practices mean. Reading some articles, mostly the meanings are (1) to pray, (2) to remember that we are going to death, (3) to get

barakah (blessings) or (4) to ask something from the dead. Whoever the dead visited mostly share similar meanings of one or two of the meanings. In addition, they sometimes consider the practice as the acculturation or assimilation of Islam and previous tradition.

For example, in a thesis entitled “Tradisi *Ziarah* Kubur Masyarakat Betawi Pada Makam Muallim KH. M. Syafi’i Hadzami Kampung Dukuh Jakarta Selatan” written by Chaerul Anwar, tells some common understanding of *Ziarah*.¹ Anwar concluded that the practice is the assimilation of Islam and previous tradition before Islam.² Also, he explained that the purpose of who do *ziarah* is to pray, to get blessing, to remember the fate of death.³

In short, mostly many scholars only deal with the meaning of *ziarah* according to World Religion paradigm, especially Islam. It is because the research question of who interested in *ziarah* generally ask the purpose and the practice of *ziarah* whether suitable to Islam or not. Such discussions are common in some higher education or in common understandings. To be clearer, i will list other examples of the *ziarah* research below:

- a. Eka Ratna Asri Salamatul Umah entitled “Studi Terhadap Motivasi *Ziarah* Kubur pada Masyarakat Tegalsari di Makam K.H. Hasan Besari” from Islamic State University of Ponorogo, studied about the perception, the purpose and practice of *ziarah* whether suitable to Islam or not.⁴
- b. Ahmad Aminuddin entitled “*Ziarah* Makam K.H. Ali Mas’ud di Pagerwejo Sidoarjo from Islami State University Sunan Ampel, found that the meanings of *ziarah* is to pray of getting solutions of problems in life like economy, psychology and family.⁵
- c. Muhammad Alfatih Suryadilaga, entitled “Living Hadits dalam Tradisi Sekar Makam,” a thesis also published in a Journal of Ar-Risalah, questioned whether the practice of

¹ Chaerul Anwar, *Tradisi Ziarah Kubur Masyarakat Betawi Pada Makam Muallim K.H. Syafi’i Hadzami Kampung Dukuh Jakarta Selatan*, (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah. 2007), p. 66.

² Chaerul Anwar, *Tradisi Ziarah Kubur...*, p. 64.

³ Chaerul Anwar, *Tradisi Ziarah Kubur...*, p. 56.

⁴ Eka Ratna Sari Salamatul Ummah, *Studi Terhadap Motivasi Ziarah Kubur pada Masyarakat Tegalsari di Makam K.H. Hasan Besari*, (Ponorogo: STAIN Ponorogo. 2010), p. 5.

⁵ Ahmad Aminuddin, *Ziarah Makam K.H. Ali Mas’ud di Pagerwejo Sidoarjo*, (Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel, 2015), p. 72.

ziarah in Penembahan Senopati Kotagede Yogyakarta accords to Hadith or not. Also, he saw that the practice is a syncretism of Islam and pre-Hindu and Hindu.⁶

Indeed, there are many literatures of *ziarah* and understandings of the practice as I have shown are similar for Muslims in any parts of Indonesia. However, today we should rethink the paradigm that may be there is another meaning of the practice. It is because mostly the interpretations are hierarchical; Islam is more superior than any practices not included in Islam. The interpretations are mostly whether the practice Islamic or not. Don't we question whom mostly the people visit and what kinds of relations between who alive and the dead are. Thus, such kind of questions will lead to other meanings of the practice. Also, it can give more complete meanings of *ziarah*.

As one of my comments, if I see the arguments seeing that the practice of *ziarah* in Indonesia is an acculturation and syncretism, indeed the practice of *Ziarah* has existed since Islam in the earlier era. The practices were documented in some Hadith of Prophet Muhammad. So, can't we say those term again? Therefore, in this article I want to comment the common understandings of *ziarah* and add new understanding of *ziarah* based on the worldview of the death in my hometown to see the other meanings focusly through maduranese oral tradition, *syi'iran* (poem) by Aminullah Murad telling about death.

DISCUSSION

Critiques to Common Understanding of *Ziarah Kubur*

Many scholars studying *ziarah Kubur* always questioning whether the practice is Islamic or not because they still think the practice is animistic. For example, Suryadilaga in the end of his article, he still has understanding that the practice is animistic way mixed with Islam.⁷ Now clearly enough that the ways they understanding mostly are Islamic centered, or in general they mostly emphasize on World Religion paradigm. If we only use one understanding by always questioning "is it Islamic way or not?", so there will be other meanings of *ziarah* that are misrepresented.

⁶ Muhammad Alfatih Suryadilaga, "Living Hadist Sekar Makam" Ar Risalah Volume 13. 2013, p. 170.

⁷ Muhammad Alfatih Suryadilaga, "Living Hadist Sekar Makam"..., p. 171.

Indeed, there are some critiques to the dominant paradigm because sometimes it leads to standardize which one is Islam and which one is not, which is religion and which one is not. For example, James L Cox argues that World Religion Paradigm is problematic because it leads to marginalize indigenous religions (commonly people called them primitive) as a separate category of World Religion.⁸ It is important to note, that the paradigm becomes main tradition in religious studies like what I found scholars studying “*ziarah*.”

In details to strengthen his arguments, Cox refers to some scholars who have tried to break the hegemonic paradigm in religious studies, especially Tomoko Masuzawa, a scholar analyzing the term “world religion,” a western classification in a study of religion, and arguing that the paradigm leads to what is religion and what is not: moreover, it also leads to essentialist. Citing Masuzawa, it is said that “by creating systems for classifying the so-called great world faiths, scholars intended primarily ‘to distinguish the West from the rest.’”⁹ So, religion like Christianity, Judaism, Islam is the great faiths and the religion that is not similar to the religions is not. Then, Masuzawa clearly contends that the world religions paradigm advocates with the error of describing ‘religion’ as an essential unity; a universal core and a strongest perception about religion that is popular and continue in the academic study of religion or in the real social life.¹⁰

In Indonesia itself to see how World Religion Paradigm, we can refer to “Java, Indonesia and Islam” by Mark Woodward. The book written between 1985 to 2010 provided how the impact of the paradigm in Indonesia, especially in Java. The paradigm can be seen from how state of Indonesia defines religion in which also understood by its citizens. Indonesia defines that religion should believe in oneness or the unity of God, have Holy book and revealed by prophet.¹¹ So, Indonesia officially then recognized Islam, Protestant Christianity, Roman Catholic Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. Therefore, the impacts of the hegemonic paradigm make people think that everything that is not similar to what the state say is not called religion.

⁸ James L Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, (Great Britain: MPG Books Ltd. Bodmin, Cornwall, 2007), p. 33.

⁹ James L Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous...*, p. 33.

¹⁰ James L Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous...*, p. 46.

¹¹ Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, (London: Springer, 2010), p. 7.

In clearer analysis, these next passages are the important notes from Woodward who studying Java about that the paradigm.¹² Firstly, it has spread the categorization of what included as religion is religion (agama) and what is not as religion as culture (kebudayaan) using the Islamic centered paradigm; and it is a fatal analytic error. Secondly, showing argument in his book, he clearly said that “it is argued that this is what led Clifford Geertz and others to seriously misunderstand and misrepresent Javanese Islam – accepting the definition of “Islam” proposed by neo-fundamentalists as an analytic category.”¹³ Also, some indigenous religions are redefined as variant of Hinduism. In addition, the religion that is not religion is not only called irrational but also dangerous and evil. Even, used in political interest, those who don’t have religion were accused as communist.

Thus, in this context, it implies that many scholars who studying *ziarah* clearly use this paradigm. It is because they always question the Islamic value in the practice and consider it as the as pre Hinduism and practice of Hinduism. Similar to the bad categorization of religion and culture, sometimes *ziarah* are also considered as heretic (*bid'ah*), sinful even evil. It is clear now about the impact of the dominant paradigm.

Another note to the scholar studying *ziarah* is when they always refer to term “animism.” They also always say that the practice of *ziarah* is animistic like what Suryadilaga argued. In fact, the term also gives bad impact in the religious studies and in the real life as Nurit Bird David argued in his article "Animism" Revisited Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology. According to him, the category of animate-inanimate by Tylorians drives to think the primitive or indigenous people as delirious as well as like a child when perceiving their world.¹⁴ Therefore, the practices of indigenous people are called irrational as he argued that categorization of animistic belief is the category of “mistake”.¹⁵

Reflecting to the other meaning of “animism”, we should not categorize what is animate and inanimate. We cannot simply accuse who visit the dead or who visit a big stone for example as irrational category or not included in religion. So, we should know more about them how the way they are like people studying indigenous religions who do

¹² Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam...*, p. 6-7.

¹³ Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam...*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Nurut Bird-david, “*Animism Revisited: Personhood, Environment and Relational Epistemology*” Current Anthropology Volume 40. The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. 1999, p. 70.

¹⁵ Nurut Bird-david, “*Animism Revisited: Personhood...*”, p. 71.

not impose the dominant and destructive paradigm of World Religion. It is because what they do also has certain meanings.

The last note, there is something paradox when they who studying argues that *ziarah* is a syncretism of Islam with pra Hinduism and Hinduism. They say, for example that there is mixing between animistic ways and Islam. However, they always quote hadith (one of main sources in Islam) that prophet supported the practice of *Ziarah*. Moreover, in analytically speaking the religions precedes Islam in Muhammad era is Judaism and Christianity that were not animistic. In other words, Islam practices and teaches *ziarah* as the hadits says that Prophet Muhammad said: I have ever prohibited you to visiting tombs, and visit them.¹⁶

Other Meanings of *Ziarah*

To find other meanings of *ziarah*, I will do like what Samsul Ma'rif did in his research of indigenous religion, the Ammatoa in Bulukumba referring to Hollowel, Morisson and Bird David.¹⁷ The scholars has broken down the paradigm of World Religion and has given complete sense of their presenting of their subject on indigenous religions that are always considered as animistic, irrational, sinful or heretic as well. The dominant perspective therefore has also been similar in seeing the practice of *ziarah*, especially in my home town that I will analyze later without imposing the dominant perspective as represented by Islam.

Before analyzing, I will give some overviews of them in how they see and present religious practice of some indigenous religions. For example, Hallowell who also synthesized by Morrison when studying native Americans and also referred by Ma'arif when studying ammatoans promotes challenging the dominant paradigm and arguing that it will misdirect in understanding other religions, specifically indigenous religion like Indian or Native Americans religion, Ojibwa who he studied. By his study, it can be found that worldview of Ojibwa, the way of how Ojibwa seeing themselves in relation to all else is

¹⁶ This hadith is always quoted by scholars studying ziarah

¹⁷ Samsul Ma'arif, "Being A Muslims in Animistic Way" Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies Vol. 52. 2014, p. 152 & Samsul Ma'arif, "Ammatoan Indigeneous Religion and Forest Conservation" Worldviews 19. Brill.com. 2015, p. 145.

different from the common.¹⁸ Usually, people see themselves only have relationship to only human, but Ojibwa does not, as it is elaborated in “persons” concept.

For example, the term “grandfather” in Ojibwa cannot only refer to human but also to persons of other- than-human that can refer to sources of power.¹⁹ According to his findings, the sun, the stone and the thunder and so forth not only considered as animated entity, but also considered having attributes of persons. Furthermore, Ojibwa also do not recognize the animate and inanimate category. However, it must be noted that the things that we call inanimate becomes animate if the Ojibwa interacts to them; and the interaction must imply reciprocal principles.²⁰ Thus, other than humans are persons because they have human attributes, interact and give benefit or share each other.

In addition, Bird-David exploring his work of hunter-gatherer Nayaka in South India, she shifts the meaning of their called-animistic practice into sufficient meaning dealing with the people of Nayaka. She then depicts Animism as relational epistemology. It is the relation that can be seen when the Nayaka celebrates animistic performance involving the visiting of superpersons (*she call devaru, a person with extra power/have relation*) who appear through trance and dance or make their voices heard.²¹ The people regard these superpersons as friends and relatives and often address and refer to them by kinship terms. In addition, it must be noted as she emphasizes that it is not only just relationship but also sharing relationship between fellow of Nayaka and other member of species, so that she defines person as one whom we share with.²²

Samsul Ma'arif in his article “Ammatoan Indigeneous Religion and Forest Conservation” and “Being a Muslim in Animistic Ways” applies the concept of “personhood” like what Hollowel, Morisson and Bird-David in seeing indigenous activities of Ammatoan community in Bulukumba, Indonesia to see how ammatoan people relate to non-human beings, especially dealing with their forest. He challenged perspectives of Ammatoan considered by scholars as animistic by relational epistemology by the three scholars, especially Bird-David in which it will get meaningful life or balanced cosmology if

¹⁸ A. Irving Hallowell, *Ojibawa Ontology, Behavior, and World view*. 2002, p. 19.

¹⁹ A. Irving Hallowell, *Ojibawa Ontology, Behavior...*, p. 21-23.

²⁰ A. Irving Hallowell, *Ojibawa Ontology, Behavior...*, p. 45.

²¹ Nurut Bird-david, “*Animism Revisited: Persoonhood...*”, p. 78.

²² Nurut Bird-david, “*Animism Revisited: Persoonhood...*”, p. 73.

there is interpersonal relationship between human and non-human that is ethical, responsible and reciprocal as concluded below.

Based on their religious cosmology, Ammatoans orient themselves to a point where mutually responsible and beneficial intersubjective relations between them and other beings is necessary. Non-human beings, commonly glossed as “nature,” are not only valuable, but more importantly are considered to be persons/ subjects constitutive of intersubjective relations and demanding equal respect. The Ammatoans various rituals and everyday practices are meant to re-contextualize intersubjectiverelations, re-assure the well-being of rupanna²³, and so to create balance in the cosmos.²⁴

Reflecting to the scholars above who don't recognized the dichotomy between human and non-human, animate and inanimate or supernatural and natural. In this essay, therefore I want to see another meaning of *ziarah* in Madura generally, especially in my home town based on what they see about *ziarah* as the way they are. I don't want to raise question “is it suitable for Islam or not?” like Ma'arif did but, I want to raise question “why do the maduranese who are mostly Muslims visit the tomb?” Because *ziarah* means visiting the dead, so that we have to find how they see the dead. Thus, I have to overview how maduranese perceiving the dead.

Indeed, the worldview of maduranese about death is represented in a *syi'iran* (spoken poem) that is an oral tradition mostly circulates and closes for maduranese and contains some educative meanings on death.²⁵ The poem is read in rhyme but less exists now. However, interestingly now I found a maduranese who recorded his *syi'iran*. So, reading the poem will let us know how maduranese understand about death. Here below the *syi'iran* recorded in video by Aminullah Murad from Pamekasan.

Bab: Roh Amit Dhe' Allah Ta'ala Chapter: Telling Soul Seeks Permission of
Kaanguy Ngoladhi Badhan Se Badhan God to See the Body in the Tomb
E Dhalam Kobur

(1)

Sampona tello areh

(1)

After third day of his/her death

²³ Ammatoans categorize (non) human beings as rupanna.

²⁴ Samsul Ma'arif, “*Ammatoan Indigeneous Religion...*”, p. 156.

²⁵ (a) harassment of demons when sakaratul maut (dying moment), (b) the depiction of dying moment, (c) The depiction in a cemetery, (d) resurrection after death, (e) the depiction of hell and heaven. Read Haeruss, *Syi'ir Madura Media Kontemplasi dan Laku Dzikir di Madura*. Lontar Madura.com. 2011.

Roh amit adu Gusteh	A soul seeks permission to God
Nyoonna edzin dhe' kobur	To ask permission of going to tomb
Nenggue badhan se ancor	To see the shattered body
(2)	(2)
Teros pas mangkat roh na	Then the soul come to the tomb
Sambi gancang pajelenna	With quickly walking
Roh ngabes dari jhau	The soul sees in distance
Dha' badhan se ampon bau	To the stink body
(3)	(3)
Elong colok gegger dhere	From his/her nose and mouth, blood flows
Roh nangis epakajhe	The soul then cries loudly
Sambi ngocak dha' badhanna	Asking the body
Apa engak dha' dunnyana	Whether remembering his life or not?
(4)	(4)
Enga' enga' badhan sengko'	I remember
Area kenangan tako'	This is a frightening place
Ben pole kennengan sossa	And a difficult place
Padha badha sossa kasta	Full of fear and regret
(5)	(5)
Bile dhapa' lema are	After five days,
Ka kobur pas entar pole	The soul goes the tomb again
Roh ngabes e jauna	The soul see the body in distance
Badhan pon banyak ola'na	The body is full of maggots
(6)	(6)
Ola' ngakan dha' dagingnga	The maggots eats the flesh of body
Badhan kare tolangnga	Only bones is in rest
Pas nanges pole roh na	The soul cries again
Cek melassa soarana	With poor sound
(7)	(7)
Sambi ngoca' dha' badhanna	Speaking to the body
Aduh be'na ma' pastena	Oh this is your fate
Aduh palang aduh palang	Oh ! poor you are!
Daging gemmet kare tolang	Only the bones are in rest

(8)	Apa be'na rea enga' Edunnya bala ben anak Anak potu ben taretan Tatangga ben kan ponakan	(8)	Do you remember? In the world, the families and the sons The descents, brothers and sisters Neighbors and cousins
(9)	Bile dhapa' dha' baktuna Tellasan dua' waktuna Pole e lailatul qadar Pananggalan peto lekor	(9)	In certain times In the two ied' (Iedul Fitri and Iedul Adha) Also in the the night of <i>Lailatul Qadar</i> In the 27 th of Ramadhan
(10)	Bula asyura ben rajab Tenga malem mare maghrib Ben malem jum'at salasa Roh datang sarta sossa	(10)	In the month of Asyura and Rajab In the night after maghrib The soul comes With anxiety
(11)	Teros entar dha' bungkona Nengenneng e beng labenga Sambi ngoca' dha' potona Sengko' parlo dha' ka ba'na	(11)	Then the soul comes to his home in the world Staying in the front of the door Speaking to his/her family I need you
(12)	Sopaja benyak sadeka Asadekaeh reng toa Sapa pole se enga'a Mun tak potu se neserra	(12)	In order to give sedekah (something) In the name of the dead Who are going to remember me? If it is not his/her generation who love him/her

.The poem tells about the activities of the dead, although we cannot really know what happening after death. Using **personhood** concept, the poem tells that the dead still has human attributes. The dead depicted in the poem still has soul and body, but both of them have been separated. In details, the first marker that the dead has human attributes because the soul can do activities. For example, in line 2 the soul seeks permission to God,

in line 2,4,5, and 18 the soul goes to his/her tomb and sees the body (line 7 and 19); The soul also cries when see his/her body (line 20 and 23); The soul speaks to his body (line 11); The soul comes to his home in certain times in which who alive usually does *ziarah* (line 33-41); Soul speaks to his family about his/her need (line 43 and 44). Second marker is the soul has feeling; the soul feels anxiety (line 39). The last is the soul has a need to be helped from his/her family (line 44).

The body also has human attributes because he/she answers the question of the soul about the condition in the world, especially in the tomb. It is said that the body can remember where he/she was (line 13). The body feels that his tomb is a frightening place and he/she feels fear and regret (line 15 and 16). In this sense, it is clear now that maduranese interact with them because maduranese still consider the dead as a person.

Next, a kind of relation between who alive and dead is also an important factor whether they are persons or not. If they share each other, so they can be considered as person. Recalling the poem, the dead is depicted as a parent as it implies in the last stanza. The last stanza tells how the dead needs his/her generation or his/her sons. It also tells that when his/her sons remember the dead, the dead will not have anxiety. Moreover, when they do *sedekah* (sharing something) for the dead is a better share for the dead. Reversely, the sons (who alive) when remembering and sharing something for their parent also will get benefit because it can make the sons also saved. By these facts, it can be see that they are interdependent each other in which there are ethical, responsible and reciprocal relation between who visit and visited in the tomb like the interdependent relation between sons and the parent. So, producing the relation both will get better life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, leaving the Islamic-centered paradigm in understanding *ziarah* in madura leads to know that is not an animistic practice as many scholars suggest or even an evil practice as who anti-*ziarah* accuses. Similar to some indigenous religion like the Ammatoans who consider their forest as person, indeed analyzing the poem using indigenous perspective shows that maduranese muslims have interpersonal relationship with the dead in which it makes sense when they practice *ziarah* as a practice to recontextualize the relationship. It is because who visit and visited are interdependent each

other. In addition, because *ziarah* is not only done in Madura, in analytical assumption it can also answer who do *ziarah* for Walisongo, Kings of Java and Kiais is because who alive and dead has interpersonal relationship.

As my last note, this essay is also a suggestion for us in order we don't become essentialist when we see everything that seems not included in Islam or World Religion as heretic, sinful or evil. Using other paradigm, Indigenous Religion paradigm represented in the "personhood" concept of the scholars, it will help us to see another meaning of marginalized phenomena like *agama lokal* (indigenous religions in Indonesia). It is because who use the dominant paradigm leads to discriminate, exploit or even persecute the marginalized.

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