

The Pilgrimage Tradition as an Economic Source for the Community Around the Sacred Tomb

Priyo Subekti, Aat Ruchiat, Diah Fatma Sjoraida

Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Jalan Raya Bandung Sumedang, Kabupaten Sumedang, 45363, Jawa Barat

Abstract

In Indonesia, the activities of coming to the graves of ancestors of the Prophet are prevalent. It encompasses the trifecta of economy, culture and religion. Grave of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi in Pamijahan, Tasikmalaya is an instance of where such religious activities can be transformed into profit by the community. With the context of women and tomb visiting, this research aims to identify the nexus of spirituality, culture, and economic development through this practice. The study was qualitative and descriptive in nature. The researchers were purposefully engaged to select samples of three groups: pilgrims, local business operators, and tomb caretakers. A detailed questionnaire was developed for in-depth interviews, as well as observational techniques. Thematic analysis was employed as a qualitative data analysis approach. Results indicate that there is considerable economic activity stemming from the activities of pilgrimage. More than 230 traders depend on these centuries old traditions as they prepare food, gift articles as well as offer guiding and accommodation services. Islamic trading principles bring added value to such interactions where trust and justice prevail. It contributes in terms of revenue generation, growth of the informal sector and avenues for cultural preservation. As consequence of the migration streams for economic reasons local development through remittances and increased economic activities is also achieved. The pilgrimage tradition practised at Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's Tomb clearly illustrates the juxtaposition of spirituality and economics and therefore can serve as a good example for culture based community development.

Keywords: *Economic Source, Entrepreneurship, Pilgrimage, Religious tourism, and Tradition.*

INTRODUCTION

Grave pilgrimage has been an enduring religious practice in the Indonesian cultural sphere. This activity is not purely religious but also acts as a medium of transcendental communication between man and the Divine (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). An example that is on point is the Sheikh Abdul Muhyi Tomb, located in Pamijahan, Tasikmalaya whose pilgrimage is highly performed. This phenomenon is worth looking into but more particularly because it

pertains to the interaction, if any, to the combination of the spiritual, social and economic realities of the region.

Human beings possess what is deemed as an exceptional capacity as they are able to adjust themselves to whatever realities their minds can conceive of; however, these never stand a chance against Khaos (Geertz, 1992). Disorientation, pain and the state of moral inner conflict, and if this is extremely severe and prolonged, constitutes an insuperable obstacle to the claim that “life has to be grasped or better, people have to cope with life efficiently”. There are countless convincing reasons that fuel why it believe or seek an explanation to a phenomenon, be it a myth or religion for that matter. People when confronted with an unfamiliar occurrence that is not intelligible to them would try to make sense of it by relying on their reasoning capacity as such people try to invent ideas or relate stories that would at least quench their curiosity (Wu et al., 2019). Myth for the proponents is not just a tale which is amusing and or being classified as a history, but rather it is a declaration of a profound reality that gives the guidance and basis of existence (Mellor, 2004). The value system that exists in society is contained in the beliefs or the ideology held by the society in which they are ever remaining superior and revered. Out of these mythical stories develop values in the form of taboos or just guidelines.

Societal life is regulated by intricate behavioral controls such as values, customs, regulations and laws among other things. It is this totality of norms and systems that motivates individuals to act. Consequently, one can argue that core values and norms and the ideals that people aspire to achieve in the society are the main purpose of people's lives. Or rather, core values and norms are aspects of a culture that is interwoven (Patterson, 1997). Rawls in his theory of justice describes the social system as an associated frame of reference which tells each member of that society whether a given action is bad or good, right or wrong.

The community around the Sheikh Abdul Muhyi Tomb complex, more particularly those along the paths in the village, use their houses as outlets where they sell souvenirs and food. To my surprise, a good number of these, mostly offspring of the waliyullah, have kept them open for business all through the night, for one reason or another. Even while the traders are in their houses at night and indeed asleep, their goods are still out in the open unattended. More baffling is the fact that shop owners have reported no cases of thievery or unfair dealings by consumers. A resident who has been trading for almost 20 years in the Pamijahan area says that the area is spiritually protected, hence the evil people do not desire entering and having bad luck.

Although some portions have been poured with cement, the finishing of the pathway leading from the terminal to the pilgrimage has largely been done using cobblestones. The residents of the area ensure that the pathway is always well maintained. Signposts capable of assisting pilgrims in their prayers are placed along the pathway leading to the tomb as well as the kuncen's house, the heritage mosque, and the terminal. In addition, most of the houses in Pamijahan village are electrified which betrays the level of the infrastructure in the region.

Two key factors serve to further explain the continuation of the pilgrimage custom to the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, which include internal factors and external factors. Internal factors consist of the position of the kuncen who is an owner of thorough knowledge about Sheikh Abdul Muhyi and who serves as the tomb keeper. By telling the stories about the miracles and karomah of sheikh Abdul Muhyi, publishing of pilgrimage guides, and imposing some customs with notion of spiritual punishment for those who disobey, the kuncen helps to

protect the eternal images about the khekh. On the other hand, external factors stem from the feelings of past pilgrims who have offered respectful prayers after the pilgrimage and had them answered. These experiences are later on reported to others, reinforcing the faith that prayers made after the pilgrimage to the tomb has an effect.

The legend of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi not only laid the groundwork for the custom of pilgrimage but also affected the cultural norms of the residents. One instance is the restriction on smoking in designated places. The locals as well as the pilgrims outside the region, ensure compliance as an act of deference to ancestral customs and etiquette. This restriction demonstrates how the legend of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi has evolved into a workable principle and societal standard which is still of significance (Moufahim & Lichrou, 2019).

The adoption of converts of advanced technologies in creating tourist sites as a source of income adds competition among the nearby communities looking for converts to opportunities. In the sociocultural context, the visit to the mausoleum of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi fosters creation of numerous income generating activities within the local people. Such events as souvenir making, food supply, or providing transport and accommodation services are among the major economic activities of families within the vicinity of the tomb. Increasing economic significance of local communities pilgrimage activities demonstrate how this practice turned into one of the components of socio-economic development of Pamijahan society.

The custom of visiting the grave of ancestors goes beyond just a religious practice which aids in boosting one's spirituality, but rather a primary source of economic activity for the surrounding community (Higgins & Hamilton, 2020). At the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi such practices create several forms of businesses that augment the economic standing of members of the locality. The residence and operating area of these communities which is the focal point of visitors has evolved into a business environment in which souvenir and food stall owners, as well as transport and accommodation service providers participate.

These economic opportunities are, or at least appear to be, a fundamental factor improving the living standards of the people in Pamijahan Hamlet informal economy. For instance, the number of more than two hundred traders already reported who earn their living solely by this pilgrimage activity ought to be noted. Islamic system of trade that is practiced in this region like the prohibition of usury and fair pricing enhances the confidence of the traders and the pilgrims as well as promotes the local cultural and religious heritage.

Moreover, the custom of performing pilgrimage has other social, and economic, consequences including economic exodus of the youth. A good number of youth are said to migrate from the hamlet in search of jobs elsewhere due to the influence of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, thereby creating an income turnover that also benefits the local people. This pattern demonstrates that traditions and myths are some of the drivers of the economic change – and they are still required (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Through the interplay of economics, culture and spiritual values, the custom of visiting the grave of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi is all one needs to see how Islam can be used as a tool for development while safeguarding the culture and the economic wellbeing of the region.

The objective of this research is to enhance our understanding of how the tradition of pilgrimage to the grave of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi acts as a form of spiritual communication while also contributing towards the economy of the region considerably. As a holistic approach to economic and social issues, a particularly interesting perspective of this research is in the context of culture-based community development through religious tourism.

METHOD

This study was conducted using the descriptive method with the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2002). The purpose of this study is to provide a deep understanding to the contributing underlying factors in the valorization of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's myth and the manner in which it aids in the reinforcement of the grave's pilgrimage norms and practices and the non-smoking rule in the vicinity of the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, Pamijahan, Bantarkalong, Tasikmalaya. The choice for a qualitative approach was made because the focus of this research is on appreciating the grave pilgrimage tradition as a very complicated type of communicative behavior that includes the interrelation of cultural elements, religious and social aspects of the community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this study, purposive sampling is applied whereby only pilgrims who can be defined according to certain criteria are analyzed. The analysis unit of this study focuses on three main factions of the informants: 1) Visitors who are pilgrimage to the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi; 2) People who own or operate stalls and other businesses within the vicinity of the tomb; 3) People who manage the Tomb: Kuncen, other staff dealing with the administration of the pilgrimage culture and services.

The study used purposive sampling to identify potential informants that related to the research aims. The informants were: 1) Pilgrims who come from outside the Tasikmalaya area (stay for at least one night around the tomb, and come in a group so that they can be led by the kuncen in a joint prayer; 2) Shops owners (who sell food, or souvenirs, or provide other services to the pilgrims; operate in the tomb complex area; have operated for more than one year); 3) Tomb care takers (are the ones directly assigned to maintain, manage and supervise the tomb complex; have experience in organizing customary activities like group prayers and the management of the place of pilgrimage).

Data Collection Techniques The data were gathered through: 1) In-depth Interview: This was done with the pilgrims, stall owners, and tomb administrators in order to know their experiences, views and what they do regarding the pilgrimage customs; 2) Participatory Observation: The researchers were able to witness for themselves the activities of the pilgrims, trade in the tomb center, and the social exchange that took place within and outside the tomb site; 3) Documentation: This refers to collecting of other forms of data including secondary data like historical information, guidebooks on pilgrimage and surveys of the pictures taken during pilgrimage and trade.

The analysis of data was based on the thematic method (Bajari, 2015) and consisted of the following basic steps: 1) Data Reduction: Picking only the data which are pertinent to the objectives of the study; 2) Data Presentation: Structuring data as narrative description on pilgrims' views and experiences, economic activities, and functions of the administrators of the cemetery; 3) Inference Drawing: Determining primary patterns where the presented data has been made. With this strategy, the research hopes to give a broad understanding of the significance of the Tomb Pilgrimage customs of the community of Pamijahan especially to the traditions and cultures and economics of the people.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

The act of pilgrimage can be considered as a tourist practice which forms part of the purposes of the tourists visit the sites (Graburn, 2024). When it comes to pilgrimage tourism why tombs are crossed to the visiting end is because they are means of devotion to death about

great leaders, altruism motivation, social relationship building, and report back through media (Hassan et al., 2024). The custom of visiting graves to the Grave of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi not only has a religious perspective but also contributes much on the economy of the residents of Pamijahan Hamlet. Most of the hamlet population work as farm workers, with approximately 710 being farm workers and 407 being farm owners. Also economic activities in the area are not only restricted to farming. The tomb complex has opened up other opportunities for economic activities such as selling of keepsakes, dishes, and providing guidance service to pilgrims. Besides that, the population also works as civil workers, educators and military men.

The locals who are mostly seen along the way leading to the tomb, have turned their homes into huttes offering souvenirs and food items. As a matter of fact, over a hundred of these kiosks are run by the descendants of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi employing the Islamic trading system promoted by Mohammed. This the system focuses on trust, the exclusion of loans with interest, and changing of prices within reason. They are all demanded to do congregational prayer and refrain from trading in this region during prayers.

Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's Tomb has been beneficial to the residents of Pamijahan hamlet. The long established tradition of going on pilgrimages has opened up various campos based on trade and giving services. Roughly, 230 local merchants in the region purvey novelties and honorific dishes including red rice and fish pepes making trading their primary activity. Such burdens of Islamic trade practices bans on every form of usury and clear cut pricing enhances not only moral practices in business but also confidence among the pilgrims on the products and services offered.

Further to trade, the influx of pilgrims from outside the region creates new sources of income by establishing rental of pilgrimage aid items, guiding them and providing basic accommodation. This diversification of business activities generates alternative revenues for the local people and improves the local economy (Ahunov & Yusupov, 2017). This economic impact is also visible in this community in terms of some business people putting up stalls and selling ready made food prepared from local raw materials such as crops and fish caught in the slaughtering community of Pamijahan. So, the tombs not only up holds the spiritual practices but also embellishes the living standard of the residents around the area.

The economy of the local areas are boosted by the pilgrim tradition in that it strengthens the framework structure of informality by enabling the growth of informal businesses along the tomb area (Shinde & Olsen, 2023). Since the retribution system is benevolent to the lineage followers of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, it enables the locals to expand their business. This implies that the existence of the tomb is not only a place for worship or religious practice but also an economic asset for the sustenance of the people of Pamijahan.

Sheikh Abdul Muhyi is recognized by the people of Pamijahan as a figure who is linuwih, who has extraordinary abilities and observances that are not possessed by ordinary people. This sacredness not only has an impact on strengthening the spirituality of the community, but also becomes the basis for the emergence of a grave pilgrimage tradition that provides a significant economic contribution to the local community. The grave of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi has a unique appeal as a religious tourism destination rich in spiritual values and cultural traditions. Stories about the sacredness of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, such as the story of him overcoming interference from followers of other religions, the supernatural journey through Safawardi Cave, and prayers that are believed to provide blessings, become a magnet for pilgrims. These narratives not only strengthen people's belief in the blessing of the tomb, but

also strengthen the pilgrimage tradition as a form of religious tourism that continues to survive.

Sheikh Abdul Muhyi Grave which is instrumental in their religious pilgrimage is testimony to great potential of Indonesia in establishing places of interest with spiritual, cultural and historical significance. This grave provides an opportunity not just for the local visitors, but also possesses the potential of being turned into a religious tourism site of international standards. In Indonesia, religious tourism has its strong point in the variety of cultures and religions which is a magnet by itself. Monuments like the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi also help in preserving the local culture and reinforcing the religion.

Religious tourism, such as visiting the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, has a pronounced economic effect on the communities as it generates countless opportunities for business to thrive as the pilgrims interact with the residents. Just like other forms of pilgrimages, the presence of the tomb creates many rounds of economic activities that involve buying and selling, provision of services and production of goods associated with the religion (Luz, 2020). A lot of people who are some of the pilgrims have several trading stalls where they sell their beads, prayer mats and books among other similar items as the heavily tend to buy them to use as souvenirs.

Also, there are communities offering prayers and rituals to the pilgrims. Usually performed by the local kuncen or other authorities, these rituals are believed to grant the wishes of the pilgrims. Some local residents have also been praying to seek water which is believed to be key for spiritual healing. This practice not only enhances the religious conviction of the travelers but also provides extra sources of earnings to the community people.

More local economies can be developed from the trade of local products around the tomb complex including red rice, fish pepes and fresh vegetables, which are sold by food stalls surrounding the place. Their relatively cheap prices and authentic taste do not only make these foods as supplements of religious tourists but they are also an interesting feature of the place. Relationships created between the pilgrims and the natives at food stalls or souvenir stalls complicated the stranglehold supporting the informal sector and the economy of the community in general.

This economic activity supervises the shrines at Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's Tomb intermingling with the essence of worship while dealing with the betterment of life of the local populace. It rings a bell how the pilgrimage culture can dovetail with the socio-culture economic development strategies based on religion creating harmony of letting the soul focus on religious matters and actively seeking for new feasible business opportunities (Leppäkari, 2008). There is a need to put more efforts in proper management so that the intended good outcome can spread to wider sections of the community.

In the context of the economic development of society, in this case, the message of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi himself to his descendants to look for sustenance outside the region emphasizes the role of the spiritual dimension on the economic patterns of the community as well as broadens the economic frontiers for the resident community (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024). The custom of labor migration by the youth of Pamijahan, who move out of the city or to foreign countries, contributes to a considerable amount of income turnover. Remittances from migrants are often domestic expenditure in support of the back home families and thereby enhance the purchasing power of the local people and expand local economic activities such as trade and agriculture.

The continuation of local agrarian and trading traditions is also one of the positive impacts of this migration pattern. Older residents continue to carry out economic activities in Pamijahan, such as farming and trading. The presence of pilgrims who come to the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi is an economic stimulus that encourages the development of local businesses. Activities such as joint prayers, recitation of wirid, and the use of prayer water which is believed to have blessings provide opportunities for the community to offer spiritual services. This not only strengthens spiritual traditions but also creates an additional source of income for locals.

Safawardi Cave, believed to be the supernatural travel route of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, also makes a positive economic contribution. It attracts pilgrims as it is considered to have strong spiritual energy. To support pilgrimage activities, the local community provides equipment rental services such as lamps or torches for lighting as well as tour guide services. These activities create additional employment opportunities and provide direct economic benefits to people living around the area.

Moreover, the idea that Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's spirit is still present and is a source of blessings adds to the appeal of this Islam heritage tourism which in turn promotes the development of the spiritual-based tourism industry. This custom is a very viable proposition in the quest to uphold the culture oriented economy, achieve a balance between the spiritual and the economic dimensions, and impact positively on the wellbeing of the local population. With appropriate management systems in place, the economic potential of this pilgrimage custom can be tapped on and be beneficial to the Pamijahan community and its environment in the long run (Liu & Wu, 2019).

In closing, the grave pilgrimage custom practised at the substantially Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi not only demonstrates the interplay between spirituality and economic activity but also the resultant impact on the community. Accounts on Sheikh Abdul Muhyi's greatness including myths on hallowed ground travel, blessings thereof, and strict taboos about smoking in some places are convincing factors that support the pilgrimage custom while draws worshippers from other parts. This custom not only deepens people's religiosity but also creates great market prospects such as religious commodities, religious craft, and site management of religious tourism (Reader, 2007).

This particular tradition holds plenty of promise for culture-based economic growth, especially where community welfare can be supported by spiritual and cultural legacy (Štefko et al., 2015). Such integration of faith and economic activities is evident in the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, where community development and enhancement of local economies is achieved while at the same time protecting local customs. Such a possibility may also be useful for other areas in the use of culture and spirituality for the welfare of the society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The ritual of grave visiting at the Tomb of Sheikh Abdul Muhyi illustrates that sectarian beliefs are not only meaningful but also contribute to the livelihoods of the people within the locality. Economic activities such as trading, offer of services, and other forms of social exchanges that happen within and around the tomb area have provided avenues through which the local community's welfare is improved. Furthermore, the presence of Islamic practices of trade in this region demonstrates the potential of art and religion to complement each other in fostering economic development.

The Pamijahan community has successfully utilized grave pilgrimage to enhance prosperity which only indicates a fraction of the resources this tradition has when used as an economic resource for creating local culture based economies in other parts of the country. Appropriate measures allow the combination of such traditions as part of community development strategies which protect traditions and simultaneously develop the local community in an environmentally friendly way.

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