



## A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF PILGRIMAGE: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN THE MBAH PRIOK GRAVE PILGRIMAGE

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the pilgrimage to Mbah Priok's grave from social, economic, and religious perspectives. This qualitative research employs a combination of literature review, historical analysis, and anthropological methods. The study reveals that the Tomb of Mbah Priok, also known as Habib Hasan Al Hadad, serves as a significant pilgrimage site despite historical controversies. The Al Hadad family has maintained religious authority and withstood temporal challenges. Notably, in April 2010, the Al Hadad family engaged in a physical and administrative conflict with a company expanding the area. During Governor Ahok's tenure, the tomb was designated a religious tourism site and cultural heritage, fostering economic growth for local businesses and the surrounding community. This research contributes to understanding the socio-economic and religious dynamics of pilgrimage sites, highlighting the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** Mbah Priok, Religious Authority, Pilgrimage

### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji ziarah ke makam Mbah Priok dari perspektif sosial, ekonomi, dan keagamaan. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan kombinasi tinjauan pustaka, analisis historis, dan metode antropologis. Studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa Makam Mbah Priok, yang juga dikenal sebagai Habib Hasan Al Hadad, berfungsi sebagai situs ziarah yang signifikan meskipun terdapat kontroversi sejarah. Keluarga Al Hadad telah mempertahankan otoritas keagamaan dan bertahan dari tantangan temporal. Secara khusus, pada bulan April 2010, keluarga Al Hadad terlibat dalam konflik fisik dan administratif dengan sebuah perusahaan yang memperluas area tersebut. Selama masa jabatan Gubernur Ahok, makam tersebut ditetapkan sebagai situs wisata religi dan warisan budaya, yang mendorong pertumbuhan ekonomi bagi bisnis lokal dan komunitas sekitarnya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang dinamika sosial-ekonomi dan keagamaan situs ziarah, dengan menyoroti interaksi kompleks antara tradisi dan modernitas.

**Kata Kunci:** Mbah Priok, Otoritas Keagamaan, Ziarah



## INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage is a deeply ingrained tradition in many parts of the Muslim world, encompassing visits to family tombs as well as the graves of respected figures and scholars. These visits serve as a means to remember death, enhance spiritual connection, and draw inspiration from the wisdom of the deceased scholars.

One prominent pilgrimage site is the Mbah Priok grave area in Koja, North Jakarta. This site attracts daily visitors who come to engage in sacred readings and spiritual practices, particularly on Thursday nights when the tomb is thronged with worshippers partaking in dhikr, prayers, and recitations. The annual grand Haul of the “Mbah Priok” Tomb and the Maulid of Prophet Muhammad SAW are significant events that draw thousands of devotees from across the country, reflecting the widespread reverence for Mbah Priok.

However, in April 2010, the Mbah Priok Tomb area became a focal point of social conflict, marked by multifaceted disputes involving various stakeholders with divergent interests. This conflict, characterized by prolonged and complex negotiations, underscored the need for a more focused resolution strategy. The eventual resolution under a subsequent government highlights the intricate dynamics involved in managing such conflicts (Adisaputra, 2013).

The historical significance of Mbah Priok’s tomb has been a subject of debate. The lack of concrete historical evidence regarding Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Hadad’s role in spreading Islam in Batavia has fueled skepticism. Nonetheless, the perceived piety and noble lineage of Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Hadad continue to inspire belief in the blessings associated with pilgrimages to his grave.

Previous studies have explored various dimensions of this tradition. Syamhari’s ethnographic study, “Interpretation of Pilgrimage at the Mbah Priok Tomb,” delves into the backgrounds and motives of pilgrims (Syamhari, 2014). Asep Adisaputra’s book, “Peaceful Resolution of Mbah Priok Tomb: A Police

Perspective Awareness,” examines the conflict from a law enforcement perspective (Adisaputra, 2013).

Building on this foundation, the present research seeks to address two primary questions: “How is the phenomenon of pilgrimage to Mbah Priok’s grave perceived in terms of religiosity and religious, social, and economic authority in the reform era?” and “How is religious authority in the Mbah Priok Tomb Area constructed to establish it as a pilgrimage reference?” Additionally, this study will explore the conflict and its resolution.

The phenomenon of pilgrimage to the Mbah Priok grave site is not only a testament to the enduring spiritual traditions within Indonesian Islam but also a reflection of the broader socio-cultural dynamics at play. The practice of pilgrimage serves multiple functions: it is a form of religious observance, a demonstration of social solidarity, and an economic activity that benefits the local community. The sacred site becomes a confluence of faith, community engagement, and economic transactions, thus embodying a complex interplay of religious devotion and practical benefits.

In examining the religious authority associated with Mbah Priok, it is crucial to consider how this authority is constructed and maintained. Religious authority in this context is not merely a matter of theological or doctrinal legitimacy but is also deeply intertwined with social and cultural factors. The veneration of Mbah Priok and the recognition of his grave as a site of pilgrimage are influenced by narratives of piety, lineage, and spiritual charisma. These narratives are perpetuated through oral traditions, communal practices, and the symbolic power of the site itself.

The conflict surrounding the Mbah Priok Tomb area in 2010 serves as a case study of how religious and cultural sites can become flashpoints for broader social tensions. The disputes involved multiple stakeholders, including local residents, religious leaders, government authorities, and business interests, each with their own perspectives and stakes in the outcome. The resolution of this conflict required careful negotiation and highlighted the challenges of balancing respect for

religious traditions with the needs for social order and development.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of pilgrimage practices and religious authority in contemporary Indonesia. By exploring the multifaceted aspects of the Mbah Priok pilgrimage, including its religious, social, and economic dimensions, as well as the conflict and its resolution, this research offers insights into the complex dynamics that shape religious practices and communal life in the modern era. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the significance of pilgrimage in reinforcing religious identity, fostering community cohesion, and navigating the challenges of modernity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating literature study, historical analysis, and anthropological methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Mbah Priok pilgrimage phenomenon. The literature study involved an extensive review of scholarly works on pilgrimage practices, religious authority, and the socio-cultural significance of Mbah Priok's tomb, contextualizing the current study within the broader field of religious studies. Historical analysis traced the origins and evolution of the Mbah Priok pilgrimage site, examining historical documents and archives to construct a detailed narrative of Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Hadad (Mbah Priok) and the establishment of his tomb as a significant pilgrimage destination.

Anthropological methods were employed to gain an in-depth understanding of pilgrims' practices, beliefs, and motivations. Fieldwork included participant observation during direct pilgrimages to Mbah Priok's grave, allowing researchers to collect qualitative data through firsthand experience and observation. This

immersive approach provided insights into the ritual practices, interactions, and socio-religious dynamics at the pilgrimage site. The findings from the fieldwork and historical analysis were integrated with Hannah Arendt's theory of authority, which conceptualizes authority as a hierarchical relationship connecting a group of people with a foundational past. This theoretical framework elucidated the dynamics of religious authority at the Mbah Priok tomb, highlighting how the perceived piety and noble lineage of Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Hadad contribute to the site's continued relevance as a pilgrimage destination.

## RESULTS DISCUSSION

### Biography of Mbah Priok

Mbah Priok is a renowned scholar hailing from Palembang. His birth name is Hasan bin Muhammad al-Haddad, later known as al-Imam al-'Arifillah al-Quthub al-Habib. Born in Ulu Palembang, South Sumatra, in 1291 H/1870 AD (Pejaten, 2023), Mbah Priok's early years were spent acquiring religious knowledge from his father and grandfather. This foundational education instilled in him a deep religiosity and proficiency in various life skills.

In his adolescence, Habib Hasan resolved to migrate to Yemen (Hadramaut) to further his Islamic education. There, his scholarly pursuits extended beyond religious studies to encompass the spiritual heritage of his ancestor, al-Habib Abdullah bin Alwi Al-Haddad R.A, the renowned Shohib Ratib Haddad. Over approximately ten years, Habib Hasan immersed himself in the profound Islamic and spiritual traditions of his family in Yemen.

At 29, upon completing his studies in Yemen, Habib Hasan returned to Indonesia with an unwavering commitment to propagate Islamic teachings in Java. This missionary endeavor was undertaken alongside his younger brother, Al-Arifillah Al-Habib Ali Al-Haddad, and three devoted aides (Gubah al-Hadad Writing Team, 2022).

During this period, Indonesia (Nusantara) was under Dutch colonial rule, presenting

numerous challenges and obstacles for Habib Hasan and his team in their missionary activities. Their pilgrimage spanned various locations on Java, including Shohibul Luar Batang in Jakarta, Cirebon (Sunan Gunung Jati), and Surabaya (Sunan Ampel). Despite the harsh conditions, the fervor and perseverance of Habib Hasan and his brother in disseminating Islamic values remained steadfast.

Notably, during their sea voyage, Habib Hasan's group faced relentless pursuit and cannon fire from the Dutch navy. Despite these aggressive efforts, the Dutch failed to halt their journey. After a grueling two-month voyage, they finally reached Java. Their resilience and determination in the face of such adversity underscored their unwavering commitment to spreading Islam amidst perilous conditions. This arduous journey exemplifies the fighting spirit and sacrifice of Habib Hasan and his companions in their missionary mission (Parinduri, 2022).

The extensive sea journey took a toll on Habib Hasan's health. The unpredictable sea conditions weakened him significantly, and the group encountered two major storms that further exacerbated their plight. The first storm violently rocked their boat, causing their supplies to be lost to the sea. Fortunately, some essential kitchen utensils, including a pot and a few liters of rice, remained intact. They persevered, using pieces of ship wood to cook rice.

After a brief respite, they continued their journey, only to be struck by an even more severe storm. This catastrophic event broke their boat, causing it to sink. Tragically, three of Habib Hasan's followers perished in the incident. The two Habibs, Hasan and his brother, struggled desperately to survive (Gubah al-Hadad Writing Team, 2022).

Despite immense difficulty, they managed to stay afloat on the remaining boat fragments. This ordeal tested their physical and mental endurance and their faith and resilience amidst natural disasters. The harsh conditions at sea further

weakened Habib Hasan. After ten days of struggling without food, his health deteriorated, and he eventually passed away.

A severely weakened Habib Ali Al-Haddad remained in the boat with his brother's body, enduring the profound loss and suffering alone amidst the storm (Gubah al-Hadad Writing Team, 2022).

Their boat, guided by small waves and accompanied by dolphins, eventually reached the northern coast of Batavia. They were fortunate to be discovered by a group of fishermen who promptly provided assistance. The fishermen, compassionate and attentive, helped bury Habib Hasan's body with honor and respect. Initially, his grave was located on Jakarta's northern coast but was later relocated at the Dutch's request. Today, Habib Hasan's grave is in the Tanjung Priok area, serving as a revered site visited by many who honor his spiritual legacy and teachings.

### **The Historical Significance of Mbah Priok's Tomb**

The historical significance of Mbah Priok's tomb as a cultural heritage site has sparked considerable debate. According to JJ Rizal, a historian specializing in Jakarta's history, the tomb's 'sanctified' status is rooted more in narrative (story) than in factual history, with many of these narratives being myths and legends. These tales often recount magical and fantastical adventures of Mbah Priok during his lifetime and continue to celebrate his name with stories that defy reason and common sense even after his death. Rizal points out, "In fact, many of these stories contradict each other." He has conducted extensive research, including historical records and interviews with descendants, one of whom revealed that Habib Hasan Al Haddad, also known as Mbah Priok, did not have the opportunity to propagate Islam in Betawi as he passed away before doing so.

Rizal also disputes the claim that the name Tanjung Priok is derived from Hasan Al Haddad. He asserts that the area was known as Tanjung Priok long before Hasan Al Haddad's arrival in Batavia. In Betawi mythology, the name Tanjung Priok is associated not with Mbah Priok but with Aki Tirem, a potter and

the leader (penghulu) of the Warakas area. This is documented in the works “Profile Tanah Betawi” and “Babad Tanah Betawi” by Betawi cultural expert Ridwan Saidi.

Citing Rizal’s statement to NU Online, “From a historical standpoint, within the network of individuals credited with Islamizing Betawi, the name Habib Hasan Al Haddad, alias Mbah Priok, is conspicuously absent.” Even in LWC Van Den Berg’s classic 1886 study “Arabs in the Archipelago,” which provides an exhaustive account of the Hadramaut community and Arab colonies in Indonesia, the name Hasan Al Haddad does not appear. Rizal highlights that this book is a comprehensive report based on Van Den Berg’s extensive research, observations, and interviews with Arab-Hadramaut groups, especially those in Batavia (Anam, 2010).

Anachronisms or temporal discrepancies further complicate the verification of Mbah Priok’s history, as noted in pilgrim guidebooks that date the tomb to the mid-1700s. These sources claim that Mbah Priok died in 1756 and was born in 1727. However, Rizal explains that there is no archival evidence or contemporary records to support this, unlike the well-documented grave of Habib Husein Alaydrus, the sacred tomb of Luar Batang, which is recorded in Company chronicles from 1756.

### **Social Conditions of the People of Priok**

Historically, Tanjung Priok has been a tumultuous area. On September 12, 1984, a massacre occurred in this region involving military personnel and Muslims. This tragic event during the New Order era significantly influenced Soeharto’s perception of Islam. The Tanjung Priok incident was precipitated by escalating tensions between Muslim groups and government authorities.

According to Sembodo (2009) and Tempo Archives Volume 36 (2008), on September 8, 1984, two Koramil officers (Babinsa) entered the as-Sa’adah mosque without removing their shoes. This incident took place in Gang IV Koja, Tanjung Priok, North Jakarta. The two

officers then desecrated the recitation notice board by dousing it with sewage water. This act of disrespect led to a confrontation, escalating into a group dispute and culminating in a demonstration that ended in a massacre. The New Order government, through Benny Moerdani and Tri Soetrisno, suppressed this mass action, resulting in a bloody event (Aziz, 2017).

Dea Anugrah, in the District Assumption program, remarked, “Years before living in Jakarta, I already knew Priok. It’s reputed to be the toughest neighborhood in the capital. They say toughness is a prerequisite to living there. The local saying is, don’t mess with Priok kids” (Anugrah, 2020). Priok is renowned for its resilient community. The area is socioeconomically diverse, with the elite dominating the Port’s economy, while the lower class struggles with poverty, living in dilapidated houses on the outskirts.

### **Economic Condition of the Mbah Priok Cemetery Area**

Pilgrims are welcome to visit free of charge; however, buses are subject to a parking fee of thirty thousand rupiah. As with other religious tourism sites, charity boxes are provided for alms. The collected alms are allocated for the maintenance of the cemetery area. Prior to entering the main gate of the cemetery, visitors encounter a row of shops selling a variety of goods and food, ranging from instant noodles and sachet-packaged ice to traditional Tegal rice and items specific to pilgrimage tourism. Notably, some of these shops display signs stating “Owned by Habib.”

Theoretically, income encompasses all earnings in the form of money or goods received from other parties. Income serves as a crucial source for individuals to meet their daily needs and is vital for their survival and livelihood, either directly or indirectly (Christopher et al., 2017). The increasing number of visitors to the Mbah Priok Cemetery directly correlates with an increase in the income of traders within the cemetery area.

### **Religiosity, Authority, and the Pilgrimage Tradition of Mbah Priok’s Tomb**

Religiosity originates from the Latin term “relegare,” meaning to bind tightly or bond together. It signifies an individual’s spiritual expression related to belief systems, values, laws, and rituals (Kaye & Raghvan, 2000).

Religiosity embodies aspects internalized by individuals in their hearts, personal conscience, and attitudes (Mangunwijaya, 1986). Similarly, Glock & Stark (Dister, 1988) describe religiosity as a religious attitude indicating the internalization of religion within a person. Another perspective defines religiosity as the pursuit of a path of truth associated with the sacred (Chatters, 2000).

According to Madjid (1997), religiosity constitutes human behavior shaped entirely by belief in the unseen or supra-empirical realities. Humans perform empirical actions, but those with religiosity ascribe the value and meaning of these actions to the supra-empirical realm. Chaplin (1997) elaborates that religion is a complex system of beliefs reflected in attitudes and religious ceremonies aimed at establishing a relationship with God.

Religiosity encompasses activities related to teachings, doctrines, values, worship, and appreciation. In contrast, spirituality involves self-recognition and understanding, motivating individuals to express their inherent values in social life. Henri L. Tischler, from a sociological perspective, explains that religion is viewed as a belief system manifested in specific social behaviors (Henri, 1990). It pertains to human experiences both individually and collectively, linking every behavior to the belief system of the adhered religious teachings. Individual and social behaviors are driven by internal forces rooted in the values of internalized religious teachings.

Ersa Aprilia, a co-author, acknowledged her pilgrimage to seek peace. However, the driver of our online car offered a different perspective, suggesting that peace could be found through “istighfar.” He expressed his disdain for the people at the Mbah Priok Cemetery. His appearance, marked by jeans with holes at the knees, suggested he was not a traditional Islamic student (santri). He admitted to living in Priok since childhood. For some Muslims, the pilgrimage tradition is a devotional practice with varied meanings.

To establish and maintain religious authority over Mbah Priok’s tomb, explicit terms such as “karomah,” “keramat,” and “barokah” are frequently employed by some Indonesian Muslims.



Picture 1.  
Water of Barokah



Picture 2.  
The Tomb of Mbah Priok (Al Haddad)

### The Mbah Priok Cemetery Conflict and Its Resolution

The existence of Mbah Priok’s grave has been a source of controversy. Initially, Habib Hasan bin Muhammad Al Haddad was interred in Pondok Dayung, Tanjung Priok. The Dutch East Indies government at that time, seeking to expand the port area, relocated the burial site to TPU Dobo in the Koja area of North Jakarta. This site also houses the grave of Habib Abdullah bin Mukhsin Al Attos. In 1997, the graves of Habib Al Hasan and his family were moved from TPU Dobo to TPU Semper. Since 1999, there have been efforts to transfer the tombstones back from TPU Semper to the original TPU Dobo site. The reconstruction of the tomb at the former burial site of Habib Hasan bin Muhammad Al Haddad was accompanied by the construction of residences for Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Zein Al Haddad and Ali Alydrus (Mufid, 2010).

In addition to Mbah Priok, or Hasan Bin Muhammad Al Haddad's grave, several other graves are present, including those of Zein bin Muhammad Al Haddad, Syarifah Nur Aisyah Binti Abdullah Al Habsyi, Ahmad Bin Zein Al Haddad, Ali Bin Zein Al Haddad, Si "dah Binti Zein Al Haddad, Rogoyah Binti Ahmad Al Haddad, Muhammad Bin Abdul Qodir Al Haddad R.A., Syarifah Nur Aisyah Binti Ahmad, Khodijah Ahmad Al Haddad, and K.H. Ibrohim (Al-Haddad et al., n.d.: 39).

The designation of Mbah Priok's grave as a cultural heritage site underwent a prolonged process. On April 14, 2010, violent clashes occurred when the Provincial Government of DKI Jakarta, under Fauzi Bowo's administration, attempted to seize the disputed land. The demolition efforts were initiated after PT Pelabuhan Indonesia II claimed rights over the land encompassing Mbah Priok's tomb. Earlier, in April 2010, the company requested the Jakarta Provincial Government to dismantle the grave. Subsequently, the Provincial Government deployed the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) to the Koja area. Residents resisted the actions of the Satpol PP, leading to mass clashes. On April 13-14, 2010, a bloody incident resulted in dozens of injuries and one fatality.

Meanwhile, Mbah Priok's descendants have maintained their religious authority by highlighting Mbah Priok's miracles, or *karomah*. In a 2019 statement, Habib Ali Zainal Abidin bin Abdurrahman Alaydrus, Mbah Priok's great-grandson, asserted that the funds for Mbah Priok were not derived from political sources, regional governments, ports, or proposals but from raising goats. He stated that the land was historically significant, initially granted by the Dutch, documented, and designated as a cultural heritage site. However, he claimed that Chinese interests sought to purchase the land for port expansion, offering 70 trillion to the governor, the Minister of the Interior, and the MUI to dismantle the grave area. Ali Zainal emphasized Mbah Priok's extraordinary *karomah*, recounting how *santri* resisted 7000 Satpol PP on April 14, 2010.

According to Ali, the mayor at that time adhered to Wahhabism, which contrasted with the beliefs of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah.

In a YouTube video, Ali Zainal Abidin described his encounter with the mayor, asserting that the wali of Allah lives with Allah. He recounted teaching the Quran to 60 children when thousands of Satpol PP arrived with eviction tools. The students resisted by praying with *hadroh*. When the Satpol PP attempted to demolish the area, their machinery malfunctioned upon touching the gate, and the driver reportedly saw a giant figure in white robes. Tear gas intended for the students was redirected towards the Satpol PP by the wind. White-robed horsemen and a golden light reaching the sky were also mentioned, along with birds throwing stones and Satpol PP vehicles catching fire (Abidin, 2019).

On March 4, 2017, Ahok officially designated the Mbah Priok grave area as a cultural heritage site. He signed the Decree of the Governor of DKI Jakarta No. 438 of 2017, which declared the Mbah Priok Tomb area a protected location and recognized it as a cultural heritage site. According to Law No. 26/2007, the Mbah Priok Cemetery area spans 3.4 hectares (Andi and Noer, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The tradition of pilgrimage remains vibrant among Indonesian Muslims, with the Tomb of Mbah Priok, also known as Habib Hasan Al Hadad, serving as a notable site. Despite historical controversies, this location continues to attract numerous pilgrims, underscoring the enduring religious significance and authority of the Al Hadad family. In April 2010, a significant conflict arose between the Al Hadad family and a corporate entity seeking to expand the area, which was eventually resolved peacefully. During Governor Ahok's administration, the site was officially designated as a religious tourism and cultural heritage area. This development not only preserved the site's religious and cultural significance but also stimulated the local economy by boosting the surrounding shops and community businesses.

The study demonstrates the resilience of religious traditions in contemporary urban

settings and underscores the socio-economic benefits of integrating cultural heritage into urban development policies. The findings suggest that respectful negotiation and official recognition of religious sites can foster community harmony and economic growth. Further research could explore similar cases in different contexts to provide a comparative analysis of the impacts of religious tourism on local economies and cultural preservation. This study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of religion, culture, and urban development, offering insights for policymakers and scholars in the fields of religious studies, urban planning, and socio-economic development.

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