



Religion and Social Construction: The Study of *Suwuk* and *Azimat* in the Perspective of Modern Society

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Abstract. Public belief regarding *suwuk* treatment and the use of *azimat* is ingrained even before it is scientifically proven. Several practices of *suwuk* and the use of *azimat* in society show a connection with the belief in Islam. This phenomenon becomes a social construction of *suwuk* and *azimat* which are considered to have many benefits from various times. The aim of this research literature to decrypt how to link the religion of Islam against *suwuk* and fetish practices and highlight the social construction *suwuk* and *azimat* in the view of modern society. The results of this study are *suwuk* and *azimat* are related to Islam because they use prayers that come from the verses of the Al-Qur'an. This is what makes *suwuk* and *azimat* still trusted and practiced in society, besides that the existence of scientific evidence about *suwuk* by researchers also makes *suwuk* easily accepted in modern society.

Keywords: *suwuk*; *azimat*; *social construction*

INTRODUCTION

The practice of *suwuk* and the use of *azimat* is a tradition that is closely related to elements of magic, especially in Javanese society (Abdullah, 2006). *Suwuk* can be interpreted as a traditional method of treatment for Javanese ethnic communities by using certain chants or prayers (usually using water as a medium), while *azimat* are objects that can be in the form of pieces of paper, precious stones, iron plates or others that are believed by some. society has supernatural powers within the perpetrator (Abdullah, 2002).

Several practices of *suwuk* and the use of *azimat* in society show a connection with the belief in Islam. This is because the prayers recited in *suwuk* and the objects that are considered *azimat* are fragments of the verses of the Qur'an. For example, reading certain pieces of the Qur'anic verse that are blown on the patient's head with the aim of eliminating disease (Arini, Alimi, and Gunawan, 2016). According to Sahiron Syamsuddin, the practice of *suwuk* and using *azimat* using the verses of the Al-Qur'an and a number of readings of Islamic teachings in society, according to Sahiron Syamsuddin, is part of the community's reception or acceptance of the Qur'an and its teachings. Islam (Mujahidin, 2017).

Medicines *suwuk* by the Muslim community, particularly among modern Muslims who previously tended to reject the practice *suwuk*, recently began to accept this tradition for their

evidentiary basis of modern science by Masaru Emoto from Yokohama University Japan. As a result of Emoto's findings, it can be understood that plain water taken by the therapist can have a healing effect on sick people (Putra, 2017). The water molecule turns out to be able to capture the healing prayer message, store it, then the vibrations propagate to other water molecules in the body of a sick person so that they can function to cure various diseases (Zuhdi, 2019).

The use of *azimat* was still widely found in society. The use of *azimat* believes that the *azimat* can provide alternative solutions to the problems at hand, according to what the wearer wants and the purpose of making the *azimat*. Various behaviors that appear in society related to the use of *azimat* appear to be local cultural elements in the form of a belief in the existence of supernatural powers in certain objects or materials (Jannah, 2020; Mujahidin, 2017).

People's beliefs about *suwuk* treatment and the use of *azimat* were ingrained even before Emoto's research was revealed. The practice is still carried out from generation to generation and is still widely encountered today, especially in Javanese ethnic communities. This phenomenon becomes a social construction of *suwuk* and *azimat* that has many benefits and certainly has a good impact on the wearer who comes from various times. Based on background, the researchers used the title "Religion and Social Construction: The Study of *Suwuk* and *Azimat* in the Perspective of Modern Society". This study uses the formulation of the problem, including whether *suwuk* and *azimat* are still practiced by modern society?; How can the views of Islam against *suwuk* and *azimats*?; How do modern society view *suwuk* and *azimat*?; and Why are *Suwuk* and *azimat* still practiced in modern society?

METHOD

This research uses the literature review method with phenomenological analysis. The sources used to compile this paper include some literature on *suwuk* and *azimat*, Indonesian, Arabic, and English literature. This literature includes books, journal articles, theses, theses, online articles, etc. Sources of various literature are analyzed so that data can be found about *suwuk* and *azimat* that develop within the scope of Islamic religion and community construction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Modern Society

Modern society is a society that lives in modern times. In this case, it is usually said with modernity. According to Susetyo, he stated that modernity is greatly influenced by the influence of internet technology which makes various information easily accessible. This situation has sometimes sparked debate about the effect of modernity on morality. This era was also marked by the strength of sensory considerations in examining problems. (Susetyo, 2018) .

Information and interaction in virtual worlds dominant Internet takes place in a sensory domain domain or press. This information affects and provokes human sensory sensations, giving

rise to a less profound quality of understanding. And many of them are easily fooled by the developing information. The impact is on habits that lack deep consideration, shallow self-reflection because of the chase from sensation to sensation from time to time (Susetyo 2018). This development creates a change in the attitude of humans as well. Humans live completely rationalist, secularist, materialistic, so that individualistic and selfish attitudes emerge, competition in life, and a hedonistic lifestyle.

Meanwhile, according to Amin Syukur, Muslims now live in the modern era. An era where people's lives are completely rationalist, secularist, materialist, and the like. (Gunawan, 2017) . Such attitudes turn out to be a separate problem in society. Things that are considered to give life happiness, in fact, cannot provide life satisfaction and even cause anxiety in life.

In this phase, humans assume that life like that can give life happiness. So that many are concerned with world affairs without thinking about the affairs of the hereafter. Life affairs related to the hereafter are considered to be an isolative life or to distance oneself from the hustle and bustle of worldly life, the most important thing is only the afterlife.

2. View of Islam against *Suwuk* and *Azimat*

a. *Suwuk*

The word "*suwuk*" is very popular in Java that means a "aji-aji" or spell. Meanwhile, in Islam, the word "*suwuk*" is known as "*ruqyah*". (Zuhdi, 2019). According to some scholars, *ruqyah* is defined as a request for protection that is read out to a sick person. In its history, *ruqyah* has also been known to the Arab community for a long time before the arrival of Islam. *Ruqyah* actually comes from divine religions, but then until now it has been distorted into magic that is used by people to behave erroneously and is used as an antidote as well. This heretical behavior can be seen from the practice of *ruqyah* itself. The *Ruqyah* that is being practiced is supplemented with their own sayings that they do not even understand. In addition, *ruqyah* is also added with objects such as rocks or pieces of animal bones and hair. After Islam came through the Prophet Muhammad SAW., The *ruqyah* was then used for therapy using verses from the Al-Qur'an and Hadith in the form of prayer readings.

Ruqyah practices that had been practiced at the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW, such as when Abū Bakr came to 'Ā'ishah's house who was suffering from illness, and found a Jewish woman who was going to treat 'Ā'ishah by means of *ruqyah* . So Abū Bakr ordered the Jewish woman to do *ruqyah* with the Book of Allah, that is, with the Torah and the Gospel. This incident shows that the *ruqyah* , apart from being practiced by the Arabs of ignorance, was also practiced by the Arab Jews.

According to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī said: "... the scholars have agreed that the *ruqyah* that is allowed is the *ruqyah* which meets three conditions, namely

- a) *Ruqyah* by clicking using the verses of the Qur'an or by using the names and His attributes;

- b) *Ruqyah* to use Arabic or any other language that can be understood its meaning; and
- c) Fully believe that the healing that occurs is solely with the permission and blessing of Allah.

The *ruqyah* technique which is based on the hadiths of the Prophet and Atsar friends can find out how to do it and what media is used, including:

- a) Read some verses from the Quran. Hadīth narrated by Ahmad and others from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī emphasized: "In fact Jibril once came to the prophet and said: 'Are you sick, O Muh} ammad?'. The Prophet replied: 'Yes'. Then Jibril recites bism Allāh arqīk min kull shay 'yu'dhīk min sharr kull nafs wa' ayn yashfīk bi ismAllāh arqīk "(in the name of Allah I *ruqyah* you from everything that makes you sick, and from the evil of all souls and eyes.. Allah will heal you, in the name of Allah I *ruqyah* you). The hadīth explained about Jibril who performed *ruqyah* after knowing that the Prophet was suffering from illness. In performing the *ruqyah* , Jibril recited a prayer using asmā' Allah.
- b) Read a prayer, then blow both hands and wipe them all over the limbs. Hadīth narrated by alBukhārī and Muslim from 'Ā'ishah explained that the Messenger of Allah, when he was sick, blew his hand for himself by reading the letter al-Mu'awwidhāt then wiped it with his own hand. When the pain was getting worse, just before he died, then 'Ā'ishah who blew for himself with his hand while reading the letter al-Mu'awwidhāt as the prophet blew for himself and wiped it with his hand. This hadith explains that when the prophet was sick, he performed *ruqyah* for himself by blowing himself, reading the letter al-Mu'awwidhāt and rubbing it with his own hands.
- c) Read a prayer, blow, and a little spit.
- d) Read a prayer and put your right hand on the part of the body that feels sore and rub it.
- e) Read a prayer and put the finger on the ground, then lift it up.
- f) Read a prayer and put your hands in the water laced with salt
- g) Read a prayer pour Zamzam water and drink it
- h) Write several verses of the Al-Qur'an or prayers on paper or tools that are not damaged by water
- i) Hit the chest, then blow out the mouth with a little saliva and wipe the face with water while reading a prayer.

b. *Azimat*

The word "*azimat*" has many meanings. If taken from Arabic, it comes from the word "adzimuth", which means the glorified one (Khoiri, 2017). *Azimat* are conceptually related to supernatural powers which are part of the religious system. As the definition of religion, according to JG Frazer which is guided by the fact that humans in their lives always solve various problems of life by means of reason and science; but in reality, that reason and the system are very limited, life's problems that cannot be resolved by reason are tried to solve by means of magic, namely magic (Nasruddin, 2013).

Thus, the meaning of the Qur'anic verses used by the public is a symbol of connecting humans as weak and limited beings and God Almighty. The verses of the Qur'an, regardless of their substance, are revelations or miracles from Allah. He has the same majesty and strength as Allah's power. People respect and believe in the Qur'an as high as possible, as part of their belief in Allah SWT. Even a piece of paper containing Arabic letters, if it falls on the road, will be picked up and saved by the community. Arabic with Arabic letters is the language of the Al-Qur'an which is believed to be the language of the heavens with suprarational power.

Tafsir al-Ibriz also wrote a story that contains advice from the Prophet Muhammad. to read the letter al-ikhhl ā sh which will be useful to launch rizqi or become penglaris. According to Bisri Musthofa in the Tafsir al-Ibriz, there are many hadiths that explain the virtues of surah al-Ikhl ā sh, including telling us that there was one of the friends who handled the Prophet and told him about the difficulty of getting sustenance and the limitations of his life.

Magic objects of this type are very diverse, some are in the form of rings, small kris, black stones, rubies, elephant maniacs shaped like pearls, puppets with Arabic letters written on them, and so on. Repository magical objects is usually acknowledged is obtained by performing certain rituals or penance in places that are considered *sakral*. There is also what the owner of the *azimat* gets through dreams, usually, when he wakes up, the person receives the *azimat* beside him or in the place shown in the dream (Humaini, 2011).

3. Modern Society Construction

Suwuk is an alternative healing by reciting a mantra on a glass of water which is then drunk to a patient. Among the Javanese, *suwuk* believed to be as a way to pitch a fire or alternative healing of someone who has to inability or expertise in terms of healing, by reading divulging u spell or a reading in aqueous media, which is then drunk to a patient or to ora ng who is suffering from pain.

In practice, the media used in this *suwuk* therapy, apart from using plain water, sometimes also uses the saliva from the *penyuwuk* to be healed or smeared on the affected body part. Besides *suwuk*, also familiar with their mascot. People say that the *azimat* tattoo is not an object that has power, but an object that is given strength. The one who gave that strength was the Almighty God. Until now, the tradition of *suwuk* and *azimat* still exists and can be found in various places in various healing rituals and places for traditional alternative therapy activities.

This belief that is deeply rooted in society makes it difficult for people to let go of this belief. Trust coupled with awareness can create constructs in society. In addition, there are various reasons why they still use *suwuk* and *azimat* in their daily lives, including:

- a) Link to tradition. The mantra contained in *suwuk* and *azimat* comes from a divine religion that has long developed in a society. As is the case in Indonesia, which originated from Hinduism-Buddhism and finally the entry of Islam. Ulama and walisongo spread da'wah which originally termed *ruqyah* which was developed in Indonesian society. So that what

has happened is still *suwuk* but with Islamic nuances there are verses of the Qur'an in it. This belief grew with the awareness that it has taken root until now (Zuhdi, 2019).

- b) As a form of effort in solving problems. The problems experienced by modern society are very diverse and in various scientific fields. These problems require a solution so that the problem does not become more complex. The settlement that occurs in the phenomenon of modern society is sometimes difficult to resolve. Then, with the character of the community still bound by tradition and tend to be pragmatic, the community will use a method that is not usually done by humans, namely by using magical items. The problems that occur are such as the treatment of diseases, success in running for election, eradicating poverty quickly, and protection from all diseases without using drugs.
- c) The embodiment of the approach with God inwardly. The practice of using *suwuk* and *azimat* certainly has an influence and impact on someone who uses these *suwuk* and *azimat*. These influences and impacts can be interrelated, one of which is to get closer to Allah SWT. The existence of special rituals such as fasting and reciting various verses of the Qur'an makes a person tawakkal to Allah in the hope of gaining His strength, taufiq, and guidance. (Hartono, 2018) .
- d) Modern scientific research on *suwuk* and *azimat*. In his research, Masaru Emoto said that water is sensitive. He will respond to every word spoken by humans. When humans send good hado (energy wave effect) to water by saying positive words, then the water will present beautiful crystals. Likewise, prayer can release energy that can change the quality of water. Giving a prayer to water means sending had into the water, and the water then uses its strength or energy to answer what is contained in a prayer. (Emoto, 2006) .

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of *suwuk* and *azimat* cannot be separated from the influence of community and religious beliefs. The more humans use *suwuk* and *azimat*, it can prove that humans are weak, have limited abilities, and have no strength. Therefore, humans need a way to help solve problems. This phenomenon can also prove that the development of society cannot be separated from religion and traditions that have been passed down from previous ancestors. Society and religion, and tradition go hand in hand and are related to one another.

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