

## IDEOLOGY OF THE MAIYAH JAMPARING ASIH BANDUNG COMMUNITY AND ITS CULTURAL EXPRESSION

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates how community ideology relates to cultural expressions and the religious experiences of its members. Maiyah Jamparing Asih is a religious study community with unique practices. The study focuses on how the formation of community ideology ultimately influences and is reflected in the cultural expressions of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community. This research adopts a qualitative approach using ethnography. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis are the methods employed to collect data. Members of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community, along with community elders, are the research respondents. The results reveal that the community ideology of Maiyah Jamparing Asih emphasizes spiritual values, unity, and social harmony. The strongly understand religious teachings and strives to incorporate them into daily life. In Maiyah Jamparing Asih, cultural expressions are reflected in various aspects of action, such as performance arts, music, contemporary and traditional poetry and religious rituals and expressions. These expressions also illustrate how community ideology shapes their cultural practices and meanings. This research provides a better understanding of how community ideology relates to cultural expressions in the context of religiosity.

**Keywords:** *Ideology, Maiyah, Religion, Society, Culture.*

### I. BACKGROUND

The modern life that seemingly offers alternative new ways of living has now disrupted the spiritual and inner aspects of humanity. Every day, humans are constantly occupied with data, numbers, sounds, and ceaseless flickering lights. These changes happen every second, yet humans willingly follow them with stumbling steps and experience anxiety when left far behind (Subadri, 2013)." It can be said that today's life forces all humans to be bombarded with various types of information, the truth and sources of which are often unclear, due to the plethora of social media dramas that spill and regurgitate all kinds of information. Ultimately, this has created a condition that "exceeds" the reality of life itself. In the context of postmodernism, this position is referred to as hyperreality. In such circumstances, humans will eventually feel emptiness, panic, and lack of clarity in navigating life. Hence, spirituality or the inner path to approach the essence of life and

divinity often becomes a way or oasis for the soul's dryness.

Spirituality needs to be "differentiated" from religion. When talking about spirituality, it can be seen as something that can be separate from religion. However, when discussing religion, it cannot be detached from spirituality. For me, the essence of religion is spirituality. Therefore, spaces imbued with true culture can lead humans to inner contemplation.

One such community is the Maiyah Jamparing Asih. Maiyah can be considered a subculture group within the general religious discourse. The term "sub" in subculture implies a distinctive and different condition compared to the dominant or mainstream society. Meanwhile, the word "culture" refers to the entire "way of life" or "meaning map" that allows its members to understand the world (Barker, 2011). The activities of Maiyah started as non-formal religious gatherings in Jombang, which began during the New Order era. These gatherings

were developed by Muhammad Ainun Nadjib, better known as Cak Nun. It all began with a regular family religious gathering in Jombang, East Java, in October 1993. This gathering is called "Padhangbulan." As a non-formal religious gathering developed by Cak Nun, his prominent presence in Indonesian society, thanks to his insightful writings in national newspapers and his role as a speaker in various discussion forums, attracted people to attend the Padhangbulan gathering (Redaksi Kenduri Cinta, 2016). The event takes place on the 15th of the Javanese calendar, precisely on every full moon night each month. Over time, the gathering developed by Cak Nun has given rise to similar gatherings in various regions of Indonesia. The Maiyah Jamparing Asih community is a branch of Maiyah located in Bandung. It was established in 2015 by several individuals who frequently attended Cak Nun's gatherings. They came together and established the Maiyah gathering in Bandung, naming it Jamparing Asih. While the Jamparing Asih community can be considered a form of Islamic gathering, the lack of symbols of Islamic identity such as hijabs or specific clothing raises interesting questions to be further investigated. The expression of their culture also presents a more local and casual atmosphere, different from the general Islamic gatherings, leading to questions about how local culture and everyday norms influence religious expression within this community. This research aims to highlight the ideology or philosophical views underlying the approach and unique identity of the Jamparing Asih community. Understanding these views will shed light on how members interact, discuss, and comprehend their spirituality and religious life. By delving deeper into the above aspects, this study will provide a more profound insight into the intriguing phenomenon of the Jamparing Asih community and how their ideology fits within the context of Islamic gatherings. Due to the uniqueness of their gathering and the mentioned aspects, this phenomenon is interesting to be further examined, especially in this research that pays special attention to cultural expression, religious experiences, and underlying ideological issues.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used in this thesis is qualitative research with a descriptive-analytic approach. According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research is an assessment and understanding process based on a methodology that seeks to investigate social phenomena. The aim of this research is to create a complex picture, examine words, and record detailed reports of informants' views on the experienced situation. In this study, the researcher will also employ an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is a research method that focuses on gaining in-depth understanding of the culture and way of life of a specific group or community. Ethnographic researchers engage in direct observation and participation within the group to obtain comprehensive and profound insights (Iskandar, 2006). Ethnographic approach is commonly used in anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies, providing understanding of how individuals within a society think and act. This research adopts a qualitative approach due to the researcher's direct engagement with the informants. The ethnographic and phenomenological approaches also allow the researcher to present the ideological and communal constructs in relation to the patterns of religious practices faced by the informants. The objective of this qualitative research is to understand the context of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community by providing a detailed description of the field study conditions. The focus of this research is to explore the ideology and cultural expressions of this community by observing the patterns of religious gatherings and the topics discussed within them. Additionally, this study will pay attention to the diverse expressions and religious experiences of the members within the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community in Bandung. To support the research, the researcher will utilize documentation in the form of photos of activities, discussion posters, and prologues taken from social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, or the community's website. All of these will be essential components of the qualitative research aimed at understanding and analyzing the

ideology and religious practices within the context of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Before discussing the ideology of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih Community in Bandung, there are several keywords that need to be addressed first. The first one is Maiyah itself, as the Bandung Maiyah is one of the branches among many Maiyah communities across Indonesia. So, it is better for us to understand what Maiyah is before delving into the ideology of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih Bandung Community. The central figure in the existence of the Maiyah community, Cak Nun or Muhammad Ainun Nadjib, defines Maiyah as a divine togetherness. The word "Maiyah" originates from the Arabic word "Ma'a," which means "together." (Caknun Jamparing Asih 2019). Based on information from interviews with some members of this community, Caknun strives and campaigns for the term "togetherness" so that people, in facing any problems, always ground themselves and connect with spiritual aspects. Discussions within the Maiyah community often focus on thematic and contextual studies, and the questions raised by the congregation usually stem from personal issues that have roots in social injustice, whether in the workplace, school, or society. Caknun, also known as Mbah Nun, plays a central role in this Maiyah movement by providing consultative responses to help solve these problems. In the context of education, Maiyah can be categorized as non-formal education because of its role as a forum for seeking knowledge within the community. Though not explicitly defining itself as non-formal education, Maiyah plays an essential role in problem-solving and community empowerment.

The Maiyah Jamaah movement can be described as a subculture. According to Hebdige (1979), a subculture is "a group of young people who function as an alternative or opposition to the dominant culture." They express their dissatisfaction and oppose the standards of the general society, even being considered a counter-culture for the youth. This movement is not only

different from other movements but also opposes the prevailing culture by constructing a new cultural concept, as the old one is deemed no longer relevant or deviating. In a theoretical context, the Jamaah Maiyah movement fulfills the criteria of a counter-culture by sharing a common view, opposing, demanding, and building humanistic values, demonstrating to society that this movement deserves to be the counter-culture for the younger generation. Kamba (2018) also argues that Maiyah is the prophetic path based on five main principles: sovereignty, purity, wisdom, honesty, and love. The essence of Maiyah lies in divine togetherness. The word "Maiyah" comes from the Arabic language with the root word "Ma'a," which means "together." Caknun strives and campaigns for this notion of togetherness so that people, in facing any problems, always ground themselves and connect with spiritual aspects, with the ideological basis of Islam.

#### **A. MAIYAH FIGURES**

Within the Maiyah organism, there are figures that serve as references and role models for its congregation, known as Marja, meaning the main teachers and sources that guide the Maiyah community. Some of these figures are Muhammad Ainun Nadjib, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Fuad Effendy, and Prof. Dr. M. Nursamad Kamba, MA. These three figures provide a general perspective for all Maiyah followers in Indonesia, including the Jamparing Asih Bandung congregation.

#### **B. BASIC CONCEPT OF MAIYAH**

There is a concept built by the Marja of Maiyah, which serves as the fundamental reference or foundation for all Maiyah communities in Indonesia. Thus, the terminology for the followers of Maiyah was created, known as the "Triangle of Love." In this context, the Triangle of Love becomes the main reference or basis for every Maiyah follower to always bring together Allah, Rasulullah, and every creature in every action they take. In the pursuit of understanding this Triangle of Love, in the studies conducted, the word "Ma'a" in the Qur'an is mentioned 161 times, depicting the

relationship or togetherness of the three entities in the triangle. The togetherness between Allah, Rasulullah, and the servants (encompassing all creatures, not just humans). (Source: caknun.com)

I have provided a description of the illustration of the concept of the Triangle of Love in Maiyah, taken from Caknun.com.



Figure I. The Concept of the Triangle of Love Formation (Source: Caknun.com)

At the peak of the triangle concept, Allah is at the highest point, signifying that God is the ultimate goal of Maiyah's love concept. Following that, on the left side of the triangle, there is *Rasulullah* (the Prophet Muhammad), and on the right side is *The Hamba* (the servant or creation). The word "*Ma'a*," which is the root of "Maiyah," also refers to a specific situation in the Quranic story when Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakar were being pursued by the polytheists during their journey of Hijrah from Mecca to Medina. In that context, there is a statement from Prophet Muhammad recorded in Surah At-Taubah, verse 20, comforting Abu Bakar while they were hiding together with the words, "*La tahzan innAllaha ma'ana*" (Do not be sad, indeed Allah is with us).

The presence of the concept of Rasulullah in the triangle of love formation is crucial for the Maiyah community. They believe that Allah and Rasul cannot be separated, as Rasulullah is the bearer of His message. This is reinforced by a hadith qudsi (sacred saying) that states, "*Laulaka laulaka laulaka maa khalaqtu aqlaq*" (If it were not for you, Muhammad, I would not have created the heavens). In another Quranic verse, it is also mentioned, "*Innallaha wa malaikatahu yusholluna alan nabi*"

(Indeed, Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet). Therefore, the existence of Rasulullah holds a sacred place in the ideology of Maiyah.

Finally, the last concept in the triangle of love is Maiyah *Mahluk* (creatures). At this point in the concept, Maiyah followers are emphasized to build good and harmonious relationships, not only with fellow humans but also with other creatures such as animals, plants, mountains, oceans, and even supernatural beings like Jin. This is to create a sense of togetherness in the vibration of God's creation. Maiyah believes that everything in the universe is a manifestation of God, so there is no space or creature that is not enveloped by the presence of Allah. The Quranic verse that reinforces this view is Surah An-Nur, verse 35, which states, "*Allāhu nūrus-samāwāti wal-ard*" (Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth).

Additionally, within the triangle concept, there is a circle that can contain various matters and worldly knowledge. This circle can be filled with all kinds of issues and worldly knowledge, but it is placed within the triangle, which means that all worldly problems faced must be within the corridor or always involve the network of the Triangle of Love.

### C. THE IDEOLOGY OF MAIYAH JAMPARING ASIH

It can be said that the ideology of Maiyah Bandung is greatly influenced by and related to the general ideology of Maiyah. However, despite this, there are distinctive differences that are not possessed by other Maiyah branches. These differences lie in the way they express culture and their thinking style. Upon careful examination, I noticed an interesting phenomenon in every gathering at Jamparing Asih. The topics discussed

can be considered out of the box compared to regular intellectual gatherings. Literary, philosophical, and cultural nuances are quite evident for a community whose roots are based on religion and spirituality. Although it can be said that the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community does not proclaim itself as a religious community or a spiritual institution. Althusser (1970) also stated that "Ideology is the embodiment and practical practice." Louis Althusser believed that ideology can be found in the things we do every day. He argued that the consequences of ritual activities, ceremonies, customs, and specific habits that we routinely engage in bind and attach us to a social order. Below are some examples of study titles related to this concept, and I will display several discussion posters from Maiyah Jamparing Asih.



Figure 2 Discussion Poster, July 2022 Edition (Source: Jamparing Asih Website)



Figure 3 Discussion Poster, September 2022 Edition (Source: Jamparing Asih Website)



Figure 4. Discussion Poster, June 2017 Edition (Source: Jamparing Asih Website)



Figure 5 Discussion Poster, April 2017 Edition (Source: Jamparing Asih Website)



Figure 6. Discussion Poster, December 2020 Edition (Source: Jamparing Asih Website)

There are five sample discussion posters that I have collected. These titles reflect the unique and out-of-the-box nature of the discussion topics, as I mentioned before. As a researcher, I find these discussions to be quite unusual for a community rooted in religion and spirituality. Although Maiyah Jamparing Asih does not officially proclaim itself

as a religious community, one of the respected members I interviewed, Nadhir Muammar (2023), mentioned that there is no separation between the spiritual and material worlds in their perspective. They believe that spirituality cannot be detached from the material, and vice versa.

During these discussions, there are numerous alternative approaches and various educational concepts presented, ranging from classical to contemporary thinkers. Participants from different backgrounds, including professors, entrepreneurs, students, street vendors, and the unemployed, all engage in these discussions.

Maiyah Jamparing Asih Bandung's slogan, "*Menabur cinta Memperluas Cakrawala*" (Sowing love, broadening horizons), truly reflects the continuous expansion of knowledge from diverse perspectives during their discussions. The discussions in this community differ from typical religious lectures given by an ustadz; rather, they feel more like a mutual sharing of knowledge and religious experiences among participants. There is no monologue; everyone is engaged in dialogue, facilitated by a moderator. Despite occasionally discussing complex topics, the atmosphere remains informal, unlike academic discussions often found on campuses. Instead, the focus is on the experiential aspects of life. These discussions are often complemented by acoustic music performances, featuring both traditional and modern musical instruments.

#### **D. CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF MAIYAH BANDUNG**

As a node or branch of Maiyah located in West Java, Maiyah Bandung exhibits a different style and focus of discussion compared to other Maiyah branches in Indonesia. Additionally, the size of Maiyah Bandung is not as large as other Maiyah branches found on the island of Java. This can be attributed to significant cultural differences in the region. One noticeable difference lies in the dominance of different ethnicities and cultures.

The Maiyah community initially grew and developed in Central and East Java, where Javanese culture strongly influenced its activities. This is

evident in several cultural lectures delivered by Emha Ainun Nadjib, often using the Javanese language as the medium of communication. The use of Javanese language is not arbitrary; rather, it is chosen to ensure ease of understanding for rural communities and to foster a sense of cultural connection.

On the other hand, Maiyah Jamparing Asih in Bandung, West Java, is undoubtedly influenced by Sundanese culture in its movements and style of discourse. This influence is reflected in the name of the community, "Jamparing Asih," which is derived from the Sundanese language. "Jamparing" means "arrow," and "Asih" means "love" in the Indonesian language. However, some senior members of the community suggest that this name might be implicitly related to King Sunda Prabu Siliwangi, who was also known as "Pamanah Rasa," carrying philosophical meanings. The Sundanese people are familiar with the term "*Ngala angen*," which, when translated literally, means "capturing the heart." It signifies the ability to attract hearts and sympathies, fostering strong and harmonious bonds of friendship.

When people with diverse backgrounds come together in one forum, each individual naturally possesses their own unique identity. It is important to note that Maiyah Jamparing Asih is not a religious sect or part of a religious organization. Based on research and the author's experiences in participating in their activities, it is true that the majority of the Jamaah Maiyah, both in Jamparing Asih Bandung and other Maiyah branches, are Muslims. However, there is also room for non-Muslims to participate in these discussion sessions. When inquired about this matter with long-standing members of the Jamparing Asih community, it was confirmed that non-Muslims also participate in these Maiyah-style discussions. Therefore, it can be said that religious differences are not considered an issue within the Maiyah community.

#### **E. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF JAMAH MAIYAH BANDUNG**

In every human journey, religion has profoundly colored their lives. Why do various

religions persist and continue to be embraced by humans? Anthropologically, sociologically, and psychologically, religions endure because they fulfill human needs (Nasr, 2002).

In the discussions and gatherings of Jamparing Asih, a fundamental understanding prevails that all human beings share one Earth but are compartmentalized into various ethnicities, races, nations, professions, cultures, and religions, which cannot be avoided due to this diversity. Jamparing Asih fundamentally challenges its members to break free from the barriers of identity, ideology, and anything that creates differences. Deni Sanjaya, a senior member of Jamparing Asih, believes that denying the pluralism of the universe is akin to denying human cognitive awareness. A narrow perspective towards the universe will only create mental barriers and promote uniformity while rejecting diversity (Deni, 2023). The term "religion" always appears in plural form (religions). Behind this pluralism lies a common characteristic that defines religion. Komaruddin Hidayat describes that imagining there is only one religion in this world is merely an illusion (Komaruddin Hidayat, 2001). The sanctity found within human beings is a reflection of the shared concept of their creation. If we examine the initial process of human creation and study their beliefs, we find that almost all human communities believe in the existence of a God who governs this universe.

One of the Maiyah Bandung members I interviewed shared their religious experience, stating, "I was raised in a strict and rooted Islamic tradition, taught to avoid socializing with non-Muslims. In my community, it's even common to kill innocent stray dogs under the pretext of ritual impurity. I was forbidden from watching soap operas, listening to music, and befriending girls. Moreover, I was not allowed to own any books other than the Quran. When I joined the Jamparing Asih community, it felt like I entered a completely different world from my upbringing. I encountered fellow enthusiasts who were non-Muslims, every gathering was accompanied by traditional Sundanese music, I was introduced to female friends, and most importantly, I was not required to

limit myself to owning only the Quran. I perceive my experience as a 'universal spiritual enlightenment'" (Bambang, 2023).

From the religious experiences of the Jamaah Maiyah, I can deduce that the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community places great emphasis on the ideologization of Islam as a *Rahmatan lil alamin* (a mercy to all creations) or the universality of the teachings of love in Islam. The Jamparing Asih community also emphasizes the optimization of each individual in every aspect of their lives, wherever they may be. In religious terms, it is called "*Fastabiqul khairat*" (racing to do good).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From the discussions presented in the previous sections, the research findings lead to the following conclusions regarding the ideological foundation of the Maiyah Jamparing Asih community:

##### a. Marja' Figures:

Within the Maiyah organism, there are respected figures known as Marja', meaning the main teacher and reference source for the members of the community. These figures, including Muhammad Ainun Nadjib, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Fuad Effendy, and Prof. Dr. M. Nursamad Kamba, MA, play a significant role in guiding and shaping the direction of the Maiyah community.

##### b. The Concept of Love Triangle (Segitiga Cinta):

The Love Triangle serves as the primary guideline and foundation for every Maiyah follower to always include Allah, Rasulullah (Prophet Muhammad), and all creatures in every action they take. Delving into the essence of this Love Triangle, the word "Ma'a" in the Quran is mentioned 161 times, illustrating the interconnectedness and togetherness of the three entities in this triangle. This interconnectedness extends to the relationship between Allah, Rasulullah, and all human beings (encompassing all creatures, not just humans).

These two fundamental concepts shape the Ideology of Maiyah Jamparing Asih, influencing its mindset and perspective. Geographical and anthropological factors contribute to the strong presence of Sundanese cultural nuances and contemporary ideas within the community. The expression of their religious experiences also leads them towards the esoteric dimension of religion, culminating in universal spirituality and the recognition of the divine. Maiyah Jamparing Asih emphasizes the esoteric religious dimension and universal spiritual values. The community is not merely a social movement or a religious organization, but primarily a platform for education, awareness, and the pursuit of spiritual growth, embracing the essence of love in Islamic teachings.

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