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Friday Free Lunch, Muslim Middle-Class Piety and Non-Secular Sociality in Yogyakarta Mosque

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain the formation of piety among the urban Muslim middle class, which seeks to achieve a non-secular social life. The practice of providing free lunch on Fridays is widespread among the middle class, especially in residential mosques. This phenomenon appears as a new form of piety that not only shapes religious class formations but also serves as an effort to achieve social class ethics. To achieve this objective, this study relies on qualitative data collected through observations at Bunda Mosque in Yogyakarta, a mosque located in a middle-class residential area. This research finds; First, the Muslim middle class constructs collective piety through rituals, wealth distribution and charity for those performing Friday rituals. The Friday free lunch practice is a direct interpretation of the Sunnah and an act of benefiting others. Second, this practice has an orientation toward achieving a non-secular life, which is not merely about the circulation of economic commodities but also involves the purification of wealth and religio-sociological ethics within the Muslim middle class. This study holds significance for the formation of class-based piety through the redistribution of welfare and offers a religious-sociological ethic that critically challenges the dominance of secular norms in urban space.

Keywords: *Free Lunch, Friday, Middle Class Piety, Non-Secular Sociality, Yogyakarta Mosque.*

Introduction

The practice of piety among the urban middle-class Muslims has recently taken various forms, ranging from increased worship intensity and learning Islam¹ to their growing religious

¹ Syukron Djazilan, ‘Proses Sosialisasi Dan Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Ke-Islaman Pada Kelas Menengah Muslim Di Surabaya’, *Education and Human Development Journal* 4, no. 1 (2019): 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.33086/ehdj.v4i1.1082>; Zakiyah Zakiyah, ‘Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Menengah Muslim: Studi Terhadap Majlis Taklim Perempuan Di Yogyakarta’, *Harmoni* 18, no. 2 (2019): 28–50. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v18i2.392>.

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lifestyle.² and consumption in urban spaces.³ Recently, they have introduced a new practice of providing free meals in cafés, with certain Islamic ritual conditions, such as reciting Surah Al-Kahf, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, or for those who have memorized the Qur'an. The latest practice is the provision of Friday free lunch at mosques⁴. Mosques, which previously only held Friday prayers, now look different as they also facilitate communal meals after prayers. This phenomenon initially emerged in middle-class residential mosques, one of which is the Bunda Mosque in the Ambarukmo housing complex, Yogyakarta. Interestingly, while other mosques allow anyone to provide food freely, this mosque organizes the meals as part of a structured Friday congregational charity program. In other mosques, food is sometimes taken home, whereas in residential mosques, it is often served buffet-style, and congregants eat together after performing their prayers.

Issues related to the religious practices of the urban middle-class Muslims have been widely studied by scholars at both national and international levels. However, studies specifically focusing on the practice of providing Friday free lunch in urban mosques have not yet received much scholarly attention. Scholarly research on the piety of the urban middle-class Muslims generally falls into three main tendencies. First, studies often revolve around piety in relation to economic aspects, such as consumption, lifestyle, and the commodification of religion.⁵ The second research tendency is that scholars examine the piety of the Muslim middle class in the context of *hijrah* (religious transformation) and its religious practices and rituals, which are viewed as efforts toward self-discipline in a secular urban environment.⁶ The third tendency focuses on the piety of the urban Muslim middle class from the perspective of interaction, exchange, and gift-giving.⁷ This study aligns more closely with the third approach, although it differs significantly, particularly in

² Rina Darojatun, "Tren Produk Halal, Gaya Hidup Syar'i Dan Kesalehan Simbolik: Studi Tentang Muslim Kelas Menengah", *Wardah* 19, no. 2 (2018): 135–157. <https://doi.org/10.19109/wardah.v19i2.2816>; Dony Arung Triantoro, "Pebisnis Islam Dan Muslim Kelas Menengah Ke Atas Di Indonesia: Kesalehan, Gaya Hidup, Dan Pasar, *El Madani: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 1, no. 02 (2020): 79–104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.53678/elmadani.v1i02.123>

³ Oki Setiana Dewi and Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "Beragam Jalan Menjadi Salih: Model Dakwah Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 14, no. 1 (2021): 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v14i1.325>

⁴ Muhammad Rafi, "Living Hadis: Studi Atas Tradisi Sedekah Nasi Bungkus Hari Jumat Oleh Komunitas Sijum Amuntai," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2019): 133–58. <https://doi.org/10.14421/livinghadis.2019.1647>

⁵ Hasanuddin Ali et al., "Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity and Consumerism," *Jakarta: Alvara Research Center*, 2017; Abd Aziz Faiz, *Muslimah Perkotaan: Globalizing Lifestyle, Religion and Identity* (SUKA-Press, 2020), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/40032/>; Lida Maulida and Doli Witro, "Komodifikasi Simbol-Simbol Agama Di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian Mahasiswa Ilmu Sosial, Ekonomi, Dan Bisnis Islam (SOSEBI)* 2, no. 2 (2022): 137–52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21274/sosebi.v2i2.6299>.

⁶ Sahlul Fuad, "Gerakan Hijrah dan Konstruksi Emosi Keislaman Di Perkotaan," *Mimbar Agama Budaya* 37, no. 1 (2020): 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v0i0.17949>; Saba Mahmood, "Politics of Piety," in *Politics of Piety* (Princeton University Press, 2011); Paelani Setia and Rika Dilawati, "Tren Baru Islam Melalui Gerakan Hijrah: Studi Kasus Shift Pemuda Hijrah," *Khazanah Theologia* 3, no. 3 (2021): 131–46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/kt.v3i3.12708>; Mila Nabila Zahara, Dadan Wildan, and Siti Komariah, "Gerakan Hijrah: Pencarian Identitas Untuk Muslim Milenial Di Era Digital," *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development* 2, no. 1 (2020): 52–65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.52483/ijssed.v2i1.21>

⁷ Paul Anderson, "'The Piety of the Gift': Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement," in *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 11 (1) (sage, 2011), 3–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499610395441>; Aybegüm Güngörđu Belbağ, "Exploring the Gift-Giving Rituals of the New Middle-Class Consumers in a Muslim Society," *Marketization: Theory and Evidence from Emerging Economies*, 2020, 75–96. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4514-6_4; Zuly Qodir and Haedar Nashir, "Forming Muslim Middle Class' Piety and Identity InYogyakarta," in *Third International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2019–Humanity, Education and Social Sciences (IcoSIHess 2019)* (Atlantis Press, 2019), 352–57. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icosihess-19.2019>.

terms of movement and the projection of collective piety as a shared orientation of the Muslim middle class through the provision of Friday lunch.

Departing from the research gap in previous studies that have largely overlooked the collective praxis of the urban Muslim middle class, this study explicitly addresses that gap by examining the movement and projection of collective piety as a shared orientation embodied in the practice of providing Friday lunch. The main distinction of this study from prior research lies in its approach to the formation of middle-class piety—not only extending beyond the self-disciplinary focus as theorized by Saba Mahmood, but also moving past the emphasis on interaction, exchange, and gift-giving through religious word and language as discussed by Paul Anderson. Instead, it highlights the material expressions of interaction, exchange, and generosity through food, while still acknowledging the foundational insights of earlier scholars. Specifically, this study has two main objectives: first, to explain how urban Muslim middle-class piety is formed through the practice of offering free Friday lunch at residential mosques in Yogyakarta; and second, to explore how this practice is interpreted and projected as an expression of piety within a social context increasingly shaped by secular and individualistic values in urban life.

This paper is based on two key arguments. First, the urban Muslim middle class, through the practice of providing Friday free lunch at mosques, seeks to cultivate pious social relationships, engage in charitable giving on Fridays, and foster a devout communal life. The distribution of wealth and economic resources through the concept of charity to those attending Friday prayers embodies the spirit and ethics of building a pious social life. Second, piety through the practice of free lunch represents a direct interpretation of *sunnah* and the principle of benefiting others. This interpretation serves as an effort to establish a practice of piety and self-realization. Its orientation is directed toward achieving a non-secular way of life that extends beyond the circulation of economic commodities, emphasizing the purification of wealth and the religio-sociological relationships within the urban Muslim middle class in Yogyakarta.

Method

The selection of the theme of urban middle-class Muslim piety is based on the fact that the practice of providing Friday free lunch at middle-class residential mosques in Yogyakarta has not been widely studied by scholars. Researchers often perceive the provision of meals at mosques as an ordinary phenomenon, whereas this practice is relatively new and forms part of the broader urban Islamic movement. The middle class is often analyzed solely through the lens of economic status. Even when scholars examine the religious practices of the middle class, the dominant themes tend to focus on how they experience spiritual emptiness amidst material wealth, leading them to turn to religion, undergo *hijrah*, engage in religious commodification, and adopt modern consumption and lifestyle patterns. However, the practice of providing Friday free lunch represents a distinct phenomenon of middle-class Muslim religiosity. This study assumes that it embodies an orientation, projection, and collective ethical virtue as an interpretation of religious texts. It is essential to examine this practice from such a perspective, as it offers insights into the everyday religious life of the urban Muslim middle class.

This study on the practice of providing Friday free lunch at Masjid Bunda, a middle-class residential mosque in Ambarukmo, Yogyakarta, employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The goal is to generate a detailed understanding of key concepts related to the religious practices and interpretations of urban middle-class Muslims in mosques. Hancock states that qualitative data

focuses on describing and interpreting information to generate new theoretical concepts⁸. Accordingly, data on the practice of providing Friday free lunch was gathered through direct observation at Masjid Bunda, a middle-class residential mosque in Yogyakarta. I conducted observations almost every Friday for about three months while spending time at Kokambar Café next to the housing complex. This observation involved attending Friday prayers at the mosque and participating in the communal lunch with worshippers and mosque administrators (*takmir*). The observational data collected includes pamphlets or flyers distributed within the residential area and mosque grounds, the types of food served, and the communal dining practices following Friday prayers. In addition to observing the Friday prayer congregation, the study also involved attending religious study sessions held at the mosque. Beyond observation, Data were also gathered through informal interviews with mosque administrators and congregants of Masjid Bunda during Friday meals in this middle-class Muslim residential community in Yogyakarta.

The data collected through observation and informal interviews, as described above, was analyzed using a five-step process, which, in practice, was conducted almost simultaneously. This analytical process includes data collection, reduction, display, verification, and conclusion drawing.⁹ During data collection, preliminary analysis was carried out by reducing the data selecting and filtering information relevant to the study's objectives. When displaying the data, different pieces of information were connected to identify structured patterns and abstract relationships.¹⁰ Verification was then conducted by cross-checking the data and interpreting it using established theoretical concepts, allowing the data to convey meaningful conceptual insights. Through this analytical process, the researcher was able to draw conclusions that contribute to a broader understanding of the religious discourse of the urban Muslim middle class.

Result and Discussion

Class Piety and Opposition to Secularism

The piety of the urban middle-class Muslims has been widely discussed by scholars, with varying conceptualizations found in academic literature. Some researchers frame middle-class Muslim piety through the lens of religious commodification, viewing it as a means of fulfilling spiritual desires.¹¹ Others associate it with aspects such as consumption, lifestyle, and Islamic identity, often emphasizing economic perspectives and Islam identity class.¹² In this context, the discourse on urban Muslim middle-class piety often emphasizes economic perspectives and their related dimensions. This view is dominant in scholarly discussions, as it is based on the assumption

⁸ Beverley Hancock, Elizabeth Ockleford, and Kate Windridge, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Trent focus group London, 2001).

⁹ Mathew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia (UI Press), 1992); Moh Soehadha, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosiologi Agama: Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Soehadha, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosiologi Agama: Kualitatif*.

¹¹ Ali et al., "Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity and Consumerism"; Siti Nur Hidayah, "Pesantren for Middle-Class Muslims in Indonesia (between Religious Commodification and Pious Neoliberalism)," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 209–44. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/qjis.v9i1.7641>; Rholand Muary and Puteri Atikah, "Tahfidz Al Quran Class: Religion Commodification and Popular Culture in Muslim Middle Class," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik Malikussaleh (JSPM)* 4, no. 1 (2023): 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.29103/jspm.v4i1.10097>.

¹² Ali et al., "Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity and Consumerism"; Belbağ, "Exploring the Gift-Giving Rituals of the New Middle-Class Consumers in a Muslim Society"; Francisca Dwijayanti, "Making Economics of Piety: Fashion, Lifestyle and Identity in Pop-Islamism Turn," *Shirkah: Journal of Economics and Business* 3, no. 2 (2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.22515/shirkah.v3i2.200>; Zuly Qodir and Haedar Nashir, "Forming Muslim Middle Class' Piety and Identity InYogyakarta," in *Third International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2019–Humanity, Education and Social Sciences (IcoSIHess 2019)* (Atlantis Press, 2019), 352–57. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icosihess-19.2019>

that the Muslim middle class, through their expressions of piety, possesses the power to construct new Islamic realities in urban spaces.¹³ This assumption arises not only from their economic strength but also from their growing enthusiasm for religious practices after having been immersed in secular life. Additionally, as a social group with access to modernity and globalization, they are seen as shaping their religious expressions according to their social class preferences.¹⁴

The study of piety in urban settings, as outlined above, has been challenged by scholars such as Saba Mahmood¹⁵ and Charles Hirschkind.¹⁶ They argue that middle-class piety should not be viewed solely through a secular economic lens. Instead, they conceptualize the piety of the urban Muslim middle class in terms of religious practice and ritual as a form of self-discipline and self-formation within a secular urban environment. Traditionally, the *self* has been understood as the source of personal desire and individual truth. However, Mahmood shifts this perspective by emphasizing that the *self* can be cultivated, directed, and shaped through various disciplines and practices, particularly religious piety.¹⁷ She argues that individuals, through their religious practices, seek to discipline and refine themselves to become more devout and pious. In this context, Mahmood also expands on the role of the body and embodiment. While the body is often perceived as a passive vessel carrying religious symbols (as seen in debates over veiling, hijab, and rituals), she argues that the body is, in fact, a central site for realizing and embodying norms. It serves as both the medium and the arena for self-development.¹⁸

More recently, Paul Anderson, in his article “*The Piety of the Gift: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement*,”¹⁹ to move beyond the frameworks of Mahmood and Hirschkind. He argues that piety is also shaped through exchange and social interaction (*mu’amalaat*), not solely through self-disciplinary ritual practices, as emphasized by Mahmood and Hirschkind. *Mu’amalaat* and the self-formation of piety movements consciously oppose the concept of secularism (*‘almana*), which is associated with economic systems and the commodification of goods. Based on his research in Egypt, Anderson suggests that one way participants distinguish themselves from secularism is by emphasizing that true piety is expressed through proper social interactions (*mu’amalaat*), rather than being confined solely to worship and ritual acts (*‘ibadah*). This study follows Anderson’s explanatory model and analytical logic to examine piety through the circulation of goods, in this case, the practice of providing Friday free lunch among urban middle-class Muslims in residential mosques in Yogyakarta. However, it takes a different emphasis, shifting the focus from mere linguistic or verbal exchanges to the material circulation of goods. Nevertheless,

¹³ Hew Wai Weng, “Making ‘New’ Muslim Places in Urban Malaysia and Indonesia,” *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* 67, no. 9 (2014): 1; Karin Willemse, “On Globalization, Gender and the Nation-State: Muslim Masculinity and the Urban Middle-Class Family in Islamist Sudan,” in *The Gender Question in Globalization* (Routledge, 2020), 159–77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315239422-14>.

¹⁴ Abd Aziz Faiz, Subkhani Kusuma Dewi, and Zulfan Nabrisah, “Middle-Class Muslims Piety Festival in Indonesia Islamic Contemporary,” *IBDA: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* 21, no. 2 (2023): 169–86. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v21i2.6859>.

¹⁵ Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2003): 837–66. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2003.0024>.

¹⁶ Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2003): 837–66. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2003.0024>.

¹⁸ Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2003): 837–66. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2003.0024>.

¹⁹ Paul Anderson. “The Piety of the Gift: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement.” *Anthropological Theory* 11 (1) (SAGE, 2011): 3–<https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499610395441>

the projection of piety in this study aligns with the explanations of Mahmood, Hirschkind, and Paul Anderson, in that it challenges the dominant paradigm of secularism in urban spaces.

This paper introduces two key concepts. First, material piety refers to the use of material mediums—such as food, almsgiving, and charitable acts—as spiritual instruments that embody a dual relationship; between humans and God through worship, and between humans and fellow beings through acts of sharing.²⁰ This concept is inspired by Marcel Mauss's distinction between *gift* and *commodity*, where the *gift* carries moral obligation, reciprocal bonds, and symbolic-spiritual meaning.²¹ Second, the concept of non-secular sociality, developed from Paul Anderson's extension of Saba Mahmood's research of how Muslim women's piety movements in mosque spaces embody political dimensions that challenge dominant secular paradigms in Egypt's public life.²² This idea also draws on Charles Hirschkind's notion of *Islamic counterpublics*, which emphasizes alternative social spaces formed through collective religious practices as sites for articulating faith-based ethics in the modern public sphere.²³ Within this framework, non-secular sociality denotes a mode of social interaction governed by religious ethics and aimed at constructing a communal life not subordinated to secular logics, but grounded in living Islamic norms. These two concepts intersect in the Friday prayer rituals followed by acts of charity, food distribution, and communal meals, concrete manifestations of material piety that simultaneously sustain non-secular sociality.

Friday Free Lunch, the Middle Class, and the Spirit of Religion

The broader context of the Friday free lunch practice can be traced back to what scholars refer to as the wave of *re-Islamization* in Indonesia following the 1998 reform era in various sectors, including law,²⁴ politics,²⁵ economy,²⁶ and everyday life.²⁷ In this study, *re-Islamization* refers to the efforts of urban middle-class Muslims to cultivate an Islamic way of life, a phenomenon that has become increasingly prominent in major cities. Post-reform Indonesia witnessed a reinterpretation of Islamic practices through various Islamic lectures held in schools²⁸ and mosques in urban spaces²⁹. This re-Islamization process led to a celebration of Islamic identity expressed in multiple

²⁰ Paul Anderson. 'The Piety of the Gift'..., 3-21

²¹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (London: Routledge, 1990), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203407448>

²² Saba Mahmood, "Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy...", 837-66

²³ Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Bani Syarif Maula, "Post-Islamism and the Rise of Sharia Laws in Contemporary Indonesia: Aspirations of Implementing Islamic Laws in a Democratic Era," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion (IJSSR)*, 2023, 163–84, <https://doi.org/10.53639/ijssr.v4i2.137>.

²⁵ Alexander R. Arifianto, "Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 37–50, Alexander R. Arifianto, "Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2019.10>.

²⁶ Firman Menne et al., "Sharia Economy, Islamic Financial Performance and Factors That Influence It—Evidence from Indonesia," *Economies* 11, no. 4 (2023): 111, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/economies11040111>.

²⁷ Wildan Insan Fauzi et al., "Research Narrative Directions about Islamization in Indonesia after the New Order 1998–2020," in *Embracing New Perspectives in History, Social Sciences, and Education* (Routledge, 2022), 74–78, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1201/9781003295273-15>.

²⁸ Yanwar Pribadi, "Sekolah Islam (Islamic Schools) as Symbols of Indonesia's Urban Muslim Identity," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia* 10, no. 2 (2022): 203–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2021.15>.

²⁹ Abd Aziz Faiz, "The Appropriation of Islamic Literacy by Middle-Class Muslims in Jogokariyan and Sudirman Mosques, Yogyakarta," *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)* 7, no. 1 (2023): 37–50,

ways, including attending Islamic lectures, participating in religious rituals and training programs, adopting Islamic lifestyles, shifting from conventional banking to Islamic banking, consuming only halal-certified products, residing in Muslim housing complexes, and demonstrating religious commitment through philanthropic practices. More recently, the practice of *Jumat Sedekah* (Friday charity), including the provision of Friday free lunches, has become a common sight in urban settings.

The provision of Friday lunch is part of the daily Islamization practices of middle-class piety. Initially, this practice did not start in mosques but rather in cafés across Yogyakarta that promoted free meals for those who recited the Qur'an on Fridays,³⁰ offered all-you-can-eat meals to those who had memorized several *juz'* of the Qur'an, and provided free iftar meals for those observing voluntary *sunnah* fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.³¹ This phenomenon has been described by social scientists as *spiritual marketing*.³² In this context, the enthusiasm for Islamic practices among the middle class, combined with their economic prosperity, has become an integral part of urban daily life. Over time, this middle-class religious fervor extended into mosques, where the practice of Friday free lunch has become increasingly common.

The practice of Friday free lunch in Indonesian mosques has become increasingly common over the past five years, particularly in urban areas. Mosques, which are typically crowded during Friday prayers, have recently begun incorporating the distribution of free meals after the prayer. Many philanthropists and wealthy individuals donate a portion of their wealth to purchase various types of food, which is then distributed at mosques on Friday afternoons. Initially, this practice was not organized or managed by the mosques themselves. Instead, it was initiated by congregants or individuals outside the mosque community who sought permission to distribute food. These meals were intended to be taken home and eaten with family or at workplaces. The types of food provided vary widely, ranging from fast food and meals purchased from street vendors to food ordered from fellow mosque members as a means of supporting their economic well-being.

Some Muslim residential mosques have distinct practices. One such mosque that regularly organizes Friday free lunch is Masjid Bunda, located in the Ambarukmu housing complex in Yogyakarta. Unlike large mosques in major cities, Masjid Bunda is a small neighborhood mosque that primarily serves the local residents. The Friday free lunch practice at this mosque differs from that of most other mosques. Instead of being informally initiated by individuals, it is systematically organized by the mosque through a structured *Sedekah Jumat* (Friday Charity) program. This program collects donations from its congregants, who predominantly belong to the middle class.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.21580/jsw.2023.7.1.12455>; Hilman Latief, "Youth, Mosques, and Islamic Activism: Islamic Source Books in University-Based Halaqah," *Kultur: The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Culture* 5, no. 1 (2010): 63888.

³⁰ Muhammad Hadyan Dwitama, "Al-Quran dan Kelangsungan Bisnis (Studi Komodifikasi Agama Pada Paket Makan Gratis Bagi Pelanggan Yang Telah Membaca Surah Al-Kahfi Di Preksu Ayam Geprek Dan Susu Yogyakarta)" (PhD Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2021), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/44803>; Dwi Elok Fardah, "Promo Makanan Gratis Dengan Membaca Surah Al-Kahfi Setiap Hari Jumat (Resepsi Atas Akun Media Sosial Preksu)," *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (2022): 140–55, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v7i2.4420>.

³¹ Ahmad Sangidu, "Model Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam Bagi Kelompok Milenial (Studi Kasus Di Kafe Basa Basa Sorowajan Banguntapan Bantul Yogyakarta)," *Tafsir Al-Ilmi* 12, no. 2 (2021): 184–200, <https://doi.org/10.37459/tafsir.v12i2.4341>.

³² Sarah Dodds, David A. Jaud, and Valentyna Melnyk, "Enhancing Consumer Well-Being and Behavior with Spiritual and Fantasy Advertising," *Journal of Advertising* 50, no. 4 (August 8, 2021): 354–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1939203>; Ida Hindarsah, "The Influence of Service Quality, Emotional Marketing and Spiritual Marketing on Customer Satisfaction," *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)* 12, no. 3 (2021): 3685–89, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17762/turcomat.v12i3.1650>.

These congregants have economic stability, formal employment, and reside in relatively affluent housing. They are registered members of Masjid Bunda, live within its vicinity, and actively participate in the mosque's religious study sessions.



Figure 1. The practice of Friday free lunch in Yogyakarta

The *Sedekah Jumat* program at Masjid Bunda is promoted to congregants through two main methods. First, religious study sessions at the mosque emphasize the virtues of *Sedekah Jumat* organized at Masjid Bunda. Second, flyers are distributed to raise financial donations from the congregants. These flyers are uploaded to the mosque's social media platforms and posted on notice boards within the housing complex. In practice, the mosque committee (*takmir*) collaborates with street food vendors and, occasionally, with specific restaurants and cafés to provide a variety of meals. Unlike the typical Friday free lunch initiatives at other mosques, where meals are usually pre-packaged, Masjid Bunda sometimes serves the food in a buffet-style arrangement, offering a more communal dining experience.

The middle-class congregants of Masjid Bunda eat together after Friday prayers. This practice differs from most mosques, where Friday lunch is usually provided on the mosque's veranda, and congregants take the food home. The communal meal after Friday prayers at Masjid Bunda is intentionally practiced by the congregants, as they believe it fosters a sense of togetherness that binds them through moral relationships.³³ Moral relationships, as an effort to build a middle-class Muslim community, go beyond mere individualism, which is often characteristic of middle-class lifestyles and exclusive housing complexes. This practice is intended not only as a space for collectivity and ethical communication among them but also as an institutionalization of virtue within their social class. They cultivate these virtuous relationships through the practice of communal meals after Friday prayers. This shared meal represents an interpretation of *mu'amalat* in Islam, where social relationships and interactions serve as a means to nurture collective piety.³⁴

Sharing food on Fridays by the middle-class congregants at Masjid Bunda in Ambarukmu Housing Estate is framed as part of the circulation of goods and the construction of piety through *mu'amalat*, a form of transaction and exchange among individuals. The exchange of material goods

³³ Vassilis Saroglou et al., "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Cognitive, Emotional, Moral, and Social Dimensions of Religiousness across Cultures," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 51, no. 7–8 (September 2020): 551–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022120946488>.

³⁴ Anderson, "The Piety of the Gift: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement," in *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 11 (1) (sage, 2011), 3–21.

in the form of food constitutes their formation of piety by fostering public virtue,³⁵ not merely through ritual acts as a means of self-discipline. Friday free lunch at Masjid Bunda is exchanged within the framework of a “gift economy,” in which ethical values of Islam are transmitted among those who have means, representing their faith and reinforcing a sense of peace, comfort, and the purification of wealth. Within the act of exchanging food, there exists a divine spiritual movement.³⁶ The consumption of food, while being a commodity in itself, does not always function as a mere commodity. Instead, it carries values, meanings,³⁷ and symbols of divine presence,³⁸ made tangible through the distribution of Friday lunch and communal gatherings aimed at fostering moral relationships among them.

Friday Free Lunch and the Projection of Non-Secular Sociality

In several studies, the formation of middle-class Muslim piety is not solely realized through rituals³⁹ but is also manifested in the circulation of language, such as exchanging advice, reciting the Qur'an together, and incorporating religious discourse into daily conversations.⁴⁰ The expression of middle-class piety at Masjid Bunda in Yogyakarta on Fridays reflects this formation, combining ritual practices like communal Friday prayers with the familiarization of religious language through study sessions that encourage the habit of *ṣadaqah* (charitable giving) on Fridays. However, another key aspect of piety formation at Masjid Bunda in Ambarukmo Housing Estate is the circulation of material goods in the form of *mu'amalat*, the act of providing food after Friday prayers. These three aspects of piety formation; ritual, linguistic exchange, and material distribution, are further emphasized by their connection to Friday, a day theologically regarded as *sayyid al-ayyam* (the master of all days), which carries special virtues for charitable giving. This structured formation is deeply embedded in efforts to manifest divinity and the Islamic spirit within middle-class practices.

At Masjid Bunda in Ambarukmu Housing Estate, there exists a linguistic ideology aimed at constructing an ethical community among the Muslim middle class. Terms such as the virtues of *ṣadaqah* on Fridays, *silaturalahmi* (social bonding), purification of wealth, and the merits (*fadilah*) of Friday charity are all directed toward fostering closeness to God and emulating the Prophet and his companions in their *mu'amalat* (social and economic interactions). The construction of this ethical community begins with routine Islamic study sessions led by religious scholars (*ustādh*). The outcomes of these studies are institutionalized through the practice of distributing Friday free lunches. The circulation of pious discourse through regular study sessions, such as *wealth belongs to Allah*, *purification of wealth*, and *the rights of others* has become an inseparable part of the class's ethical formation. Moreover, key concepts related to the importance of Friday charity are prominently displayed in flyers posted around the housing estate and on the mosque walls. These efforts aim to

³⁵ Anderson. ““The Piety of the Gift”: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement,” in *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 11 (1) (sage, 2011), 3–21.

³⁶ Anderson. ““The Piety of the Gift”: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement,” in *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 11 (1) (sage, 2011), 3–21.

³⁷ Yugang He, Yinhui Wang, and Xiaodan Gao, “What Role Does Religion Have in Shaping Human Consumption?,” *Religions* 13, no. 1 (January 2022): 8, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010008>; E. C. Herschman, “Religious Affiliation and Consumption Processes,” *Research in Marketing* 6 (1983): 131–70.

³⁸ Anderson, ““The Piety of the Gift”: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement.”

³⁹ Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2003): 837–66.

⁴⁰ Anderson, ““The Piety of the Gift”: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement,” in *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 11 (1) (sage, 2011), 3–21

embed social ethics as a shared communal spirit. Some of the texts that circulate and appear on the flyers include:

Category	Text
Al-Qur'an	<i>O my Lord, if only You would delay my death for a little while, so that I could give in charity... (Al-Munafiqun 10)</i>
Hadith	<i>The best of people are those who bring the most benefit to others.</i>
Hadith	<i>Every person will be under the shade of their charity until judgment is passed among people. (HR Ahmad)</i>
Hadith	<i>Indeed, Allah accepts charity and takes it with His right hand, then He nurtures its reward for one of you, just as you nurture a young horse, until even a small charity, as little as a single grain, grows to be as large as Mount Uhud. (HR Tirmidhi) (The reward of Friday charity)</i>

The trend of circulating normative Islamic language, as illustrated above, whether through discussions, religious studies, or pamphlets, is part of the collective effort to cultivate middle-class piety standards.⁴¹ The ideological language of giving charity on Fridays, as reflected in the dissemination of Quranic verses, Prophetic hadiths, and material food offerings, is aimed at self-reformation or creating conditions for others to be reformed.⁴² Therefore, they emphasize a sense of collectivity, which is evident in their practice of performing the Friday prayer together, followed by communal meals among them.

“The purpose of the Friday charity program: besides the many virtues of giving charity on Friday, it also serves as a means of strengthening social bonds among congregants after Friday prayers, enlivening the mosque, and encouraging people to give charity even outside the month of Ramadan.” (Syafuddin, a congregant of Bunda Mosque)

The statement above confirms the reformative orientation aimed at establishing middle-class Muslim standards of religiosity at Bunda Mosque. They shape their piety through ritual practices,⁴³ engagement with Islamic learning,⁴⁴ and cultivating Islamic behavioral movements within their community. At the same time, they promote Islamic virtues⁴⁵ by actively participating in the Friday charity movement, sharing their wealth and well-being with others.

The Friday free lunch initiative is part of the circulation of goods that embodies the “piety of the gift” among the middle-class Muslim community. The Friday meal, beyond being a material object, carries a socially oriented value. The circulation of goods both defines and is defined by the notion that middle-class piety at Bunda Mosque involves social exchange and interaction, fostering social closeness within a moral devine relationship. This material circulation reinforces the collective piety formation of the middle-class Muslim community. While food as an exchanged

⁴¹ Mahmood, “Politics of Piety.”

⁴² Anderson, ““The Piety of the Gift”: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement.”

^{43 44} Betül Akgöl Can, “Hybrid Patterns of Piety and Visibility of Religion for Being Muslim in a Globalized World,” in *Strategies for Cultural Assimilation of Immigrants and Their Children: Social, Economic, and Political Considerations* (IGI Global, 2023), 151–82, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-4839-7.ch008>.

⁴⁴ Syamsul Haq, “Piety and Commercialization Da’wah: The Influence of Hanan Attaki’s Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia,” *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31, <https://dx.doi.org/10.26555/almisbah.v12i1.9951>.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Velji, “Proposing an Islamic Virtue Ethics beyond the Situationist Debates,” *Inquiry*, January 2024, 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2023.2296467>

material has a social orientation, its value embodies a divine spirit.⁴⁶ Both aspects define a form of Islamic distinct from individualistic, non-religious materialism and mere wealth accumulation.

The creation of a pious environment is a crucial aspect of how the middle class defines its own religious piety. The pursuit of piety among the middle class becomes significant because they live in urban areas, which are often perceived as individualistic, secular, and focused on worldly engagements. They possess various resources, including income sources, networks, capital, and accessible consumption practices.⁴⁷ Engaging with worldly matters is part of their daily lives. However, in recent years, they have developed a renewed religious spirit, marked by Quranic study sessions, shifts in language trends, fashion choices, and the re-Islamization of their daily practices.⁴⁸ In this context, the collective piety they promote through Islamic consumption and the circulation of material goods, such as the Free Lunch Friday initiative can be classified and distinguished within urban spaces as a projection of middle-class piety.

The Friday free lunch initiative at Masjid Bunda Yogyakarta appears to be an effort to challenge the perception of the middle class as a secular (“almana) and luxury-driven group⁴⁹. Their economic status has often been seen solely through the lens of commodification. This perspective has led them to redefine their relationship with wealth and its circulation as part of their religious responsibility rather than mere commodification. The value of wealth is elevated by embedding a sacred existence within it. Thus, being a middle-class Muslim is not just about accumulating economic capital, consumption, and competition (secular values) but also about fostering care for friends, family, and community. In this context, the Muslim middle class at Masjid Bunda Yogyakarta seeks to reconstruct pious sociality by institutionalizing charitable giving through the Friday free lunch program, which they organize within their community.

The practice of providing Friday lunch at the mosque appears as a response to what is referred to as secular sociality. This is because there has long been a separation between the religious and the secular, particularly in the reality of those who engage with a commodified economy.⁵⁰ Worship is seen as worship, while economics is merely a matter of welfare. However, the practice of providing Friday lunch at the mosque is part of what they consider a dual obligation, toward God through worship and toward fellow human beings. Thus, Friday prayers, as a collective act of worship, followed by acts of sharing, charity, and communal meals, represent an effort to integrate the pursuit of piety with the well-being of the Muslim middle class.⁵¹ They redefine their

⁴⁶ Jonathan Benthall, “Financial Worship: The Quranic Injunction to Almsgiving,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1999, 27–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2660961>.

⁴⁷ Ali et al., “Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity and Consumerism.”

⁴⁸ Anderson, “The Piety of the Gift?: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement”; Faiz, *MUSLIMAH PERKOTAAN*; Tanweer Fazal, “The Old and the New Muslim Middle Class: Classificatory Practices and Social Mobility,” in *Marginailities and Mobilities among India’s Muslims* (Routledge India, 2023), 125–38, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003280309-9/old-new-muslim-middle-class-tanweer-fazal>.

⁴⁹ Anderson, “The Piety of the Gift?: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement”; Mahmood, “Politics of Piety.” In *Politics of Piety*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

⁵⁰ Moch Muwaffiqillah, “The Trichotomy of Islam, Democracy, and Secularism in Indonesia After the Conservative Turn,” *Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 34, no. 1 (2023): 79–94, <http://dx.doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v34i1.3190>.

⁵¹ Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, “Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media,” *South East Asia Research* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 70–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2019.1691939>.

way of life in relation to the secular. Borrowing Anderson's term, this reality can be described as a reality of non-secular sociality.⁵²

In the context mentioned above, the circulation of food on Fridays by the Muslim middle class at mosques in Yogyakarta appears as an effort to cultivate moral ideals and social bonds in leading a meaningful life.⁵³ The circulation of goods through Friday free lunch charity becomes essential in conceptualizing the ethics of the Muslim middle class. These moral ideals and social bonds are articulated through the circulation of religious words and language, acts of worship, and sharing of wealth in alignment with the prioritized times in Islam. This can be observed, for example, in the practice of exchanging advice through religious study sessions, pamphlets discussing the virtues of charity, and the organized effort within their community through the Friday charity program. All of these efforts are collectively projected as a formation of communal piety aligning with the moral standards of the Qur'an and the Prophet.⁵⁴

Based on the results and discussions presented in the two preceding subsections, this study offers a theoretical contribution to the discourse on urban Islam by demonstrating that Muslim middle-class piety is manifested through redistributive and compassionate economic actions. While in Saba Mahmood's studies the formation of piety centers on self-disciplinary ritual practices, and in Paul Anderson's account it is articulated through the circulation of religious language and words as gifts and forms of exchange, in this context, the formation of piety extends through the circulation of goods, acts of charity, and food distribution following Friday rituals. Therefore, the data presented above deepens the understanding that piety in urban contexts is a social construction closely tied to class formation and moral economy within the *mu'amalat* framework. By introducing the concept of religious-sociological ethics, this research expands the theoretical scope of urban Islam and offers a new analytical pathway for understanding how piety is embedded in everyday social interactions (*mu'amalat*) and class practices. Nonetheless, the findings also align with the conceptions of Saba Mahmood and Paul Anderson, showing that middle-class practices, in various forms, are projected toward building a non-secular mode of life in urban society.

Conclusion

This study finds that the Muslim middle class actively engages in shaping class-based piety through religious-economic practices, particularly through acts of charity in the mosque. Practices such as the provision of free lunch serve as an embodiment of the Sunnah and a moral expression that integrates individual piety with communal ethics oriented toward the formation of a non-secular sociality. Theoretically, these findings contribute to discussions on religious-sociological ethics by demonstrating that piety is manifested through economic redistribution, challenges secular social norms, and offers an alternative ethical foundation for class relations through the moral economy of *mu'amalat*. However, this research is limited by its focus on a single residential mosque and Friday rituals, which are predominantly male-dominated. Future studies should explore a variety of urban locations, incorporate more diverse gender perspectives, and examine the formation of non-secular spaces through middle-class Islamization projects in urban settings, in order to capture the phenomenon more comprehensively at a macro level.

⁵² Anderson, “The Piety of the Gift: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement.”

⁵³ Yanti M. Hoelzchen, “Mosques as Religious Infrastructure: Muslim Selfhood, Moral Imaginaries and Everyday Sociality,” *Central Asian Survey* 41, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 368–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2021.1979468>.

⁵⁴ Anderson, “The Piety of the Gift: Selfhood and Sociality in the Egyptian Mosque Movement.”

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