

Discourse and Power in Religious Social Practices of the Gowa Highland Society

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Abstract— This paper explains about the discursive practice of religious knowledge of alms and *aqiqah* in the procession of death which is very commonly practiced by the people of the highland Gowa. This religious knowledge is produced and reproduced through a system of discourse, so that religious knowledge is authoritative and legitimate. Religious knowledge as an authoritative and legitimate discourse produces a mainstream religious rite. The application of authoritative and legitimate religious knowledge as a religious practice of mainstream, marks the operation of the power regime through the practice of the relationship that has developed between the history of knowledge as episteme and discourse. When the power regime manifests in authoritative and legitimate knowledge through discourse, it results in a distinction between the majority and minority religious behavior; followers and not follower burrs; common and unusual in society. In this context, the practice of alms and *aqiqah* in the procession of death which is considered a "true" religious practice for the highland Gowa people can be explained.

Keywords— Alms and *aqiqah*, Religious knowledge, Gowa plateau, Discourse, Power.

I. INTRODUCTION

The people of Gowa Regency are spread in two large regions, namely people who inhabit the lowlands and highlands. People who inhabit the highlands tend to be homogeneous, both in terms of language and ethnicity is Makassar. Homogeneity of society is also reflected in religious aspects. The majority of the people are Muslim. Significant correlations to explain the existence of Islam as a majority religious institution can be explained in terms of the material aspects and religious practices found in this area. In the material aspect, almost every village has a mosque building as a center for religious activities. The next mosque became an important material measure in explaining the religious activities of the people. In addition to the mosque, various Islamic religious activities (worship), both *mahdhah*¹ and *ghairu mahdhah*², reinforce Islamic religious practices in this area.

In general, religious practices (Islam) in this area have similarities with Muslims elsewhere. Being different is when talking about the socio-religious reality of society, especially with regard to religious practices in the

procession of death. For the people of the highlands of Gowa, especially in the Subdistricts of Tompobulu, Biringbulu and Bungaya, in the procession of death, there are two religious practices that are very common to them, alms and *aqiqah*. Alms and *aqiqah* is a unity that encompasses the procession of death carried out by families who have been left behind. The practice of alms and *aqiqah* is very common in Muslim societies, but as a socio-religious reality, both practices are interesting to explain. The context of alms and *aqiqah* in this case is not explained in terms of mere Islamic practice, but both practices seem to be a necessity of complete religious practices in the rite of death in this area.

For Muslims, alms become an important practice as a form of gratitude for everything that he has received and has for the gift of Allah SWT. The concept of sharing or caring for others (philanthropy) is an inseparable part of the practice of alms. Referring to the context of alms in the procession of death as something "obligatory" becomes interesting when connected with the form or form of material alms issued. For the people of Gowa plateau, the concept of almsgiving that is believed in the procession of death is to give part or all of everything that is owned by the deceased who has died to someone else. Furthermore, the subject of the next recipient of alms was narrowed down, as if those entitled to receive alms were religious leaders (individuals) or institutionalized, namely village or village priests, who specifically led the procession of death from the procession of corpse to burial to the burial ground.

The general alms context relates to certain material given by one person to another person. Material aspects and the amount of alms are also very specific to the highland Gowa community. Alms material in the procession of death is generally in the form of mattresses, pillows, mats, beds, cooking utensils, to motorcycles. The form of alms material is quite unique, because all the material offered tends not to have material that was previously owned, but was held when the calamity of death struck their family. More than that, the amount of alms and the quality of the material also varies greatly, this depends on how able the family to realize the alms material. In this context, the element of "prestige" or "shame" (read: *sirri* in Makassar language) is inherent in the conscious mind of individuals in society [1], when explaining the matter.

The next religious practice is *Aqiqah*. Generally, *Aqiqah* is worship which is also related to almsgiving [2]. *Aqiqah* generally cuts part or all of the head hair on the seventh day since the birth of a child accompanied by slaughtering

¹ The type of worship since the beginning of its establishment from the proposition of the sharia.

² The type of worship that is not directly regulated is stipulated from the proposition of the sharia.

animals (goats or cows). Referring to this practice, girls are cut one goat and for boys are two goats [3]. For the highland Gowa people, the *aqiqah* concept also applies to people who have died. The family prepares a cow or buffalo to be slaughtered in doing this practice. For them, *aqiqah* became one of the completeness of the whole series of death processions for the highland Gowa people. In other words, if the two processions are not carried out, then it is considered incomplete in releasing the departing family.

The religious practice of Alms and *aqiqah*, as explained earlier, is basically a religious knowledge or concepts embodied in religious practices in this area. Despite these two religious' practices, it can be very common for them, but in the present context, it becomes interesting when connected with the question that people die is the biggest disaster, both for individuals who die, and also for families who are being left behind. For disadvantaged people, this disaster is very heavy, and certainly does not have to be burdened with other material burdens.

Associated with the two religious practices referred to, this paper is basically not to explain at the same time answer about why and how the religious practices of the alms and *aqiqah* are carried out. Whether the two religious practices are burdensome or not for the highland Gowa people, is also not part of the question to be answered. It also does not explain the implications of what arise from the application of religious practices in society. This paper basically explains about discursive practices related to religious knowledge or religious concepts (Islam) running in society from the past until now. How does religious discourse (alms and *aqiqah*) in the procession of death develop and act authoritatively and legitimately which subsequently results in an individual or comprehensive religious behavior or practice in society. This paper also talks about how the construction of religious discourse is produced and reproduced by the community, so that it produces a mainstream religious rite. The context of the Mainstream religious rite is closely related to the explanation of the majority and minority behavior, the behavior of followers and non-follower behavior, as well as the "usual" and "unusual" religious rites, as part of the embodiment of religious discourse which had previously been constructed by theologian with authority in providing interpretation of the religious text. Referring to this explanation, the two religious practices are analyzed using Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse. The important question to be answered in this paper is: how does religious knowledge (alms and *aqiqah*) apply authoritatively and legitimately, so that it manifests in socio-religious practices in the Gowa highland community?

II. ALMS AND *AQIQAH* AS A MAINSTREAM RELIGION PRACTICE

The majority of the Gowa plateau community is Muslim [4] The historical context can explain that the entry of Islam into Gowa certainly shifted many pre-Islamic religious practices into religious practices based on Islamic understanding. Although some pre-Islamic religious practices continue in society, forms of transfer referring to Islamic knowledge have been carried out. Just as the meaning of *sirri* 'which can be interpreted a priori as

"shame" shifts in meaning when it is connected with Islamic knowledge, *sirri*' in this case is interpreted as "shame" refers to the submission of creatures towards Allah SWT [5] The entry of Islam as a religion certainly offers so many clauses regarding how the procedures for a religious practice (Islam) are carried out, including regulating the religious behavior of alms and *aqiqah*.

Religious knowledge related to alms and *aqiqah* is a religious practice that can be said to be comprehensive for the highland Gowa people. Religious practice is something that is considered "mandatory" as a norm, to the point as a practice of truth. In this case, the community tried to carry out such religious practices when one of their family members died. The family seeks to collect material that has been owned by a deceased individual, to collect money sourced from an abandoned extended family, such as: selling land, jewelry, or other materials so that religious practices can be carried out.

For those who are economically established, alms material can be in the form of mattresses and pillows (including spring bed), beds, mats, gloves, cooking utensils, even motorcycles. For economically disadvantaged people, the alms material elements are the same, but the quality is different. Another phenomenon related to the material being offered is also quite interesting, the material being offered is not from material that is owned by a person who has died, but is new material. For local people, the amount of material offered is very relative, depending on who will be given and how "able" the family to carry out the practice of alms. If the death procession invites *gurunta*³, then the amount and quality of alms material will also be higher. Vice versa, if only village or village priests⁴ were brought in to lead the death procession, the quality and amount of material offered was relatively reduced. The reduced quality and material for alms for village or village priests does not necessarily explain that the amount and quality of the material is small, the amount remains of "great" value, because only those who are entitled to receive alms for the alms material. For other communities, (other than *gurunta* and or village or village priests), they are not entitled to the alms. For people who take part in the procession of the body prayer, generally alms are given in the form of money. The people who get alms money are basically those who participate in the procession of corpse prayer, while those who do not participate in the corpse prayer, they do not get alms.

The practice of alms and *aqiqah* that accompanies the process of death as a religious knowledge is carried out as it was previously accepted. Religious knowledge is received by the community through religious leaders who are locally referred to as *gurunta* or *tuan guru* (master teacher). *Gurunta* in the construction of the Gowa plateau community

³ *Gurunta* are local scholars who are authorized as the bearers of Islam in certain communities who are appointed by local rulers who are familiarly referred to as *karaeng* or kings.

⁴ The village priest is a local cleric who is authorized as the bearer of Islam in certain communities who are appointed by the local Ministry of Religion Institution. The village or hamlet priest is appointed by the village priest.

became the delivery actors of the process of transformation of religious knowledge in the community. *Gurunta* transformed his knowledge through various media, such as recitation (Al-Quran, Hadith, and the book of *fiqh*) at his home once a week in a long period of time. *Gurunta* which is generally also a lecturer transforms religious knowledge through lectures conducted in the community, both during Friday sermons, public recitation from house to house, as well as religious lectures in the context of carrying out religious holidays in this area, including, lecture when guiding the course of the procession of death.

When the *gurunta* has passed away, the religious duties are continued by the students in transforming religious knowledge. Religious knowledge has now spread widely in society. The next religious practice is based on general knowledge that has been spread in society through the discourse of diversity that has been believed to be true.

The social practices of *aqiqah* religion and alms have shifted more or less. Even though these two religious practices still continue to this day, some of the highland Gowa people have shifted from previous understanding to another understanding. They considered that the practice of alms returned to aspects of religious practice based on the strength of sincerity they believed in. Some people replace alms material and negate the *aqiqah*, generally individuals or groups of people who have higher education. By local people, individuals or groups of people who do not carry out socio-religious practices are considered deviant as a comparison of normal behavior. The social consequences received were that they would be gossiped about, and the rumors continued to hang in the memory of the local people.

III. DISCOURSE AND POWER IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF ALMS AND *AQIQAH*

Referring to the large Indonesian dictionary, discourse is defined as verbal communication; conversation; overall speech as a whole [6]. in English is defined as a discourse [7] Referring to Ormiston and Scrift's statement [8], that discourse is a dialogical activity that has the qualities and intellectual commitment to obtain a shared truth. Foucault further explained, the manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said [9]. More specifically Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's definition of religious discourse is the various interpretive possibilities of religion that claim to hold to the "correct" and "true" language about his treatise and teachings [10]

Referring to the definitions that have been presented before, then in this case alms and *aqiqah* can be categorized as discourse. These two things are interpretations of the ulama, which in this case, the context of the ulama is represented by the *gurunta*, the village or village priest or someone who is considered to understand about religion. The interpretation of ulama or *gurunta* basically refers to Islamic law (*fiqh*), books, and any religious texts that have become a reference for Muslims. Primary texts refer to Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith, while secondary texts are based on the construction of scholars who refer to primary texts. In this section we are familiar with religious books that contain

religious discourse (including fatwas) and subsequently serve as guidance in carrying out religious activities in the form of praxis. When religious discourse which is based on primary and secondary texts has been constructed by the ulama as a party considered to have authority, it will produce a variety of interpretations or meanings. Referring to the explanation of Khaled Abou el-Fadl, it is in this context that there is a delegation of persuasive authority [11]. Delegation of persuasive authority occurs when the public does not fully understand the primary text. The secondary text that has been constructed by the ulama as the party that has authority over the matter, is finally used as a reference to carry out religious activities as well as the embodiment of aspects of piety in religious practice by the wider community. Ulama who have authority over the construction of texts, both primary and secondary, are basically also part of humans who have subjectivity and the will of subjectivity itself. Humans in interpreting the text, must be based on an understanding, which subsequently gave birth to an interpretation of the text different from one another. When the construction of ulama's religious discourse is used as a basis for explaining the truth, good and bad, right and not right for religious practices in society, it will result in groupings in societies that are familiarly referred to as insider and outsider, meaning that the like-minded party is considered the right group while those who are disagree is considered wrong and becomes another group [12]

Various sources of texts are used as a basis for explaining these religious activities, as if they have become a flawless final part. In fact, in the reciprocal context that religious discourse will give birth to religious rites. The construction of religious discourse opens space for the emergence of new understandings, both of how religious discourse is transformed through its devices, so as to produce a dominant religious rite in society. In a firmer context, borrowing Foucault's explanation, that discourse has the power of praxis. Discourse plays an important role in the process of forming social practices[13]

The role of the ulama as an intermediary subject to the practice of developing discourse in society, is basically not an important part, because scholars, both individuals and institutions, who are considered as the owner of interpretive authority over religious knowledge may not be accepted by other subjects of society. Such a context explains, that each individual has authority over religious interpretations through the knowledge they possess. At this stage, the question of authority no longer rests on a particular subject, but relies on knowledge, more precisely the history of knowledge. What is meant by knowledge here is not referring to a specific form of knowledge from a particular scientific discipline temporarily. Knowledge refers to the history of knowledge as an episteme. Episteme is a form of knowledge that has been established (authoritative) as the meaning of certain situations in his day. Episteme is like a world-view, a slice of history that is common to all branches of knowledge that impose on each of the same norms and propositions, general stages of thought, certain structures of thought that humans in certain periods cannot get out of the network. Thus, Foucault explained:

This episteme may be suspected of being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape — a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand.[9]

The question then is, how can knowledge be authoritative and legitimate in explaining things? Alms and *aqiqah* in the procession of death, in this case is a form of religious knowledge that is accepted and believed to be true by the local community. Accepted and convinced of religious knowledge about alms and *aqiqah* by the highland Gowa community, explained that the religious knowledge is authoritative and legitimate in explaining the concepts or knowledge of religious practices carried out. Religious knowledge that is authoritative and legitimate further influences or becomes the basis of reference in carrying out individual socio-religious practices, ways of thinking, speaking, acting in understanding, carrying out these religious practices. there is one case about how this authoritative and legitimate knowledge affects the way of thinking of the highland Gowa people. Someone who is critically ill, consciously gives the message - if not said as a will - to his child, that if he dies, do not forget to be *aqiqah* (slaughtering a cow) by selling his jewelry stash.

The history of knowledge as an episteme does not in itself become a reference for society in carrying out social religious practices. The main impulse that underlies is the operation of the power within. In this context, the question is not directed at what power is, but rather how power is received, practiced, and seen as truth [14]. Power operates when scientific knowledge is related to prior knowledge, which also acts as an initial pre-understanding or episteme. The relation between the two manifests in discourse. Scientific knowledge becomes a comparison of previous validations [13]. This context explains how knowledge as a pre-Islamic episteme has been shifted by Islamic knowledge. The practice of bringing offerings in the form of food placed on large trees or small houses (Makassar language: *saukang*) which is considered sacred, has been shifted by the introduction of Islam in the form of *barzanji*, when the Gowa highlands have embraced Islam. In different contexts, the rejection of the practice of alms and *aqiqah* in the procession of death by some people who have a scientific understanding, is a manifestation of the practice of the relationship between scientific knowledge and knowledge as previous episteme. Such knowledge relations are familiarly referred to as knowledge structures which Foucault calls discursive formations. In this context, cracks in the archeological constructs of knowledge, being indicators in knowing how changes in the knowledge regime of a period, have become or are represented as a common practice that distinguishes from the practice of uncommon, because knowledge has become authoritative and legitimate. This is a sign that power has operated through discourse that runs fully through knowledge. When the discourse manifests in its praxis, both institutionalized and not institutionalized, it will result in social change and also produce a social condition as well. In this context, discourse apprentices an

important role in the emergence of a claim for truth. A variety explained by Foucault, that there is no truth or true knowledge that is final and universal. Truth is a special case of errors which at a certain time are recognized as authoritative and legitimate, and in the next period can be replaced by other truths that have authority and legitimate in the next process [13]

Power does not operate through destructive individuals or institutions. Power is not merely explained as the will of God [15] Power is not centered on the charismatic individual as explained by Weber [16]. Power is not class domination and economic domination as explained by Marx [17]. Referring to Foucault's explanation, that power is one dimension of relations. Where there is a relationship, there is power [18]. Power is omnipresent, that is, it is spread invisibly, unconsciously, which basically controls an individual's body. Even though power is not visible, it can be felt through its real effects. The visible effect is represented in authoritative and legitimate knowledge as a knowledge regime. Individuals and / or institutions are not controlling the knowledge regime, but at some stage, individuals or institutions can capture or manage authoritative and legitimate knowledge, but not in the framework of controlling let alone authority holders, but humans are part of the power mechanism itself [19]

In the case of alms in the procession of death, *gurunta* becomes a figure that is considered important. Alms became an inseparable part when he became the imam of the corpse. At this stage, he next spreads the discourse that he is entitled to get "more alms" (read: motorbike) when the deceased party is not from the neighborhood of the village or village where the *gurunta* lives or lives. The community's rejection of this rule made the community prefer village priests or village priests to lead the procession of death. The discourse about "almsgiving" does not get its relation, so the context of power is not inherent in that aspect. this can explain that power is not represented on a particular subject, but manifests in authoritative and legitimate knowledge.

Authoritative and legitimate knowledge eventually becomes a regime of discourse that has implications for the formation of social practices. Referring to Foucault's explanation, that power does not only shape knowledge and custom as an episteme. Power related to knowledge implies not only the individual body, but also the social body. This context will subsequently produce a social practice that is comprehensive and manifests in the form of social control, where power manifests in disciplinary power. That power works through the practice of disciplining individual bodies and social bodies [13]. The form of disciplinary power in the practice of alms and *aqiqah* is the practice of gossip and rumors. The practice of gossiping and rumors are considered as a process of normalization of certain individuals or groups of society. By Foucault exemplified as the state put the poor, criminals and crazy people in prison. Punishment is considered as a form of normalization or discipline of the conditions of social unrest and economic depression that plagued Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries [20]

IV. CONCLUSION

Alms and *aqiqah* in the procession of death tends to be interpreted as "truth" religious behavior for the highland Gowa people. Basically, there is no truth or true knowledge that is final and universal. The truth is nothing more than a "mistake" which at a certain time is recognized as authoritative and legitimate, which can be replaced by other truths that have authority and legitimate in their time.

Alms and *aqiqah* is a product of the history of knowledge represented through the practice of discourse. When the history of knowledge (about alms and *aqiqah*) as episteme is related to discourse, it is in this context that power operates. Power is spread invisibly, unconsciously, which basically controls an individual's body. Even though power is not visible, it can be felt through its real effects. This is what Foucault explained, that power is omnipresent. The effect that appears to be realized is authoritative and legitimate knowledge as a knowledge regime.

As a regime of knowledge, alms and *aqiqah* produce a mainstream religious practice that distinguishes between common and unusual religious practices, right and wrong in a social context. As a knowledge regime that involves the operation of power, alms and *aqiqah* are produced and reproduced through socio-religious practices. In this context, power explained by Foucault is reproductive. Power not only controls the individual body, but also controls the social body.

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