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**Marriage and Piety:
East Javanese Women Cultivating Piety by Doing Marital Tasks**

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Abstract

This article examines how the Pandalungan women in East Java understand their marital chores in marriage and feel that performing them is a sign of their piety by using the concepts of piety, gender, and marital tasks. Qualitative data are collected through interviews, using the snowball sampling technique to select interlocutors. The analysis indicates two main findings. First, Pandalungan women believe that domestic chores are their primary responsibilities in marriage, which must be performed by them rather than their husbands. These responsibilities are culturally and socially internalized as part of their gender role within the household structure. Second, women in the Pandalungan group perceive that a woman's piety can be cultivated and expressed through marriage by being obedient to her husband and fulfilling her assigned marital tasks. This obedience is seen not only as a social expectation but also as a moral and religious duty. Therefore, women are obliged to perform their marital tasks as a form of devotion and expression of piety within marriage, which reflects the intersection between gender norms, cultural values, and religious understanding in their daily lives.

Keywords: Marriage, Piety, Marital Tasks

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana perempuan Pandalungan di Jawa Timur memahami pekerjaan perkawinan mereka dalam pernikahan dan merasa bahwa melakukannya adalah tanda kesalehan dengan menggunakan konsep kesalehan, jenis kelamin, dan tugas perkawinan. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel bola salju untuk memilih lawan bicara. Analisis menunjukkan dua temuan utama. Pertama, perempuan Pandalungan percaya bahwa pekerjaan rumah tangga adalah tanggung jawab utama mereka dalam pernikahan, yang harus dilakukan oleh mereka daripada suami mereka. Tanggung jawab ini diinternalisasi secara budaya dan sosial sebagai bagian dari peran gender mereka dalam struktur rumah tangga. Kedua, perempuan dalam kelompok Pandalungan menganggap bahwa kesalehan seorang perempuan dapat dikembangkan dan diekspresikan melalui pernikahan dengan taat kepada suaminya dan memenuhi tugas perkawinan yang diberikan. Ketaatan ini dipandang tidak hanya sebagai harapan sosial, tetapi juga sebagai kewajiban moral dan agama. Oleh karena itu, perempuan wajib melakukan tugas perkawinannya sebagai bentuk pengabdian dan ekspresi kesalehan dalam pernikahan, yang mencerminkan persimpangan antara norma gender, nilai-nilai budaya, dan pemahaman agama dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

Kata Kunci: *Pernikahan, Kesalehan, Tugas Perkawinan*

Introduction

In recent years, piety has been a focus of growing interests of discussion and studies in diverse spectrums. The core issue of the interest is the concept of piety and its expressions. The growing interest of this subject can be seen in a number of scholarly works such as Mahmood,¹ Rinaldo,² Ansor,³ Yulikhah,⁴ Pepinsky and

¹Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005); Gabrielle Clark, "Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject by Saba Mahmood," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 31, no. 2 (2008); Salwa Ismail, "Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject: Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 3 (2006).

²Rachel Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity In Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 2, no. 1 (2008), p. 23–39.

³Muhammad Ansor, "Being Woman in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh," *Al-Jami'ah* 52, no. 1 (2014), p. 59–83; Abdul Rahim, "Between Piety and Lifestyle: Hijab Shar'i on the Commodification Practices of the Islamic Culture Industry," *Ulumuna* 26, no. 1 (2022).

⁴Inayah Rohmaniyah, "Burqa, Body and The Ultimate Piety of Being a Woman: The Construction of Sexuality and Resistance among Indonesian Female Migrant Workers," *Ushuluddin International Conference (USICON)* 4 (2021); Shahbaz Ahmad Cheema, "Construction of Authenticity in Islamic Law: An Analysis of Polygamy, Divorce, and Political Participation of Women," *Islamic Studies* 59, no. 4 (2020); Siti Dian Natasya Solin et al., "Batak Customary Marriage: A Study of the Prohibition of Same-Clan Marriage and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era," *El-Usrah* 7, no. 1 (2024).

Welborne,⁵ Tobin,⁶ Smith,⁷ as well as Khan and Seedat.⁸ Some of those scholarly works come up with critical analysis of piety concept in normative and practical realms.⁹ In practical realms, none of the ample studies of piety in marriage focus on piety and women's doing marital tasks. For that reason, this study will discuss how women in a local context of East Java perceive and cultivate their piety by doing marital tasks. It will examine specifically how the women perceive their marital tasks in marriage and believe that doing the tasks as a form of their piety.

Mahmood, through her research among Muslim women activists in Egypt, and Rinaldo, among Muslim women activists in Indonesia, for instance, attempted to conceptualize the so-called pious and pious critical agency. They argued that piety is an expression of agency. Furthermore, it is not at odds with feminism.¹⁰

Ansor conducted research among Langsa women in Aceh. He particularly talked regarding female body. He found that the concept of piety is debatable among different classes of women in this place related to this issue. For example, Langsa's religious authority figures view that piety should be expressed through symbolic way, such as covering female body. On the other hand, the majority of 'ordinary' Langsa's women think that piety should be shown on the substantive way. It is the act of their hearts which matters rather than their body.¹¹ Besides, Yulikhah in her study among female students at State Islamic University of Walisongo in Semarang argued that veiling and covering female body is not only a practice of piety, but it becomes a social phenomenon among Muslim women in Indonesia.¹²

Pepinsky and Welborne as well as Tobin discussed the concept and practice of piety in Economic field. Pepinsky and Welborne employed survey data from twenty five different countries, such as Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Turkey, and others. Pepinsky and Welborne concluded that piety affects economic preferences of

⁵Thomas B. Pepinsky and Bozena C. Welborne, "Piety and Redistributive Preferences in the Muslim World," *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2011), p. 491–505.

⁶Sarah Tobin, "Everyday Piety: Islam & Economy in Jordan," in *Everyday Piety: Islam and Economy in Jordan* (Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁷Bianca J. Smith, "Sexual Desire, Piety, and Law in a Javanese Pesantren : Interpreting Varieties of Secret Divorce and Polygamy," *Anthropological Forum* 24, no. 3 (2014), p. 227–44.

⁸Mariam B. Khan and Fatima Seedat, "Secure between God and Man: Peace, Tranquility and Sexuality through the Pietistic Aspirations of Believing Women," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 30, no. 1 (2017), p. 137–60.

⁹Afiya Shehrbano Zia, "'My Body, Allah's Choice': Islamic Laws and Sexual Autonomies in Pakistan," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 23, no. 2 (2022); Shahana Munazir, "Khidmat as Understanding: Muslim Women, Marriage, and Ethics of Care in Muslim Households," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 32 (2025).

¹⁰Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*; Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity In Indonesia."

¹¹Ansor, "Being Woman in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh."

¹²Safitri Yulikhah, "Jilbab Antara Kesalehan Dan Fenomena Sosial," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 36, no. 1 (2017), p. 96–117; Muhammad Zain et al., "Hijab Discourse in Indonesia: The Battle of Meaning Between Sharia and Culture in Public Space," *Samarah* 7, no. 3 (2023).

Muslims in these countries.¹³ Meanwhile, Tobin did her research among Amman Muslims. She argued that the practices of economic and piety produce new form of religiosity.¹⁴

Based on her ethnographic research among women in Javanese *pesantren*, Smith found that sexual desire does not contradict with piety. The women she talked to argued that active sexuality is part of being pious in marriage context.¹⁵ Besides Smith, Khan and Seedat explored the way South African Muslim women negotiating piety within their marriage life.¹⁶

In the previous studies, little attention has been paid to the way Muslim women construct and practice piety in the context of marriage and how gender role construction contributes to their understanding and practice of piety in marriage. Therefore, this study will focus on these issues.

This study chooses *Pandalungan* sub-cultural group in East Java—specifically in Malang district, East Java, for two main reasons. First, based on existing works on this sub-cultural group, it was mentioned that this group has a rigid gender roles division for man and woman, especially in a marital relation and working sphere, which allows this study to see how gender construction of women's position contribute to the concept and practice of women's piety in marriage. Second, Malang is well known to be one of distributed areas of *Pandalungan* groups apart of other areas in East Java. Thus, this study discusses the way *Pandalungan* Muslim women construct and cultivate piety in the context of marriage, as well as describe gender role construction among the community of *Pandalungan*, and how this construction contributes to the understanding and practice of piety in marriage within the *Pandalungan* Muslim women.

A qualitative approach is applied in this study with a case study model and interview as the data collection technique. In finding the interlocutors, this study uses a snowballing technique, from one *Pandalungan* woman to other women who are potentially accessible for interview. The selection criteria of interlocutors, does not include specific backgrounds (Education, economics, and social) of the women because the focus is married women's notion about piety in marriage.

¹³Pepinsky and Welborne, "Piety and Redistributive Preferences in the Muslim World."; Tobin, "Everyday Piety: Islam & Economy in Jordan." Zia, "'My Body, Allah's Choice': Islamic Laws and Sexual Autonomies in Pakistan."

¹⁴Pepinsky and Welborne, "Piety and Redistributive Preferences in the Muslim World."; Moh Toriquddin et al., "Living Qur'an, Niqab, and Islamic Law: A Study at Mambaush Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, Gresik, East Java," *Samarah* 8, no. 2 (2024).

¹⁵Smith, "Sexual Desire, Piety, and Law in a Javanese *Pesantren* : Interpreting Varieties of Secret Divorce and Polygamy."

¹⁶Khan and Seedat, "Secure between God and Man: Peace, Tranquility and Sexuality through the Pietistic Aspirations of Believing Women."

Piety, its Dimensions, and Aims

The equivalent meaning for and the closest approximation of the word piety in Muslim Arabic usage is *taqwâ*.¹⁷ Ma'luf defined *taqwâ* as the fear of God and submission to Him.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Manzur described the word *taqwâ* as a preventive action from all the undesirable things because its basic meaning is to preserve, to avoid, to cover, and to hide.¹⁹ In addition to definition proposed by Ma'luf and Manzur, al-Asfahani said that *taqwâ* will maintain someone from doing the unlawful things.²⁰ Al-Jurjani and Maham and Bhatti said that *taqwâ* is an act of obedience to God and avoidance of His punishment.²¹ It can protect oneself from actions that deserve punishment.²²

In his book of "Tafsir al-Azhar", Hamka noted that the word *taqwâ* has more comprehensive meaning, such as love, expectation, affection, patient, brave, and the so forth. In his opinion, *taqwâ* is maintaining a good relationship with Allah by performing a good conduct not because of fear for Allah but due to self-awareness of being servant of Allah.²³ Similar to this definition *taqwâ* is an integrity in obedience towards God and the Prophet with sincerity, love, honesty, and fear. It also means being keen on everything that brings someone closer to God.²⁴

Shihab pointed out that the word *taqwâ* is often associated with the word Allah (*ittaqullâh*) meaning the fear of Allah.²⁵ This term is understood as an effort to keep away from the punishment of Allah. Commented on Shihab's saying, Irsyadunnas argued that the fear of Allah will lead people to avoid the punishment of God by performing good conducts. According to him, a pious person is a person who maintain him/herself from the punishment of Allah, he or she must have high perspective and awareness on understanding the causes which can result in punishment. He pointed out that the word *taqwâ* indicates Muslims' self-control.²⁶ This notion is in line with Saba Mahmood's definition on piety as "the state attainable", an integrated inherent capability of a Muslim in perspective and action

¹⁷<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/piety>; <https://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/piety/>

¹⁸Louis Ma'luf Al-Yasu'i, *Al-Munjid Fi Al-Munjid Fî Al-Lughah Wa Al-Adab Wa Al-Ulûm* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Katholikiyyah, 1927).

¹⁹Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan Al-'Arab*, III (Beirut: Dar al-Fikri, 1999), 377.

²⁰Ar-Raghib Al-Asfahani, *Mu'jam Mufradât Alfâz Al-Qur'ân* (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr, 1972).

²¹Raj Maham and Omar Khalid Bhatti, "Impact of Taqwa (Islamic Piety) on Employee Happiness: A Study of Pakistan's Banking Sector," *Cogent Business and Management* 6, no. 1 (2019).

²²Ali bin Muhammad Al-Jurjani, *Al-Ta'rifat* (al-Qahirah: Dar al Kitab al-Mishri, 1991), p. 52.

²³H.A.K. Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, I (Jakarta: Panjimas, 2021), p. 122–23.

²⁴Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari, *Tafsir Al-Tabari*, XVI (al-Qahirah: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.); Mohamed Sulaiman and Omar Khalid Bhatti, "Workplace Deviance and Spirituality in Muslim Organizations," *Asian Social Science* 9, no. 10 (2013).

²⁵M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002).

²⁶Abdulrahman Helli, "The Concept of Taqwa and the Quranic Ethical System: Structure and Context," *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 2021.

to reach the religious virtue as Muslim's daily practices. The pious Muslim must have the capability to develop his or her good or spiritual self-capacity.²⁷

The proposal of a concept of private piety as a new form of Muslim religiosity is a recent trend of defining piety individually. In their opinion, piety is becoming a private matter for Muslims, which gives a personal preference to define the meaning of being pious for a Muslim and express it in various forms of piety. Hence, it is noteworthy to note the basic concept of piety itself in more normative ways to get a general insight into the diverse expressions of piety.²⁸

Some scholars recognized two types of piety.²⁹ The first type of piety is called "ritual piety" or "individual piety" which emphasizes the relationship of Muslims with God (*ḥablun min Allāh*). This kind of piety is expressed through devotional acts and religious performances such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, reciting the Qur'an, and others. The other piety is "social piety," which lays stress on the relationship between Muslims and other human beings (*ḥablun min an-nās*). The social piety is demonstrated through implementing Islamic values in a social sense. Those who have this kind of piety attempt to help and sympathize with others. Islamic piety should compromise both ritual and social kinds of piety. Therefore, a pious Muslim should have both as the internalization of Islamic teachings.

In his research among Australian Christians and Muslims, Hassan mentioned five dimensions of piety. The first dimension is the ideological dimension of religious beliefs. This dimension includes the religious beliefs they hold. The second dimension is ritualistic, which encompasses religious practice or devotional acts. The third dimension is devotional. This dimension of piety is similar to the previous dimension. However, this devotional dimension gives more attention to the way they refer to Bible or The Qur'an to make a decision. The fourth dimension is the so called the experiential dimension which consists of how they experience regarding divine reality, such as the feeling of the presence of God. The last dimension is consequential which concerns how religion affects their daily life.³⁰

As an act, piety constitutes different aims. It also emerges in the context of individual (personal) and communal interest. Several Qur'anic verses mention the purpose of piety in Islam. For instance, piety saves people from destruction (27:53, 41:18), it absolves people's sins and admits them into the garden (5:65), to protect people from bad deeds (8:29), it is a source of comfort (10: 63-64). In addition, a pious Muslim will be rewarded by Allah immensely (65:5) as well as will be given

²⁷Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*.

²⁸Roman Loimeir and Liza Maria Franke, "Islam Mondain" and Private Piety: New Forms of Muslims Religiosity. Retrieved from <http://www.centren.de>. Accessed on April 20, 2016

²⁹Safira Mustaqilla et al., "Ritual Contestation in Contemporary Acehnese Islam," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 8, no. 2 (2025).

³⁰Riaz Hassan, "On Being Religious: A Study of Christian and Muslim Piety in Australia," *Australian Religion Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (2002); Amporn Marddent, "Religious Piety and Muslim Women in Thailand," *Women and Gender: The Middle East and the Islamic World*, 2013.

a way out of their difficulties and provided from source they could never imagine (65: 2-3).

Besides described in the Islamic sources above, the aims of piety are expressed by various communities in different contexts. For example, an Anthropologist, Patrick Eisenlohr, stated that piety movement in Mauritius emerges in line with the development of modern ways of life of Mauritians.³¹ Piety in this context is expressed in a practical form and public sphere. The Mauritians maintain their religious identity towards the modern life and globalization effects through religious practices, trading and religious networks, and education. They used their religiosity activities as a medium to deal with all the changing life due to their success in economics and the consequence of success with modern life. According to this study, piety helps the Mauritians to survive their religiosity within the modern ways of life.

Furthermore, Wendell Schwab suggests that, in line with the emergence of modernity and globalization, piety or being pious is an important notion to survive human beings from the undesirable impacts of both trends.³² Schwab argued that piety is helpful to bring Muslims to the pure Islam and save them from hypocrisy which will lead them to “the hell” and to “social disorder” such as adultery, corruption, and divorce. According to him, in this era, piety is very significant for Muslims to maintain the individual (domestic) and communal (public) goodness. Taking the context of Kazakhstan as a secular country with the majority of Muslims inhabitants for his research, in his view, the country has less indicator of being Muslim country. In responding to the situation, a small group of piety movement emerges to survive the “pure” and the “real” Islam by publishing books on piety. The issue of publishing focuses more on the daily life practices of Muslims. It is intended to solve social problems among the society such as high rate of divorce and alcoholism. Schwab concludes that the idea of piety movement through publishing contributes to positive social change in Kazakhstan.

Based on research conducted by Maham and Bhatti,³³ among Pakistan’s Muslim employees found that piety has an impact on the happiness of the employees. Furthermore, Piela’s research suggested that, for women in particular, piety is one issues in measuring women’s religiosity and a medium for women’s liberation, empowerment, and gender justice.³⁴

³¹Patrick Eisenlohr, “Cosmopolitanism, Globalization, and Islamic Piety Movements in Mauritius,” *City and Society* 24, no. 1 (2012), p. 7–28..

³²Wendell Schwab, *Reading and Writing Piety: Islamic Literature in Kazakhstan* (Indiana University, 2010).

³³Maham and Bhatti, “Impact of Taqwa (Islamic Piety) on Employee Happiness: A Study of Pakistan’s Banking Sector.”

³⁴Piela, p. 249–65.

Women and domestic tasks: local gender constructions

Gender is a social construct that encompasses the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. These constructs can change and vary across different cultures. Therefore, it can be only applicable locally. Gender construction involves the ways in which individuals come to understand and perform their gender identity within their society's norms (i.e., local traditions and practices) and expectations. Gender norms and expectation can also be derived from the state's regulation,³⁵ religious laws interpretations,³⁶ and personal's interests. Since gender is a norm of behavior, one's compliance with gender is unavoidable in most cases.

The gender classifications construct a certain gender ideology as well as gender stereotypes.³⁷ Most of the time, a gender ideology creates a 'sphere' for women and men, with women usually being designated to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere.³⁸ Within these spheres, men and women are supposed to perform certain gender-specific roles. Traditionally, many societies have had distinct roles assigned to men and women within families. These roles often reflect societal expectations and historical practices. Some common gender roles in families include:

- a. Breadwinner vs homemakers: historically, men were often expected to be the primary breadwinners, while women were responsible for caregiving and homemaking duties. This division of labor was reinforced by societal norms and economic structures. It also formulates the 'appropriate' working sphere for men and women, which is mostly public assigned to men, and domestic for women. Therefore, women have often been expected to take on the majority of labor within families such as managing the chores, including tasks such as managing relationships, providing emotional support, and organizing family events. In the context of this study, Pandalungan women identify themselves that domestic responsibilities are theirs, and they are not suitable for husbands. Therefore, they maintained that a man should be the sole provider for the family, and woman is the home maker.

³⁵Pieterella Van Doorn-Harder, "Controlling the Body: Muslim Feminists Debating Women's Rights in Indonesia," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 6 (2008), p. 1021–43; Karen Bauer, "Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading by Nimat Hafez Barazangi," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008).

³⁶Kusmana, "Modern Discourse of Woman's Ideal Role in Indonesia Tafsir Al-Qur'an of Ibu and Female Agency," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 9, no. 1 (2015), p. 25–28; Clarissa Adamson, "Gendered Anxieties: Islam, Women's Rights, and Moral Hierarchy in Java," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2007), p. 5–37; Ronak Husni and Daniel L. Newman, *Muslim Women in Law and Society, Annotated Translation of Al-Tahir Al-Haddad's Imra'tuna Fi 'l-Sharia a Wa Al-Mujtama, with an Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

³⁷Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Gender Equity, an Integrated Theory of Stability and Change* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1990), p. 34–37.

³⁸F. Van Rollegheem, "William and Mary Law Review," *The Military Law and the Law of War Review* 12, no. 2 (2023), p. 818.

- b. Household chores: gender norms often assign domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry are women's responsible, while earning money and representing family's public affairs are men's.

In Indonesia, gender role division in marriage, as mentioned earlier, is constructed by the state apart from other contributing factors. The state officially divide gender roles and conceptualises them as marital tasks through two main legal references, the Marriage Act of 1974 and the compilation of Islamic law, the so-called *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (KHI). It is the development of certain provisions of Islamic law, the Marriage Act of 1974, and to a lesser extent, customary law. Apart from the local cultural norms of gender, the gender construct by the state confirm legally the practice of women's tasks domestication and potential experience of double burden for working women outside the house.

According to the Marriage Act of 1974, when the state grants a marriage, the husband and wife must carry out their responsibilities under the Act. Chapter 6 (Article 30) states that husbands and wives have similar obligations to support the family, which serves as the foundation of society. Furthermore, Article 32 requires both spouses to have a permanent address. The following article (33) states that both parties must love, respect, and support one another physically and mentally. However, husband and wife are assigned different domestic roles. According to the Marriage Act of 1974, articles 31 (3) and 34 (1), a husband is the protector and provider for his family to the extent of his capacity. Although women are assigned to be responsible for domestic roles, none of the articles of the Act indicate that the wife is prohibited from working.

Additionally, according to article 83 (1 and 2), a wife has two primary duties: obeying her husband's orders that do not violate Shari'a, and being responsible for household matters. If the wife is obedient, her husband must fulfill his obligations to her as outlined in Article 80 (points 1-7). If the wife disregards her husband's orders and duties, she may be considered disobedient (*nushuz*), and she may lose marital rights that her husband is required to provide according to articles 84(2-3) and 80(7). However, it also does not specifically kind of acts of a wife can be considered a 'disobedient' act and categorised into *nushuz*.

Piety: Interpreting women's religiosity in Marriage

In domestic life (marriage), the relationship between women and piety is also a crucial issue in relation to the harmony of the family.³⁹ In a patriarchal culture, the harmony of family is mostly devoted to women (wives). In Islam, marriage is considered as an act of piety which entails two facets of relationship: spiritual and social realms. In spiritual realm, marriage is an expression of obedience of God by performing all the orders in marital life. For the social realm, marriage is an agreement and commitment of people to one another. Women's piety is discussed

³⁹Beth Bugenhagen, *Muslim Families in Global Senegal: Money Takes Care of Shame* (Indiana University Press, 2012).

much in a marriage as part of marriage sustainability. In any patriarchal culture women are commonly constructed as marginal in family structure. However, in terms of piety and family harmony, they are not marginal. In this account, women are positioned as the primary agency to the harmony of family by maintaining their pieties.

Among the studies on women and piety in the marriage context, a work by a Historian, Barbara Welter is one of the earlier studies on this issue. She investigated the idea of “The cult of womanhood” among Christians during 1820-1860. She collected written concepts from many writers and discussed the notion on women. This historian concluded that the virtue of women was asserted into four characters or attributes namely piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Those attributes were considered as women’s “proper role” in the context of Industrial capitalism growth society. The cult of women was defined as the true women. Then, the true women concept referred to the concept of the “hostage in the home”.⁴⁰

Those four attributes to women were constructed personally by women and communally by their husbands and the society. At the same time, the attributes were translated into four domestic roles which assigned women as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. With those attributes women were ensured that they would get the happiness and power by performing those attributes.

In addition, as quoted by Barbara from Welter, the first attribute of woman which was very essential is their pieties. The piety was seen as the basic essence of woman virtue. It also became the main consideration for a man to take a woman as his wife. A pious woman is believed to bring goodness to the man. In this account, according to the writer’s summary on several works, a man who commits a sin could be back to a religious person with the guidance of woman’s piety.

This work also emphasized that piety and purity⁴¹ were very important for women because they could save themselves in their appropriate place the so-called “home”. Nevertheless, women’ submission to domestic sphere was a high demand by the church to avoid them from losing their true woman’s capacity. As a result, the submission was given not by these women’s choice. The submission was described “to suffer and to be silent under suffering seems the great command she has to obey”. In regard to domestic sphere, welter added that marriage for women was the medium to increase their authorities because it would upgrade their female characters by giving them higher goal and “dignified position”. Therefore, women’s motivation for marriage must be free from materialistic orientation. Welter concluded that women’s construction image and role has been closely related to the idea of religiosity for centuries.

⁴⁰Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966), p. 151–74.

⁴¹Purity in this context refer to the highest beauty, the true pole-star- which is to guide humanity a right in its long varied and previous journey.

In recent context, Usamah Yasin Ansari stated that women are required as the active agency of piety production.⁴² In North Indian culture, women are directed to train themselves to be pious by learning from a manual (Urdu text) which is written by Ashraf Ali Thanvi. The manual's name, *Bahishti Zewar*, is translated as heavenly ornaments. This manual provide guidance to produce pious dispositions for women by explaining the well-formed women to bridge the modernity, sharia, and the tradition. Thanvi's manual puts women as the targeted group by giving them "burdensome responsibility" to act appropriately based on tradition and religious teachings. For Thanvi, the manual text is part of "spiritual reform movement" in the context of North India because previously the object and the subject of pious teachings was focusing on men's public affairs.

With this manual, women's piety can be cultivated in their domestic life by exercising their logical capacity (reason) and using literacy ability to gain well-formed women position. Ansari illustrated the well-formed women this way *"It provides a picture of the well-formed woman in which self-control is centrally important: a woman who does not say anything or do anything before she carefully reflects on its outcomes; a woman who is ordered and systematic"*.⁴³ In his later statement, Ansari maintained that women should practice Thanvi's manual as he noted *"women are necessary to actualize his notion of tradition through their actions; they are not merely the ground on which what is authentic tradition and what is not may be worked out. Through training, women's action, educating them along Thanvi's definition of correct behaviour, one may actualize the pious self"*. The focus of this manual is merely on the demand of women's domestic life as the place of building their pieties. Thanvi's focus is too much on women's submission for domestic life in which Ansari called it Thanvi's "animation of women" as the interpretation of women's piety. Ansari, in some points argued that women's submission in Thanvi's notion is not what classical texts (of Islam) conveyed. For example, household is not women's duties but men's. Above all, this manual emphasizes that women's piety is urgent for public life of Islam through their domestic life.

Rachel Rinaldo contends that subjectivity may influence the interpretation of piety. She conducted research on women member Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia to analyze their notions on piety with their middle-class background.⁴⁴ She found out that Piety in this party is produced in a gendered form with a particular pious practice. For women members of PKS, the orientation of piety was not necessarily toward equality. These women accepted the division of labour in the

⁴²Usamah Yasin Ansari, "The Pious Self Is A Jewel in Itself: Agency and Tradition in the Production of Shariatic Modernity," *South Asia Research* 30, no. 3 (2010), p. 275–98.

⁴³Usamah Yasin Ansari, "The Pious Self Is A Jewel in Itself: Agency and Tradition in the Production of Shariatic Modernity."

⁴⁴Rinaldo mentions these women as "a newly pious woman" because they have no background of religious attachment with organization (e.g. NU and Muhammadiyah) or Islamic education institutions

household and prioritized their domestic duties. Gender equality in public sphere is not their main goal. Although men and women have different tasks in family life, they are judged and valued equally by Allah.⁴⁵

Pandalungan Muslim women: Cultivating Piety through Marriage

For Pandalungan muslim women, piety has diverse meanings such as obedience to God as well as husband, taking good care of household, and keeping family's good name. The practices of piety are also different from one woman to another. Here are some narratives of these women:

Obedience to God and husband

Most of Muslim women of Pandalungan community mentioned that pious women are those who are obedient to their husband. *Informan 1*, for instance, said "Piety is obedience to husband. If the husband says I shouldn't do that, then I shouldn't. If he says I may, then it is alright [...] Besides obedience, she (a wife) should diligently pray. But how (is she considered a pious woman) if she is not obedient (to her husband).⁴⁶ For *Informan 1* obedience to God by diligently performing prayer, for example, is not enough for a woman to be called pious. In addition, she has to be obedient to what her husband says. Similar to the statement of *Informan 1*, in the opinion of *Informan 2* and *Informan 3*, piety means loving her husband and taking great care of him, as well as performing prayer persistently. *Informan 2* told me "Actually, (a pious woman) is the one who loves her husband, performs prayer..."⁴⁷. Meanwhile, *Informan 3* stated that being a pious woman (*perempuan solehah*) means being obedient to her husband.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, *Informan 4* stated that she obeyed her husband's order in all matters such as working to earn money although she was wondering why a wife should work for money. Her husband did not work and stayed at home. She kept being obedient to her husband's order only until one day she found out that her husband was cheating behind her during her absence at home for working.⁴⁹

Some informants shared their story about their experience in obeying their husband as part of piety. *Informan 5*, for instance, said "Actually I didn't want to work, it was my husband's decision at that time. I was ordered by my husband to work." Similarly, *Informan 4* also told me that her husband asked her to work. She thought that working and providing financial supports for her family is not her responsibility. It was her husband's. However, as a pious wife, she obeyed her

⁴⁵Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity In Indonesia, p. 32–34.

⁴⁶ Interview with Informan 1, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, March 3, 2017

⁴⁷ Interview with Informan 2, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, February 7, 2017.

⁴⁸ Interview with Informan 3, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, February 4, 2017

⁴⁹ Interview with Informan 4, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, February 15, 2017

husband's order.⁵⁰ In the opinion of *Informan 6*, a pious wife should obey her husband. Even if her parent dies, for example, she cannot leave her house. Even two steps she walks outside the house will double her sin. She said "When we hear a member of our family is sick, we leave (our house). That's also a sin without we realize [...] So, being a *soleha* wife is not easy [...] Sometimes, husband calls, oi, take this (taking or doing something), and a pious wife should obey the husband."⁵¹

Their understanding in this issue is rooted in some verses. For example, Qur'anic verse of an-Nisa: 34 explained that men are protectors and maintainers of women. Men have the duty to protect, help, and support women because the position of men is higher than women. The verse also mentioned that righteous women are those who devoutly obedient to Allah and their husband. In this verse, men's duty to support their wives and women's obligation to obey their husband is due to the financial support of the husbands to their wives. Ibn Katsir noted that within the context of marriage, leadership is in the hand of men because Allah has given men advantages over women. Furthermore, because Allah has required men to spend part of their wealth for women in the form of dowry, living expenses, and others.⁵²

Quraish Shihab said that Allah appointed men as leaders due to two main considerations. First, Allah has preferred some of them over others and each of them has given privileges. The privileges given to men are the abilities to lead the household, support, and protect women. On the other hand, the privileges given to women are the capacities to provide a sense of peace to men as well as educate and raise their children. Second, men spent some of their wealth for women. The verse uses the past form *أنفقوا* instead of present form indicating that providing support for women has become a norm for men and phenomenon since ancient times. In the context of leadership in family, according to Shihab, this reason is more logical. Because of these psychological and physical privileges of men, they have the rights to be obeyed by their wives in matters that do not conflict with Islamic teachings and the personal rights of wives.⁵³

The view of Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir in the interpretation of this verse is different. He proposed *mubadalah* concept in which both men and women have balanced obligations and rights within the context of marriage. According to Faqihuddin, the verse of an-Nisa: 34 contains conditions regarding the leadership of men, they are the capacity of men and the financial support from their assets for their wives. This means that leadership is a matter of responsibility for those who have capacity and ability to lead and provide a living, not because of their gender. If these conditions are considered important, then the leadership of household is not a matter of gender. Instead, it is a matter of capacity and ownership of assets available for the

⁵⁰ Interview with Informan 5, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, February 10, 2017

⁵¹ Interview with Informan 6, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, March 9, 2017.

⁵² Abu al-Fida' Isma'il al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi Ibnu Kasir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim*, IV (Kairo: Darul-Manar, 1999), p. 292.

⁵³ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, p. 511–16.

benefit of the family. The main meaning of the verse is related to having someone who leads the household and is responsible by ensuring that the family's needs, both physical and psychological are met.⁵⁴

Compliance with the assigned domestic tasks

The roles of women in domestic spheres have evolved over the years and vary across cultures and societies. Previously, women often been assigned traditional roles which mostly involves tasks and responsibilities within the household and family. In many societies, particularly those who strongly adhere to patriarchal culture, women are responsible for household management includes doing chores such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of children and ensuring the well-being of the family members. The area is divided into domestic space which belongs to women, and public space which belongs to men. Recently, in many communities the strict boundaries are no longer common. For instance, based on research conducted by Muhammad Irfan Syuhudi, he found that some marriage couples did not divide their responsibilities strictly. Husband could take care of the domestic tasks while wife might be involved in public settings.⁵⁵

For Pandalungan Muslim women, obeying God and managing their household is an expression of their piety. Therefore, wives who work in public spaces still play dual roles in the household. Apart from helping their family financially, they are responsible for doing household chores. Informan 7 stated that "The pious wife is religious, taking care of the household, it is important".⁵⁶ For Informan 4 as mentioned before, while supporting their family financially by working, doing household chores is their priority. This fact is in line with research of Umi Sumbulah.⁵⁷ She indicated that men do not have the burden of multiple roles in domestic life because the working wives in public sphere still carry out their duties in the domestic sphere. Although women carry out double burden, they consider the domestic tasks are theirs and they should voluntarily comply with the tasks. These women accepted their division of domestic tasks and committed to both public and domestic tasks. For them, piety does not always mean equality as mentioned by Rinaldo.⁵⁸

Protection of the Family's Reputation

For Ani, one of the Pandalungan Muslim women, piety means protecting her family's reputation, particularly her husband's, inside and outside her house. She added that the purpose of marriage is worship and having someone who will take care of her in sickness and pain. It is her responsibility to maintain her husband's

⁵⁴<https://mubadalah.id/tafsir-mubadalah-surat-al-nisa-ayat-34/>. Accessed 6 February 2024

⁵⁵Muhammad Irfan Syuhudi, "Berbagi Kuasa: Kesetaraan Peran Suami Istri Dalam Rumah Tangga," *Mimikri Jurnal Agama Dan Kebudayaan* 8, no. 1 (2022), p. 207–29.

⁵⁶Interview with Informan 7, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, March 20, 2017.

⁵⁷Umi Sumbulah, *Spectrum Gender: Kilasan Inklusi Gender Di Perguruan Tinggi* (Malang: UIN-Maliki Press, 2008).

⁵⁸Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity In Indonesia."

good name within society (Malang, March 24, 2017). In Islam, maintaining the family reputation is considered an important ethical perspective. The concept is based on the previous verse of an-Nisa: 34. The pious wives are watchers in the absence of their husbands. Being a watcher in the absence of a husband is assigned as a wife's marital duty apart from domestic chores, and compliance with the task reflects women's piety.

Compliance with marital task as a form of piety; a local gender construct

East Java's population is mostly Javanese. They are frequently classified into sub-cultural groupings depending on their cultural heritage.⁵⁹ The sub-cultural groups are *Mataraman*, *Arek (Arekan)*, *Madurese* (Madura Island), *Pandalungan*, *Osing*, *Ponoragan*, *Samin (sedulur sikep)*, *Tengger*, *Madura Bawean*, and *Madura Kangean*. This study includes Pandalungan sub-cultural group inhabiting Malang district.⁶⁰ This sub-cultural group is conceptualized as a hybrid cultural group, Madurese and Javanese cultures. In different areas, each culture can be a dominating culture. This cultural-mixed group has a particular gender construction, constructed and shaped by local norms and local leaders' perception. The local norms is identified by the existing studies to have a patriarchal society, strengthened by religious leaders' authorities in interpreting the religious texts.⁶¹ The patriarchal context can be seen in their daily gender framework and practices, assigning men to public task and women to domestic task.⁶² It is also applicable to the *Pandalungan* group in Malang this study chosen as its research location.

As mentioned earlier, KHI as one of state gender norms, cited that a wife is required to be obedient to her husband (article 83, point 1 and 2), However, it also does not specifically kind of acts of a wife can be considered a 'disobedient' act and categorised into *nushuz*. Although it does not mention what obedient acts are, in practical level, the examples of women's obedient can be seen among the *Pandalungans*. For instance, Informan 8 stated that she was not allowed to work outside the house to earn money by her husband. She just accepted it since it was an order from her husband, and she believed that being an obedient to husband is obligatory for her as it is one of indicators of a married woman's religiosity. She said

⁵⁹Abdul Chalik, "Religion and Local Politics: Exploring the Subcultures and the Political Participation of East Java NU Elites in the Post-New Order Era," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 4, no. 1 (2010).

⁶⁰Pandalungan people in East Java mostly inhabit in three areas: the Western areas (Pasuruan and Probolinggo districts); the Eastern (Situbondo and Bondowoso districts), and the Southern areas (Lumajang, Jember, and Banyuwangi districts).

⁶¹W. Hefner Robert, "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987); Ch Mufidah, "Complexities in Dealing with Gender Inequality: Muslim Women and Mosque-Based Social Services in East Java, Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017).

⁶²Ari Susanti Indraswari, Unti Ludigdo, and Ari Kamayanti, "Fenomena Penolakan Auditor Perempuan Oleh Auditee Pandalungan," *Journal of Research and Applications: Accounting and Management* 1, no. 3 (2016).

clearly this way: “*I just do not work. My husband forbade me to work. I just obeyed it. Here, usually, women do chores, while men are working outside to earn money*”.⁶³

From her narrative, it can be seen that local practices of woman's obedience to husband and her assigned gender roles are in line with gender ideology constructed by the local norms and legally by the state. Since there is no difference between the practice and the legal gender ideology, women may be motivated to do the assigned gender roles. Furthermore, local gender norms can be a motivating factor for women to comply with their assigned marital tasks, which are domestic. One of local leaders of the *Pandalungan* group, *Informan 9* stated that in his area, a wife should devote herself to her roles, which are domestic. If they are not compliant with the tasks, they will be ridiculed by the society and can be a topic of gossip.⁶⁴ Another local leader, *Informan 10* added that a wife's duty is at home, while a husband is in public area to earn money, and the division is stipulated in the religious doctrines.⁶⁵ Therefore, in his opinion, a man should fine a woman who is not working and is willing to devote herself to domestic chores. From both narratives, one may argue that local leaders' interpretations on particular doctrines in religion contribute to the practice of women's devotion to domestic chores, especially when it is cited from religious doctrines. Hence, doing the tasks for women in this study is doing a religious order, providing them a chance to cultivate their piety.

Conclusion

The analysis of *Pandalungan* women's narrative indicates women's belief in domestic tasks (e.g., as their primary responsibility). Therefore, they are willing to comply with the tasks. They considered that doing the tasks is an obligation for a married woman, strengthened by their understanding of women's role in marriage, local norms and practices, and local leaders' interpretation of ideal gender division in marriage. By doing the domestic tasks, the women felt that they were performing their piety because they were performing their primary duties based on their obedience to God, their husband's order, and their understanding of women's piety and women's primary duty. The findings contribute to the existing studies on piety and women in the context of marriage. Apart from the two main findings above, this study does not include women's knowledge and understanding of references to piety cited from Islamic law sources (i.e., the Quran and hadiths). Their knowledge and understanding may contribute to their concept of piety and compliance with their assigned marital tasks, and can be a further point to study.

⁶³ Interview with Informan 8, a local housewife from Pandulungan, Malang, March 4, 2017.

⁶⁴ Interview with Informan 9, local leaders of the Pandalungan group, Malang, February 7, 2017.

⁶⁵ Interview with Informan 10, local leaders of the Pandalungan group, Malang, February 8, 2017.

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Interviews

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