# READING ALI'S RELIGIOSITY IN ALI (2001)

## A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the

Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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## A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinions or findings included in the graduating paper are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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Saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqasyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, saya ucapkan terima kasih

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## **MOTTO**

People fear what they do not understand

So, float like a butterfly sting like a bee, rumble young man rumble.



## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this graduating paper to:

My great parents Teguh Widodo and Alviatus Solichah

My beloved young brother Gelar Dewa Buana

My lecturers

My dear friends

**English Literature Department** 

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University



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Yogyakarta, 28 Mei 2020 The Researcher,



## READING ALI'S RELIGIOSITY IN ALI (2001)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Ali (2001) is a biographical film that tells the story of Muhammad Ali, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. This film not only shows his journey in the world of boxing but also his religious behavior. His religious behavior in this film becomes very important considering his figure as a Black Muslim in America. On the one hand, he is shown as a religious figure, but on the other hand, he is shown as a bad character that is contrary to religion itself such as sex outside marriage. This problem is analyzed using the theory of religiosity and film theory. Research on the topic of religiosity is needed to find out the components and causes of one's religious behavior that are represented in literary works, especially in Ali (2001). Qualitative method is used in this research. The results of this study revealed that Ali is a religious person with various components that he experienced and not just having religion. Ali experienced the six components of religiosity in Mervin F. Verbit's theory which consists of doctrine, ritual, emotions, knowledge, ethics, and community. The components of religiosity experienced by Ali varied from the lowest stage namely the 'content' dimension to the 'centrality' dimension. This is caused by various internal and external factors that influence Ali's religious behavior. This also proves that one's religiosity cannot be seen only in a visible and fleeting standard but from various factors and measurable aspects.

Keywords: Religiosity Theory, Religious Dimension, Muhammad Ali.



#### READING ALI'S RELIGIOSITY IN ALI (2001)

Oleh: Puja Alviana Dewantri

#### **ABSTRAK**

Ali (2001) adalah sebuah film biografi yang menceritakan sosok Muhammad Ali, juara dunia tinju kelas berat. Film ini tidak hanya menampilkan perjalannya dalam dunia tinju namun juga perilaku keagamaannya. Perilaku keagamaan Ali dalam film ini menjadi sangat penting mengingat sosoknya sebagai figur muslim berkulit hitam di Amerika. Sedangkan dalam film ini, Ali ditampilkan sebagai sosok yang religius namun di sisi lain ditampilkan pula tabiat buruknya yang berlawanan dengan agama itu sendiri seperti berhubungn seksual di luar nikah. Permasalahan tersebut dianalisis menggunakan teori film dan teori religiusitas. Penelitian dengan topik religiusitas ini dibutuhkan untuk mengetahui komponen dan penyebab perilaku keagamaan seseorang yang direperesentasikan dalam karya sastra, terutama dalam film Ali (2001). Metode Kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa Ali adalah orang yang beragama dengan berbagai dimensi yang dialaminya dan bukan sekedar mempunyai agama. Ali mengalami keenam komponen religiusitas dalam teori Mervin F. Verbit yang terdiri komponen dari doktrin, ritual, emosi, pengetahuan, etika, dan komunitas. Komponen religiusitas yang dialami Ali bervariasi dari yang terendah yaitu dimensi 'content' hingga dimensi 'centrality'. Hal ini disebabkan oleh berbagai faktor internal dan eksternal yang memengaruhi perilaku keagamaan Ali. Penelitian ini juga membuktikan bahwa religiusitas seseorang tidak bisa dilihat hanya pada standar yang terlihat dan sekilas namun dipengaruhi berbagai faktor dan aspek yang terukur.

**Kata kunci:** Teori Religiusitas, Dimensi Agama, Muhammad Ali.



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#### **CHAPTER I**

## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of Study

According to William Little (2016: 592), religion provides a function for humans as a source of knowledge, ethics, hypothesis tools, even social control. Religion also positively influences its adherents, for mood and happiness, for altruistic encouragement to help others, and for self-integration. Rituals that express belief in symbolic behavior can even be used as a healing tool. Yet, awareness of practicing religion is inseparable from the level of human development itself. So that, religion in relation to an individual or adherent is how his behavior and personality reflect his beliefs.

Religiosity is defined as the extent to which a person believes and views things that occur daily from the point of view of religion and applies his religious beliefs to daily life. In the religious aspect, there are various matters concerning one's morality, faith, and devotion (Spinks, 1963: 11). Studying religiosity will reveal the nature and aspirations of contextual religion and broaden our understanding of how religion shapes individual identities, experiences, and actions. This is what happened to Muhammad Ali, the teachings of Islam have shaped his identity as a religious person, various lessons and experiences he gained have shaped his behavior as a Muslim who strives to obey his religious teachings.

Muhammad Ali's name is increasingly known to the world, written in various news, scientific works, and even made into a film. One of those films is *Ali* (2001), a biography film. The film, starred by Will Smith, tells the story of Ali since the beginning of his debut as a professional boxer against Sonny Liston until he finally regains the world title for the second time. This film also tells the story of Ali's refusal to take part in conscription, his household life, and the equally important is his friendship with Malcolm X to become a Muslim.

According to data taken from Pewresearch.org, it is also stated that the Muslim population is only 0.5% of the total population in America. In the same source, it is also found that according to the American population, religious followers who suffer the most discrimination are Muslims. This phenomenon could not be separated from Afro-American history. African Muslim slaves were brought to America until one day they no longer received proper protection from the government. This is the beginning of the formation of Muslim communities or organizations in America ranging from the Moorish Science Temple, the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam, to the Nation of Islam (NOI) which is considered very influential on the development of Islam in America (McCloud, 1995:27).

One of the people who are very influential in NOI is Muhammad Ali who is also an activist against racism. Ali is a part of the minority (Afro-American) in America. Moreover, he became a Muslim in 1964 which is clearly a minority in America. Yet, different from what most minorities experienced at that time, he is accepted by majorities (white people) and even supported by them. In a book

entitled *Africana Islamic Studies* edited by James L. Conyers Jr. and Abul Pitre mentioned that Ali's presence in NOI also made the public more discussing his name and makes Islam more widespread (2016:20).

Because of his name as an influential black American Islamic figure, his religious image in this film is very important. In this film, Ali's life in religion is visible. On the one hand, he is shown as a religious figure, but also displayed his bad character that is contrary to religion such as having relationships with several women out of wedlock are also shown in this film. However, it must be realized that religiosity as a person's inner attitude cannot be seen directly but must be seen from various sides.

Based on the depiction above, this research discusses about the religiosity aspects of Ali. Research on the topic of religiosity is needed to find out the components and causes of one's religious behavior that are represented in literary works, especially in *Ali* (2001). According to Glock and Stark (1974: 182), religion is described as a unity that is formed from a system of symbols, beliefs, values, and behaviors which is to proceed to the main goal, namely, ultimate meaning in the religion itself. It is compatible with this case because the researcher needs to know about Ali's religiosity which is patch upon him. It is expected that the use of religiosity theory in this research can change the ordinary people's perspective in evaluating one's religiosity, not merely at a glance and visible standards anymore.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of study above, the writer arranges the research questions as follow:

- 1. How are Ali's religiosity components as seen in Ali (2001)?
- 2. What are the factors that influence Ali's religiosity as seen in the film?

## 1.3 Objective of Study

The writer hopes the question above can be answered by the objective of study as follow: to find out Ali's religiosity components in *Ali* (2001) and the factors that influence it.

## 1.4 Significance of Study

The writer hopes that this research can be the one of reference for people who study religiosity especially in the field of literature. Research on the topic of religiosity is needed to find out religiosity components and causes of one's religious behavior that are represented in literary works, especially in *Ali* (2001). The writer also hopes that this research can show us that there are many variables of religion because everybody has their own way to express their religiosity. It will make people prioritize tolerance and not easily blame the way other people worship.

#### 1.5 Literature Review

There is research that also uses *Ali* (2001) as the material object. It is "Being the People's Champion in *Ali*" by Vincent M. Gaine (2011). The research focuses on how existentialism works on Ali. It is stated that the victories obtained by Ali make him socially and existential wins. Ali's broad resonance made him the protagonist by aligning his existential guiding ethics with social involvement. It will be different from what the writer will be discussed because this research focuses on the religiosity issue.

There are also previous researches that use the same theory with this research. The first is Aspek Religiusitas Masyarakat Madura dalam Kumpulan Cerpen Karapan Laut Karya Mahwi Air Tawar (Kajian Sosiologi Sastra) by Deni Purbo Kastono (2015) which aims to describe and understand the religious aspects of the Madurese community and to describe the causes of religious activities of the Madurese in literature work. The second is Dinamika Religiusitas Siswa Muslim di Sekolah Non Islam (Studi Kasus Tiga Siswa Muslim di SMA Santo Thomas Yogyakarta) by Rizky Setiawati (2014). The research focuses on the interrelationship between scientific discourse and education with the development of insight into a pluralist religious environment and its impact on one's religiosity with minority presentation. Both of these studies use different research objects with very different backgrounds from this study. However, they both help the researcher to understand more about religiosity.

## 1.6 Theoretical Approach

The writer decides to analyze the paper with two theories, namely Religiosity by Mervin F. Verbit and Film Theory (Mise En Scene and Cinematography). Both of them explain the problem based on the research question. Those theories are explained below:

## 1.6.1 Religiosity Theory

Religion was obtained from the Latin word *religio*, which comes from word *religare* which means "to tie, to restrain, to bind, to hold firmly." It implies that religion in general has rules and obligations that must be obeyed and carried out by adherents. All of which serve to bind a person or group of people in relation to God, fellow humans, and the natural surroundings (Glare, 1968: 1605-1606). Religion is something that is felt very deeply, which is in contact with one's desires, requires obedience and rewards or binds someone in society that has some behaviors called religiosity. Religiosity is a comprehensive unity of elements that makes a person called a religious person (being religious) and not merely claims to have a religion (Khan, 2014: 68). So, the word religion basically has been understood as a belief in the existence of a sacred magical power, which helps determine the way of life and influences human life, faced carefully so as not to deviate from the determined will.

C.Y. Glock and R. Stark (1974: 182) stated that religion is interpreted as a system of symbols, belief systems, value systems, and institutionalized systems of behavior, all of which are centralized on issues that are lived out as the ultimate meaning. In this study, the researcher uses Verbit's theory as a theoretical basis

and indicator to see the religiosity that exists in Ali's character. The difference between Verbit's theory and the previous theory is on the aspect of social relations which is not mentioned by Glock and Stark. This aspect is very important to see the religious side of Ali who is in an environment where the majority has a different religion. According to Weaver and Agle (2002: 78-79), based on sociological research there is a strong relationship between religion and social phenomena.

Verbit, as revealed by Kucukcan in "Multidimensional Approach to Religion: A Way of Looking at Religious Phenomena in JSRI "(2005: 64), said that there are six components of religiosity as follows:

- 1. **Doctrine** is a confession of a one's connection with God, His scripture or words, etc.
- 2. **Ritual** is how far someone carries out his religious worship obligations.
- 3. **Emotions** are feelings such as admiration, affection, afraid or another emotion that show one's closeness to his God.
- 4. **Knowledge** is about how much someone knows about his one's religion.
- 5. **Ethics** are the norm to lead interpersonal behavior to differentiate the true from the false, the good from the evil, etc.
- 6. **Community** is a person's involvement with other people or being.

Each of these components can be measured or categorized based on the following four dimensions:

Content refers to religious elements of a person's repertoire which indicates the
presence or absence of participation in every component.

- Frequency shows the 'amount' of a person's involvement in religious behavior and practices.
- Intensity refers to determining the degree of consistency about one's position towards religion.
- Centrality shows the importance of these components for a person's principles, rituals, and religious sentiments.

## 1.6.2 Film Theory

#### A. Mise en Scene

According to Sikov (2010: 41-42), the word Mise en Scene depicts the main features of cinematic representation. This term is taken from French which means which has been put into the scene or put onstage. Mise en Scene is the first step to comprehending how a film is made and represent the sense or the purpose. Villarejo (2007: 29) said that there are six components of Mise en Scene, namely setting, lighting, costume, hair, make-up, and figure behavior. However, the writer will only use four of them.

#### 1. Settings

The setting is the place or location where a scene is played. In the world of film, Setting is not limited to interiors, such as dwellings or workplaces, but can be broader literally to the new world of galaxies and beyond our universe (Villarejo, 2007: 29-30). To strengthen the setting atmosphere in the film, property is needed. Properties provide further definition of settings or draw attention to details in larger scenes.

## 2. Lighting

One of the visual aspects that influence the atmosphere of the scene is lighting. Differences in the intensity, direction, and distribution of lighting can have different effects. There are two types of lighting based on the light intensity, namely low-key lighting and high-key lighting. Two types of lighting based on the direction, namely overhead lighting, side lighting, backlighting, and front lighting. While based on the light distribution, there are hard lighting, medium lighting, and soft lighting (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 114-117).

#### 3. Costume

According to Villarejo (2007: 33-34), Costume is the physical and symbolic element that is closest to an actor and the character portrayed.

## 4. Figure Behavior

Behavior figure refers to mise en scene is to describe the movements, expressions, or actions of the actor or other figures (animals, monsters, animations, droids) in a given shot (Villarejo, 2007: 35).

# B. Cinematography AMIC UNIVERSITY

Cinematography is the study of the world of cinema. The literal understanding of the word *cinematography* comes from two Greek words: *kinesis* (the root of *cinema*) which means movement and *grapho* which means writing or record (Sikov, 2010: 124). The film is a cinematographic product.

Cinematography deals with visual language theory. It must be able to explain that the picture is not just a picture, but a piece of information (Boggs and

Petrie, 2008: 125). To fulfill the requirement, there are several elements in cinematography. However, the writer will only use four of them.

## 1. Framing

Framing the picture in the film is very considering some aspects that are very influential on emotions and motivation addressed by a director or filmmaker. One of those aspects is the types of shots. Based on Villarejo (2007: 38), those types of shots are divided into several sections namely:

## • ECU (extreme close-up)

Shot that shows details of an object, such as eyes, nose, or ears. This shot is usually used for a specific purpose or to show details of certain objects that the audience really needs to know and have an important role in a story.

# • CU (close-up)

A shot showing from shoulder to head limit, to show the detailed expression of a character.

## • MCU (medium close-up)

A shot showing objects from the chest to the top of the head. This shot is used in the interview scene to show closeness to the object without losing the authority of the interviewee.

#### • MS (medium shot)

A shot showing objects limited to the stomach to the head.

## • MLS (medium long shot)

A shot that displays an object limited to the waist to the head, sometimes it can also be limited to the knee to the head.

## • LS (long shot)

A shot that displays the object as a whole from the foot to the head and slightly visible background of the object so that it appears full in the frame.

## • ELS (extreme long shot)

Taking pictures by displaying the main object in a very distant position. This aims to show the overall location. Sometimes the main object or character is deliberately omitted because this shot aims to provide an orientation of the background where the event or scene took place.

## 2. Angle

Angle plays a very important role in cinematography. However, a film is formed by several shots that require the placement of the camera in the best place for the audience to follow the story in the film. Placement of a good angle can certainly strengthen the dramatic of a film because the camera angle is the eye of the viewer seeing visual information and can also mean how much area we use in a shot. Placement of the camera angle will position the audience closer to the action in the film, for example with CU techniques and so forth. Placement of the camera angle also affects the psychological condition of the audience (Villarejo, 2007: 38). For example, a high angle is positioned so that the viewer is higher than the object shot. While the low angle is positioned so that the viewer feels the object of the shot is higher. Then there is also what is called an Eye-level, while the camera is the same height as the subject level or if the subject is standing/sitting the camera is in the same axis as the subject's position (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 152).

#### 3. Focus

The Deep Focus technique is able to display images with the same sharpness from the foreground to the background, while the Rack Focus technique only displays the background or foreground that is in focus (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 145-147).

## 4. Compositing

Compositing is the most important part of visual communication because it is an attempt to organize all the visual elements in the frame. Organizing visual elements here can mean we direct the attention of the audience to the information we provide to them. Lots of factors affect the composition of which; color, line, texture, shape, size, and so on (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 3).

#### 1.7 Methods of Research

This part of this research contains the type of research, data sources, data collecting technique, and data analysis technique.

# 1.7.1 Type of Research

Qualitative research methods are used in this study. Moleong (2011: 6) says that qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena about the experiences of research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, etc. holistically. While according to L.R. Gay, Geoffrey E. Mills, and Peter Airasian, Qualitative research is the comprehensive collection, analysis, and interpretation of narratives on observational data such as interviews, questionnaires, telephone calls, personal and official documents, photos, recordings, pictures, journals,

messages, and e-mail responses, and informal conversations for gain insight into certain interesting phenomena (2012: 381). Qualitative method refers to meaning, concept, and characteristic of things.

For the analysis, the writer finds the data based on the film itself. The writer also uses the other source such as an article that provides text sources. All data are used by the writer by analyzing them based on religiosity theory. This research also applies film theory as the supporting theory.

#### 1.7.2 Data Sources

Two types of data used in this study are primary and secondary data. The primary data are taken from Ali itself. Primary data contains elements in every scene in the film. Those elements are dialogues and acts of the characters in the Ali film. To discuss the religiosity or piety of Ali, the writer also concerns in the mise-en-scene elements. Secondary data is based on text sources. They are books, journals, articles, and pdf files. These sources contain important information about the concepts and ideas of the analysis. Secondary data also support the writer's argument.

# 1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

Frames are used by the researcher as the main unit analysis in this study. First of all, the researcher reads the film. Then, the writer looks for the data related to Ali's religiosity by collecting and capturing the frames. Third, the frames are divided based on the categories of religiosity theory. Here the researcher also utilizes the two theoretical films needed to categorize these scenes.

Last, the writer adds the details of the frames such as scene name, dialogue, and time.

## 1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

Religiosity theory by Mervin F. Verbit is used by the researcher in this study. In this theory, the main point is about the kind of religiosity which is portrayed in six components. There are several types to analyze this paper. First, the writer reads the film and collects the frames and dialogues as the data of analysis. Then, the writer applies the religiosity theory which contains the six components of religiosity by forming a connection between the data and the theory in Islamic point of view. Then, every Ali's religious component can be measured to the four dimensions, from just the dimension of content to the dimension of centrality, through his words and acts or the other character's opinions seen in this film. Last, the writer makes the analysis paragraph based on the evidence.

# 1.8 Paper Organization SLAMIC UNIVERSITY

This research paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that contains the background of the study, research question, the objective of the study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach, methods of research, and paper organization. The second chapter is the intrinsic elements of *Ali* (2001) which contains theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, and summary of the film. The third chapter is the analysis where the writer uses the theory of religiosity by Mervin F. Verbit also

film theory which focuses on Mise en Scene and Cinematography to analyze the religiosity patched up on Ali's character. The last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion.



#### **CHAPTER IV**

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

#### 4.1 Conclusion

Muhammad Ali whose personality in Ali (2001) can lead to debate or misunderstanding in the name of religion turns out to have the religious components in him. He has experienced religious behavior since he decided to change his religious identity into a Muslim. The six components of religiosity presented by Verbit are in Ali. There are low and high dimensions in Ali's religious behavior in terms of doctrines, rituals, emotions, knowledge, ethics, and community. So, Ali is a religious person with various dimensions that he experienced and not just having religion. Religiosity has also influenced daily views of life and behavior both in his personal and social life.

The factors that influence the dimensions of Ali's religiosity include the factors within himself (internal) and factors outside him (external). Internal factors are influenced by Ali's will and age while external factors are influenced by his experiences and relationships. Because of such factors, someone could experience the low and high dimension of his religious acts. As well as the premarital and extramarital relationships mentioned earlier are also part of the dynamics of Ali's religiosity caused by age and association factors. In addition to answering Ali's religiosity, this study also delivers a message to all people especially Muslims to not blame other people's worship because various components and factors are effecting one's religious acts.

## 4.2 Suggestion

Based on the conclusions described above, the study conducted on *Ali* (2001) only revealed a small portion of the problem of religiosity in a literary work. Further research on other literary works is expected to connect the theory of religiosity with other views or theories so that research can be more objective and interesting. For readers in general, this research is expected to be able to develop and increase knowledge about literary research.



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Hadiths and Verses are taken from Sunnah.com and Quran.com

