

SUFISM MEMES: Gus Mus's Representation in Countering the Narrative of Religious Fundamentalism on Social Media

Laila Sabrina and Rizqa Ahmadi

Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an (UNSIQ) Wonosobo, Jawa Tengah
UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Jawa Timur
email: rizqaahmadi@iain-tulungagung.ac.id,
lailasabrinamaulana@gmail.com

Abstract: *In Indonesia, Muslim clerics preach the sermon orally. It is considered an effective method to disseminate Islamic teaching. Today, Muslims adopt the development of information technology to propagate the teaching of Islam. One of them is using memes. Commonly, memes are made by quoting wise words from influential figures. This study focused on Gus Mus's wise words. Gus Mus (Musthafa Bishri) is a famous figure in Indonesia. His socio-religious idea is related to the moderate and traditional Muslim. This research aims to find out why some people use the quote of Gus Mus as an object for a meme. Second, it investigates how the memes represent the idea of Gus Mus. It employed qualitative research. The data was gathered through netnography, which focused on specific social media platforms. The data then were analyzed using a sociological approach. It was found that the massive appearance of disturbing memes causes the emergence of Gus Mus's quote meme, particularly comes from fundamentalist communities. These memes represented the spiritual and humanistic ideas of Gus Mus. It is then called Sufism Memes.*

الملخص: قام العلماء بنقل أفكارهم لعامة الناس في سياق الإسلام الإندونيسي عادةً من خلال المحاضرات الشفهية. هذه الطريقة تعتبر وسيلة مؤثرة لنشر التعاليم الإسلامية. ولما تطور تكنولوجيا المعلومات أثر المسلمون في نشر تعاليم الإسلام، أحدها عن طريق استخدام ميمي. الميميات تتركب من اقتباس كلمات حكيمة من شخصيات مؤثرة. في هذا

البحث، صارت كلمات الحكيمه لدي suM suG التي اقتبسها بعض الناس دراسة أساسية. suM suG (مصطفى بشري) هو عالم مشهور في إندونيسيا. فكرته الاجتماعية والدينية أكثر رسوخًا بين المسلمين المتوسطين والتقليديين. فالأسئلة الرئيسية لهذا البحث هي لماذا اقتبس بعض الناس كلمات suM suG لميمي، وكيف تمثل الميمي فكرة suM suG؟ تم جمع البيانات من خلال شبكة الإنترنت مع التركيز على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي محددة وتحليلها بنهج اجتماعي. ومن ثم، أدعي أن ظهور ميمي suM suG كسررد مضاد بالظهور الميمات الهائلة والمزعجة، ولا سيما من المجتمعات المتطرفة. تمثل هذه الميمات من أصل الأفكار الروحية والإنسانية لدي suM suG. فأسميها ميمي صوفي.

Abstrak: *Dalam konteks Islam Indonesia, pandangan tokoh agama biasanya disampaikan kepada khalayak melalui ceramah secara verbal. Metode tersebut dinilai efektif untuk mengajarkan Islam. Pada perkembangan terkini, kemajuan teknologi informasi mempengaruhi sebagian besar muslim dalam penggunaan media baru untuk mengajarkan Islam. Salah satunya melalui meme. Biasanya meme dibuat dengan mengutip kata-kata bijak dari tokoh yang berpengaruh. Pada penelitian ini, kata-kata bijak Gus Mus (Mustafa Bishri) menjadi fokus kajiannya. Gus Mus adalah tokoh populer di Indonesia. Gagasan sosial keagamaannya lebih dekat dengan corak Islam moderat dan Islam tradisional. Pertanyaan utama artikel ini adalah mengapa sebagian orang mengutip kata bijak Gus Mus untuk dijadikan meme dan bagaimana kutipan tersebut merepresentasikan gagasan Gus Mus. Data penelitian dikumpulkan menggunakan metode netnografi dengan terfokus pada beberapa platform sosial media tertentu, dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi. Penulis berpendapat bahwa kemunculan meme tersebut merupakan kepanikan moral atas maraknya meme yang meresahkan, khususnya dari kelompok fundamentalis. Meme tersebut merepresentasikan gagasan humanis dan spiritual Gus Mus. Penulis menandainya dengan istilah Meme Sufistik.*

Keywords: fundamentalist, social media, Gus Mus, Sufism meme.

INTRODUCTION

As intelligent beings, humans always develop technology to make their life easier. It strongly encourages people always to make changes in all sectors of life, especially the communication sector. The sophistication of communication technology that develops replaces conventional communication functions.¹ Thus, a social reality initially constructed from direct interaction in real society, often known as Face-to-Face (FtF),² turns into a computer-based virtual interaction called Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).³ John December defined CMC as a process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems.⁴ Thus, technological developments eventually led to a new virtual and artificial arena popularly known as cyberspace.⁵

The term cyberspace was first coined by the American-Canadian author William Gibson in 1982 in a story published in *Omni* magazine and then in his book *Neuromancer*.⁶ In this science-fiction novel, Gibson described cyberspace as creating a computer network in a world filled with artificially intelligent beings. Someone who also helped popularize the term cyberspace is John Perry Barlow.⁷ He also invented the term meatspace as a contrast to cyberspace. According to him, both meatspace and cyberspace are two inseparable things. The word “meat space” refers to the real-life physical world that we inhabit. However, cyberspace is the interconnected virtual world of computers that we interact.⁸ It knows no distance and spreads information rapidly. Within today, cyberspace deals with virtual reality, while meat space describes the real physical world.

¹ Nanang Martono, *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial: Perspektif Klasik, Modern, Postmodern, dan Poskolonial* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2011), 12.

² Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *Tafsir Sosial Atas Kenyataan: Risalah Tentang Sosiologi Pengetahuan*, terj. Hasan Basari (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990), 41.

³ Basuki Agus Suparno, “Computer Mediated Communication Situs Jejaring Sosial dan Identitas Diri Remaja,” *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 (2012), 85-102.

⁴ Jhon December, “Units of Analysis for Internet Communication,” *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 1 (1996).

⁵ Crispin Thurlow, *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2004), 50.

⁶ Joanna Buick, *Introducing Cyberspace* (Duxford: Icon Books Ltd, 1995), 4.

⁷ John Perry Barlow, “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace,” *Futurist & The Electronic Frontier Foundation*, 2017.

⁸ Sutan Remy Sjahdeini, *Kejahatan & Tindak Pidana Komputer* (Jakarta: Grafiti, 2009), 3.

The development of computer-based communication tools is increasing exponentially. The most familiar mobile technology among the public is smartphones. Easy to use and easy to own make it spread rapidly, and its ownership grows exponentially worldwide. Thus, the more the population of smartphone owners, the more the population of cyber society or virtual society. Although this is economically advantageous, technological sophistication has the potential to be wrong. Fukuyama called the negative side of communication technology a tremendous disruption.⁹ He argues that many irresponsible people use technology to spread destruction under the pretext of upholding human rights freedom. In the Indonesian context, the negative side of technology can also threaten cultural values, religious norms, and the ideology of Pancasila,¹⁰ and the bad side of identity contestation.¹¹

Facing a significant threat of modernization requires the role of government, community, and religious leaders. The harmony of the three elements is expected to maintain the nation's noble values, suppress the escalation of the nation's moral decadence, and fortify the country from elements that divide the nation. Because destructive thoughts and negative ideas are disseminated massively via cyberspace, technology in Islamic preaching is necessary. Elements of the nation close to society, such as clerics, must be confident in using technology to confront deviant ideologies.¹²

In 2014, the Global Web Index noted that approximately 653 million people subscribed to data packages for accessing the internet via mobile phones in Asia. Indonesia was the third-highest internet user, around 58 million people.¹³ The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) released national research on Indonesian internet

⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Guncangan Besar: Kodrat Manusia dan Tata Sosial Baru* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 239.

¹⁰ Nur Fadhilah, "Tantangan Dan Penguatan Ideologi Pancasila dalam Menghadapi Era Revolusi Industri," *Journal of Digital Education, Communication, and Arts* 2, no. 2 (2019): 66–78.

¹¹ Perdana Pangestu, "Indonesian Muslim Identity Constellation in the Digital Media: Labeling Arrogant Islam by Permadi Arya on Social Media," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 21, no. 1 (2021): 55–71.

¹² Zulkarnaeni, "Da'wah Islam di Era Modern," *Jurnal Risalah* 26, no. 3 (2015): 156.

¹³ Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia, "Pengguna Internet Indonesia Tertinggi Ketiga Di Asia," 2017.

users during 2016. The research showed that the virtual population in Indonesia is estimated at 200 million people.¹⁴ Indirectly, human dependence on cyberspace forms a profitable market for developing social networking products such as Friendster, which Indonesians widely used in 2002-2006, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, and Instagram.

In a specific realm, one of the viral new media in the communication sector to spread information, messages, and ideas is the Internet meme media.¹⁵ In the beginning, Internet memes were synonymous with funny pictures taken from someone's photo, which was given an interesting caption. Further, Internet memes have become a means of criticism. It becomes an informal message containing social criticism of various phenomena that are currently happening. The JPEG or GIF meme format makes it popular and quickly spread in cyberspace through the copy or share feature. That means the masses quickly and easily accept the messages in the memes. The wider the meme is spread, the wider the influence of the message of the meme.¹⁶

In its development, Internet memes have also become a medium to convey religious messages, which are often called "religious memes." The religious meme is a cyber-poster that contains religious values in the cyber society. Not only Muslims but other people also spread the ideology they believed to the public by using memes. It means that memes are used as a means of Islamic preaching and are often used as a medium for arguing (truth contests). In the context of Islam, religious memes usually feature a photo of a religious figure such as *Kyai*, *Ustadz*, or *Gus* and words of wisdom from the figure. One of the great scholars who utilize technology is KH. Mustafa Bisri, who is popularly known as Gus Mus.¹⁷ He is a person whose photos and words of wisdom have been made into memes. Based on the popularity and quantity of Gus Mus memes spread, this paper intensively examines the memes that contain Gus Mus's wise words.

¹⁴ APJII, "APJII Rilis Hasil Survei Pengguna Internet Terbaru Indonesia," *Buletin APJII*, Edisi 74, 2020, 9.

¹⁵ Anwar Arifin, *Opini Publik* (Jakarta: Pustaka Indonesia, 2010), 8.

¹⁶ Sara Cannizzaro, "Internet Memes as Internet Signs: A Semiotic View of Digital Culture," *Sign Systems Studies* 44, no. 4 (2016): 563.

¹⁷ Ahmad Mustofa Bisri, *Tadarus (Antologi Puisi)* (Yogyakarta: Adicita Karya Nus, 2003), 112. See also, Badiatul Roziqin, *101 Jejak Tokoh Islam Indonesia, E-Nusantara*, 2009, 74.

It is identified as Sufism memes. Gus Mus's wise expressions are packaged into memes. They contain primarily moral messages and humanistic values from the teachings of Islamic esotericism.

This study examined the phenomenon of meme dissemination, which is currently rife in cyberspace. It employed a sociological approach. This study elaborated on two main questions. *First*, why do people quote Gus Mus's quote as a meme? *Second*, how do the memes quoted represent Gus Mus' ideas?

To gather the data, researchers used ethnography, specifically, with a virtual approach. Some scholars mentioned it as netnography or virtual ethnography.¹⁸ As the rules of ethnography require researchers to be directly involved with participants (subject of the research), the researchers were involved in the community directly. The subject of this research was a cyber-society. They were involved in the internet community—for example, the followers, members, or friends on their social media platform. The cyber society that is the “location” of this research is a community of meme creators and lovers, especially Gus Mus memes. The data was collected from around 2019 until 2020. The data were analyzed with in-depth analysis or “thick description,” as mentioned by Geertz.¹⁹

MEME AND THE FIGURE AUTHORITY

The theory of memes is expected to be a reference in capturing messages represented by Gus Mus's religious memes created and distributed online on social media. Most of the memes contain messages and ideas that are adopted from some influential figure. In its development in cyberspace, memes are used for several purposes and motives, such as spreading the idea or for entertainment purposes. The meme also becomes the medium for actualizing some ideology

¹⁸ E. Paul Durrenberger, “Ethnography,” in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 416–22. See also, Heddy Shri Ahimsa Putra, “Paradigma Ilmu Sosial Budaya Sebuah Pengantar”, The paper was presented at the Public Lecture “Paradigma Penelitian Ilmu-ilmu Humaniora” which was organized by the Linguistics Study Program, Graduate School, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, in Bandung, 7 December 2009.

¹⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture In The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30.

published and spread through social media platforms or other internet space media.

The rise of internet memes in the cybernetic space, especially in social networks, was already familiar in other countries such as America. Memes were published on the sites 9gag.com, meme base, cheezburger.com, and so on. In Indonesia, internet memes were first popularized by the Indonesian meme comic community in 2012.²⁰

The meme is a term used by Richard Dawkins to describe the spread of ideas or cultural phenomena based on Darwinian principles. Richard Dawkins popularized the term meme in his book *The Selfish Gene*.²¹ According to Dawkins, memes are forms of cultural genes (ideas, behavior patterns, and so on) that are spread through the process of imitation, such as songs, jargon, fashion clothes. Then Richard Brodie developed the concept of memes in his research *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme*. Dawkins mentions that a meme is a unit of information stored in a person's mind. Based on Dawkins and Brodie, it can be concluded that memes are information that becomes popular because it spreads so quickly and can inhabit people's minds like a virus.²²

Internet memes are an adaptation of Dawkins' thought that developed in internet pop culture. Through pop culture, ideas or behavior patterns spread in society and influence the previous culture through imitation. Internet memes displayed in visual form have various formats such as photos (JPEG), animated GIFs, or videos. The three forms widely spread on the internet and social media are internet memes in still image format (macro animation).²³

Photo memes should ideally consist of elements such as text and images, although that is not a requirement. There are photo memes that only contain words and even pictures taken from movie scenes, video games, celebrities, and even the world of politics.²⁴ The meme

²⁰ Fitrie Handayani, "The Use of Meme as A Representation of Public Opinion in Social Media: A Case Study of Meme About Bekasi in Path and Twitter," *Humaniora* 7, no. 3 (2016): 335.

²¹ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.

²² Richard Brodie, *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (California: Hay House, 2011), 17.

²³ Cannizzaro, "Internet Memes as Internet Signs: A Semiotic View of Digital Culture," 566.

²⁴ Henry Subiakto and Rachmah Ida, *Komunikasi Politik, Media dan Demokrasi* (Kencana Prenadamedia group: Kencana Prenadamedia group, 2014), 20.

then spread very quickly in cyberspace. Its nature can be entertaining, educational, and even potentially used as a medium of criticism.

The Utilization of images as a medium of communication and dissemination of ideas in memes is effective. Oemar Hamalik defines an image as anything visually manifested in two-dimensional form as an outpouring of feelings or thoughts.²⁵ Arief Sadiman termed images with visual graphics helpful in channeling messages from the source to the recipient.²⁶ The sense that is necessary for enjoying this visual graphic is the sense of sight. So that images are very effective at attracting attention, clarifying ideas, illustrating, or confirming facts so that they are not easily forgotten or ignored.

The use of wise words from the specific figures for memes is relevant to the personal authority of the community. Some people may use memes by using the wise word of specific figures to legitimate their idea. In the Indonesian context, the existence of Islamic preachers as Islamic patronage figures can not be separated from the theory of authority, one of them initiated by Max Weber. In his theory of Social and Economic Organization, Weber classifies authority into three types.²⁷ First is traditional authority. The belief of the ancient tradition's holiness and the authorities' legitimacy is nature. The types are gerontocracy, patriarchalism, and patrimonialism. The second is charismatic authority. Weber describes it as the followers' recognition of the leader because of his specialty, quality, and superiority. In addition, charismatic authority is found in leaders with an inspiring vision and mission. The third is legal-rational authority. It grants authority from laws or statutory regulations as applied in modern countries or cities.²⁸

The theory of authority is used to reveal Gus Mus's position in society. The question of why many people quote Gus Mus's quote will be answered based on this theoretical framework.

²⁵ Oemar Hamalik, *Media Pembelajaran* (Bandung: Citra Adhitya Bakti, 1986), 43.

²⁶ Arif Sadiman, *Media Pendidikan: Pengertian, Pengembangan dan Pemanfaatannya* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2012), 28–29.

²⁷ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

²⁸ George P. Hansen, *Max Weber, Charisma, and The Disenchantment of The World* (PA: Xlibris, 2001), 102.

THE CHARISMATIC FIGURE OF “SI MBAH KAKUNG” GUS MUS

KH. Ahmad Mustofa Bisri is often called Gus Mus by the public. Gus or Agus is a call of honor for the son of the kyai. The term *Gus* was initially only known among Islamic boarding schools, especially on the island of Java. The term has become familiar nationally since the emergence of Gus Dur’s name in the 80s. Another fact is that Gus is synonymous with NU. Gus is a sub-culture of pesantren, especially Javanese pesantren. The nickname *Gus* represents a person’s social strata obtained based on a measure of honor as Weber’s theory of social stratification.²⁹ This honor was obtained because Gus Mus was the son of Kyai KH. Bisri Mustofa, founder of the Roudlotut Thalibin Islamic Boarding School, Rembang. The wealth of scientific treasures also measures the title Gus obtained by Gus Mus. It is evident from his many works.

Gus Mus is one of the great scholars who was born in Rembang, August 10, 1944.³⁰ This famous writer is an ‘eccentric’ scholar because he works as a very productive writer. The figure who is often dubbed “Simbah kakung” in his social networking accounts is also an artist.³¹ He is very good at writing poetry, reading it, and painting. Gus Mus uses his poems as a medium to communicate actual social situations with his students/audiences in easy-to-understand and straightforward everyday language.³² With the curiosity of students and audiences aroused, dialogue is opened to hope for a complete understanding of oneself, others, environmental situations, religion, and the state.³³ While in the art of painting, his innovations in painting with *klelet* (cigarette residue) on envelopes were presented in a solo exhibition

²⁹ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, “Gusti, Kajeng, Ulama, Kyai Dan Gus,” *kompasiana*, 2017.

³⁰ Nur Rokhim, *Kiai-Kiai Kharismatik dan Fenomenal* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2015), 194-197.

³¹ Abu Asma Anshari, *Ngetan Ngulon Ketemu Gus Mus* (Semarang: HMT Foundation, 2005), 55.

³² Labibah Zain and Lathiful Khuluq, *GusMus Satu Rumah Seribu Pintu* (Yogyakarta: LkiS Printing Cemerlang, 2009), 17.

³³ Zain and Khuluq, *GusMus Satu Rumah Seribu Pintu*.

³³ Ken Sawitri, *Album Sajak-Sajak A. Mustofa Bisri* (Surabaya: Mata Air Publishing, 2008), 579.

entitled “99 Paintings of Envelopes” at the Art Exhibition Building of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Jakarta in 1997.³⁴

In addition to these previous identities, Gus Mus has also been involved in politics. However, Gus Mus considered that the atmosphere in the legislative environment was not under his conscience.³⁵ These conditions made Gus Mus’ political career short. Thus, he resigned because of these psychological and spiritual factors. The peak of Gus Mus’ accumulation of powerlessness in the Regional Parliament is contained in Balsem Poem from Tunisia.³⁶

Gus Mus is a magnetic figure to be investigated in the era of truth contestation in the political or religious realm because of his broad perspective of thinking. Although he is a calm and polite person, he dares to criticize social, political, and spiritual paradoxes. Of course, he not only has a deep understanding of Islam but has also been a politician so that he can share his experiences.³⁷

Gus Mus is not only a charismatic figure but also a scholar who cares about technological developments. Even though he is not young anymore, he actively interacts with communication technology to express his ideas. He has social media accounts such as Instagram with several followers of approximately 52.3 thousand Instagram users. Accounts that intensely post Gus Mus memes and their recitations also have many followers. It proves that Gus Mus is a contemporary scholar who is popular among netizens.

REPRESENTATION OF GUS MUS ISLAMIC PREACHING THROUGH SUFISM MEMES

Memes have become a phenomenon in the world of communication. It is an ordinary communication tool and a medium for disseminating religious values, categorized as religious memes. In this study, the religious memes studied focused on memes with Islamic nuances. The massive spread of Islamic memes is marked by the rise of internet users who post Islamic memes on several of their social media accounts. We can also easily find thousands of Islamic memes by typing “Islamic

³⁴ Anshari, *Ngetan Ngulon Ketemu Gus Mus*, 342.

³⁵ Gus Mus avoided receiving a salary. Gus Mus said: “... the performance and salary given to high officials are not equal. The salary given is greater than the achievement”.

³⁶ Anshari, *Ngetan Ngulon Ketemu Gus Mus*, 82–85.

³⁷ Anshari, 116.

memes” or other related keywords on the search engine. One example of an Islamic meme that contains Islamic preaching’s message is the meme “Cool Muslim prays on time” and “Your wealth is blessed with sadaqah.”

Memes, including Islamic memes, are also used as a medium in the contestation of truth. Islamic memes originating from the Qur’an and Hadith certainly often issue dissent. The diversity interpretation is a sensitive issue that often triggers friction to win the idea to fight over the mass. It relates several religious and Islamic discourses in Indonesia. It involves radicalism, fundamentalism, and pluralism, often debated. There are many such memes, for example: “All the deeds Rasulullah never did is Bid’ah”; “Beware, *bid’ah*, *kufur*, *shirk* everywhere”; “Mawlid is bid’ah.” Consequently, anti-fanaticism memes also enliven the realm of contestation with rebuttal statements, such as “Stop accusing infidels of strike heresy,”; “The pilgrimage to the grave is sunnah, not heresy,” and so forth.

Religious memes come in various patterns, either for Islamic preaching or to instill an ideology, whether to give peace or incite hostility. Memes that contain the spirit of piety, peace, and Sufism often include pictures of Islamic preacher and their words of wisdom. Some Islamic preacher figures mostly found in memes are Habib Umar bin Hafidz, Habib Syech Assegaf, Abdul Rahman Wahid (Gus Dur), KH. Ahmad Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus), KH. Maemoen Zubaer; Habib Muhammad Lutfi bin Yahya, Emha Ainun Najib (Cak Nun) and so on.

One of the many Islamic preachers whose expressions are often used as memes is Gus Mus. The wise words quoted from Gus Mus contain the Islamic teaching of peace and tolerance. Gus Mus’ memes also inspire religious esotericism. It is a religious practice that displays formalistic legality aspects and penetrates deep into the spiritual-Sufism realm. That’s why it is categorized memes that incorporate Gus Mus’ wise words into Sufism memes.

Sufism memes included in religious memes are actualizations of the contemporary *da’wah bi al-qalam* (written da’wah). *Da’wah bi al-qalam* utilizing the meme is a simple form of Islamic preaching that follows digital culture. Memes can be called simplification or the core of someone’s lecture, which is poured in a more attractive visual

form.³⁸ The exciting side of Islamic preaching media can be seen in several aspects, such as the uniqueness of the design, the harmony of the images, videos, or writings, and the beauty of the colors. In addition, the message of the Sufism meme is also easy to remember because it is packaged and in context. A crucial aspect is that mystical memes are easily and quickly spread by utilizing online media and social networks.

Gus Mus's collection of Memes will be easily found on several social media platforms. One of the vast collections is found on Instagram. On Instagram, besides the official Gus Mus account, other accounts post the memes of Gus Mus, such as *gusmusquotes*, *gusmus channel*, *ngaji.gusmus*, *your gusmusgus*, and *my gusmusgus*. Of the many accounts, only one account consistently contains memes containing Gus Mus quotes, namely *gusmusquotes*. The *gusmusquotes* account, until August 11, 2021, has posted approximately 200 Gus Mus memes and is followed by 47,500 Instagram users.

Gus Mus's wise words memes in digital media are Gusmusgusmu, who regularly posts short *tausiyah* (preaching) on Fridays to his Twitter account. His *tausiyah* was quoted by NU journalists online. The creator of the Gus Mus meme is unidentified. It is anonymous (without a name). However, the meme creators note the source from which the quote was taken to maintain the authenticity of the figure's idea.

CHARACTERS OF GUS MUS'S MEME

In this section, writer analyze several Gus Mus memes with a content analysis approach. Several Sufism Gus Mus memes are assumed to represent Gus Mus's preaching character. They are often used as memes by the internet community.

Creating Gus Mus memes does not require extra effort from design creativity because Gus Mus memes are simplified. The core of the meme is the message from Gus Mus, not the picture design. Most of Gus Mus's memes only have two elements, and both are photos of

³⁸ Although today's Islamic memes are in demand by many people and widespread widely, they do not eliminate the culture of oral da'wah (*da'wah bi al-lisan*). There are still many people who don't have smartphones like people in rural areas. There are also many people who don't like to operate smartphones other than just for communication. So listening da'wah to ulama directly is still a culture that has not faded.

Gus Mus and his quoted wise words. The selection of which photo to be displayed is not the main thing. It is also non-binding because there is not always a relationship between photos and text. In the Gus Mus meme, the photo serves as a legalization tool to show that the quote comes from Gus Mus. In addition, Gus Mus' picture can make memes more eye-catching for those who know him, idolize him, or have similar ideas with his thoughts.

Gus Mus' memes come in a variety of images. Several memes contain the same expression but use different photos of Gus Mus. It is shown as in the collection of memes below.



Image 1. Gus Mus's meme appears in a different image with the same message. "In inviting goodness, be hard on yourself and be gentle on others, not the other way around."

The following meme is a collection of Gus Mus memes with the same picture but different expressions. It can be seen as follows.



Image 2. Gus Mus memes appear in the same picture with different messages.

The collection of memes in both images shows that whatever image the creator chooses, the image of Gus Mus is not a priority. The emphasis is the expression or message that emerges from it. Thus, a picture of Gus Mus gives a sign of ownership of the expression.

In terms of content, quotes from Gus Mus’s expressions in several memes that were spread contain humanist values and messages of peace. He called on his followers to be tolerant, love one another, stay away from complacency and hatred, and maintain unity and other Sufism values. These Sufism values also become one strategy to defend from the attacks of religious extremism thought, or at least to become counter-narrative of religious fundamentalism, which is flooding the cyberspace.³⁹

The Gus Mus memes below (Image 3) show a call to promote the values of compassion and tolerance.

³⁹ Rizqa Ahmadi, “Nasyr Da’watu Al-Tasawwuf SI-Ijtima’i Li Mukāfahati SI-Irhāb Wa Al-Tataruf,” *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 1 (2017): 81–103.



Image 3.

Gus Mus memes carry the values of compassion, tolerance, anti-hate

The collection of memes in the picture above contains Gus Mus' call to all Indonesian people to maintain unity and not be easily divided. Gus mus was bridged by the creators of the memes wanting to show that the Indonesian nation was in an appalling condition. Several phenomena of truth claims, the erosion of tolerance, and the peaking of denigrating each other for the sake of personal (group) interests are examples of the concerns that he responds to. Based on a survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) in 2016, Indonesia has entered a zone prone to intolerance. It was recorded that 59.9 percent of the 1,520 respondents admitted that they could not live side by side with people with different religious backgrounds.⁴⁰ As a representative of civil society and an influential charismatic national

⁴⁰ Rakhmat Nur Hakim, "Survei Wahid Foundation: Indonesia Masih Rawan Intoleransi dan Radikalisme," *Kompas*, 2017.

figure, Gus Mus suppressed the massive level of intolerance that could potentially lead to radicalism.

Hatred towards others because of ideological differences and other factors, including political affiliation, also seemed to be quite worrying for Gus Mus. In the context of Indonesia, in the last decade, society is being hit by an attitude of hatred between religious communities, even fellow adherents of Islam. Differences in religious principles also often lead to hatred and intolerance. Gus Mus's expressions in memes seem to invite humankind to rid themselves of the elements of hatred that appear in the public sphere.

In other Gus Mus Memes, Gus Mus's expressions indicate that he pays attention to human rights (HAM). The words "other" or "others" used in memes indicate that Gus Mus pays excellent attention to social relationships. These social relationships, such as an invitation to do good to others, must be good, take care of other people's feelings, hatred for others. Another reason is not something that God likes.



Image 4. The Gus Mus meme contains Gus Mus's message to be more moderate, not fanatical to groups and to fight for national unity.

The collection of Memes in the image below shows that Gus Mus has a high tolerance.



Image 5. Gus Mus memes show the high tolerance value that Gus Mus has

Although Gus Mus paid great attention to the harmony between human beings (*habl min al-nas*), he did not ignore the vertical aspect. It is the relationship between man and his God. As an Islamic preacher, he often calls people to have a good relationship with his creator (*habl min Allah*). It's just that some Gus Mus memes, which have the nuances of belief (*aqidah*) ansich, namely calling for following certain *aqidah* doctrines, have not been found by the author. The author found Gus Mus's meme, which contains an invitation to get closer to Allah in general, as stated in the meme in image 6.



Image 6. Gus Mus memes contain an invitation to get closer to the Creator

Based on these data, the writer argues that Gus Mus's wise expression contains substantive and essential Islamic teachings, as outlined in the meme. He went deep to catch the core messages of religious teachings. What is expressed is very close to the spirit of Sufism which emphasizes the esoteric aspect. In other words, religious packaging is not more important than religion's core teachings, which emphasize the inner aspect.

So many memes have been displayed. All of Gus Mus memes include Gus Mus photos in large or small sizes. The selected image shows Gus Mus in various poses and expressions. Some memes show Gus Mus posing, talking, reading, contemplating, staring at the camera, listening to something, paying attention, or explaining something. Some of Gus Mus' body expressions that can be observed include: serious, smiling, and laughing. It is not only pictures of Gus

Mus, but also meme creators always write Gus Mus” or “KH. Ahmad Mustofa Bisri” or simply “KH. Mustofa Bisri” to show the affiliation of these expressions.

Seeing the various symbols or logos included in the meme indicates the source of the quote. In some of the memes mentioned above, the logo of NU Online, *www.nu.or.id*, and symbols of social networks: *twitter@gusmusgusmu*, *@jamaahnu*, *@nu_online*; *Instagram*, *gusmusquotes*, and *nuonline-id*, or other web addresses such as *memecomicsantri.blogspot.com*. Others don't list the source at all.

Although some communities post Gus Mus memes, the NU Community, often called NUtizen, interacts most intensely with Gus Mus memes. In line with Theodore Newcomb's theory, a Balance Theory of Group Formation explains that a community can be formed because of the similarity of thoughts and the same attitude in responding to something and having the same goals. Likewise, with the community that created the Gus Mus meme. They have the same ideas and generally agree on the expressions conveyed by Gus Mus through his Sufism quotes on social media. In other words, someone will tend to take sides or continue to pay attention to someone who has the same idea as him, either partially or wholly.

In addition, the Gus Mus memes that are spread do not all include the source but have the same content as the meme that lists the source. It proves that memes attempt to imitate a product from an existing one into a new one, either by adding or changing images. There is no visible word change in some existing memes because the words “quote” remains in the exact wording; only the image is different.

CONCLUSION

Based on some evidence, it can be concluded that the emergence of the Gus Mus quote meme is caused by the massive emergence of disturbing and terrifying memes. Some say the meme is troublesome as it contains negative values. It may contrast with Islamic values, Indonesian cultural norms, and the ideology of Pancasila, such as racism, radicalism, fundamentalism, extremism, fanaticism, intolerance, inclusiveness, which are not in line with the spirit of *rahmat li al-'alamin*. Thus, the cyber community raises Islamic

memes as a form of resistance to thoughts and ideas. Perhaps, this phenomenon can be categorized as a moral panic.

Based on the moral panic, there are several considerations in choosing memes as a medium of Islamic preaching. *First*, memes are considered an appropriate medium in the digital era, where more people join the virtual world. *Second*, Gus Mus's memes contain simple, concise, and easy-to-understand wise words. *Third*, Gus Mus is one of the great scholars of the NU organization (Islamic organization with a massive number of followers). Many Indonesian Muslims sympathize and feel in agreement with the wise word Gus Mus conveys. Indonesia is also a country that has many students who respect kyai. Gus Mus is kyai. Thus, many students, especially NU students, feel in harmony with Gus Mus' ideology. *Fourth*, the purpose of the emergence of Gus Mus' memes is not merely to be published or to counter negative memes. It is an alarm for behavior or motivation for some people to be better. Some Gus Mus' memes lovers save the memes on their digital media or even print them and display them in their rooms. Gus Mus' memes can also be used to declare a person's ideology or identity-related to their community. For example, someone wants to show that they are a *Nahdiyyin*⁴¹ community or a community of admirers of Gus Mus.

There are several points to note. Gus Mus' memes do not require creativity and high imagination because the main element that netizens want is their message. Gus Mus's memes are a means to spread Islamic advice and universal goodness values because many of Gus Mus's memes contain universal humanitarian messages.

There are several characteristics of Gus Mus's memes that are spread in cyberspace. Based on the wise word retrieval source, some of Gus Mus's memes directly quote the wise word from Gus Mus's Twitter. Several other memes are the result of discussion and information from the Gus Mus congregation. Another Gus Mus' meme is the essence quoted from Gus Mus' lectures either inside his boarding school or outside it.

Gus Mus' memes are categorized into a virtual community of NU (NUtizen) based on the distribution agent. It is always labeled the NUonline sign on every Gus Mus' meme. Gus Mus community

⁴¹ Nahdiyyin is the nickname associated with the followers of Nahdlatul Ulama Organization

has alliances with other social networking communities that are not always NU.

From the angle of appearance, all Gus Mus' memes always feature Gus Mus's photos. The design of Gus Mus' meme that imported Gus Mus' photo on it can be classified into several categories. Some of those memes have the exact content of wise words with different photos. Some others display the same image with different wise words.

In the digital era, Muslims are challenged to promote Islamic values to Muslim society to strengthen spirituality. It is through either "*habl min Allah*" or "*habl min al-nas*" through the efforts of "*amr bi ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*." Gus Mus' Memes try to disseminate the values of *amar ma'ruf wa an nahy 'an al munkar* in Muslim society optimally, such as the call for unity and the prohibition of parochial, narrow-minded, and ultra-conservative to prevent fundamentalism. Every Muslim is not recommended to be excessively fanatical but is required to tolerate and respect others' rights, opinions, and beliefs to eliminate misunderstandings among Muslims. The reality tells us that extreme-minded in fundamentalism, fanaticism, intolerant spread quickly through mass media. They potentially disrupt Muslims. Accordingly, Muslims significantly need technology to make Islamic preaching enjoyable so that Islamic messages are imitable and understandable.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadi, Rizqa. "Nasyr Da'watu Al-Tasawwuf SI-Ijtimā'i Li Mukāfahati SI-Irhāb Wa Al-Tatarruf." *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 1 (2017).
- Anshari, Abu Asma. *Ngetan Ngulon Ketemu Gus Mus*. Semarang: HMT Foundation, 2005.
- APJII. "A PJI Rilis Hasil Survei Pengguna Internet Terbaru Indonesia." *Buletin APJII, Edisi 74*, 2020.
- Arifin, Anwar. *Opini Publik*. Jakarta: Pustaka Indonesia, 2010.

- Barlow, John Perry. "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace." *Futurist & The Electronic Frontier Foundation*, 2017.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *Tafsir Sosial Atas Kenyataan: Risalah Tentang Sosiologi Pengetahuan*. Edited by terj. Hasan Basari. Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990.
- Bisri, Ahmad Mustofa. *Tadarus (Antologi Puisi)*. Yogyakarta: Adicita Karya Nus, 2003.
- Brodie, Richard. *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme*. California: Hay House, 2011.
- Buick, Joanna. *Introducing Cyberspace*. Duxford: Icon Books Ltd, 1995.
- Cannizzaro, Sara. "Internet Memes as Internet Signs: A Semiotic View of Digital Culture." *Sign Systems Studies* 44, no. 4 (2016).
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- December, Jhon. "Units of Analysis for Internet Communication." *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 1 (1996).
- Durrenberger, E. Paul. "Ethnography." In *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Henry Holt, 1996.
- Fadilah, Nur. "Tantangan Dan Penguatan Ideologi Pancasila Dalam Menghadapi Era Revolusi Industri." *Journal of Digital Education, Communication, and Arts* 2, no. 2 (2019).
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Guncangan Besar: Kodrat Manusia dan Tata Sosial Baru*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture In The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Hakim, Rakhmat Nur. "Survei Wahid Foundation: Indonesia Masih Rawan Intoleransi Dan Radikalisme." *Kompas*, 2017.
- Hamalik, Oemar. *Media Pembelajaran*. Bandung: Citra Adhitya Bakti, 1986.

- Handayani, Fitri. "The Use of Meme as A Representation of Public Opinion in Social Media: A Case Study of Meme About Bekasi in Path and Twitter." *Humaniora* 7, no. 3 (2016).
- Hansen, George P. *Max Weber, Charisma, and The Disenchantment of The World*. PA: Xlibris, 2001.
- Kementrian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia. "Pengguna Internet Indonesia Tertinggi Ketiga di Asia," 2017.
- Mahendra, Yusril Ihza. "Gusti, Kajeng, Ulama, Kyai dan Gus." *kompasiana*, 2017.
- Martono, Nanang. *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial: Perspektif Klasik, Modern, Postmodern, dan Poskolonial*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2011.
- Pangestu, Perdana. "Indonesian Muslim Identity Constellation in the Digital Media: Labeling Arrogant Islam by Permadi Arya on Social Media." *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 21, no. 1 (2021).
- Rokhim, Nur. *Kiai-Kiai Kharismatik dan Fenomenal*. Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2015.
- Roziqin, Badiatul. *101 Jejak Tokoh Islam Indonesia. E-Nusantara*, 2009.
- Sadiman, Arif. *Media Pendidikan: Pengertian, Pengembangan dan Pemanfaatannya*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2012.
- Sawitri, Ken. *Album Sajak-Sajak A. Mustofa Bisri*. Surabaya: Mata Air Publishing, 2008.
- Sjahdeini, Sutan Remy. *Kejahatan & Tindak Pidana Komputer*. Jakarta: Grafiti, 2009.
- Subiakto, Henry, and Rachmah Ida. *Komunikasi Politik, Media dan Demokrasi*. Kencana Prenadamedia group: Kencana Prenadamedia group, 2014.
- Suparno, Basuki Agus. "Computer Mediated Communication Situs Jejaring Sosial dan Identitas Diri Remaja." *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 (2012).

Thurlow, Crispin. *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2004.

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Edited by Talcott Parsons. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Zain, Labibah, and Lathiful Khuluq. *GusMus Satu Rumah Seribu Pintu*. Yogyakarta: LkiS Printing Cemerlang, 2009.

Zulkarnaeni. "Da'wah Islam di Era Modern." *Jurnal Risalah* 26, no. 3 (2015).