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## SOCIAL MOBILITY OF THE BUGIS FEMALE HAJJ PILGRIMS

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### ABSTRACT

*This research delves into the social mobility of Bugis female Hajj pilgrims, examining not only the ways in which the experience of performing the Hajj transforms Bugis women socially but also how this mobility becomes integral to their cultural lives. Utilizing qualitative methods which include field studies and interviews with Bugis women who have completed the Hajj, this research positions them as agents, actors, and subjects. Its objective is to reveal the various forms of social mobility that have reshaped the status of Bugis women who have performed the Hajj. Specifically, it investigates the role of the Hajj as a social identity within Bugis society, the social and cultural transformations experienced by Bugis female Hajj pilgrims, and the effects of their social mobility on changes in their societal status and roles. Field findings show that the social mobility of Bugis female Hajj pilgrims is deeply intertwined with the community's respect for the difficult journey of performing the Hajj, from departure to return. This journey redefines women's positions within religious rituals, fosters cultural cohesion through the symbolic attributes worn during the Hajj, and generates both direct and indirect impacts on society through the pilgrims' contributions.*

**Keywords:** *Social Mobility; Bugis Female; Hajj Pilgrims*

### INTRODUCTION

The centuries-long history of Islam's arrival to mainland Sulawesi in the 17th century brought about profound changes in societal dynamics. Particularly significant was the decision of the Bugis Kings to establish Islam as the official religion of the kingdom, extending invitations to neighboring kingdoms to embrace Islam collectively. This Islamic influence was not limited to coastal communities; even inland regions garnered the attention of influential monarchs (Mappangara, 2003; Nasiruddin, 2020). The integration of Islamic principles into local culture strengthened, guided by the principles of *sara*'

(Islamic law). Initially controversial, the Pangngadereng culture underwent a process of elaboration within the community, solidifying into a cornerstone of social institution. This integration laid the foundation for the Bugis Islamic community to utilize Islamic values and cultural practices as guiding principles in their daily lives. (Rahim, 1992; Mulkan, 1998; Djamas, 1998).

The increase in the number of Muslims within Bugis society has brought dynamism to religious rituals. Among these, completing the pillars of Islam, particularly performing the Hajj pilgrimage, stands out as a paramount aspiration. In an era marked by rapid development, the significance of the Hajj extends beyond its religious connotations. It has evolved into a marker of social identity, economic legitimacy, and cultural expression within society (Nasiruddin, 2021). To fulfill these complex roles, individuals enthusiastically endeavor to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. For the Bugis people, embarking on the Hajj journey is a matter of pride, symbolizing a journey filled with challenges from departure to return to their homes (Hamid et al., 2003; Normasunah, 2019). It is undeniable that the experience of the Hajj has given rise to numerous cultural phenomena within Bugis society (Subair, 2019). Interestingly, a significant majority of Bugis pilgrims are women.

This research found that out of 78 percent of individuals undertaking the Hajj pilgrimage, 60 percent were women and they were identified as housewives (Agustang, 2018). Despite the strict guidelines within the Islamic faith regarding women's travel, which typically mandate the presence of a *mahram* or, at the very least, a husband during long journeys (Bobihu, 2023), notable scholars within the Shafi'i and Maliki schools have provided concessions for the Hajj pilgrimage. They advocate for participation within trusted groups that ensure safety and security throughout the worship process (Zahroh & Muhajarah, 2024). Consequently, it is not surprising that a higher number of Bugis women undertake the Hajj compared to men.

The dynamics surrounding the Hajj pilgrimage within Indonesian society are undergoing functional changes, as evidenced by several research findings. Three relevant studies have been summarized to shed light on this phenomenon. Zamakhsyari Dhofier (1990 & 1984), for instance, conducted a survey on the socio-economic profile of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims. He explained that economic factors significantly influence the dynamics of the Indonesian Hajj. Similarly, studies have examined the tradition of wearing Hajj clothing within the Bugis ethnic group (Nirwati et al., 2021; Kasman, 2019), revealing notable differences in Bugis women's attire before and after performing the Hajj pilgrimage. Furthermore, investigations into the relationship between the Hajj pilgrimage and the social status of Bugis women



indicate that obtaining the Hajj title can elevate their social status (Nasiruddin, 2022; Fitri, 2023). Building upon these insights, this research aims to delve deeper into the process of social mobility among Bugis women who perform the Hajj pilgrimage. This will be achieved by formulating three key questions to guide further exploration in the subsequent sections. First, the discussion will revolve around the Hajj pilgrimage as a form of social identity within Bugis society. Second, attention will be directed towards unraveling the social and cultural transformations experienced by Bugis female Hajj pilgrims. Finally, the focus will shift to examining the impact of social mobility resulting from the Hajj pilgrimage on changes in the social status and roles of Bugis women within society. By addressing these questions, the study endeavors to provide new scientific insights into the evolving trends of Hajj participation within Bugis society, particularly among women.

This research aims to complement previous studies by exploring the scope of social mobility generated by Hajj pilgrims within the Bugis community. It is important to explore this topic in greater detail, focusing on three key aspects. First, while the Hajj pilgrimage is typically viewed as a religious obligation within Islam, for Bugis women, it holds additional significance as a means of elevating their social status. Thus, there is an urgent need for an in-depth examination of the social mobility experienced by Bugis women who undertake the Hajj pilgrimage. Second, the impacts stemming from the Hajj status attained by Bugis women require special attention, as they serve to strengthen their identity within society. Finally, this research highlights the sacredness of the Hajj pilgrimage within Bugis society and its profound significance as a source of pride in social life. This qualitative study targets individuals across various strata of Bugis society, including both educated and uneducated women, by examining the influence of education on their perception, activity, and social repositioning.

### **SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION THROUGH HAJJ AMONG THE BUGIS PEOPLE**

According to H.P Badrun (1997), the Bugis perspective on the Hajj ritual illustrates a dual motivation: first, fulfilling religious obligations and second, using the pilgrimage as a means to gain social recognition, subsequently fulfilling societal roles. In addition, the Hajj is viewed as an expression of obedience to religious recommendations and the fulfillment of the fifth pillar of Islam (Syamsurijal, 2020). However, beyond individual motivations, the Hajj is also a communal expression rooted in a collective awareness of the importance of adhering to true Islamic principles by completing fundamental

religious teachings. This community-driven perspective aligns with Durkheim's assertion that religion serves as a unifying force within society. (Bustomi et al., 2023).

The Hajj pilgrimage has evolved into a profound religious symbol that motivates the Bugis people to perform it. Beyond its spiritual significance, the Hajj holds considerable influence in shaping the social identity within Bugis society. Social identity encompasses various aspects, including culture, religion, and shared values upheld by a community (Lisma, 2023). Within the Bugis community, embarking on the Hajj pilgrimage transcends mere religious obligation; it serves as a powerful foundation for the formation and reinforcement of their social identity.

Moreover, the Hajj pilgrimage can serve as a motif for individuals to engage in economic activities guided by principles such as strong work ethic, efficiency, optimism, and adherence to halal procedures. This is particularly evident in traditional societies where numerous events occur before and after the Hajj pilgrimage. However, the substantial economic investment required for the Hajj presents a significant obstacle that requires determination to overcome. The cost factor undeniably plays a dominant role in determining the success or failure of prospective Hajj pilgrims. This was evident in 1999 during the monetary crisis, where there was a drastic decline in Hajj pilgrims due to soaring costs, leading to a one-third reduction in the number of pilgrims compared to the previous year. (Ahmad, 2013).

Participation in the Hajj pilgrimage introduces a new dimension to the social identity of the Bugis community. Culturally, the Hajj experience is deeply-rooted within the rich traditions and values of the Bugis people. This spiritual journey not only signifies obedience to the pillars of Islam but also reflects a sense of pride in the enduring Bugis cultural heritage, as described in this discussion. Furthermore, the Hajj serves as a channel for fostering solidarity and unity among the Bugis community (Baso, 2012). The collective undertaking of the Hajj pilgrimage fosters strong social bonds among fellow pilgrims. On a broader scale, the Hajj experience serves as a unifying force, allowing the Bugis community to take part in the solidarity of Muslims globally, thereby fortifying their social identity as integral members of the broader Islamic community.

In society, there exist four structural elements: social identity, social situation, social groups, and social roles (Spradley & Mc. Coerdy, 1975: 118). This concept serves to explain and comprehend the phenomenon of pilgrimage among Bugis women for several reasons. First, it seeks to grasp society in a structured manner, revealing the tangible patterns of interaction among its

various components. These patterns endure over time as interactions occur in an organized fashion. This concept facilitates the explanation of society through a more specific and interconnected framework of structures that contribute to the formation of societal dynamics.

Second, this concept explains the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the broader social structure (society). It suggests that individuals and society possess distinct identities that influence each other. Individuals within society can be categorized into various groups based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, occupation, etc. Sheldon Stryker (1980) refers to this as 'identity.' As individuals form groups, their individual identities transform into group identities, each characterized by unique attributes that distinguish them from other groups. (Hogg A.M., 2003). Identity elements can also identify groups of people who feel inferior compared to other societal groups and subsequently strive to improve their condition to regain a positive social identity. According to Hogg and Abram (1988), only with a positive social identity can recognition and social equality from others be achieved. In the context of social groups, positive social identity can be shaped through mechanisms such as social mobility and social change.

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals from lower social groups to higher ones. According to Laker (in Taylor and Moghaddam, 1994), individuals or groups who perceive their identity as inferior may experience misidentification, where they attempt to align themselves with the identity of another group perceived as superior. The social identity shaped through the Hajj pilgrimage significantly influences the Bugis people's self-perception and their relationships with the broader community. This spiritual journey not only deepens their sense of Islam but also fosters an increased awareness of social and moral responsibility among individuals and within the Bugis community. (Francis & McKenna, 2017).

Overall, the Hajj is not merely a pilgrimage; it serves as a strong foundation for forming social identity in Bugis society (Syamsurijal et al., 2023). Through this experience, Bugis pilgrims explore their cultural roots by studying history, engaging with the older generation, and observing traditions. This journey reinforces Islamic values, enhances solidarity, and shapes their self-perception and role within the wider society. Thus, the Hajj transcends being a mere religious ritual, becoming a pillar that builds and sustains a rich social identity for the Bugis people. (Niu & Li).

## **TRANSFORMATION WITHIN THE BUGIS FEMALE HAJJ PILGRIMS**

Bugis female Hajj pilgrims experience a significant social transformation

marked by increased religious awareness during their Hajj journey (Prastyo, 2022). This spiritual experience not only alters their perspectives on Islamic teachings but also deepens their understanding of the religious values that strengthen everyday life. This increased religious awareness involves a more profound comprehension of Islamic worship practices, ethics, and moral values grounded in commendable morals (Wekke, 2017). Consequently, Bugis women who undertake the Hajj not only undergo individual transformation in the religious dimension but also positively impact their home communities. This increased religious awareness often influences social interactions, policy formation, and the development of moral values within their social environment.

Within the community, the Hajj serves as a powerful social symbol for Bugis women, reinforcing social values. As a symbol, the Hajj holds significant importance in the minds of the Bugis people. In the Kalabbirang urban village, the status of having performed the Hajj helps shape social values in the daily lives of Bugis women, distinguishing them from other Bugis individuals who have not performed the pilgrimage. These pilgrimage values then influence their interactions in everyday life. Thus, the symbol of “Hajj” carries substantial importance for Bugis women. (Fitri, 2023).

According to Clifford Geertz, the significance of a symbol is most tangible when it is prominently featured in rituals or myths. The sacredness attributed to symbols serves to bridge ontology and cosmology with aesthetics and morality. The distinctive strength of these symbols lies in their capacity to align facts with values at the deepest level, instilling something purely factual with comprehensive normative content (Geertz, 1995: 54-57). In the context of Bugis society, cultural practices culminate in reverence for the objects of that culture.

Due to their substantive and perceived nature, values, norms, and symbols hold greater prominence among structural functionalists not as structural elements, but rather as cultural components. These elements occupy various conceptual spaces surrounding the social structure of Bugis society (Merton, 1949). Essentially, the norms and values of the Hajj represent ideas or symbols residing in the minds of individual Bugis women who have performed the pilgrimage, serving as a ‘code of sanctions’ for their interactions. As a symbol, the Hajj carries significant value in the collective consciousness of the Bugis people. Bugis women possess an awareness of the subjective meaning inherent in the symbols of the Hajj, which can manifest through words, actions, or objects (Wahab, 2011). When the Bugis community comprehends the significance of the Hajj, it becomes a social phenomenon. Moreover, the

ability of Bugis individuals to construct the Hajj as a social symbol inherently positions the human mind as a product of socialization. (Sadzali, 2018). Field findings indicate that during weddings or village events, individuals who have performed the Hajj pilgrimage are accorded the same level of respect as religious scholars and village officials. This social capital not only facilitates the economic activities of traders by alleviating psychological barriers but also enhances trust among their peers. The honorific title of “hajj” confers trustworthiness and a range of social benefits, including improved social status and socio-economic advantages, categorizing Hajj participants as part of a religious elite group (Subair, 2019). Furthermore, Subair (2019) elaborates that the significance of the Hajj ritual transcends mere religious doctrine, evolving into an institution capable of upholding local values. For instance, Hajj as a social institution can elevate an individual’s status within society. (Farida, 1999:37).

The impact of the Hajj on individuals who have completed the pilgrimage is often perceived through changes in their social status within society. This perspective views the Hajj instrumentally, recognizing its potential to strengthen and enhance an individual’s mobility and competitive spirit. It involves strategies and symbolic behaviors aimed at increasing personal prestige, as well as that of one’s family or group (Bianchi, 2015; Nashir, 2013). Thus, the Hajj is interpreted as a status symbol that reflects one’s social standing and position of high regard. Common methods employed to express this status include the utilization of symbols such as commendable actions (Horton and Hunt, 1992), observable behaviors, attire, housing, and affiliation with organizations, all serving as manifestations of self-actualization. (Soerjono, 1990).

Strengthening cultural identity within the context of the Hajj pilgrimage among Bugis women offers a profound insight into how spiritual experiences can foster unity and safeguard cultural diversity. This is proven by their actions throughout the Hajj pilgrimage, where Bugis women often wear traditional attire, engage in customary Bugis rituals, take part in pre-departure celebrations, utilize Bugis weaving as a symbol of pride, recite prayers in the Bugis language, and create spaces that promote and fortify their cultural identity (Kasman, 2019). Upholding these traditions not only fosters a sense of solidarity among Bugis pilgrims but also serves as a distinctive marker of Bugis cultural diversity amid diverse Hajj pilgrims coming from various corners of the world. Beyond serving as a local identifier, the strengthening of cultural identity can serve as an effective instrument for fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation among Hajj pilgrims. (Hakim & Djarot, 2023).

In a broader context, enhancing the cultural identity of Bugis female Hajj pilgrims can have a positive impact on the global perception of Muslims. Through celebrating cultural diversity within the universal setting of the Hajj pilgrimage, Bugis women not only preserve their cultural heritage but also serve as cultural ambassadors who promote positive intercultural dialogue amid the social complexities of a globalized society. Strengthening cultural identity during the Hajj journey transcends mere local performance; it serves as a global assertion of the richness of culture capable of uniting the spirituality of Muslims worldwide.

### **SOCIETAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY THROUGH HAJJ PILGRIMAGE**

The social mobility experienced by Bugis female Hajj pilgrims manifests as an elevation in their status or standing within society, giving them respect and recognition. This is attributed to the dynamics and processes involved in performing the Hajj pilgrimage, which not everyone can undertake, spanning from the initial stages of departure to the return. This journey yields significant contributions to society. First, participation in the Hajj pilgrimage emphasizes Bugis women's unwavering commitment to Islamic values. The pilgrimage journey, characterized by extensive travel and material sacrifice, serves as tangible evidence of their dedication to upholding the principles of the Islamic faith (Suliyati, 2018).

Their courage to embark on the Hajj pilgrimage amid logistical and physical challenges serves as a testament to their level of faith and sincerity, garnering admiration from the surrounding community (Zainuddin, 2013). Martin Van Bruinessen (1990: 45) further observes the Hajj ritual as possessing religious, social, and political functions. Moreover, Kuntowijoyo (1991) highlights the social function of the Hajj, which historically, during colonial times, played a role in shaping the emergence of a new class within the hierarchical structure of society.

Social mobility through the Hajj pilgrimage provides Bugis women with opportunities to acquire new experiences and knowledge. Throughout the pilgrimage, they engage in interactions with pilgrims from diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Khair, 2008). This not only enriches their understanding but also broadens their social networks, facilitating the exchange of ideas and fostering collaborations that can elevate their social status (Kisworo, 2017). Furthermore, active participation in religious activities such as the Hajj can boost the leadership capabilities and social skills of Bugis women in the eyes of society.



The participation of Bugis women in Hajj activities has yielded a positive impact on reshaping society's perception of women. Traditionally, women's roles have been constrained by conservative social norms prevalent in certain communities (Moore, 1998; Radcliffe, 1982). However, through their experiences as Hajj pilgrims, Bugis women have the opportunity to engage in worship activities that are often regarded as prestigious, affording them space for a deeper understanding of the role of women in Islam (Abdurrahman, 2009). This opportunity provides them with a platform to showcase their spiritual resilience and religious knowledge, breaking up stereotypes and fostering new perspectives on the potential contributions of women to society. (Zahrok & Suarmini, 2018).

The Hajj experience offers Bugis women a broader understanding of women's roles within a social context. As Hajj pilgrims, they engage with the international community, gaining insights into social and cultural realities beyond their local environment (Pasa, 2022). This exposure helps change societal perceptions of women from being confined solely to domestic roles to recognizing their significant contributions to social and religious dynamics (Qomariyah & Fathiyaturrahmah, 2024). Consequently, Bugis women's participation in the Hajj not only triggers changes in public perceptions but also holds the potential to provide greater opportunities for women's involvement across various aspects of life.

Moreover, the elevated social status of Bugis women can significantly influence overall family dynamics (Rohmah & Hidayat, 2023). When a mother or wife garners respect and recognition in society due to social mobility, it can positively impact the family's perception and well-being. Elevating the social status of women within the family can also inspire the younger generation to pursue higher education and aspirations, fostering a family environment oriented towards positive development. (Wahyuni & Simatupang, 2024).

The social mobility experienced by Bugis female Hajj pilgrims represents a phenomenon capable of reshaping the landscape of religious values within society. The Hajj pilgrimage engages Bugis women in a profound spiritual environment, offering a unique opportunity to deepen their comprehension of religious values (Prasojo, 2020). As agents of change, Bugis women who have performed the Hajj can impart their religious insights to the surrounding community, thereby making a positive contribution to the dissemination and understanding of spiritual values in everyday life. This perspective aligns with the notion of the constructive impact of women's engagement in religious activities, where the experience of the Hajj can generate the transformation of religious values within the Bugis community. (Afsar, 2009).

The contribution of Bugis women in elevating social status also yields positive role models for the next generation (Mansyur et al., 1998). Serving as strong and independent exemplars, Bugis women who have performed the Hajj can inspire young women to pursue their aspirations and engage actively in community development (Homans, 1974). Hence, the social mobility of Bugis women through the Hajj not only affects individual social status but also generates a multiplier effect that resonates throughout the broader social structure.

## CONCLUSION

As times are changing, societal development has resulted in new patterns of life, even within the Bugis community, while still maintaining its cultural traditions. Drawing from the explanations and discussions presented earlier, this research has formulated three significant findings. First, the Hajj pilgrimage serves not only as a religious fulfillment for the Bugis community but also as a means of shaping their societal identity, thereby enhancing their mobility. Second, the identity of Bugis women who have performed the pilgrimage remains embedded in them throughout their lives. This is evidenced by the elevated status of individuals holding the title of Hajj, who often assume central roles in Bugis community events, even informal ones. They continue to collaborate with religious leaders, transcending their previous status as ordinary individuals. Third, the social mobility of Bugis women affects public perceptions regarding the role of women in religious rituals, which are still overshadowed by conservative ideologies. Through the Hajj, Bugis women challenge the stigma associated with their societal position, debunking the notion that women are inherently subordinate to men in religious contexts.

There are limitations in the findings of this study. One notable aspect is the sustainability of the impact generated by social mobility within the Bugis community. This research serves as a supplement to existing studies on the Hajj for Bugis women, leaving room for further exploration of unexplored areas. It is therefore necessary to delve into other aspects such as the challenges and opportunities encountered by Bugis community pilgrims in maintaining their societal presence. This endeavor promises to reveal new insights and scholarly contributions as modernity penetrates remote regions of Indonesia, particularly in Sulawesi. Contemporary rituals frequently generates new cultural practices within society, and the socio-cultural dynamics of Bugis community members who have performed the Hajj pilgrimage are no exception.



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## **BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPING THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Catechists preach the Bible through the practice of catechesis. The proclamation is carried out in a methodical and organic manner. Catechist actors, in particular, focus on evangelizing the general public, both clergy and laity. In the real-world development of the Christian faith, laypeople who become catechists have a complicated responsibility. Because they are directly involved in the lives of the people, they are at the forefront of the ministry work. They are also, in another sense, among people who share God's word with others. The lay catechists' experiences in life have become so ingrained in people's lives. The realities of today are extremely diverse. Even though they live in a time of globalization and modernity, there are still a lot of areas in which civilization has not been particularly developed. Border areas are in many cases being ignored, like places that are sometimes still harder to get to than the development of government centers, like roads that are hard to get to. Catechists face difficulties in providing services due to the scattered location of their service stations. To continue serving under the most difficult circumstances, the catechists need a spiritual spirit to support their efforts in developing religious education in this global world.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership Spirituality; Catechesism; Catholic Education*

## INTRODUCTION

The primary disciples of Jesus Christ are referred to as the Apostles. Jesus Christ himself had followers. The message that the disciples spread is the testimony of Jesus Christ himself. Mark 16:9–15, the apostolic spirit is the will of Jesus Christ that He communicated to His disciples. Preach the Gospel to every creature in the world. It can be seen from the passage from Mark that the Lord Jesus really wanted His disciples to be able to share the gospel with all living things. Therefore, it is not surprising that Catholics now exist throughout Indonesia.

Educational spirituality plays an important role to Catechists'. One of Indonesia's provinces with a large number of Catholics is West Kalimantan. Some of them can be found in the Beduai subdistrict, which is near the Indonesia-Malaysia border. Naturally, this cannot be separated from the catechists' role. A far cry from the center of government is the border region. The infrastructure and economic situation along Indonesia's and Malaysia's border are still severely lacking. The border community is a society that must endure this deprivation in order to survive. Catechists faced a challenge in and of themselves with these limitations and deficiencies, particularly when it comes to preserving the faith of the parishioners. On the one hand, they were also having issues with infrastructure and the economy. They must, on the other hand, proclaim Jesus' testimony. Naturally, every catechist who conducts services in this Malaysian-Indonesian border must be enthusiastic about this. The catechists were able to endure limitations thanks to this spiritual spirit. Their excitement was something that should be investigated to be a motivation for catechists any place they are.

The Indonesian West Kalimantan borderland, which is located far from the central government, presents a number of difficult life issues in educational spirituality. Normally, catechists faced different challenges than catechists in more advanced regions as church ministers working in the field of evangelization in border areas. The formulation of the study's problems: How does the catechists' preaching experience of faith relate to the situation in the border regions? How do the border catechists live out their service-oriented spirituality? What obstacles confront the border regions' catechetical workers? How do the Catechists deal with the difficulties that come with preaching in border regions? How do catechists deal with these obstacles?

The purpose of this study was to explore the issues in the educational spirituality of Catholic Church services in the Indonesian and Malaysian borderland. As a worldwide church, the spirit of synergy as co-reporters must remain coordinated, which is why this research is so important. Naturally,



the catechists come from a variety of backgrounds, particularly when it comes to their motivations for preaching. The goal of the research was to determine how this motivation can inspire people to preach. Catechists' consistency as preachers and willingness to endure the repercussions can be influenced by their growing commitment. The researcher learned more about the actual situation and the difficulties catechists face in border regions. The difficulties catechists faced in overcoming obstacles in border regions should be investigated and discussed with fellow catechists wherever they are. The church's status as a worldwide church will be bolstered by this. A type of visitation from researchers to catechists was another goal of this study. The researchers were from the Pontianak State Catholic College (STAKat), which trains future journalists and makes it possible for them to work in the Indonesian and Malaysian border regions. As a member of the universal church, STAKat Negeri Pontianak wishes to pay attention to catechists in border regions by being present among them to listen to their concerns and assist them in locating solutions.

This research provides a true picture of the news situation in border regions. The testimonies of catechists are an encouragement to catechists everywhere. This testimony is certainly an experience. There is value in seeing catechists continue to struggle under limited circumstances. The enthusiasm and actions of catechists who persevere in their work of service can touch and inspire the hearts of catechists everywhere. In other words, this survey can be a means of sharing the evidence of fulfilling one's duties as a catechist. This study can also inspire members of the Church and further promote a spirit of mutual respect and affirmation as part of the universal Catholic Church. The difficulties faced by catechists may also be noted in other Catholic churches in other dioceses. The 4,444 parishes with members can provide spiritual and temporal motivation for catechists in border areas. For Pontianak STAKat, this study will help gain insight into the enthusiasm of catechists. Pontianak State Law Among other things, it is also very useful in educating aspiring catechists based on data about the real problems that catechists face. Pontianak STAKat is able to study existing problems and train individual catechists to be strong and responsible in carrying out their duties and service tasks.

This study was classified as qualitative r, also known as interpretive research. It was a methodology borrowed from scientific disciplines such as sociology and anthropology and adapted to educational settings. Qualitative researchers utilized inductive reasoning methods and strongly believe in the existence of multiple perspectives. Qualitative research was characterized by its focus on exploring research problems that have limited knowledge or understanding,

aiming for a comprehensive understanding of the central phenomenon. In this type of research, data was collected through general questions that allow participants to provide answers. In the case of this research, it was conducted as field research to investigate the spirituality of catechists in border areas. The findings were presented and described in the form of text or words, obtained through interviews and observations conducted directly in the field. The study is conducted in stages and over a specific period of time. The researcher aimed to present the obtained data in a descriptive manner, making it easier to comprehend based on the field observations. Additionally, the research also included the presentation of data through photographs taken by the researchers.

The research process commences by identifying the research subject. In this case, the research subject chosen was catechists in the border region between Indonesia and Malaysia. Once 20 research subjects were selected, the researcher proceeded with conducting observations and reviewing relevant literature on catechist spirituality to support the research. The subsequent step involves data collection. Through this process, both primary and secondary data were obtained. Primary data was gathered through interviews with informants or sources, while secondary data was obtained from previously conducted research documents. The collected data is then analyzed to address the problem formulation that was formulated earlier, leading to the final conclusion.

## **THE SPIRITUALITY AS A GUIDE**

The word spirituality comes from the Latin root word 'spiritus'. In Indonesian the word spirit means 'spirit', 'power', 'spirit'. Spirituality is an aspect of a person's self that is able to provide power, energy and motivation. Spirituality is a force that moves or awakens a person, such as spirit, breath, passion for life, and the enthusiasm to stay and continue living. A dignified and humane human existence is influenced by the spirituality of his life. With spirituality a person dares to enter into silent experiences and deepen the existence of his life. Like Socrates' statement, "A life that is not worth reflecting on is not worth living", spirituality brings humans into reflection on their lives. Human life runs in time and space, various events and experiences certainly become the dynamics of life. Daeli in the journal *Melintas* (2018:97) stated that spirituality encourages people to explore and find something essential by daring to doubt artificial tendencies that are decorative, but poor in content. Spirituality directs humans to be steadfast in entering the depths of human experience in seeking and defending high values. Spirituality can be closely related to a

person's actions. Spirituality makes a person able to feel, reflect on, and absorb the presence of God/power in life events. So spirituality greatly influences a person's thought patterns, feeling patterns and action patterns. Spirituality can become very visible when someone is able to continue to struggle in their work of service even though they are faced with many challenges.

Humans are unique creatures and different from other creatures. Humans have the ability to reason and interpret events. In their lives, humans grow up with various things that can color every experience of their lives. Human life is not just based on life instincts like animals. For example, when you are hungry you have to eat, when you are thirsty you have to drink. On the other hand, humans are able to understand what they eat for? How does he get food? When to eat and when to stop eating? Max Weber, a German sociologist, explained that humans are "meaning makers" (cf. Bowie, 2000:34). Meaning makes humans have a meaningful, efficient and dignified life. Humans are able to understand the purpose of their life, take lessons from everything they receive, and how they must survive all the challenges that exist.

Spirituality becomes the power for humans to do all these things. Spirituality can become a priority for humans. Spirituality is part of human existence to become an authentic person (cf. Bunjamin, 2008: 178). Even though humans are in different loci and times as well as the cultures that influence their lives, there are elements that humans have in common, namely the ability to grow, the ability to relate and act, the ability to reproduce (cf. Mondin, 1985:37). Humans, as "an intelligent being" are also "a spiritual being". Spirituality is an ontological principle that shows the essence and existence of humans which is different from other creatures. Spirituality as a "spirit" that moves, in a certain sense spirituality is the power of humans. Spirituality does not make people give up easily. Spirituality is able to bring humans to know themselves, each other, nature of creation, and The Supreme Being. By understanding the purpose of life, spirituality as part of human life acts as a principle of life. Humans will continue to act with confidence in their lives as a manifestation of their dignified existence. In this case, the values of a religion are able to act as the spirituality of human life.

## **THE CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

In a Christian perspective, the meaning of spiritus based on etymological understanding develops to a broader meaning and is more focused on the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. So it can be said that spirituality means a way, style, power and enthusiasm to build and realize oneself in one's ideals completely and comprehensively in God, the source of salvation. Or an awareness of the

people to live in God and the willingness of believers to be formed by the Spirit of God. Spirit 6 of God is a source of inspiration in the maturation of spiritual life for every believing human being (Meran, 2017: 74). The Spirit of God in the Holy Bible already exists in every human person. According to the book of Genesis, in the process of creation, humans became noble creatures, because God Himself breathed His Spirit into humans (cf. Genesis 2:7). Humans are special creatures in whom there is divine power and must always be protected (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20).

Markus Meran elaborates on the five key aspects of Christian spirituality: the presence of Jesus Christ is manifested in His body, the Church, and its members. Christ has bestowed His Spirit upon the Church, enabling believers to encounter and unite with the Father. The Father, in turn, grants the Church the charisms of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel and contribute to God's work of salvation. The Spirit of Christ guides and shapes the individual personalities of Church members, allowing them to experience the richness of spiritual life. This experience strengthens their faith, hope, and love for God, empowering them to serve others. Through the Holy Spirit, subjective inner experiences are translated into tangible actions. Believers respond to life events by striving to fulfill the Father's will. The work of the Holy Spirit infuses Divine love, fostering unity among all members of the Church with Christ as their head. This deepens the spirit of "*comunio*" through continuous communication of faith, resulting in a vibrant and authentic spiritual life. Ultimately, the spirituality of Christian life originates from the joyful news of Jesus Christ. The Church is called to embody ideals, attitudes, and behaviors that bear prophetic witness to humanity. This dynamic process involves both self-evangelization and evangelization of others.

In essence, Christian spirituality emanates from Jesus Christ Himself. His actions and words serve as the primary proclamation, while the Holy Spirit safeguards and empowers the Church. This aligns with the perspective of Douglas G. Bushman, S.T.L, who emphasizes Christ as the focal point of spirituality. Through Christ, believers attain a profound appreciation of the Triune God. In the present age, understanding of Christ is attained through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is bestowed upon the Church. The Church upholds and proclaims this divine gift in its ongoing dynamics.

## THE CATHECISM

Catechesis, derived from the Greek word *Katekein*, refers to the oral teaching of religious principles. It encompasses the instruction of the Christian faith, drawing from Scripture and church doctrine. The primary recipients of

catechesis are individuals who have not yet been baptized and those who seek to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith. Essentially, catechesis aims to proclaim the good news to those who are still developing their faith, with the hope that they will eventually be baptized or grow into mature followers of Christ. As stated in *Catechesi Tradendae*, Chapter 3, Article 20, the specific purpose of catechesis is to foster the growth of a budding faith, with the assistance of God, so that it may gradually expand and strengthen the Christian lives of believers, both young and old. Catechesis is an act of service that contributes to the development of faith. This growth is achieved through the imparting of fundamental knowledge about the richness of Christian life, which is derived from the teachings found in sacred texts, traditions, and the authority of the Church. For Christians, the Holy Scriptures, tradition, and magisterium serve as the means through which the Holy Spirit guides their conduct. These sources contain valuable life principles that can guide believers. Initially, these principles are acquired as knowledge, but the ultimate goal is for this knowledge to shape their way of life in accordance with Christian values. Catechesis specifically targets adults in the faith, presenting Christian teachings in an organic and systematic manner, with the intention of leading them towards a complete Christian life. The delivery of catechesis is carried out by individuals or groups who are dedicated to this task. According to the Book of Canon Law (KHK), the process of catechesis itself serves as a specific means of evangelization. The teachings of the Gospel hold utmost importance in this process.

In general, all baptized Christians have a unique calling to proclaim the word of God. This act of preaching is primarily carried out by special preachers who are clergy and non-clergy known as catechists. Catechists are individuals who dedicate themselves to the education of faith in Jesus, possessing expertise in the field of education and Catholic religious teaching. They play a crucial role in teaching Christian values to believers, nurturing their faith within the church and formal educational settings. The Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) places great importance on catechists, recognizing them as the main pillars in spreading the Gospel. Catechists undergo formal religious education, studying subjects such as philosophy-theology, Catholic religious education and teaching, pastoral science, as well as non-formal education with a religious emphasis, such as in monasteries and seminaries.

Overall, catechists are entrusted by the church to educate and foster the faith of the people. While not all of them have received formal religious education, they receive specialized training through seminars and other means. This aligns with the teachings of Kan. 785, which states that catechists should be involved

in missionary work. They are lay Christian believers who are well-trained and exemplify a Christian way of life. Under the guidance of a missionary, they dedicate themselves to conveying the teachings of the Gospel and organizing liturgical activities and charitable works. Catechists should be established in schools or, if not available, work under the direction of missionaries. From a theological standpoint, catechists are encouraged to emulate the actions of.

In Indonesia, individuals who serve as catechists can include priests, nuns, Catholic religious teachers, and counselors. Their actions are considered acts of service, and they are not limited to the wages they receive. These catechists operate under the guidance of the central church as they proclaim the Word of God. The role of spirituality plays a significant part in the life of a catechist. Spirituality, which encompasses power and the spirit, ultimately determines the quality of a catechist. Spirituality assists catechists in understanding their own lives. Harjanto MSF's revelation serves as a vivid example. Drawing from Sandra Schneiders' insights, he perceives spirituality as a collection of ideas. Spirituality is not merely an abstract concept; it is an experiential encounter with God. It is a profound event that deeply impacts an individual's life.

These experiences shape and even transform a person's life. They required individuals to be aware of, appreciate, and pursue the values embedded within these experiences. These life experiences are not mere rituals; they are personal encounters that can also have a communal impact. Encountering God is a testament to His love. It is God who extends an invitation to humanity, and it is up to individuals to accept and realize this invitation. Therefore, catechists are called to delve deeper into all of their life experiences, particularly those that involve encountering God, as these experiences have the power to save and positively influence human life. Catechists, like journalists, must cultivate strong relationships as they live out their lives and report on their experiences. A catechist's life, which is directed towards God, should be a testament to His presence and accompanied by His power. Catechists are considered to be intimately connected to the Word of God. Through their spirituality, they are able to reflect upon and make sense of all the life events they encounter. Reading God's word and attending church services are not mere rituals, but rather meaningful acts that deepen their spirituality.

### **BORDER AREA AND THE FAITH EXPERIENCE**

The geographical distance between various locations often poses challenges for catechists in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. This has left a profound impact on many catechists, who selflessly carry out their service without considering the financial rewards. Among these catechists are



Catholic religious teachers who are actively involved in formal education at elementary, middle, and high schools. Some hold civil servant positions, while others do not. In addition to their role as religious educators, some of them also serve as catechists within the church, entrusted by the Pastor with this important responsibility. The faith experience of these catechists in border areas is characterized by a demanding and dedicated service that requires immense enthusiasm and hard work. They willingly sacrifice their time and energy to fulfill their reporting duties in these remote regions. Their commitment as catechists is unwavering, as they serve for the greater glory of God. Typically, these catechists have received education specifically tailored for their role. They have completed studies in Catholic Religious Education and Teaching, as well as Theological Philosophy Education. Some have even pursued further education to become brothers or servants. This comprehensive education equips them with the necessary skills to effectively proclaim God's message of love within the communities surrounding Entikong. This commitment further strengthens and purifies their faith, especially when confronted with the unique challenges of the border areas. On the other hand, the border areas are home to a significant population, and the catechists are acutely aware of the great need for their presence. This realization fuels their passion to continue their work in these remote regions until the very end. They firmly believe that their presence has a profound impact on the lives of many individuals, particularly through pastoral care services such as assisting pastors in preparing worship celebrations, providing faith counseling, and leading various religious practices.

### **THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CATECHISTS IN BORDER REGIONS**

The border area between Indonesia and Malaysia in Sanggau Regency presents various challenges for catechists. This region is characterized by hilly plateaus, swamps, and rivers such as the Kapuas River and the Sekayam River. The soil type in Sanggau district is predominantly podzolic, which is evenly distributed throughout the sub-district. Additionally, the area is surrounded by rubber and oil palm plantations, making the majority of the population engaged in farming these crops.

The geographical location of this region poses a significant challenge for catechists in providing their services. Development in these areas has not been evenly distributed, resulting in inadequate access to basic facilities such as roads and public transportation. This lack of infrastructure hinders the reporting process for catechists. Furthermore, not all catechists reside in the areas where they work, requiring them to travel long distances of 2 to 3 hours

by motorbike. Some locations are inaccessible by private transportation, necessitating the use of boats and walking.

In addition to the challenges posed by inadequate facilities and infrastructure, catechists also face the issue of an imbalanced ratio between the number of people and the number of catechists. Many state schools in the region do not have Catholic religious teachers, which is a particular concern for catechists. It is disheartening to find numerous Catholic students in state schools without access to a Catholic teacher. One catechist shared that he had to visit fifteen sub-districts and discovered that many Catholic schools lacked religious teachers. Consequently, many community areas have individuals but lack worship ministers due to the shortage of catechists.

The Beduai Parish, which serves 21 stations/villages, faces these challenges on a daily basis. The list of stations/villages includes Beduai Parish Center, Pemodis Village, and Muara Ilay Village. Despite the difficulties encountered, catechists continue to persevere in their mission to provide spiritual guidance and support to the Catholic community in these border areas.

## **ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF PREACHING IN BORDER AREAS**

Catechists approach the challenges they face with a sense of gratitude. These challenges provide them with an opportunity to align their lives more closely with the life of Jesus Christ. As they navigate these challenges, catechists are able to enhance their ministry and delve deeper into the teachings of God's love. They also find meaning in their own life experiences by strengthening their faith, reflecting on their journey, and embracing the missionary spirit that guides them. Despite the obstacles they encounter, Jesus Christ remains unwavering in His mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God. His suffering and death served as the catalyst for His glorious resurrection. The path to becoming a catechist in a border area is filled with numerous challenges, albeit on a smaller scale compared to the preaching carried out by Christ. Catechists strive to emulate Christ's perseverance and maintain their enthusiasm for serving, despite the limitations they face and the various challenges that arise.

Catechists confront these challenges through prayer. Prayer serves as a means of connecting believers with God, much like how Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Catechists emulate Christ's attitude of surrender to His Heavenly Father (cf. Matthew 26:36-46). Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane exemplifies His human limitations. His plea to the Father reflects the fear that any human would experience when faced with impending events. However, Christ also recognized that this was His purpose in the world. His suffering



and death would become part of the Mysteries of God's Salvation. Through prayer, Christ regained His strength and enthusiasm. Prayer represents the deepest expression of a person's faith in God. By praying, catechists gain a deeper understanding of their role as messengers. Prayer serves as a reminder of their purpose as catechists, which is to proclaim the work of God in the world.

## CONCLUSION

Spirituality encompasses the inner force that motivates and awakens an individual, including their spirit, breath, zest for life, and the enthusiasm to persevere and continue living. The spirituality of one's life greatly influences their dignified and humane existence. Through spirituality, individuals are able to delve into profound experiences and deepen their understanding of life. In a way, spirituality acts as a driving force, empowering humans to face challenges without easily giving up. It enables individuals to discover themselves, connect with others, comprehend the nature of creation, and seek a connection with a higher power. By recognizing the purpose of life, spirituality becomes a guiding principle in human existence.

In the context of Christianity, the spirituality of a Christian life originates from Jesus Christ himself. Christ's actions and teachings serve as a testament to his spirituality, and he safeguards his Church by bestowing the Holy Spirit upon it. The Holy Spirit's work instills the power of divine love, uniting all members of the Church under Christ's leadership. This fosters a sense of "comunio" through continuous communication of faith, which radiates a genuine life force. Sustaining this communication is crucial for nurturing faith, fostering brotherhood, and engaging in acts of loving service. Therefore, catechesis plays a vital role. The specific objective of catechesis is to develop and expand the budding faith with God's assistance, strengthening the Christian lives of believers, both young and old, day by day. Catechesis is a form of service that contributes to the growth of faith. Catechists in border areas typically possess religious teaching or education in philosophy and theology, in accordance with KHK canon 785. Catechesis in these regions is a challenging endeavor, as catechists face obstacles such as a shortage of personnel, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and the remote locations of their mission areas.

As indicated in the analysis, this work finds important recommendations regarding the spirit of catechists. Catechists should strive to be role models of faith, particularly in fostering a sense of community among believers. Catholics should also find inspiration from preachers or catechists. It is important for Catholics to recognize and appreciate the efforts of catechists

in meeting the spiritual needs of fellow Catholics. For Catholic universities, there is a responsibility to impart the spirituality embraced by catechists in border areas to the students. These students will eventually become future catechists in border areas themselves.

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## REPOSITIONING RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION ACTIVISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### ABSTRACT

*The rise of the digital world poses a challenge to the position of religious organizations. This is evident in the emergence of new authorities, both individuals and groups, outside traditional religious structures. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a mainstream traditional organization, has also been impacted by this shift. However, several studies indicate that NU has effectively adapted to various challenges and situations over time. This analysis focuses on how NU, as a representative of traditional mainstream Islamic organizations, has repositioned itself in response to the digital era, using the example of its activities in Mojokerto. This work addresses two key issues: first, how NU adapts to the presence of social media; second, what strategies NU employs to reposition itself in the face of these new challenges on social media. To explore these questions, this work employs a qualitative methodology, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data is then analyzed and presented using a digital religion approach. The findings suggest that NU has repositioned itself in two main ways. First, through adaptation, by adopting and actively using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube via the organization's official accounts. Second, through a form of resistance, by having NU activists engage on social media without prominently displaying their organizational affiliation.*

**Keywords:** *Repositioning; Religious Organization; Digital World; Nahdlatul Ulama*

### INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, social media and religion have emerged as a prominent focus in academic research, reflecting the dynamic relationship between the two (Campbell and Bellar, 2023). Social media platforms have transformed the social landscape, rendering it highly fluid. Concurrently, the digital domain, across its diverse platforms, is seen both as an extension of traditional authority and a potential catalyst for the emergence of new religious authority

(Campbell, 2007). This phenomenon presents a fresh challenge for religious institutions in Indonesia, including NU and Muhammadiyah (Abdullah, 2020).

In the realm of Islam and social media research, the presence of social media has given rise to what is termed an Islamic digital space, where a plethora of religious discussions unfold across various digital platforms. Scholars refer to this space as CIE (Cyber Islamic Environment) (Bunt, 2018). While some scholars, like Campbell (2007), Helland (2016), and Bunt (2018), regard this development positively, viewing social media as an effective medium for disseminating religious teachings (Islam 2019), others, such as Amin Abdullah (2020), Ahmad Muttaqin (2020) and Husen (2019), hold a negative perspective. They argue that social media fosters superficial understanding and poses a significant threat to traditional authority, which derives legitimacy from tradition (Weber, 1978).

When it comes to the potential positive and negative impacts of social media, NU does not lean exclusively towards one viewpoint. Throughout its history in Indonesia, NU has demonstrated unique patterns of adaptation. Scholars, including Bush (2009), have noted NU's remarkable ability not only to adapt but also to effectively address and overcome various challenges. For instance, following the aftermath of 9/11, when the international focus cast a stigma on Islam as being associated with terrorism, NU successfully countered this perception by presenting a friendly, moderate, and respectful image of Indonesian Islam. These efforts have subtly reshaped the international perspective, making NU an intriguing subject of study for scholars worldwide. (Bush, 2009).

Throughout its history, NU has displayed a remarkable pattern of adaptation, notably during the early years of Indonesian independence. During this period, NU exhibited a comprehensive response to the political landscape and national ideologies. It underwent a significant transformation, transitioning from a civil organization to a political party—an essential move to counter the pressures from anti-democratic and non-pluralistic Islamic factions. However, NU reverted to its non-party civil organization status once the situation stabilized (Bush, 2009). This adaptation remained evident as NU navigated through the Islamic discourse and the peak of Islamism in Indonesia. In the midst of these challenges, NU, under the banner of Indonesian Islamic ideals articulated by Gus Dur, promoted a grand narrative known as 'Islam Nusantara' [Indonesian Islam] (Mietzner and Muhtadi, 2018). Implicitly, NU emerged as a representation of a religious organization capable of partnering with the government to uphold the nation's integrity and statehood. Its various

adaptations have significantly contributed to the nation's stability. (Hakim, et al., 2023).

As NU steps into the digital era within the national context, it's observed to have undertaken various adaptations. These begin with aesthetic adjustments, reflected in the presentation of excerpts highlighting deradicalization, moderation, and narratives stemming from Islam Nusantara, packaged in visually appealing images and videos on social media platforms (Schmidt, 2021). However, the efficacy of these adaptations is not absolute, given the nuanced nature of the digital realm and the Cyber Islamic Environment (CIE), as discussed by Bunt (2018). For Muslim minorities, the CIE serves as a space for consolidation, while for the majority, it serves as a platform for affirmation and dominance. Simply put, the CIE and the digital landscape at large foster the growth of various Islamic groups (Iqbal, 2017). Consequently, the digital presence poses both challenges (Akmaliah, 2020)—characterized by internal and external turmoil within NU (Hoesterey, 2021). On the other hand, it is also interpreted as an opportunity (Akmaliah, 2022), represented by NU's continued resilience as a representation of moderate Islamic values in Indonesia.

In fact, NU's engagement with the digital world can be characterized as navigating between opportunities and challenges. Therefore, this research aims to delve into how NU navigates the digital landscape amid these dual forces by focusing on the local context—NU activities in Mojokerto City—across various social media channels.

## **DISCOURSE ON RELIGION IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

Historically, the discourse on religion and the digital world emerged in the 1980s (Campbell and Emerson, 2011). However, its true impact began to manifest in the 1990s, as the internet network facilitated the migration of numerous offline religious activities into the digital realm (Bunt, 2022). Academically, this relationship between religion and the digital world is gradually being recognized as a new scientific discipline. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has yet to receive the serious attention it deserves from scholars (Vitulo, 2016).

As discussions surrounding religion and the digital world progress, they are gradually gaining traction within academic circles. Initially, two major responses emerged among scholars. The first response came from utopian circles, who held the belief that the digital world would not significantly alter religious practices. In contrast, the second response emerged from dystopian

circles, suggesting that the digitalization of religion is not only possible but could potentially lead to significant transformations in religious life (Vitullo, 2016).

Helland (2005), is credited as the first scholar to propose a theory of the relationship between religion and the digital world. According to him, this relationship is an unavoidable phenomenon, as evidenced by the increasing technological maturity that brings religion closer to the digital realm. In his initial theory, Helland introduced two forms of closeness between religion and the digital world. The first, termed *online religion*, denotes the presence of religious information in digital spaces. The second, termed *religion online*, goes beyond merely containing religious information, describing digital spaces where concrete activities and interactions resembling offline religious practices occur. This concept suggests that the digital realm becomes a new arena for the institutional presence of religion, not just a repository for religious information. Over time, the distinction between offline and online aspects of religious life has blurred, leading scholars like Helland (2016) and Campbell (2013) to propose a new concept to describe this increasingly intertwined relationship: digital religion or, as Siuda (2021) terms it, cyber religion. These terms describe the penetration and manifestation of religious activities within online spaces.

In the context of Islamic studies and the digital world, the concept of *digital religion* is acknowledged as a necessity, recognizing that the digital sphere constitutes an integral part of contemporary religious life. The acceptance of the digital world across various channels featuring Islamic content led to the conceptualization of the Cyber Islamic Environment (CIE). This term not only signifies the acknowledgment of the digital world as a component of the Islamic domain but also reflects a fervent embrace of it within Islam, thereby engendering new challenges for the Islamic community. Among these challenges is the contestation of Islamic authority, which brings forth competitors both at the individual and group levels (Bunt, 2018). While the presence of the digital world is enthusiastically embraced within Islam, it also poses a threat to traditional authority, presenting an opportunity for Islamic minorities with political agendas and resistance stemming from disillusionment with the international political order, often expressed through jihadist narratives (Bunt, 2003). This jihadist narrative, frequently disseminated in online spaces, contributes to stigmatizing Islam as a religion associated with terrorist activities. Returning to the discourse on religion in the digital world, it is evident that the presence of the digital realm impacts all Muslim groups, including both the majority and minority factions, presenting



both opportunities and challenges. While minorities may find opportunities in the digital space, the digital world poses a threat to the majority, particularly traditional authorities.

The coupling of the digital world with the narrative of globalization presents another significant challenge that increasingly threatens traditional authorities. The characteristic of openness inherent in the digital world has facilitated the entry of various authorities into digital spaces. Consequently, two crucial changes have ensued: macro changes and micro changes. Macro changes are characterized by the emergence of new religious ideas and the formation of new groups. Meanwhile, micro changes manifest as shifts in the mindset of religious communities, fostering independence and a disregard for official religious institutions that are traditionally controlled by authorities. This proliferation of options in the digital world grants religious adherents greater freedom and independence in shaping their religious orientation, often disregarding established religious authority or institutions (Dawson, 2014).

Amid the looming threat of the digital world's impact on religious institutions, particularly traditional ones, it is evident that the digital world will continue to exert significant influence on human life. Religion itself can no longer evade the pervasive presence of the digital world. According to Brenda (2001), the digital world has evolved into a new frontier for the next generation, similar to Moses seeking God in the desert labyrinth. This implies that, whether embraced or not, the digital world and religion are inevitably intertwined in the future (Jones, 2002). In fact, social media, as an integral part of the digital world, has become a crucial source of religious information for Muslim communities worldwide, including those in Indonesia (Slama, 2018). Consequently, the issue of authority and the proliferation of religious authority within the digital space must be acknowledged as a reality that all religious authorities and institutions must confront (Ahyar and Alfitri, 2019).

The acceptance of the digital world in Indonesia began with the digitalization of Islam, marked by the emergence of important applications related to Islam, such as the widespread adoption of the Al-Quran application by the majority of the Indonesian Muslim community. This initial phase was followed by digital Islamization, characterized by the proliferation of Islamic content in digital spaces (Said et al., 2020). The impact of the digital world became more tangible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. As traditional religious activities faced limitations due to social distancing measures, the digital world served as a bridge, enabling the continuation of religious practices that could not be carried out collectively offline. Consequently, the obstacles posed by offline meetings were mitigated through online alternatives, presenting the

digital world as a solution that was consciously embraced by the majority of the Indonesian Muslim community as a new religious space (Burhani, 2021). Overall, the digital world has transformed religious practices within the Indonesian Muslim community, affecting various aspects from rituals to the authorization process (Syarif & Hannan, 2022). Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, online activities such as Friday prayers gained popularity, highlighting the increasing significance of digital platforms in facilitating religious rituals. (Tari, et al., 2021).

Behind the widespread acceptance of the digital world among the Indonesian Muslim community, there exists a certain degree of wariness. A primary concern is that the digital world, particularly on social media platforms, often showcases figures or preachers who lack sufficient qualifications and may even succumb to the commodification of religion (Muttaqin, 2020). Specifically, this phenomenon is perceived to undermine traditional mainstream authority, as social media content tends to offer instant but superficial insights, providing recipients with an incomplete understanding (Husen, 2019). From another perspective, the phenomenon is regarded as a religious ailment or symptom if religious matters are discussed by individuals lacking adequate religious knowledge. Nevertheless, this reality cannot be overlooked, and thus, social media has become a space for negotiation and contestation for both traditional authorities and emerging figures (Murken, 2004). Below is an example illustrating the use of social media for preaching by a celebrity with shallow religious understanding, resulting in what can be termed as “religious symptoms.”.



*Instagram as a space for da'wah*

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/arieekuntung/>

Accessed on 3 June 2024

Indeed, the discourse on religion and the digital world has long been an academic concern. The acceptance of religion and Islam in the digital world presents both opportunities and challenges. A significant challenge, especially for Islam in the context of the digital world marked by the rise of social media, is the issue of authority. The gradual marginalization of traditional authority in religious discourse within the digital domain has become a pressing concern for all religious authorities and institutions, including those within the Islamic world. In this regard, NU, as a representative of the Indonesian Muslim community, is not immune to this threat.

### **MOJOKERTO CITY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

Discussions about religion and the digital world have now permeated the broader community. The intersection of religion and the digital world is not confined to major cities or elite circles; it is also becoming a topic of interest among local communities. In the Indonesian context, awareness of the digital world is growing across various regions and cities. For instance, in the past three years, Mojokerto has been recognized as one of the cities with the most advanced digital preparedness in Indonesia (Riani, 2021). This digital readiness inevitably impacts all aspects of its citizens' lives, including their religious practices.

The city of Mojokerto has experienced numerous administrative changes throughout its history, beginning with its status as a residency city called *Staadsgemeente* during the Dutch East Indies government. This long-standing importance is particularly evident in the East Java region. During the Japanese occupation from 1942-1945, it was known as *Si Ku Cho*. Post-independence, Mojokerto retained its significance through various administrative statuses. In 1950, it became a Municipality, in 1965 it was designated the Municipality of Mojokerto, and in 1974 it became a Level II Municipality. Finally, in 1999, it was established as the Mojokerto City Government, a status it holds to this day (Mojokerto City Government, 2024). Despite its relatively small area of 16.47 km<sup>2</sup>, Mojokerto remains an important city both economically and culturally. (Financial Audit Board of East Java, 2024).

The small city of Mojokerto is home to approximately 140,730 residents who exhibit a rich ethnic and religious diversity. From a religious perspective, Islam is the predominant religion, with around 130,327 adherents. Protestantism follows with 735 adherents, Catholicism with 1,843, Buddhism with 1,062, Hinduism with 106, and Confucianism with 41 adherents (Office of Population and Civil Registry of Mojokerto City, 2023). As the majority religion, Islam

prominently influences the religious symbols seen in public spaces. The most significant manifestation of this is the number of places of worship, 252 in total, which includes 179 prayer rooms and 73 mosques (Kementrian Agama Jawa Timur, 2013).

The presence of numerous Islamic houses of worship indicates that Islamic activities in Mojokerto are vibrant and frequent. Observations from November 2023 to January 2024 reveal that several key mosques in the city maintain a regular schedule of recitations and congregational prayers. For instance, the Al-Fatah Mosque, the main mosque in Mojokerto, holds routine recitations every evening after Sunset prayers. Additionally, it hosts weekly events such as the *Rebuan* session on Wednesday evenings after Evening Prayer and a Saturday morning recitation followed by a communal breakfast in the mosque courtyard. Other nearby mosques, like the Al-Hidayah Mosque in the Prajurit Kulon sub-district, also maintain daily and weekly recitation schedules. Similarly, the Salahuddin Mosque offers a comparable weekly schedule, including a Sunday morning recitation followed by breakfast (Offline Observation Results, January 2024-March 2024).

Meanwhile, religious activities in the digital world of Mojokerto City are just as vibrant as the conventional ones. A search using the keyword “religious studies” on three social media platforms—YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram—revealed 30 active accounts broadcasting religious activities. Specifically, there are 14 accounts on Instagram, 8 accounts on Facebook, and 8 channels on YouTube (Offline Observation Results, January 2024-March 2024).

Hence, Mojokerto city, with its well-prepared digital infrastructure and abundance of mosques, boasts a bustling schedule of religious activities. Offline, congregational prayers and recitations in numerous mosques occur daily and weekly. Viewed through the lens of Weber’s three types of authority processes (1978), these offline religious activities in Mojokerto align with the traditional category. This classification applies both in terms of methodology and the authority figures leading the recitations, such as the *kiyai*, *gus*, and *ustadz*. These figures hold traditional legitimacy and are closely associated with NU traditions.

Religious activities in the digital world are equally vibrant, with 30 accounts actively broadcasting on three major social media platforms. Instagram emerges as the busiest platform for religious content dissemination, followed by Facebook and YouTube, each hosting 8 active accounts. This robust digital presence mirrors the thriving offline religious landscape in Mojokerto City, particularly evident in the recitation of the Quran. Implicitly, this data reinforces the scholarly arguments put forth by academics such as Campbell

(2023), Helland (2016) and Bunt (2018), highlighting the digital world as a growing arena for religious engagement among communities, including Mojokerto City’s Muslim population.

NAHDLATUL ULAMA ACTIVITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN MOJOKERTO CITY

In the preceding section, we explored how the digital world has become an integral part of a new religious activity space for the Muslim community of Mojokerto City. In this section, we delve into NU’s response to the emergence of social media and the potential presence of new authorities within Mojokerto City’s Muslim community. Employing a fresh perspective in examining the relationship between religion and the digital world—termed the digital religion perspective (Tsuria and A.Campbell 2022)—we will analyze data on both offline and online activities. This includes direct interviews, offline field observations, observations on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube), and relevant documentation.

Based on our observations in the social media space, NU in Mojokerto City appears to be very receptive to the presence of social media. This is evident from the distribution of accounts actively broadcasting religious activities. The data for this research was collected between December 2023 and February 2024. The detailed information can be seen in the following table.

Distribution of Accounts on Three Social Media Platforms								
Platform	Mass Organization				NU	Non-Mass Organization		Total
	LDII	MUI	Salafi	Muham-madiyah		Other Organiza-tions	Public/Private	
Instagram	1	1	0	1	8	1	1	14
YouTube	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	8
Facebook	0	0	1	0	3	0	4	8
Sub Total	1	1	1	1	13	6	7	30
18				12				

*Table: Summary of observation data from three social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube—using the search terms “religious organizations and religious studies” between November 2023 and January 2024.*

The table above shows that NU emerges as the most dominant group across the three platforms, with a total of 13 accounts. Comparatively, other groups or organizations show less activity; Muhammadiyah, MUI, LDII, and Salafi each has only 1 account. However, NU faces strong competition from accounts affiliated with other institutions and personal accounts, totaling 12 accounts, trailing NU by just 1 point. In terms of social media dominance, NU maintains control by consistently maintaining a presence on every platform, with 8 accounts on Instagram, 2 on YouTube, and 3 on Facebook.

The number of NU accounts on social media does not necessarily translate into a significant influence on social media users. Strong competition from non-mass organizations and new authorities, both individual and group, poses a challenge for NU. Despite NU's dominance in terms of social media accounts, this does not correspond to a larger number of followers or subscribers. In fact, non-mass organizations and personal accounts, even though they have one fewer account than NU, have a greater number of followers. This data is illustrated in the following table.:

Distribution of Subscribers/Followers of Religious Activities on Social Media in Mojokerto

Platform	Mass Organization					Non-Mass Organization		Total
	LDII	MUI	Salafi	Muhammadiyah	NU	Other Organizations	Public/Private	
Instagram	108	74	0	156	7971	845	2901	12055
YouTube	0	0	0	0	18408	1110	28500	48018
Facebook	0	0	4500	0	3600	0	86821	94921
Sub Total	108	74	4500	156	29979	1955	118222	154994
Sub Total			34817			120177		

*Table: Observation Results of Profile Descriptions of Several Accounts on Three Religious Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), Data Collected between November 2023 and January 2024.*

Using the table above, we can compare the number of NU followers on social media, totaling 29,979 across 13 accounts spread across three platforms. However, this figure pales in comparison to the followers of non-mass organizations, which reach 120,177 followers, constituting 77.56% of the total followers or accounts inclined towards religious activities on social media in Mojokerto City. In percentage terms, NU is followed by only 19.34% of all social media followers. This significant disparity in followers between NU and



non-organizational groups and personal accounts highlights the emergence of new authorities that pose a considerable threat to NU's position within the Muslim community of Mojokerto City in the digital world.

The disparity between the significant number of NU accounts and the total count of followers on social media presents a new challenge. Essentially, dominance in the social media sphere is determined by the number of followers or subscribers, rather than the sheer quantity of accounts. This indicates that, in this instance, NU has only managed to adapt to social media without exerting substantial influence. In fact, NU still lags behind its competitors, namely non-mainstream institutional groups and personal accounts. Upon closer examination, it was revealed that NU's approach to adopting and adapting to social media remains modest and not yet fully professionalized, as confirmed by Gus Badri, one of the NU representatives interviewed. The following excerpt is from the interview.

Researcher: What are your thoughts on the process of digitizing da'wah in Mojokerto City?

Informant: In my opinion, within the circles of Islamic boarding schools, it can be said that the efforts are still lacking and not very intensive.

Researcher: What about NU itself?

Informant: The situation is similar with NU; it's still lacking and far behind other groups. (Interview, February 19, 2024)

Gus Badri also confirmed this sentiment during his interview, highlighting that the use or acceptance of social media is quite informal and lacks professional management:

"Yes, at least when it comes to Qur'an recitations, it's usually done live. Going live is convenient, without the need for editing. Editing takes up a lot of time. The recitations I lead occur every Monday." (Interview, February 19, 2024)

Similarly, Gus Ismail expressed similar sentiments regarding NU's use of social media in Mojokerto City. The following is an excerpt from his interview:

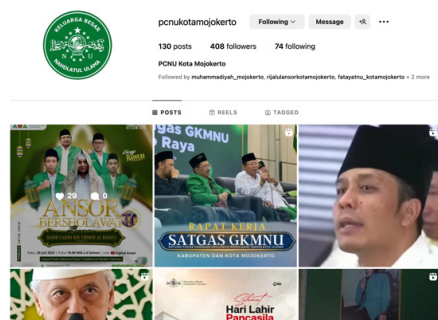
Researcher: For instance, when compared to other groups, how would you describe NU in Mojokerto City?

Informant: Actually, NU's efforts are not as vigorous when compared to other groups, particularly, former Wahhabi adherents who excel in their recitations in Mojokerto City. (Interview, February 20, 2024)

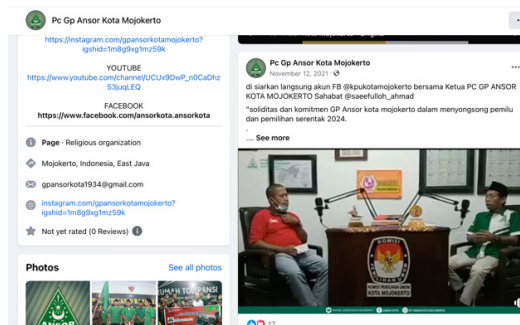
When examining the social media pages of Mojokerto City Ansor on Facebook,



it's apparent that the content in the last 10 posts primarily focuses on internal organizational activities aimed at enhancing internal structures only (A. K. Mojokerto, 2024). Similarly, on the Instagram platform of Mojokerto City NU PC, there are minimal general recitation posts, with a greater emphasis on structural reinforcement by showcasing information on NU activities. This includes both the initiatives undertaken by Mojokerto City NU PC and those by the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board. Although some posts are designed to appeal to the wider audience by featuring quotes from NU *kiyais* and founders, such as Hadratus Sheikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the overall content targeting the general public is considered very limited (Pcnukotamojokerto, 2024). Below are screenshots of the two Mojokerto City NU social media pages, namely the Facebook page owned by PC Anzor Mojokerto City and the Instagram page owned by PC NU Mojokerto City, both of which predominantly showcase organizational activities rather than outreach efforts directly engaging the broader community.



Source: Instagram  
<https://www.instagram.com/pcnukotamojokerto/>  
 Accessed on 24 March 2024



Source: Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/gpansorkotamojokerto>  
 Accessed on 24 March 2024

### *Religious Organizations' Social Media on Instagram and Facebook Platforms*

The phenomenon described above contrasts with the activities of non-mainstream institutions and personal accounts. Non-mainstream institutions refer to Islamic educational establishments that are not affiliated with specific mass organizations. For instance, the Petaqu Al-Multazam Tiga YouTube account, one of the channels associated with non-mainstream institutions, predominantly features direct da'wah content aimed at the broader community rather than information about institutional activities (P. P. T. Q. in Mojokerto, 2023). This discrepancy in engagement with the wider community leads to a higher level of interest from the public in non-mainstream social media content.

This is evident in the difference in the number of followers or subscribers of Islamic social media accounts in Mojokerto City, where accounts of non-mainstream institutions and private individuals outnumber NU accounts. However, upon closer inspection of non-mainstream institution accounts, it becomes apparent that many of these accounts represent Islamic boarding schools in the city of Mojokerto. For example, in the Petaqu Al-Multazam Tiga account, numerous NU *kiyais* are actively involved, with informants like Gus Ismail and Gus Badri regularly leading recitations on this platform (P. P. T. Q. in Mojokerto, 2023). The screenshot below clearly illustrates the presence of Gus Badri and Gus Ismail as NU activists who frequently contribute to recitations on this account.



Source:  
YouTube Petaqu Al-Mutazam Tiga  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xt6iG3MpbY>  
Accessed on 24 March 2024



Source:  
YouTube Petaqu Al-Mutazam Tiga  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQa-Z079PB0&t=1555s>  
Accessed on 24 March 2024

Figures 1 and 2:  
Online recitations on YouTube platform led by *kiyais* affiliated with NU

The presence of Gus Badri and Gus Ismail on non-mainstream social media accounts illustrates that Mojokerto City NU's response to the emergence of social media and the growing religious activity on these platforms extends beyond official structural directives reflected in official accounts. Instead, NU's presence permeates social media channels that may not explicitly mention their affiliation with NU. Therefore, evaluating Mojokerto City NU's presence on social media cannot solely rely on its official accounts but must also consider the involvement of NU activists such as NU *kiyais* [Cleric] and *ustadz* [Islamic teacher/preacher] across various social media platforms. Consequently, even if the official Mojokerto City NU accounts appear to have fewer followers

or subscribers, it does not necessarily indicate a loss of influence within the Mojokerto City Muslim community. This is because the presence of NU *kiyais* in non-mainstream institution accounts indirectly reflects NU's influence across social media platforms.

In concrete terms, the enduring significance of NU in Mojokerto City is evident through the testimonials of several NU residents who continue to rely on NU for crucial religious matters. Dina, representing the younger generation of NU followers, acknowledged that while she frequently follows recitations on social media, she still turns to local NU *ustadz* for religious guidance on matters she finds difficult to grasp. Here's an excerpt from the interview:

S: When it comes to religious matters, do you prefer searching online or asking local *ustadz* directly?

R: It varies, really. If I don't fully understand something from online sources, I prefer consulting the local NU *ustadz* or *kiyai* in my community. Since I identify with NU, I usually turn to NU figures for guidance (Interview, January 23, 2024).

In addition to its efforts on social media, NU in Mojokerto City remains steadfast in providing offline religious activities, as highlighted in the previous section. During the period from November 2023 to January 2024, mosques affiliated with NU, such as Al-Fatah Mosque, Sholahudin Mosque, and At-Taqwa Mosque, consistently held daily recitations after sunset and weekly gatherings on Saturdays and Sundays. Moreover, religious practices like *tahlil* are conducted every evening after sunset on Thursdays or Fridays. These findings bring us back to the focal point of this research: the adaptation patterns of Mojokerto City NU to the emergence of social media, viewed through the lens of digital religion theory (Campbell and Bellar, 2023; Campbell and Emerson, 2011). This adaptation can be seen as a form of contestation, resisting the challenges posed by social media. Furthermore, when analyzed through Weber's theory of the authorization process (1978), which emphasizes the role of traditional actors such as *kiyai*, *gus* (young *kiyai* or *kiyai's* son), and *ustadz*, NU's response falls into the traditional category. In summary, NU in Mojokerto City exhibits two adaptation patterns to maintain its position as a religious institution and authority amidst the presence of social media. First, NU fills each social media platform with representative accounts in a structured manner. Second, to counter the potential influence of new authorities that could challenge NU's position, NU strategically places its activists on social media accounts without explicitly highlighting their affiliation with NU. Meanwhile, offline religious activities like *tahlilan*

[*recitations of the confession of faith*] and mosque recitations remain crucial pillars of NU's influence in Mojokerto City, even in the digital era.

## CONCLUSION

The emergence of social media within religious communities has introduced a new religious sphere, presenting both opportunities and challenges, particularly for traditional authorities like NU. The ongoing efforts to sideline traditional authorities persist with the influx of new authorities on social media, comprising both groups and individuals. Leveraging its experience in adaptation throughout its history in Indonesia, NU has demonstrated an ability to navigate the digital era through various social media platforms. NU's approach to adaptation avoids extremes, neither outright rejecting the digital world (utopian) nor unconditionally embracing it without consideration (dystopian).

In the case of NU in Mojokerto City, it is evident that NU has effectively adapted to social media in a balanced manner. Mojokerto City NU demonstrates two key forms of adaptation. Firstly, there's a clear dominance of structural NU accounts across major social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Secondly, there's a strategic resistance to potential new authorities and the erosion of NU's influence in the digital era, reflected in the presence of NU activists filling non-mainstream social media institutional accounts in Mojokerto City without explicitly highlighting their NU affiliation. Additionally, offline, NU remains active in mosques throughout the city. Thus, both online and offline, NU's presence remains robust among the people of Mojokerto City. These findings affirm NU's capability to reposition itself as a significant religious authority and organization in the digital era. Implicitly, this research reinforces the scholarly argument, previously reported by Akmaliah (2022), that NU retains its influence as a religious organization and authority for the Indonesian Muslim community in the digital age.

Indeed, this research significantly contributes to the advancement of studies concerning religion and digitalization in Indonesia. Specifically, it offers valuable academic insights into the role of religious authorities and institutions in the digital age. The reposition and adaptation strategies employed by NU in Mojokerto City serve as a noteworthy example of how religious organizations navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by social media in the digital era. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this pattern is just one of many, and further investigation is warranted to comprehensively understand the dynamics of religious organizations in diverse digital spaces. Future research should explore the experiences of other religious organizations beyond NU,

involving various digital platforms, to enrich and refine the findings of this study.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND KEPERCAYAAN ADHERENTS IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Since its establishment in 2016, the Indonesian government has conducted Pendidikan Kepercayaan (Belief Education) as religious education for indigenous communities and kepercayaan (belief) adherents in Indonesia. Various studies affirm that kepercayaan Education is the Indonesian government's way of eliminating discrimination against indigenous communities and kepercayaan adherents in the educational sphere. Other research on kepercayaan Education targets the challenges of implementation in the school context. This work attempts to examine the interconnectedness of kepercayaan education and the education of indigenous religions and kepercayaan adherents within the community context. The underlying question is does belief education represent the education of indigenous religions within communities? How does the education of indigenous religions in the community context contribute to and be included in the development of kepercayaan education? As a theoretical framework, I employ the concept of indigenization that has developed in the discourse of indigenous education in Canada. The method used in this research is a literature study. The results of this study indicate that belief education does not represent the education of indigenous religions and kepercayaan adherents within the community realm. Kepercayaan education is a service designed unilaterally by the state without recognizing and respecting the diversity and educational needs of indigenous communities in Indonesia. As an alternative, I propose a reconciliation and collaboration-based indigenization approach as a new framework for reconstructing kepercayaan education. The path of reconciliation and collaboration provides a space for children of indigenous communities to achieve the national educational aspiration of learning and practicing the teachings of their 'religion' in accordance with the educational model of their respective communities.*

**Keywords:** Religious Education; Indigenous Communities; Kepercayaan Adherents; Indigenization

### INTRODUCTION

Prior to the introduction of *kepercayaan* education in the formal education sector, the practice of indigenous education only took place informally, either

at home or within their communities (Saripudin, 2009). Each adherent of indigenous religions and *kepercayaan* adherents (henceforth indigenous communities) has their own unique methods and educational strategies. For instance, since 2000, the Rimba people – an indigenous community in Jambi – have had an educational practice called the sokola rimba (Rimba school). The founder and teacher at the Sokola Rimba is Butet Manurung. At the Sokola Rimba, children learn about how to survive and protect the forest they love. For the Rimba people, nature is both their home and their teacher (Manurung, 2013, 2019; Manalu, 2023). The Rimba people believe that learning about life and living a good life is true education (Manurung, 2019). The *meto* people of Timor, an indigenous religion of the Timorese community, have a non-formal school known as the lakoat.kujawas. The founder and educator at this school is Dicky Senda. Similar to the Rimba people, the *meto* people possess an eco-pedagogy that is used as a strategy to maintain the harmony between human life and nature (Umbu Deta et al., 2022). Therefore, education within indigenous religious communities has been ongoing for a long time, independently from government intervention.

In 2016, after a long advocacy process, indigenous communities gained their own religious education service called *Kepercayaan* Education. It was established and managed under the authority of the Minister of Education and Culture (now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) (Setara Institute, 2022). *Kepercayaan* Education was established through the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 27 of 2016. This education service is an inseparable part of the state's recognition of the citizenship status of indigenous communities in the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97 of 2016 concerning Population Administration Services (*administrasi kependudukan*). However, many other religious communities to date have not received educational services according to their beliefs, such as Ahmadiyah, Orthodox, Baha'i, Buddha Maitreya, and others. Therefore, Amalia (2021) argues that the definition of religion in religious education services is still problematic because many other religious communities have not received educational services according to their religious teachings.

While *Kepercayaan* Education is a step forward as the government has added a new category of religious education, state discrimination against indigenous communities continues (Deta, 2021, 2022; Nenohai, 2023, 2023a). One example is the plan to remove the word 'Belief' in the draft of the 2022 National Education System law (Perempuan, 2022). Various studies on *Kepercayaan* Education to date also show that the government's commitment at the local level to open *Kepercayaan* Education classes in schools is still not apparent

(Noviana, 2023; Siagian, 2022). Various obstacles, such as slow administration and lack of school initiatives to provide textbooks, also remain problematic (Biantoro & Setiawan, 2021; Maulana, 2019; J. Nenohai, 2023; Sholakodin, 2021).

Based on the development of research on *kepercayaan* education, the discussion surrounding it has revolved around the issues and challenges of its less-than-optimal implementation. Some of these challenges have arisen due to the sluggish response from local governments, as evidenced in cities like Surabaya and Yogyakarta (Maulana, 2019; Noviana, 2023). However, researchers have not yet explored further whether and how *Kepercayaan* Education represents indigenous peoples' education within the community context. In my view, this discussion is crucial to understand the relationship between indigenous education in the formal context, i.e., *Kepercayaan* Education, and indigenous education in the non-formal context that existed before the introduction of *Kepercayaan* Education. Therefore, this research aims to connect and review the implementation of *Kepercayaan* Education through the lens of indigenous education practices within community contexts.

This article raises the research questions: Does *kepercayaan* education represent indigenous education in the community context? How can indigenous education in communities contribute to the development of *kepercayaan* education in the formal context? The concept employed in this article is the idea of indigenization that has developed in the study of indigenous education in Canada, hence the literature study becomes the research method. In indigenous education studies, indigenization is understood as an effort to reactivate all indigenous elements in the public sphere (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Prete, 2018). Indigenization upholds a reconciliation and collaboration approach to provide indigenous education services in the formal education sector (Stein et al., 2022). Reconciliation and collaboration proceed with a commitment to equity and diversity. Through the lens of the indigenization concept, this research shows that *Kepercayaan* Education does not represent indigenous education in the community context because the development of *Kepercayaan* Education is an extension of official religious education in Indonesia. Consequently, *kepercayaan* education does not provide space for the diversity and uniqueness of the education of indigenous communities in Indonesia. The state then equates and demands that children from indigenous religious communities grow to become religious according to the standards and models of world religions' education.

## INDIGENIZATION AS A PERSPECTIVE

Indigenization is the process of reactivating indigenous elements into the public sphere (Arrows, 2019; Battiste, 2013; Grafton & Melançon, 2020). Indigenization emphasizes the process of equalizing and repositioning aspects of indigenous communities that were erased by colonizers in the public space, therefore, the concept of indigenization goes hand-in-hand with the concept of decolonization. Grafton and Melançon (2020) emphasize that the spirit of indigenization is decolonization. Decolonization and indigenization essentially work in the same direction: "Decolonization is an emancipatory response to colonial oppression. Indigenization is a process of resurgence, a re-centering of precolonial and colonial indigenous ways of knowing and being that never ceased to exist despite colonialism" (Grafton & Melançon, 2020, p. 135). Emily and Grafton term it the "mutual reinforcement of decolonization and indigenization". In practice, the work of decolonization and indigenization helps first nations detect aspects of colonialism in existing structures, while indigenization helps scholars understand indigenous voices that need to be fought for (Grafton & Melançon, 2020).

In Canada, indigenization has been taking place in the long history of the indigenous movement and studies. Various educators from First Nations<sup>1</sup> backgrounds, for example, uphold the Mi'kmaw concept of Two-Eyed Seeing as a learning method in higher education (Hogue & Bartlett, 2014; Peltier, 2018). Indigenization involving the government and educational institutions massively occurred after the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 (hereafter TRC 2015) as an inseparable part of the ratification of UNDRIP (Rhea, 2015; Stein et al., 2022). After TRC 2015, Sheila Cote-Meek wrote that "The TRC 2015 calls on post-secondary institutions to engage in the reconciliation process and essentially lead change in education that promotes awareness and understanding and importantly integrates Indigenous histories, knowledges, and pedagogies in the classroom" (Cote-Meek, 2020). The TRC was used to transform the colonial aspects in Canadian education that had severed the relationship between the First Nations of Canada and their teachings, communities, and lands (Lavalley, 2020). For First Nations scholars in Canada, the word 'reconciliation' in the TRC is directly linked to the spirit of decolonization and indigenization. Their efforts aim to ensure that the TRC does not become a dead text but is mobilized for the interests of First Nations.

The TRC 2015 massively encouraged educational institutions in Canada to

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<sup>1</sup> First Nations is a term used to identify indigenous people in Canada who are neither Inuit nor Métis.

make the 'theme of indigenization' a variety of educational policies. Many First Nations study centers and courses on indigenous religions such as health and indigenous religions emerged at Canadian universities (Linton & Ducas, 2017). Gaudry and Lorenz, two researchers from the University of Alberta, summarized three spectrums of indigenization in Canada post-TRC 2015: inclusive indigenization, reconciling indigenization, and decolonial indigenization. In order, inclusion indigenization is the process of granting educational rights and services to indigenous religious communities (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Reconciling indigenization is the process of changing the mindset and way of educating Canadians towards students from First Nations backgrounds. Meanwhile, decolonial indigenization is the process of totally transforming the educational structure to make room for the educational paradigm of indigenous religions in initiating educational services (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Of the three spectrums above - inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization - Gaudry and Lorenz state that the most commonly used form of indigenization taking place in Canada is inclusion indigenization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 226). Inclusion indigenization has become a new burden for First Nations as they are required to learn things that refer to the European Enlightenment perspective. In Western knowledge, nature and humans are separated and fragmented. Nature is merely positioned as an object of knowledge (Pidgion, 2016). The Western knowledge model is clearly detrimental to First Nations because for them, nature and humans are unity (Battiste, 2013). For First Nations, the land is not an object. It is a subject that needs to be protected and cared for like humans (Grande, 2015). Therefore, inclusive indigenization still privileges Western knowledge in the educational curriculum and demands that First Nations grow through the Western paradigm.

Samuel Torres (2019) argues that inclusive indigenization is a new colonialism agenda. Inclusive indigenization is a way for educational institutions to demand that First Nations learn about and support the interests of white supremacy in Canada (Torres, 2019). Inclusion indigenization only increases the number of First Nations people in educational spaces but does not provide room for First Nations to be subjects over their own curricula and education systems (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). As a consequence, inclusion indigenization does not realize the aspirations of the TRC 2015 because in practice, the Canadian academia does not respect knowledge and education from First Nations' perspectives (Pidgion, 2016). Therefore, Pidgion (2016) categorizes inclusive indigenization as a practice of assimilation: internalizing Western knowledge into the knowledge structures and daily practices of First Nations (Pidgion,



2016, pp. 80–82).

Moving beyond inclusion indigenization, various researchers in Canada have proposed a decolonization-based indigenization approach. Gaudry and Lorenz refer to this as the spectrum of decolonial indigenization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Decolonization-based indigenization is the most transformative approach (Debassige et al., 2022; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Stein et al., 2022). Decolonial indigenization encompasses all aspects of inclusive and reconciling indigenization. The decolonial indigenization spectrum transcends the subject-object dimension of educational policymakers in inclusive indigenization. As an approach within the realm of indigenization, decolonial indigenization upholds the projects of decolonization and indigenization simultaneously - by abolishing the old, highly colonial educational services while opening up educational services from the perspective of indigenous religions themselves (Debassige et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2022). Therefore, Debassige refers to decolonial indigenization as a radical approach because it provides space for indigenous religions to be sovereign over education (Debassige et al., 2022).

Moving beyond inclusion indigenization, Sharon Stein proposes decolonization that involves the practices of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI approaches) (Stein et al., 2022). Moreover, EDI is to increase Indigenous peoples' inclusion into these institutions. More critical EDI approaches emphasize that access alone is insufficient. These advocate for additional measures such as the creation of courses focused on Indigenous knowledges, increased funding for Indigenous research, formalized agreements and collaborations with local Indigenous communities, and dedicated spaces and resources to serve and ensure the success of Indigenous students. Thus, this interpretation of decolonization seeks to radically reform and transform institutions through representation, recognition, and redistribution (Stein et al., 2022, pp. 205–206).

The EDI approach is based on the provision of education by involving the active role of First Nations as subjects. First Nations do not appear as service recipients but rather as determinants of educational services (Stein et al., 2022). Parnter (2024) summarizes and brings a commitment to collaboration and reconciliation to the EDI approach. For her, recognition for first nations cannot be done alone by Canadian academia. In accordance with the demands of the 2015 TRC, Canadian academia must involve collaborating with First nations as a form of reconciliation for past crimes committed by colonials and settler colonialism in the past that are still ongoing in the present (Parnter, 2024).

Based on the development of indigenization discussions in Canada, I summarize that decolonization and indigenization are the main reference points for the

provision of education services for first nations. The decolonization approach involves reconciliation and collaboration as a concrete form of recognition and fulfillment of the right to education for first nations. Canadian academia does not act as the sole determinant of education services but rather as a facilitator of education services for the first nation. Therefore, first nations play an active role as sovereign communities of knowledge and educational models for the benefit and future of their respective communities. (Battiste, 2013; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Parnter, 2024).

### **WHY DOES THE STATE REQUIRE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO STUDY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN FORMAL SCHOOLS?**

Before 2016, there was not a single school in Indonesia that provided indigenous education. Education of indigenous communities was only possible outside the realm of formal education. This was because, in Indonesia, religious identity is the basis for providing religious education services (Widyawati, 2012). Therefore, the reason why the state did not provide religious education services for indigenous communities was heavily influenced by the politics of religious recognition.

Various studies show that since the beginning of independence, the Indonesian government has used the world religions paradigm as the definition of an official religion (Abbas, 2021, 2021; Alfian, 2022, 2023). The word *Agama* in Indonesia is a direct translation of 'religion.' The religion that has been understood by the Indonesian government is a copy of the 'world religions paradigm' (Maarif, 2017, p. 14). In the 'world religions paradigm' that developed in the West, religion has been objectified as a concrete noun that has specific elements: doctrine of divinity, a prophet, a sacred scripture, institutions, and is adhered to internationally (Abbas, 2021, 2021; Asad, 2001; W. C. Smith, 1962).

Although the 'world religions paradigm' was not officially established as the definition of religion by the Indonesian government, government policies since independence have perpetuated and tightened the world religions paradigm. The Indonesian government then made 'Islam' the prototype (Maarif, 2019). Other religions that wanted to be recognized had to conform to Islam. Confucianism was recognized later after the Soeharto regime forced them to create the concept of 'God' (Tian) and a sacred scripture, but Confucianism was only consistently served fully by the state during the era of Indonesia's fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid (Sutrisno, 2018). Therefore, in the independence era, the government only registered and recognized six groups as 'religions': Christianity, Islam, Catholicism, Confucianism, Buddhism,

and Hinduism. No indigenous religions and *kepercayaan* adherents were recognized as 'religions' (Maarif, 2019).

In the early days of independence, indigenous religious communities did not receive educational services because they were categorized as 'indigenous communities' (masyarakat adat). *Adat* was a colonial Dutch viewpoint adopted by the Indonesian state to differentiate indigenous religious communities from world religions (Tuhri et al., 2020). *Adat* was labelled as primitive. It resembled religious elements, but not fully fulfilling requirements to be a religion. It was animistic, psuedo-religion (Maarif, 2019). Then, during the New Order era, indigenous communities were forced to embrace official religions in order to gain recognition and public services, including education (Maarif, 2017). Because they were not recognized as religions, official religious communities made indigenous religious communities 'objects of religious conversion.' Vikri Paais, in his research on the *Huaulu* community, narrates that the Christian community made the *Huaulu* community a target for conversion because *Huaulu* practices were viewed by the Christian community as heretical and infidel (Paais, 2023). The practice of conversion under the influence of the state's official religious policies has also been experienced by many indigenous communities, to this day, in various other regions of Indonesia (Alfian, 2023; Ilahi et al., 2017; Mulyadi, 2019; Nenohai, 2023a).

The restrictive definition of religion in Indonesian politics opens up space for what Maarif and Asfinawati call the politics of official religions. The policy regarding official religions is understood here to refer to the state's political and legal authority to legitimize certain religions as official through regulations and policies (Maarif et al., 2022, p. 206). The politics of official religions becomes a reference for official religious groups to control and even judge certain practices of other groups that are outside the scope of their religious teachings (Perempuan, 2022). Consequently, the politics of official religions also influences the rights, obligations, and relations between religious communities at the grassroots level. In the context of conversion, for example, the standards of official religions are used by certain groups to label other religions as heretical and infidel, for the purpose of religious conversion. Official religious communities feel entitled to judge and justify acts of violence against groups that do not fall into the category of official religions, such as the violence perpetrated by Islamic groups against the *Kejawen* community on the southern coast of Yogyakarta (Wasisto, 2021).

In the context of education, the politics of official religions also serves as the basis for the government to limit educational services for indigenous communities while simultaneously forcing indigenous communities to choose and study the

religious education provided in schools. This demand is unavoidable because religious education is a compulsory subject in Indonesia (Yusuf, 2016). The state requires indigenous communities to practice the teachings of official religions, such as the case of a child of *kepercayaan* adherents in Semarang who was forced to participate in Friday prayers (Amalia Anna, 2021). The child was forced to practice the teachings of another religion because the rules of religious education require every child to practice religious teachings without exception (Suhadi et al., 2015).

For indigenous communities, this becomes a new burden because the religion they learn in school differs from the religion they learn at home (Raihani, 2016). The act of practicing another religion, in fact, reinforces the negative stigma from society towards them. For instance, in the experience of the Marapu community in West Sumba, due to having to attend Catholic education, Marapu children acquired the stigma of being 'Catholic-Marapu.' The term 'Catholic-Marapu' becomes a burden in itself for Marapu children because they are accused of being inauthentic Marapu (Oka Wedasantara & Suarsana, 2019). Consequently, religious education influences the majority religion's perspective towards the religious attitudes of indigenous communities.

In its design, religious education obligates students to practice religious teachings for the interest of civil society (Suhadi et al., 2015). Therefore, religious education also has a strong ethical component. In the public sphere, the government utilizes religious education as a tool to shape the behavior of indigenous communities. As a consequence, indigenous religious communities are prohibited from practicing their own religious teachings in public spaces, and the values of their teachings can only be expressed as culture (Maarif, 2017). Bagir (2020) categorizes the control of public attitudes of indigenous communities as an issue of freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia, as religious teachings and public expression are inseparable.

Because they are not recognized as religious practices, the state limits indigenous communities from practicing their teachings in public spaces (Arianingtyas, 2020). Kabir (2020), for example, narrates the challenges faced by the Kejawen community on the southern coast of Yogyakarta in practicing the tradition of *larung sesajen* (offering ritual). Due to the influence of the politics of official religions, the Islamic community on the southern coast prohibits the practice of *larung sesajen* because it is considered a heretical or polytheistic teaching (Kabir, 2020). Through this example, religious education policies are directly related to freedom of religion and belief because the content of religious education is directly connected to ethics in public spaces. Through the previous explanation, before the introduction of indigenous

*kepercayaan* education, indigenous communities faced obstacles in obtaining their educational rights and freedom of expression in public spaces. The politics of official religions also underlies these issues. Knowledge of indigenous religions, in each respective context, only took place within the community and sectoral contexts. These restrictions also influenced the relationship between indigenous communities and other religious communities living as their neighbors. Any knowledge of ancestral religions could be displayed by the community to the public, as long as that knowledge was conveyed through cultural expressions. Thus, in my view, religious education—the story about the challenges faced by the Kejawen community in practicing *larung sesajen* and the stigma towards the Marapu community in East Sumba—sends us a message that religious education creates problems for indigenous religions to use their own knowledge as a living practice in public spaces. The issue of religious education is inseparable from the issue of freedom of religion and expression in Indonesian public spaces.

#### **AFTER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: *KEPERCAYAAN* EDUCATION AND ITS CRITICS**

The provision of *Kepercayaan* Education marks the state's commitment to eliminating discrimination against indigenous communities in the education sector (Setara Institute, 2022). The management of religious education and education are regulated separately. The official name for religious education services for Christian, Islamic, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian communities is Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama). Religious Education is regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The official name for religious education for indigenous communities is *Kepercayaan* Education. That is regulated by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology. To date, various indigenous communities have received *kepercayaan* education services, such as Marapu, Parmalim, and Sapta Dharma (Amalia, 2021; Nenohai, 2023a; Nenohai, 2024).

As a religious subject for indigenous communities, the model of *Kepercayaan* Education is conducted in a similar manner to religious education. The government provides teachers, teaching materials, and subjects in accordance with the beliefs held by students from indigenous religious backgrounds (Amalia, 2021; Noviana, 2023). Due to its relatively new implementation since 2016, *kepercayaan* education have not yet been enjoyed by all students from indigenous community backgrounds. Many studies show that not all followers of indigenous religions have received *Kepercayaan* Education services due to complicated issues and the tendency of local governments to respond slowly

(Maulana, 2019; Nenohai, 2023; Zakiyah, 2018). Not all *kepercayaan* education classes have teachers and teaching materials (Perdhana, 2023; Siagian, 2022; Febriany, 2020). In addition to administrative reasons, Rosyid advocates for the implementation of *kepercayaan* education at the university level, as that education is also important for followers of indigenous communities in higher education institutions (Rosyid, 2022).

Akil Sholakudin, in his article '*Posisi Tawar Permendikbud Nomor 27 Dan Urgensi Pendidikan Agama Dalam Satuan Pendidikan*,' proposes merging Indigenous Faith Education (Pendidikan Kepercayaan) and Religious Education into multicultural education. Learning from the experience of violence faced by Saptha Dharma children, instead of maintaining *kepercayaan* education, Sholakudin suggests changing the model of religious education to multicultural education so that students from all religions can learn about 'religion' rather than studying and deepening their respective religions (Sholakudin, 2021). Sholakudin's proposal is not new, as multicultural education materials already exist as one of the topics in religious education classes in Indonesia (Baidhaw, 2005). Therefore, the introduction of a multicultural education subject would argue that merging *Kepercayaan* Education and Religious Education is not an urgent need.

Besides the issue of administrative obstacles, the merging of *kepercayaan* education and religious education, the issue of religiosity is also voiced by researchers of *kepercayaan* education. Maarif and Asfinawati (2022), in their article *Toward a (More) Inclusive FORB: A Framework for the Advocacy for the Rights of Indigenous People*, argue that indigenous *kepercayaan* education is still creating something new for indigenous communities. *Kepercayaan* education, as part of the compulsory course in schools (based on the regulation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology) is formulated to comply with religious education. Such an articulation on the part of the ministry is equivalent to the state prescribing "how to be religious." In Indonesia, this framework is upheld by the policy regarding official religions (Maarif et al., 2022).

Maarif and Asfinawati's view is affirmed through the research I conducted in the Marapu community, East Sumba. The Marapu community has a way of being religious called *Lipayenu-Lipatembu* (Damai, 2024; Nenohai, 2024). *Lipayenu-Lipatembu* is the teaching of love towards the ancestors (Marapu), humans, and the universe, therefore *Lipayenu-Lipatembu* can be translated into Indonesian as the wisdom of love. To be religious, Marapu children are taught to participate in the community, such as taking part in rituals, hosting guests, respecting nature, not cutting down banyan trees carelessly, and so on.



In contrast, in the classroom setting, through *Kepercayaan* Education, children are required by the government through laws to become religious through a series of teaching materials and assignments (Damai, 2024; Nenohai, 2024). In my view, the Indigenous *Kepercayaan* Education is diametrically opposed to the model and practice of religiosity understood by Marapu children in the community context.

Referring to the various studies above, I argue that *kepercayaan* education is present as a perfect copy of religious education. *Kepercayaan* Education is established by referring to religious education. As a consequence, the state designs and establishes *kepercayaan* Education without providing space for indigenous followers to incorporate aspects of their knowledge and education into the design of the education. Education for indigenous communities follows the complete pattern of education for religions that have been recognized beforehand. Furthermore, followers of indigenous communities then learn two different models of education, namely *kepercayaan* education at school and indigenous education according to their community's version. I categorize *kepercayaan* education as state indigenous education because this education is designed by the state without involving the role of the indigenous communities' paradigm, but rather the paradigm of 'religion' established by the state. As a national education, children from indigenous community backgrounds also bear the responsibility to learn and practice their teachings in public spaces in accordance with the ideals of religious education as a national education. Therefore, once again, I categorize *kepercayaan* education as the state official indigenous education.

### **KEPERCAYAAN EDUCATION AS INDIGENIZATION**

Departing from the meaning of indigenization, I categorize *kepercayaan* education as an indigenization for several reasons. The first reason is that *kepercayaan* education provides a space for indigenous knowledge to be present in national education policies in Indonesia. Consequently, the government incorporates aspects of indigenous knowledge and education into public policies. This pattern is precisely what occurs with *kepercayaan* education in Indonesia. The state acknowledges the existence of indigenous knowledge while preserving it within educational laws and regulations. The state also provides support through funding arrangements and providing facilities such as schools to support *kepercayaan* education. The second reason is that in the process of indigenization at the global level, the reference used for the recognition of indigenous knowledge is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In Canada, UNDRIP was ratified as



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Arrows, 2019; T. Smith, 2016). The TRC became a milestone for indigenization in the context of schools in Canada (Côté et al., 2021). In Indonesia, *kepercayaan* education as a form of state recognition originated from the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97 of 2016. Through this recognition, the citizenship status of indigenous religions has been equalized with other religious communities in Indonesia. The official administrative name for indigenous religions and *kepercayaan* adherents is 'belief' (Wiratraman, 2018). In the practice of indigenous communities in Indonesia, the term 'belief' religiously contains the same elements as other terms such as *adat* (custom) and indigenous communities (Maarif, 2022). Hence, *kepercayaan* should be viewed as knowledge based on indigenous communities' paradigm. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education is an inseparable part of the Indonesian state's recognition of the status and citizenship rights of indigenous communities. As religious education, *kepercayaan* education also supports the ideals of national education.

*Kepercayaan* education as indigenization has two fundamental objectives. First, *kepercayaan* education breaks the chain of state discrimination against indigenous communities in Indonesia. This educational program emerged with the spirit of state recognition and services received by indigenous communities. The recognition for indigenous communities is supported by two legal regulations, namely the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97 of 2017 and the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 26 of 2016. The state acknowledges its responsibility and provides educational services as a right of indigenous communities in Indonesia. Second, indigenization introduces indigenous knowledge into the education system in Indonesia. *Kepercayaan* education is an inseparable part of state recognition and the fulfillment of the rights of indigenous communities that have been neglected. This recognition is conditional, meaning that indigenous communities are obliged to support state policies on the national education system as stated in Article 3 of the National Education System Law. Third, indigenous communities are allowed to learn the 'content of their own religious knowledge', but the educational structure to support educational practices still follows the standards determined by the state, namely the religious education curriculum. The aim is for *kepercayaan* education to support the ideals of national education as stated in Article 3 of the National Education System Law of 2003. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education is the state's way of restoring the rights of indigenous communities while simultaneously placing aspects of indigenous knowledge for the public interest, as stated in the objectives of religious education in the 2003 National Education System Law.

## THE IDEA OF INCLUSION IN *KEPERCAYAAN* EDUCATION AND BEYOND

From the three reasons above, I consider *kepercayaan* education to be an indigenization process occurring within the framework of religious education determined by the state to support the ideals of national education. As an indigenization process, *kepercayaan* education is a form of state's self-criticism: the state is rectifying its flawed religious education policies within the national education system. Unlike the case in Canada, the Indonesian state did not use international recognition such as UNDRIP as a reference for policy changes. Indigenization, in the Indonesian context, is carried out through reforms to the discriminatory national education system. Indigenization in Indonesia is a change in policy at the national level. Therefore, the Indonesian state is expanding the scope of religious education services by introducing *kepercayaan* education for indigenous communities in Indonesia. Indigenization in Indonesia is based on policy changes to eliminate discrimination perpetrated by the state against indigenous communities: *masyarakat adat* and *penghayat kepercayaan*.

Referring to the design and implementation of *kepercayaan* education, I categorize it as an inclusion indigenization. First, *kepercayaan* education is the state's way of equalizing the rights of indigenous communities to receive educational services according to their beliefs. After the *kepercayaan* education, children from indigenous community backgrounds have the same opportunity as groups from the other six recognized religions. They can now learn religious education that contains the teachings of their own religions, such as Marapu, Parmalim, and Sapta Dharma children. Second, *kepercayaan* education is the process of introducing indigenous knowledge in public spaces without involving aspects of reconciliation and collaboration. Reconciliation and collaboration are the fulfillment of educational services through dialogue as a way to recover from the state's previous policy failures (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Parnter, 2024). In Indonesia, the state established *kepercayaan* education without going through a dialogue process. The state designed the education system by referring to the framework of religious education. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education emerged as a complete copy of religious education. *Kepercayaan* education also eliminates collaboration between that education and indigenous education in the community context. As a consequence, the state only established 'one model' of education for 190 indigenous communities in Indonesia. Third, the state acts as the sole determinant of the educational model for all indigenous communities in Indonesia. This aspect is a direct consequence of the absence of a reconciliation and collaboration process in the design and implementation of *kepercayaan* education. As a consequence, the state establishes an educational model by

disregarding the fact of the diversity and unique pedagogies of each indigenous group in Indonesia. Indigenous communities are then required to grow 'in religious ways' according to the standards and ways of the officially recognized religions in Indonesia.

The three mentioned reasons indicate why *kepercayaan* education is taking place through the idea of inclusion indigenization. The education is an educational service used by the state to equalize indigenous communities with the other six recognized religions. This equalization, following Stein's EID approach, results in a lack of equity and diversity in the context of national education. The state makes 'religious education' the standard and way for indigenous communities to grow to be religious. In other words, the state provides educational services by limiting the space for the diversity of ways in which indigenous communities grow to be religious through the assistance of educational models in each community. As a result, the state requires children from indigenous community backgrounds to learn and practice their religious teachings in the manner of world religions.

Up to this point, the two guiding questions of this article have been answered. First, *kepercayaan* education does not represent the educational needs and models of indigenous communities in Indonesia. Kepercayaan education is the state's version of indigenous education. More specifically, the education is religious education in a new guise. The state did not design and establish *kepercayaan* education through a process of dialogue and collaboration with indigenous communities. Kepercayaan education emerged as the state's way of determining the standards of religious education as a reference and the means for children of indigenous communities to achieve the national education goal of practicing their religious teachings for the public. Second, as a state education, *kepercayaan* education is completely disconnected from the indigenous education of indigenous peoples in Indonesia. In their respective contexts, indigenous communities have their own unique educational models, such as the cultural education of the Boti indigenous community (Wardany et al., 2023), cultural revitalization of *meto* people in Timor (Crisp, 2021; Krisharyanto Umbu Deta dan Jear Nenohai, 2022), nature-based education of *Orang Rimba* in Jambi, (Manurung, 2019), and so on. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education is a policy formed on the initiative and preference of the state for religious education. In other words, the state does not recognize and accommodate the diversity of indigenous education as a way of being religious. Taking religious education as the primary reference, the state makes the model of official religious education the sole medium of education for all religions in Indonesia.

For indigenous education in the community context to contribute to the development of Indigenous Faith Education, a reconciliation and collaboration approach needs to be incorporated in the implementation of *kepercayaan* education. Reconciliation and collaboration become important because Indigenous *kepercayaan* education only represents religious education for the issues, needs, and uniqueness of the indigenous education of Indonesian indigenous peoples are not represented in policy development. Through reconciliation and collaboration, indigenous communities are present as subjects of educational services. The state plays a role as a service provider to meet the educational needs of indigenous communities. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education is not based on the ways of world religions but rather follows and adapts to the ways children of indigenous communities grow to be religious according to their respective community traditions.

## CONCLUSION

*Kepercayaan* education is the state's version of indigenous education. More precisely, *kepercayaan* education is the religious education of official religions. The state has made religious education the reference and model for the education of followers of indigenous communities in Indonesia. Therefore, *kepercayaan* education does not represent the variations and uniqueness of the indigenous education of indigenous peoples in Indonesia. This occurs because the state employs an indigenous inclusion approach in designing and implementing educational services for indigenous communities. As a consequence, the state regards indigenous communities as objects of policy. Indigenous communities do not have the opportunity and right to develop through educational models that align with their community's educational paradigms in the formal education setting.

And as a form of development, this article offers the path of reconciliation and collaboration as an effort by the government to connect and develop an educational model that is relevant and appropriate to the educational needs of each indigenous community. This would provide space for children from indigenous community backgrounds to develop in accordance with their community's educational paradigm as their way of fulfilling the national education goal: to learn and practice the teachings of their 'religion' for the benefit of the Indonesian people. This model of belief education is an alternative of initiative that departs from the perspective of those doing the education as it is supposed to be based on their needs.

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## **THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEND MINORITY RIGHTS: The Role of Islamic Religious Counselor in the Realization of Religious Freedom**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*When the principle of tolerance is seen as an agreement on shared values, the forms of its practice can be diverse, even contradictory. On the other hand, the relationship between minority and majority groups in Indonesia continues to change over time, and this dynamic becomes a locus of control for the authorities. The government never ignores this problem. In addition to regulations, one of the facilities provided is the existence of Islamic Religious Counselors. The purpose of this study is to explain the role of Islamic religious counselors in realizing harmonious relations for minority groups in freedom of religion and belief. The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with descriptive analysis. The results of the study show the issue in understanding the extent to which the role of divine (heavenly) religious symbols is manifested in the social realm when the majority and minority groups of various religious believers interact with each other in a society, and when each different symbol touches each other intensely. Religious counselors can provide an important foundation for expressing religion amid diversity. The main thing that needs to be underlined is the moderate religious insight and attitude. This is what distinguishes a Islamic religious counselor from other religious figures although both convey religious messages through guidance and counseling activities. The efforts and roles of*

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*religious icounselors are explained from the perspective of religious moderation, harmonization, and freedom of religion and belief. From the perspective of religious moderation, the counselors have a role as an agent of moderation, guardian of morals, and guardian of faith, while from the perspective of harmonization, the counselors have an informative and educative roles, the same thing also in realizing freedom of religion and belief.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Counselor; Freedom of Religion; Minority Rights

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesian has a diverse and complex culture that cannot be separated from the fact that Indonesia is a plural and multicultural society bound in one unity, namely nationalism (Hadi 2020)the first pattern creates social friction or conflict. On the contrary, the second pattern is directed towards acculturation and assimilation of culture which can strengthen social harmony. The important finding of this research is that it can be known the real issue, so that problems related to all parties can be found a solution as well as a resolution. This research also proves that social mechanism preparedness is considered urgent to prevent negative excesses (negative things. One of Indonesia's diversities is the religious beliefs of its people. Formally, Indonesia recognizes six religions, namely Islam, Catholic Christianity, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Hadi 2020)the first pattern creates social friction or conflict. On the contrary, the second pattern is directed towards acculturation and assimilation of culture which can strengthen social harmony. The important finding of this research is that it can be known the real issue, so that problems related to all parties can be found a solution as well as a resolution. This research also proves that social mechanism preparedness is considered urgent to prevent negative excesses (negative things. The six religions have representatives in the Ministry of Religion both at the central and regional levels.

According to sociological conditions, the terms of religion is often interpreted as a continuous ritual belief system in something that is believed to bind its adherents. On the other hand, in the sociological dictionary, the definition of religion is a belief in spiritual things or a set of beliefs that are considered to have their purpose. In the legal approach, especially stated in Article 7 of the UDHR, it is stated that "Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal legal protection without discrimination." This means that everyone has the right to equal protection against any form of discrimination that is contrary and against all incitement to this kind of discrimination.



The high level of aggressive behavior that occurs towards minorities in terms of religion, as well as the fatal failure of the government in weakly enforcing regulations based on the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the protection of religious freedom (Mubarrak and Kumala 2020), The right to religious freedom, has been demonstrated by violence and discrimination in a series of incidents, such as incidents in Aceh related to the freedom to practice religion according to each person's beliefs and beliefs, recorded in newspaper publications and also studied by Ansor (2016) in his research conducted qualitatively with the title *Becoming Like Other Religions: The Hijab and the Hybrid Identity of Christian Students towards minority religious students in Aceh*, regarding the use of the hijab (Islamic clothing) (Ansor 2016). The hijab which shows the identity of women who are Muslim, in this case, is forced to be used in public areas (PTN/campus) by non-Muslim adherents.

Social friction related to regulations on the establishment of Christian houses of worship in Aceh Singkil was also reviewed by Ondang (2015) in the *Serambi Indonesia Daily* entitled "Singkil Conflict Torn Wisdom". The burning of houses of worship is suspected to have originated from the clash of regulatory wisdom that provoked people's emotions to act discriminatively. In addition, the development of social prejudice that has not been resolved has given rise to in-groups and out-groups. Fanatical religious views have implications for errors in understanding religious life. This has contributed to triggering social friction, especially among adherents of different religions, even a small leaflet with a slanted sentence, the congregation is immediately provoked (Yunus 2014).

Coupled with the strengthening of identity politics that often marginalizes minority groups. Democracy is often interpreted as majoritarianism (Paralihan 2019). The authority of the majority as managers and policymakers is a common tendency in several regions in Indonesia. Through the door of democracy, demands, aspirations, and colors of political policies that are determined and controlled by the majority (majority rule) develop. Because it is determined by the logic of the majority, as a result in several regions many policies have emerged that are less biased and even marginalize the existence of minority groups. The contestation of religious symbols in public spaces is part of the symptoms of the strengthening of identity politics in Indonesia in at least the last two decades (Hutapea and Alexandra, Sukendro, Widodo 2023).

In Indonesia, minorities are often identified as non-Muslim groups only. Meanwhile, there are Muslim minorities in Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, North Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua, and several districts/cities that are centers of certain

ethnic cultures. Thus, minorities in Indonesia cannot be identified only as non-Muslim groups. Apart from that, ethnic and linguistic minorities also exist in Indonesia (Permana 2018). For example, the Gayo ethnic minority in Aceh, who cannot speak Acehnese, is both an ethnic minority and a language minority in Indonesia, because they are an ethnic minority and speak Gayo, not Acehnese or Indonesian. Meanwhile, the Chinese, Arab, Indian, European, and Japanese ethnic groups are examples of ethnic minorities in Indonesia. Some ethnic minorities in Indonesia still face social and political discrimination. Meanwhile, several other ethnic minority groups have also been accepted in social, political, and economic life in their homeland, Indonesia.

The culture and attitude of the diversity of Indonesian society is quite exclusive so it only recognizes salvation and truth unilaterally. There is a comparison between groups that are not based on a tolerant attitude, which triggers a conflict because each uses power to recognize the truth of their religion. To avoid such a conflict, it is necessary to grow and develop a moderate way of being religious, or an open way of being religious which is called an attitude of religious moderation. To deal with such a situation, a religious instructor must develop the right strategy in providing counseling to achieve certain goals. However, globally religious instructors can be classified into three main things, namely issues of faith (aqidah), issues of Islam (sharia), and issues of character (akhlakul karimah).

The role of religious instructors in society is very important because there are still many people who need an ideal figure to be used as a religious figure in community life. Religious instructors serve as agents of moderation, guardians of morals, and guardians of the faith and morals of society. The task of religious instructors is not merely to carry out religious education in the narrow sense such as religious studies or lectures, but also all activities in the form of guidance and development.

There are several studies related to the role of Islamic religious instructors that have been carried out, for example, Muhammad Dachlan who research related to building a harmonious life through religious instructors, the results of which acknowledged that the religious harmony that is established in the North Mamuju community cannot be separated from the role of instructors, both civil servant instructors and non-civil servant instructors (played by religious figures, community leaders, traditional leaders) in establishing harmony (Dachlan 2017).

Sarifah Suhra also conducted research related to the role of counselors in fostering tolerance character in the community which showed that one of the professions that most supports fostering tolerance character is religious

counselors (Sarifah Suhra. dkk 2023). However, unfortunately, the two studies have not discussed in depth the important roles that religious counselors should or have played in realizing a harmonious life and fostering tolerance character.

Research by Najwa Ainun Nabilah related to the role of religious instructors in the lives of marginalized communities shows a picture of the important role of religion in human life, especially in marginalized communities facing social and economic challenges. Marginalized communities face social imbalance, backwardness, and economic problems, which often lead to slums and low living standards. In facing these challenges, religion becomes the foundation of life and mental defense for marginalized communities. Religion provides moral and spiritual guidance to overcome anxiety and discomfort in a dynamic life. Religious instructors play a key role in providing religious understanding and support to the community (Nabilah and Darmaningrum 2023).

Furthermore, Husni Mubarrak's research, related to Discrimination Against Minority Religions: Case Study in Banda Aceh, shows that minority communities experience restrictions or obstacles in expressing themselves in public spaces. The things that cause discrimination are prejudices regarding Christianization efforts carried out by minority religious groups and the existence of regulations (written or unwritten) that are considered to limit opportunities, space for movement, and support for minority religious groups in public spaces (Mubarrak and Kumala 2020) .

Sa'idy and Vewawati's research conducted a study related to the existence of religious instructors as agents of religious moderation in Indonesia (Sa'idy and Vewawati 2022). The study shows that Indonesia has a pluralistic society and is very vulnerable to religious conflict in particular, therefore the existence of religious instructors is very important. and this is one of the studies that are very close to the author's research, but the author maps the role of instructors in 3 perspectives that are considered very relevant to the current conditions of Indonesia, namely the perspective of religious moderation, harmony, and freedom of religion and belief that are carried out ideally in Indonesia. By the background and previous studies, this study aims to determine the efforts of Islamic religious instructors from the perspective of religious moderation, religious harmony, and freedom of religion and belief that are implemented ideally in Indonesia.

#### **THE EXISTENCE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COUNSELOR AS FIGHTERS FOR HUMANITARIANS**

Religious counselors have a special position today in the context of building

religious commitment. Religious commitment is encompassed in three main Islamic teachings: Iman (belief), Islam (surrender to Allah), and then (the state of being obeyed by Allah) (Hikmawati 2014). One of the state's means of fighting for minority rights in society so that it is following humanity and the constitution is Islamic Religious Counselor who has an office (on duty/home base) at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). Institutionally, Islamic Religious Counselor's existence has a long history in this republic. As a form of recognition of the important role of religious leaders in resistance to colonialism during the pre-independence period and also their strong work and influence in society, the Ministry of Religion appointed Islamic religious leaders as Honorary Religion Teachers with the task of guiding the religious and social fields (Susanto and Ulfah 2022).

The term extension is used for activities to provide information to the community, both by government and non-government institutions. This term is taken from the word *suluh* or torch which functions as lighting (Mazid et al. 2021). Counseling in the sense of information is widely used in agricultural, plantation, health, drug, family planning, and religious activities. The term counseling means guidance in Psychology and is a translation of Counseling (Asrifa, Asysyifa, and Hafizianor 2022).

Religious instructors provide religious data services for the state and the general public, including data on religious facilities and infrastructure, such as data on Mosques, Musholla, Majelis Taklim, TPQ/TKQ, Dakwah Institutions, Islamic Mass Organizations, Population-based on religion, and so on. Meanwhile, the function of Islamic religious instructors at the KUA includes two things, namely; informative and educative functions. The Legal Basis for Islamic Religious Instructors Functional is stated in the following regulations: 1) Presidential Decree No.87 of 1999 concerning Functional Position Groups; 2) Kep menkowasbangpan No.54/kep.waspan 9/99; 3) Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Head of BKN No.574 and 178 of 1999; 4) Presidential Regulation Number 24 of 2006 concerning the duties, position, and Functions of the State Ministry and the organizational structure and procedures of the State Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia (Asnawi, Budianto, and Hidayatullah 2022).

Intolerance is a serious threat to the diversity of a nation, including Indonesia. Religious and religious intolerance in Indonesia is accused of being a problem of religion, society, politics, education, and nationalism. Intolerance can be considered a trigger for radicalism amid national diversity. Wahid Foundation in its report explained the potential for intolerance in Indonesia. There are several indicators used. First, the disliked groups include LGBT 26%,

Communists 16.7%, Jews 10.6%, Christians 2.2%, Shiites 1.3, Wahhabis 0.5, Buddhists 0.4, and Chinese 0.4, while those who do not have problems with other groups are 38.7. The data shows that as many as 61.3% have problems with other groups. Second, the intolerance score includes neutral tending to be tolerant 43.4%, neutral tending to be intolerant 7.0%, tolerant 0.6%, while intolerant is 49% (<http://wahidfoundation.org/>, 2019). Therefore, it is important to strengthen tolerance education as one of the preventive steps to prevent intolerance (Amaliansyah 2020).

Islamic Religious Instructors are Civil Servants who are given full duties, responsibilities, authority, and rights by authorized officials to carry out Islamic religious guidance or counseling and development activities through religious language (Harahap, Siregar, and Harahap 2023). North Sumatra requires a long transformation within the framework of religious moderation to build harmony and maturity. This study aims to reveal the dynamic spectrum of religious moderation in the bubble of North Sumatra's local wisdom. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method by involving six subjects who were selected through a purposive sampling technique. Subject criteria are natives of North Sumatra and have sufficient knowledge of religious moderation in the local custom of North Sumatra. In-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to collect the required data. This study reveals a vast spectrum of diversity among the North Sumatrans. In the meantime, religious moderation is evidence of upholding religious ideals integrated with the local culture. Moreover, this research also shows how the people of North Sumatra from the following three regions, (1. The term Religious Instructor began to be socialized in 1985, namely with the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 791 of 1985 concerning Honorariums for Religious Instructors. The term Religious Instructor is used to replace the term Honorary Religious Teacher (GAH) which was previously used in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Since the beginning, Religious Instructors have been the spearhead of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in implementing Islamic religious education amidst the rapid dynamics of the development of Indonesian society (Barmawie and Humaira 2018).

The role of religious instructors is very strategic to build the mental, moral, and values of the piety of the people and also to encourage the improvement of the quality of life of the people in various fields, both in the fields of religion and development (Muhlisin, Kholis, and Rini 2023). So far, Islamic Religious Instructors have an important role in empowering the community and empowering themselves as government employees. In other words, success in guidance and counseling to the community shows success in self-

management. Islamic Religious Instructors as the leading sector of guidance for the Islamic community, have quite heavy, broad tasks/obligations and the problems faced are increasingly complex.

Islamic Religious Counselors cannot be alone in carrying out this quite heavy mandate, they must be able to act as motivators, facilitators, and at the same time catalysts for Islamic preaching. Preaching management must be able to be developed and actualized under the development of society which is experiencing changes as an impact of globalization and increasingly sophisticated technological developments, which result in shifts or multidimensional crises.

Religious instructors run their programs starting by recording places of worship, recording religious leaders, consolidating religious leaders, smoothing meetings every three months at the sub-district level, holding coordination ahead of religious celebrations and even practicing nationalist spiritual values. Religious leaders are community leaders of religious people, both those who lead religious organizations and those who do not lead religious organizations who are recognized and respected by the local community as role models: 1) Religious instructors record places of worship such as mosques, prayer rooms, Majlis Ta'lim, and other social facilities; 2) Religious instructors collaborate with figures from various religions; 3) Holding consolidation meetings with religious leaders once a quarter; 4) Coordination meeting for data collection with the regional government consisting of regional heads, police, TNI, Ministry of Religion, and other sectoral agencies according to existing levels starting from village to provincial level; and 5) Holding coordination ahead of religious celebrations. 6. Providing national insight such as teachings that adhere to Pancasila, NKRI and nationalism, democracy, religion (Triwahyuningsih 2018).

The 'obligation to respect' means that the state and its apparatus must not intervene or interfere under any pretext to reduce or eliminate the rights of individuals and/or groups to exercise or enjoy their rights, such as not interfering in the practice of carrying out religious worship. The 'obligation to fulfill' requires the state and its apparatus to take steps (such as judicial, administrative, and judiciary) and actions to ensure the fulfillment of individual and/or group rights (Hakim and Kurniawan 2022) masih menjadi diskursus yang menarik di Indonesia. Untuk itu, penelitian ini dilaksanakan dengan pendekatan systematic literature review dengan tujuan untuk mengajukan paradigma hukum HAM yang berbasis pada kewajiban asasi manusia. Dari sudut pandang penelitian hukum, sifat penelitian ini dikategorikan ke dalam penelitian preskriptif. Data dalam penelitian ini bersumber dari peraturan



perundang-undangan, buku, dan artikel ilmiah dari jurnal nasional dan internasional yang berhubungan dengan konsep HAM dan hukum HAM. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penegakan HAM harus melihat pemenuhan kewajiban asasi manusia, karena secara umum seseorang dapat menuntut hak apabila telah memenuhi kewajiban. Dengan melandaskan hak pada kewajiban, maka hukum HAM akan menjadi seimbang (balance).

The 'obligation to protect' requires the state and its apparatus to take necessary steps to protect the rights of individuals and/or groups, including preventing violations of human rights. As a realization of the state's commitment to respecting, protecting, and upholding human rights, the government has many human rights instruments in the form of ratification of several international human rights instruments (Setiyani and Setiyono 2020).

The availability of the above national and international instruments shows the government's seriousness, at least on paper, in carrying out its three functions as a human rights actor. Consequently, the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental human right (basic rights) must be the main consideration in the formulation of every policy, regulation, and action in every state apparatus, including Islamic religious instructors without exception (Fauzia and Hamdani 2021).

Normatively, commitment to human rights is reflected in several documents that serve as guidelines for Islamic Religious Counselors, even though they do not explicitly use human rights language. Guidelines for Non-Civil Servant Islamic Religious Instructors, as stated in Decree No. 298/2017, states that in carrying out their roles and functions, Islamic Religious Counselors must adhere to the principles of democracy, equality, and also non-discrimination ('principles for all').

Indonesia is a multicultural country, this statement cannot be denied because in reality Indonesia has a population consisting of various adherents of different religions and beliefs and has a variety of cultures and languages. That is why Indonesian society is called a pluralistic society because there are various tribes, religions, races, and cultures caused by people who come from various regions and then settle in one place. They bring their customs and cultures to their new homes, resulting in diversity in a place or region. However, this diversity and diversity can cause social conflict, if it is not based on the foundation of nationality in building joint decisions in the state (Hakim and Darajat 2023).

About Indonesia as a pluralistic country, the role of Islamic religious instructors in diversity is very important, several studies show the existence



of the role of Islamic religious instructors in this field, including maintaining and optimizing tolerance between religious communities (Sarifah Suhra. dkk 2023), and as a facilitator of change (Mukhlisuddin 2016) and an expert in resolving conflicts (Ferdiansyah et al. 2023) and conduct consultations with related parties to improve community harmony (Nuruddin 2016), Therefore, religious instructors are expected to always guide, protect, and motivate the community to do good.

### **ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COUNSELOR IS THE MAIN PILLAR DRIVING THE REALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS DEVOTION**

Religious harmony is also a mandate entrusted to the KUA through Islamic Religious Counselor. Conflicts with religious nuances that occur in the country encourage the state, through all its tools, to instill and maintain interreligious harmony in society (Prayogo, Simamora, and Kusuma 2020). Moreover, the fact that many religions (and also beliefs) have the potential to destroy unity if not managed well. KUA, as the government's spearhead in the religious sector, has a significant role because it is directly in touch with community problems at the grassroots. Based on this awareness, the KUA appointed a PNS<sup>2</sup> or Non-PNS<sup>3</sup> Islamic Religious Counselor specifically deals with issues of religious harmony with three main functions: providing education about the importance of religious harmony to the community (informative/educative), becoming a place for consultation and complaints regarding issues of religious harmony (consultative), and help overcome, mitigate and resolve problems of religious harmony (Rusydi and Zolehah 2018).

The state's approach which relies on harmony and stability rather than religious freedom has given rise to some restrictions on religious freedom through legislation and regulations at both the central and local levels. Law No.1/PNPS/1965 concerning the Prevention of Abuse and/or Blasphemy of Religion, for example, guarantees religious expression but is accompanied by restrictions that are still vague and open to many interpretations such as 'abuse', 'deviation' and 'religious blasphemy'. Violation of these restrictions may result in legal consequences. Another example is the Joint Regulation of Three Ministers no. 9 No. 8/2006, which among other things regulates the establishment of places of worship, as well as several local regulations in several areas that are considered discriminatory (Prakosa 2022).

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2 PNS is a state civil servant, namely someone who works in government and receives a salary according to the standards set by the state based on their class and length of service.

3 Non PNS is employees who work in government institutions based on contracts or work agreements with a certain duration

'Public order' is the reason for restrictions put forward by the state. However, in practice, 'public order' is not placed in the true sense of 'public', which includes all citizens without exception. On the other hand, the 'public' referred to by the state is the majority, so it seems as if the state justifies limiting the right to religious freedom for minorities in order to protect the interests of the majority (Budiono 2017).

This is where problems sometimes arise because interpretations of the majority can also vary: does it refer to quantity or influence because in practice the idea of 'public order' comes from the idea of a small influential group that claims to represent the majority. In other cases such as religious blasphemy, for example, claims of maintaining 'public order' often stem from hate spin in the media and also mass mobilization by certain groups which then becomes the basis for someone being accused of committing religious blasphemy, even though it may be the perpetrator not intended to do so<sup>60</sup> or even disapproved by the majority of the public. Thus, the distinction between the claims of the majority and the hate spin of a small group of people needs to be carefully considered before any restrictions are imposed on a minority.

### **THE DILEMMATIC POSITION OF THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COUNSELORS AS FIGHTERS FOR HUMANITARIANS**

Observing the reality of the implementation of Freedom of Religion and Belief (*Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan-KBB*), Islamic Religious Counselor has complex challenges in its position as the Freedom of Religion and Belief actor in the true sense. On the one hand, their status as ASN<sup>4</sup> requires them to take responsibility for enforcing the Freedom of Religion and Belief as mandated by the Constitution. On the other hand, the state's approach which is more oriented towards public order or harmony and security places them to a difficult situation with many problems in fulfilling the Freedom of Religion and Belief for all citizens without exception (Budiono, 2017).

All Freedom of Religion and Belief restrictions implemented by the state through a set of laws or regulations have resulted in many cases of discrimination and even criminalization by both state and non-state actors. The question then is what an Islamic Religious Counselor's position is in this kind of dilemmatic situation. Is there a middle way that they can take by contributing to the maintenance of order or harmony without having to participate in restricting or violating the rights of the Freedom of Religion

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<sup>4</sup> ASN is profession for civil servants and government employees with work agreements who work in government agencies and ASN is a new term for government civil servants

and Belief as mandated by the Constitution? The answer to this question is not easy but that does not mean it is impossible. According to the author, there are several things that extension workers can do through their trilogy of functions in society: informative/educative, consultative, and advocative (Sa'idy and Verawati 2022).

In their role as Islamic religious instructors, both informative and educational, Islamic Religious Instructors need to continue to play an active role in building public awareness of Freedom of Religion and Belief through 'religious language' that continues to prioritize the principles of human rights. In this effort, the main challenge comes from religious doctrines that have long been deeply rooted in society. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many people are still anti-Islam and anti-human rights, and are in a pattern of irreconcilable relationships like oil and water.

This major problem is what religious instructors should be able to explain through innovations in their roles as extension agents and education agents for all levels of society with all their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the principle of preaching that calls for goodness and protects against evil with the language of "bil hikmah" wisdom becomes one of the central points of the extension movement carried out by these religious instructors. This is in line with the message from Mukhlisin's research, namely that promoting religious moderation must be seen as an important shared agenda because it plays an important role in determining the long-term survival of a country (Mukhlisin et al. 2023).

According to the data and facts that have been presented, Islamic religious instructors have not maximized their role in the field of information and education. This is a role of prevention for conflict in a pluralistic country like Indonesia. The ability of Islamic religious instructors to play their role as informants and educators must be complete and innovative. The informative and educative roles are also closely related to the resources or abilities they have (Tabroni and Idham 2023) the Salafist movement later gave rise to various factions. One of the results of the dynamic and contestation of these various factions was the emergence of religious moderation movements of Salafists. This article tries to explain the role of The Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia (DDII). Therefore, the Ministry of Religion in supporting this must have a good recruitment pattern and quality training pattern, so that it can produce religious instructors who are under their roles and functions.

One strategy that can be taken to overcome this obstacle is to convey education through 'religious language' that is easily understood and accepted by the community. In this connection, the opinion of Mashood A. Baderin, a Muslim

thinker, is worth stating. According to him, Islamic law and human rights need a dialogical approach to achieve a common understanding and this can be done by prioritizing the concept of *maslahah* which is a valuable legacy in the treasures of Islamic legal thought (Hamu 2023).

Ethical-philosophical values in human rights such as internal freedom, non-coercion, non-discrimination, and non-derogability must be found in the context of religion so that they can be well accepted in society. This strategy is also in line with the movement of moderation and religious tolerance initiated by the government. Respect, protection, and enforcement of Freedom of Religion and Belief through the consultative role of Islamic Religious Instructors can be carried out through dialogue that is carried out in a civilized and humane manner.

So far, the role of consultation mandated to Islamic Religious Instructors tends to be more supervisory than coaching (Dzulfaqqor 2018). The 2009 Non-PNS Religious Instructor Task Implementation Module, for example, defines this role as "receiving consultations or complaints from the community". This means that Islamic Religious Instructors are positioned as 'police' tasked with monitoring the movements of fellow citizens who are considered dangerous to order and stability. Rather than carrying out a supervisory pattern like this.

Islamic Religious Counselors can implement a coaching pattern as a form of *da'wah* while still upholding human rights norms such as the right to freedom of religion or belief as guaranteed in the Constitution. Public complaints about the existence of deviant sects or heretical sects are not a reason to ostracize certain groups, but rather a trigger to create democratic living spaces amidst the differences in beliefs that exist.

*Da'wah bil hikmah* as a manifestation of the role of consultation is not interpreted as waiting but rather as inviting and working together to create a harmonious life amidst the diversity of Indonesia. This requirement of course requires strong regulations, freedom of movement for Islamic religious counselors, and adequate financial support, considering that one region and another in Indonesia are far apart and have different field challenges as well.

This means that Islamic Religious Counselors are positioned as 'policemen' tasked with monitoring the movements of fellow citizens who are deemed to endanger order and stability. Rather than adopting this kind of monitoring pattern, Islamic Religious Counselors can implement a coaching pattern as a form of *da'wah* while still upholding human rights norms such as the right to freedom of religion or belief as guaranteed in the Constitution. Complaints from the public about the existence of splinter or heretical sects are not a

justification for excluding certain groups but are a trigger for creating spaces for democratic life amidst existing differences in beliefs.

Finally, Islamic Religious Counselors can optimize their advocacy roles to also expand into *KBB*. The legal approach that has often been used in resolving various Freedom of Religion and Belief problems has turned out to cause many problems, not only in terms of the legal product itself but also the effects it has on victims, such as continued problems for their families, lengthy processes, and also failure to resolve the root of the problem. Ironically, the legal approach has the potential to become an instrument of power and become an extension of the majority to suppress minorities in the form of "threats, rewards, punishment, intimidation, stigmatization, or whatever to pursue and achieve their own goals."

## CONCLUSION

Every citizen has the same rights for justice. This has become a common knowledge or shared principle along with the strengthening of the democratization process in Indonesia. The principles of social equality are seen as collective values that underlie relations among citizens in the country. When the principle of tolerance is seen as having become an agreement of shared values, the form of its practice can be varied, even contradictory. In a pluralistic Indonesian society, the polemic about whether an action is called tolerant or intolerant becomes more complex. The relations between the majority and the minority groups, therefore, are significant to the efforts of building harmonious life of the society. Both the majority and the minority are subject to defend their rights within the corridor of bulding a sustainable harmonious life.

Islamic religious counselors, indeed, have an important role in promoting sustanable a harmonious religious life. In giving services, they deal with religious issues such as marriage, inheritance of property, politics, and socio-religious conflicts. Religious counselors have more opportunities of sharing their contributions through their trilogy of functions in society including informative/educational supports, consultative services, and advocacy works. As the front line actors, religious islamic councilors have been seen as the representation of the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in giving the ervices to the society where religious conflicts often accour.

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## EMOTIONAL MATURITY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOSITY WITHIN MILLENNIAL GENERATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Indonesia's diversity may be challenging as it can be a double-edged knife in the context of social interaction. Not only supporting positive development direction, the diversity also carries negative influence that may cause inharmony to Indonesian society. In the context of the millennial generation as the future leader, the diversity is also very important for further discussion in response to the efforts of building a harmonious society. Projecting the case study of millennial generation in Pontianak City of West Borneo, this work aims to explore the level of emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance, as well as to verify the relationship between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance. It is based on a quantitative approach with a type of causality research project. There were 182 samples in this study. The research results show that the Pontianak City millennial generation is in a high category in terms of emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance. Further, the results have proven that emotional maturity and religiosity have a relationship with religious tolerance, which indicates that each dimension of emotional maturity and religiosity has a relationship with religious tolerance. The findings also show that an additional factor that shapes emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance is the educational level of the millennial generation. This indicates that the higher the level of education of the millennial generation, the higher their emotional matu-*

*rity, religiosity and religious tolerance.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Maturity; Religious Tolerance; Religiosity; Millennial Generation*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural society that has various religions as a reality of society, including ethnicity, race, religion, social status, economy (Masri, 2020). Multicultural is part of the existing cultural diversity which recognizes as unique potential as well as an asset of the Indonesian nation. The diversity is spread throughout Indonesia, without exception, Pontianak City. Pontianak City is the capital of West Kalimantan Province which is also one of the cities famous for its equator. The city with a variety of diverse dams is also one of the most populous cities in Indonesia. Known for its bustling population, Pontianak also has a variety of cultures, languages, ethnicities, and also includes a diversity of religions adhered to by its residents.

This diversity can be two blades. On the one hand, it has a good meaning, but on the other hand it can become a conflict that divides the harmony of the nation and the homeland. The consequences of pluralism make Pontianak vulnerable to conflicts that bring up the issue of ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup (known as SARA in Indonesian terminology). This usually starts with sentiment towards a particular tribe, ethnicity or religion and then ends in widespread conflict. The diversity of the existing population does not always have a positive impact, but it can also be a potential for various social conflicts and other conflicts. This is in line with Arkanudin (2005) that communities that have a range of lives with various ethnicities, religions and cultures tend to have disputes and disharmony as well as the emergence of existing conflicts. Pontianak is an area that is prone to conflict, especially tribal conflict. If the conflict is from a religious perspective, there was one incident on 20 May 2017, headlined by an action to defend ulama which coincided with the Gawai Dayak festival (CO, 2017). The conflict that occurred involved between religions, which started with the expulsion of religious leaders who wanted to go on a missionary safari. in Pontianak. This condition led to the emergence of actions to defend the ulama. Around 205 people had an argument with the crowd in front of the Mujahidin Grand Mosque.

These conflicts is triggered by the lack of tolerance practice. The lack application of tolerance accentuate the divisions in a multicultural society, resulting in conflict between groups and individuals. This term is usually called intolerance. This behavior will divide the harmony of existing diversity. With the potential for diversity, it is necessary to create tolerance that can

bridge harmony. Tolerance is also a reinforcement of diversity in the life of a pluralistic society. According to Afkari (2020), tolerance is defined as mutually respectful behavior, giving freedom to have both beliefs, ethnicities and various other diversity aspects. On the other hand, tolerance is also interpreted as a method for achieving peace. This means that peace can be achieved if mutually respectful behavior occurs reciprocally. So tolerance requires two-way involvement to create peace and harmony.

According to Afkari (2020), tolerance is defined as mutually respectful behavior, giving freedom to have both beliefs, ethnicities and various other diversity aspects. Additionally, a manifestation of religious tolerance is a willingness or acceptance within oneself to respect adherents of other religions. This is in line with the opinion of Safei (2020), that creating an order of social life through the birth of religious tolerance that respects each other and synergizes in solving social problems. In connection with the description above, to reduce and overcome conflicts, is to strengthening tolerance. The people who are having the tolerance is known for having emotional maturity. This is based on the opinion of the Hygiene (1967) that someone who is called mature does not only have their reactions oriented towards the expectations of other people's reactions, but their reactions arise because of considerations within themselves. So someone who has good emotional maturity is predicted to be able to have better interactions with the environment, including tolerance. People who have emotional maturity can choose the right response, regardless of what other people do to them.

Apart from emotional maturity, religiosity is also associated with religious tolerance. Naim (2012) states that someone who is called character is a religious person. If you want to form a religious character in someone, it is not enough just to read the teachings. However, further than that, there is a need for internalization efforts and a process of appreciation in interpreting religious teachings. Thus, the practice of religion is not just a mere formality but becoming the character of religiosity requires a long process. In this research, researchers took the subject of the millennial generation.

As the agent of change, the millennial generation is expected to have quality that can maintain the unity and unity of the Indonesian nation. However, the current status quo on the religious tolerance remains questioned. Thus, it is necessary to study further regarding religious tolerance. Within the quality, the researcher aim to examines whether Millennials emotional maturity and level of religiosity have an influence on a person's religious tolerance.

The three variables are hoped to be existed within the generations for the better future of Indonesia in living and nurturing the diversity. Therefore, with

these scientific studies, it is hoped that the result of this study can shed the light for the government, in this case the Ministry of Religion, as a guide for an accurate view of the current situation and conditions of existing diversity, especially in Pontianak. Additionallu, based on these findings, it is hoped that in the future, new solutions or policies related to diversity in Indonesia will be born. Based on the explanation above, researchers are interested in examining the relationship between emotional maturity and religiosity with religious tolerance. To sum up it is important to emphasize rhis research aims to find out: the level of emotional intelligence of the millennial generation in Pontianak city; the level of religiosity of the millennial generation in Pontianak city; and finally to determine the level of relationship between emotional intelligence and religiosity with the religious tolerance of the millennial generation in the city of Pontianak.

### **THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND RELIGIOSITY**

According to Bahari (2010), tolerance is the most basic part needed to foster mutual respect and understanding of all differences that occur in society to create harmonious, safe and peaceful social relations. Bahari states that there are four aspects of tolerance, namely the behaviour of appreciating, respecting, and allowing and permitting differences in the surrounding environment. These differences are not just a matter of belief but can also be differences in stance, perception or views, habits or behaviour, and so on.

According to Setiawan (2015), emotional maturity is the condition of a person who is not quickly disturbed or tempted by emotional stimuli originating from outside or within him. Bimo Walgito said that the characteristics of emotional maturity that can be seen in a person (Setiawan, 2015), include 1) being able to accept the conditions of oneself and others objectively, 2) most of them are not impulsive, adjusting their thoughts by providing a reactionary response to stimuli what he feels, 3) can regulate his emotions and expressions well, with any emotional state but not shown publicly, 4) think objectively, which can foster a sense of patience and understanding, 5) have good responsibility so that he can face every situation well.

Based on Glock and Stark (2014) religiosity is a unity related to institutionalized religion and is centred on various issues that are lived and interpreted more deeply. Furthermore, they said that religiosity has several dimensions, namely: 1) ritual dimension, a dimension related to the extent to which an individual carries out his religious obligations, 2) belief dimension, a dimension that refers to an individual's belief in a religion and its values. as a guide in everyday

life, 3) the dimension of appreciation, the dimension of a combination of high trust or confidence and the optimal implementation of worship so as to give rise to a sense of closeness to God, 4) the dimension of religious knowledge, which can be in the form of individual understanding and knowledge both conceptually and textually from the teachings, believed and trusted, 5) consequence dimension, related to self-commitment to apply and implement religious teachings, both commands and prohibitions.

### **THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION**

Religious tolerance is one of the factors that makes society, especially the millennial generation, able to live in harmony and prosperity alongside various existing differences. The millennial generation, which is the nation's next generation, requires them to have an attitude of religious tolerance so that they can create an attitude of mutual respect and respect between individuals so that peace and progress of the nation can be realized without division. To foster an attitude of religious tolerance, various dimensions are needed to support the development of this attitude, including the dimensions of emotional maturity and religiosity.

The current study tries to see the relationship. Whether the relationship is positive or negative, created by relationships between variables. There is a positive relationship between emotional maturity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation, with the assumption that if emotional maturity in the millennial generation is high, then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is high, and conversely if emotional maturity in the millennial generation is low then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is low. 2) There is a positive relationship between religiosity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation, with the assumption that if religiosity in the millennial generation is high, then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is high, and conversely, if religiosity in the millennial generation is low then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is low. 3) There is a positive relationship between emotional maturity and religiosity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation, with the assumption that if emotional maturity and religiosity in the millennial generation are high, then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is high, and conversely, if emotional maturity and religiosity in the millennial generation is low then religious tolerance in the millennial generation is low.

The population in this study were all individuals in the Millennial age category in Pontianak City. Then, a sample is taken from this population. According to Mukhtazar (2020) the population in this study were all individuals in the



Millennial age category in Pontianak City. Then, a sample is taken from this population. According to Mukhtazar (2020), the sampling technique is a step used in drawing or taking samples, which aims to select good elements to represent the population that has been selected to become the target of the research. The characteristics of the sample used in this research are: 1) Domiciled in Pontianak City, 2) In the millennial age category with birth years from 1981 to 2000, 3) Are male and female, 4) Not limited to a particular religion.

Data collection instruments were carried out using questionnaires and Likert scale models.. The scale used in this research consists of 3 scales: religious tolerance, emotional maturity, and religiosity. The religious tolerance scale was measured using the Religious Tolerance Scale created Rumadjak (2018). The emotional maturity scale was measured using a measuring tool created by Sarah (2017). Skala Religiusitas dibuat oleh Hafsari (2020). The following is an explanation of the instruments used in this research. All scales used have the same model score, with the alternative answer option strongly disagreeing with the favourable item being given a score of 1. In contrast, the unfavourable answer option is given a score of 4. The alternative answer option of disagreeing with the favourable item is given a score of 2, while the unfavourable is given a score of 3. Alternative choices: An agreed answer for a favourable item is given a score of 3, while an unfavorable answer is given a score of 4. The alternative answer option is strongly agree for a favorable item is given a score of 4, while an unfavorable answer is given a score of 1. Below is a table of scales that have been used.

**Table 1**  
**Scales That Used In Research**

No	Variable	Source	Aspects/Dimensions	Items	Cronbach's alpha
1	Religious Tolerance	Rumadjak (2018).	Aspects of appreciating, respecting, allowing and allowing	11 items	0.888
2	Emotional Maturity	Sarah (2017)	Aspects of appreciating, respecting, allowing and allowing	18 items	0.878
3	Religiosity	Hafsari (2020)	Dimensions of ritual, belief, appreciation, religious knowledge, and consequences in religion	35 items	0.976

The process in this research began with research preparation by looking for an appropriate scale to measure the millennial generation's emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance. When all scales are appropriate, then proceed with conducting the research. The scale is given to subjects who meet the criteria. The research implementation phase began in a month, with questionnaires distributed online using Google Forms. Each respondent received three research scales and personal data that each respondent could fill in. The scores obtained are from the subject's answers from these scales. The next stage is processing the data that has been obtained, consisting of personal data.

Data analysis uses assumption tests, including normality and linearity tests, to obtain significant level ( $\alpha$ ). For this reason, data can be said to be normal and linear if the significance level ( $\alpha$ ) is  $> 0.05$ . Then, the hypothesis used multiple regression analysis, which was carried out to see whether there was a linear relationship between religious tolerance and a person's emotional maturity and religiosity. The tool used to analyze data in this research is the Statical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). SPSS is used to analyze descriptions of subject characteristics, descriptive statistics, normality tests, linearity tests, multiple linear regression equations, and hypothesis tests to determine whether there is a partial relationship between variables X1 and a relationship between variables X1 and X2 and Y simultaneously.

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MILLENNIAL GENERATION

There are 182 millennial generation in Pontianak City who participate in this research. From the table 1, it is found that the respondents were dominated by women, totalling 116 people (63.74%). Based on religion, the respondents were predominantly Muslim, numbering 158 people (86.81%). In terms of education, it was dominated by respondents with D4/S1/equivalent education, totalling 129 people (70.88%). If we look at the area, it is found that the respondents are dominated by respondents who live in Pontianak City with a total of 65 people (35.71%).

**Table 2**  
***Description of Participant Characteristics (n=182)***

The Description		Total
Gender	Male	36,26%
	Female	63,74%
Religion	Buddha	2,20%
	Islam	86,81%

Education	Catholic	3,85%
	Protestant	7,14%
	Senior High	13,74%
	Diploma 3/Associate's Degree	6,04%
	Diploma 4/Undergraduate/Associate's Degree	70,88%
Domicile	Master	8,79%
	Doctoral	0,55%
	West Pontianak	15,93%
	Pontianak City	35,71%
	South Pontianak	15,93%
	Southeast Pontianak	8,79%
	East Pontianak Timur	10,44%
	North Pontianak	12,64%
	Sungai Raya Dalam District	0,55%

**Table 3**  
***Categorization of Emotional Maturity, Religiosity, Religious Tolerance***

	Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional Maturity	Low	$X < 36$	-	-
	Middle	$36 \leq X < 54$	62	34,07%
	High	$54 \leq X$	120	65,93%
Religiosity	Low	$X < 70$	2	1,10%
	Middle	$70 \leq X < 105$	6	3,30%
	High	$105 \leq X$	174	95,60%
Religious Tolerance	Low	$X < 70$	2	1,10%
	Middle	$70 \leq X < 105$	50	27,47%
	High	$105 \leq X$	130	71,43%

Based on table categorization of emotional maturity, religiosity, religious tolerance, it can be seen that the emotional maturity, religiosity, and religious tolerance of participants. The third aspect is above 50%, which indicates that the millennial generation in Pontianak City is at a high level.

**Tabel 4**  
**Linear Regression Analysis**

Model B		<i>Unstandardized Coef- ficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	T	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2,554	3,120		0,818	0,414
	Kematangan Emosi	0,470	0,062	0,539	7,516	0,000
	Religiusitas	0,054	0,026	0,149	2,073	0,040

Based on the analysis of Linear Regression Analysis in table 4, it can be concluded that the multiple linear regression equation and its explanation in this study are as follows:  $Y = 2.554 + 0.470X_1 + 0.054X_2$ . The regression coefficient value of the emotional maturity variable ( $X_1$ ) is 0.470, which is positive. From this figure, it can be interpreted that the direction of the variable relationship is positive, where if the value of the emotional maturity variable increases by 1, it can be predicted that the value of the religious tolerance variable ( $Y$ ) will increase by 0.470.

The regression coefficient value for the religiosity variable ( $X_2$ ) is 0.054, which is positive. From this figure, it can be interpreted that the direction of the variable relationship is positive, where if the value of the religiosity variable increases by 1, it can be predicted that the value of the religious tolerance variable ( $Y$ ) will increase by 0.054.

**Table 5**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Model B		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	-19,586	17,354		-1,129	,264
	Emotional Maturity	,686	,339	,260	2,024	,048
	Religiosity	,474	,228	,267	2,080	,042

From the analysis multiple linear regression analysis in table 5 shows, it can be proven that there is a relationship between emotional maturity and religious tolerance. Based on the analysis, it was found that the significance value between the variables of emotional maturity and religious tolerance was  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Then, the next findings prove a relationship between religiosity and religious tolerance. It was found that the significance value between the religiosity variable and religious tolerance was  $0.040 < 0.05$ .

The next test to see whether there is a relationship between variables X1 and X2 and Y simultaneously can use the F test. Table 5 to see whether there is a relationship between emotional maturity and, religiosity and religious tolerance can simultaneously use the F test. Based on the analysis, a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  is obtained. This proves a significant relationship exists between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance.

**Table 6**  
*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis*

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2710,299	2	1355,150	61,705	0,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3931,151	179	21,962		
	Total	6641,451	181			

**Tabel 7**  
*Uji R Square*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0,639	0,408	0,401	4,686

Based on the analysis of multiple linear regression analysis in table 7 above, it shows that the R Square or R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.408. Referring to this figure, it means that 40.8% of the Religious Tolerance variable can be explained by the two independent variables in this research, namely Emotional Maturity and Religiousness. Meanwhile, the remainder, namely  $100\% - 40.8\% = 59.2\%$ , can be explained by other variables outside of the variables in this study. The magnitude of the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable can be seen through effective contribution. The effective contribution for the Emotional Maturity variable with Religious Tolerance is 33.85%. Meanwhile, the effective contribution for the Religiosity variable with

Religious Tolerance is 7.00%. It can be concluded that the emotional maturity variable has a more dominant relationship compared to religiosity.

### **THE IMPORTANT AND THE EXISTENCE OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG EMOTIONAL MATURITY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOSITY WITHIN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION**

There are several objectives will be discussed as formulated. The first objective is to find out the level of emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation of Pontianak City. This goal can be achieved after distributing questionnaires related to emotional maturity, religiosity, and religious tolerance among respondents who are part of the West Kalimantan millennial generation. After the data is collected, a series of data analyses are then carried out. The data analysis shows that the emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance of the millennial generation who were respondents in this study are predominantly in the high category.

The further aim of this research is to determine the relationship between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation of Pontianak City. This goal was obtained by conducting hypothesis testing using the T and F tests. Based on the hypothesis, it was found that emotional maturity and religiosity have a positive relationship with religious tolerance. The analysis showed that the significance value between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance was  $0.000 < 0.05$ .

This proves a significant relationship exists between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance. This indicates that the aim of the relationship between emotional maturity and religiosity and attitudes of religious tolerance in the millennial generation has been achieved, and the hypothesis can be proven. Based on research by researchers, this research is novel because no research has combined these three variables, namely emotional maturity and religiosity, with religious tolerance.

Religious tolerance is an important attitude for the millennial generation. Religious tolerance is the recognition and support of a person's right and freedom to have his or her own beliefs without having to seek the truth of a religion (Ghufron dan Risnawita, 2010). When the millennial generation has religious tolerance, it means that someone has respect and cares for other religious beliefs. Then, the attitude of not forcing other people to follow their own religion and not interfering in each other's religious affairs.

The diversity of ethnicities, tribes, cultures and religions in Indonesia, especially in Pontianak City, makes the millennial generation vulnerable to

SARA issues and moral decline. This is due to advances in unlimited access to various communication and information technologies, which can cause many things to not be filtered properly. Hence, it is important for them to pay more attention to and sort information and technological developments, along with a strong understanding of religion, to prevent negative things.

Concern and vulnerability about problems or conflicts that may occur require the millennial generation to have an attitude of tolerance. This is because the millennial generation is one of the most important components in society. It exists in an era of idealism, and it shapes everything in a better direction in its life concepts and personal plans (Rohmiyati, 2018). So that this generation becomes the hope of continuing the relay of young generations who excel in leading the nation.

As the next generation to lead the nation, the millennial generation is expected to have the emotional maturity to foster religious tolerance in society. Emotional maturity is an important and appropriate character to have as a step to avoid conflicts that might occur due to SARA. Ideally, someone with high emotional maturity can try to tolerate all conditions that occur.

In line with this, based on the hypothesis test analysis, the significance value between emotional maturity and religious tolerance was obtained at  $0.000 < 0.05$ . This proves a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and religious tolerance, so the next hypothesis in this research can be proven. In line with what Sofyan (2015) has stated, there is an influence between emotional maturity and tolerance because the dimension of emotional maturity is related to the personality maturity side.

Personality maturity indicates that a person is able to gain an understanding of himself so that the individual can act maturely towards himself and others. According to Sabiq (2020), personality maturity is characterized by caring for other people, accepting all differences wisely, and accepting other people's views openly and objectively. Of course, this character must be possessed by the current millennial generation because it indicates that the individual is able to control emotions in various situations and conditions.

Based on the regression coefficient value, emotional maturity shows a result of 0.470, which indicates that emotional maturity is positive. This figure can be interpreted as a positive direction of the relationship, which indicates that if the emotional maturity value increases by 1, it can be predicted that the religious tolerance value will increase by 0.470. This shows that high emotional maturity provides a relationship that is in line with a high level of religious tolerance in the millennial generation. In line with what was stated by William James,



people who are tolerant and mature in religion will have emotional changes in a positive direction, becoming a symmetrical feeling of love and harmony so that they are free from feelings of hatred, disputes and so on (Sabiq, 2020).

Referring to the research of Aryono, Machuroch, and Karyanta (2017) that there is a significant correlation between emotional maturity and tolerance for stress in nature-seeking students at Sebelas Maret University ( $p=0.00 < 0.05$ ,  $T_{count} = 7.149 > T_{table} = 1.985$ ). It can be said that if emotional maturity is related to tolerance, then there is a significant relationship. This means that high emotional maturity is predicted to be associated with a high tolerance level. On the other hand, if someone has low emotional maturity, then the person's tolerance will also be low.

Apart from emotional maturity, religiosity also has a relationship with religious tolerance, indicating that religiosity has a role in fostering attitudes of religious tolerance in the millennial generation. In line with the opinion of Hafifah and Anggraini (2022) ) a person with high religious intensity can separate good and wrong actions, which means that the religiosity factor plays an important role in life. This is also proven by the subsequent hypothesis test analysis which shows that religiosity has a positive relationship with religious tolerance. Based on the analysis, it was found that the value between religiosity and religious tolerance was  $0.040 < 0.05$ .

This proves that there is a significant relationship between religiosity and religious tolerance and the next hypothesis in this research can be proven. This aligns with the research of Khoiril dkk (2022) who obtained a value of  $r_{x1-y} = 0.330$  and Sig. 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicates a significant relationship between religiosity and tolerance in Lampung ethnic students. In line with what Meiza (2018) Analysis of Variance (Anova stated, religion is often interpreted as religiosity. It is also often mentioned that tolerance is closely related to religiosity or religious morals.

Based on the regression coefficient value, religiosity shows a result of 0.054, which indicates that religiosity is positive. This figure means that if religiosity is positive if it increases by 1, it can be predicted that the value of the millennial generation's religious tolerance will also increase by 0.054. This is in line with the opinion of Afandi (2018) that an individual with a high level of religiosity will be in line with a high level of appreciation for his religion. On the other hand, if an individual has a low level of religiosity, appreciation of his religion will also be low, causing a person to behave in a way that does not comply with the demands of his religion. A low appreciation of one's religion means that a person can commit violations and lack respectful and respectful behaviour.

If we look at the magnitude of the relationship between emotional maturity and religiosity and religious tolerance, it can be seen through its effective contribution. The effective contribution to emotional maturity with religious tolerance is 33.85%. Meanwhile, the effective contribution to religiosity with religious tolerance is 7.00%. This shows that emotional maturity has a dominant effective contribution to religious tolerance compared to religiosity.

A glimpse at the magnitude of the relationship between emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance shows that it is an effective contribution. The effective contribution to emotional maturity with religious tolerance is 33.85%. Meanwhile, the effective contribution to religiosity with religious tolerance is 7.00%. This shows that emotional maturity makes a dominant and effective contribution to religious tolerance compared to religiosity.

This is in line with Sofyan (2015), who said that someone with emotional maturity is aware of not oppressing or criticizing other people and other negative emotions. So, emotional maturity is important to foster tolerance by respecting each other and maintaining unity. Having religious tolerance is mandatory because it makes life peaceful and peaceful amidst many differences. Through high emotional maturity, a person can think positively and objectively towards other people, have a high attitude of caring, help each other, and foster a sense of love and compassion for fellow humans.

However, on the other hand, religiosity also makes an effective contribution to religious tolerance, although it is not dominant. According to Akmansyah (2017), the intensity and experience model of religiosity indicates the qualification or level of religious tolerance. Of course, there are differences in a person's attachment to the spirit of their religiosity. This indicates that an individual's tolerance level and quality will also vary. Therefore, it can be said that the effective contribution of the millennial generation's religiosity depends on the appreciation and meaning of religiosity towards their religion. It can be predicted that the millennial generation's understanding of their religion is not that high, making the effective contribution to religious tolerance also not that high.

## **THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF MILLENIAL GENERATION IN A MULTICULTURAL COUNTRY**

This research was located in Pontianak City which still does not represent the quantity of each religion. Apart from that, the number of respondents based on the education level of the millennial generation is also not evenly distributed. So, there is a need for further research with a larger and more evenly distributed total of millennial generation respondents. Research

respondents who are the millennial generation with a larger and more evenly distributed quantity of respondents at each level of identity, such as religion and education, can provide much more significant results. There is further research related to the relationship between emotional maturity and, religiosity and religious tolerance in the millennial generation with research locations or areas that are further expanded and enlarged in scope, such as the province of West Kalimantan or, even more broadly, the Indonesian nation. With these shortcomings, researchers hope that we can still provide future suggestions for the millennial generation. Related to the third element which is important in creating harmony between religious communities in a multicultural context.

This research implies that emotional maturity and religiosity factors play a role in religious tolerance in the millennial generation. A good understanding of religious tolerance, emotional and religious maturity can shape the readiness of the millennial generation as potential leaders in the future era. The aspects contained in religiosity and emotional maturity of individuals are predicted to foster attitudes of religious tolerance. In this way, a person's ability can appreciate, respect, allow and enable everyone to carry out their obligations as religious community with their own beliefs and convictions.

The millennial generation must develop an understanding of themselves to think rationally and neutrally. This individual is identified with the idea of which things should be prioritized so that they can consider things in life wisely. Wise and good things can be obtained with knowledge of religious teachings, which can be in the form of understanding one's knowledge conceptually and textually regarding the religious teachings one believes in.

Through the values of religiosity and emotional maturity, a person is expected to be able to control himself so that he can develop an attitude of tolerance toward religion. Religion is a life guide that is really needed in providing teachings and certainty about good and correct norms. A person needs religious norms as a psychological need to create a stable mental condition, a balanced mentality and a healthy and peaceful soul (Rahmawati, 2002). The millennial generation understands values and has an adequate and deep intellectual level regarding moral values, which manifests in their personalities. Apart from that, the millennial generation can regulate their emotions through religion to help them reach emotional maturity.

The quality and quantity of an individual's religiosity can give him an appreciation of religious teachings in realizing the establishment of faith and knowledge of religion, enabling a person to build good relationships with the surrounding environment. Apart from that, a high and good degree of religiosity, supported by good and stable emotional maturity, can help a person

respect himself and his environment. In this way, in the end, the millennial generation can develop a form of religious tolerance.

From a different angle, there are other interesting findings in this research. Based on the analysis, the millennial generation's educational level shows an influence on their average emotional maturity and religiosity. This shows that the higher the education, the higher the emotional maturity and religiosity of the millennial generation in Pontianak City. In line with religious tolerance in the millennial generation, it shows similar that the higher the education of the millennial generation, the higher their religious tolerance.

Yahya, Harahap, and Nawawi (2022) assume that the higher an individual's level of education, the higher and broader the individual's understanding and insight in thinking, acting and behaving, which is also related to the maturity of a person's thinking in sorting out good and bad things. This shows that when the level of education is high, the millennial generation also has a high level of mutual respect and respect in thinking and acting so that attitudes of religious tolerance can be upheld. Education is one of the efforts that continues to be advanced to develop a person's personality and abilities for the sake of continued life because education has an essential role in obtaining the quality of individual awareness. Based on the explanation above, emotional maturity and religiosity have interrelated aspects, and the level of education factor has an influence and contributes to creating an attitude of tolerance in the millennial generation. These dimensions and factors are predicted to increasingly enable the millennial generation to behave better towards other people. This includes being tolerant of people whose religious beliefs differ from one's own. Apart from that, the formation of these two things will also minimize moral degradation and divisions related to SARA issues.

Programs that implement increasing and building religious tolerance continue to be intensified so that society, especially the millennial generation, which has developed an attitude of religious tolerance, can be maintained and divisions that could occur at any time do not occur. These programs include an active and open religious outreach program to create harmony between religious communities, providing facilities for forums or religious groups to recommend activities that can be carried out within the group. Developing religious tolerance development programs such as seminars, dialogues and workshops for the millennial generation as a continuation of the leadership relay in the nation's progress.

## CONCLUSION

The data and analysis show that millennial generation is in the high category in terms of emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance. The case study on the millennial generation in Pontianak city indicates that it is very important to highlight the needs of giving appropriate educational materials to the millennial generation to support their better understanding on peaceful and moderate society for the future of a sustainable harmonious life in the global world. Psychological aspect of the education is highly demanded for the generation as the modern world carries the complexity of modern life.

The data also shows that emotional maturity and religiosity had a relationship with religious tolerance, which indicated that each dimension of emotional maturity and religiosity had a relationship with religious tolerance. On the other hand, the findings in this research show that an additional factor that shapes emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance is the educational level of the millennial generation. This shows that the higher the level of education of the millennial generation, the higher their emotional maturity, religiosity and religious tolerance.

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## ACCULTURATION OF RELIGION AND CULTURE WITHIN MUSLIM SUNDANESE SOCIETY IN WEST JAVA

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the acculturation of culture and religion, focusing on the interaction between Islam and Sundanese culture in West Java, Indonesia. Early Islamic preachers employed accommodating strategies, integrating pre-existing cultural elements, which led to the development of a unique form of Islam in the region. The purpose of this article is to examine and highlight the ways in which Islam has blended with Sundanese culture in West Java. The study utilized a qualitative research approach, combining field research with data from both primary sources (observations and interviews) and secondary sources, such as books, scholarly articles, research reports, and other relevant materials. The data were displayed in a narrative-descriptive format and analyzed using the qualitative data analysis techniques including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the long-standing process of acculturation between Islam and Sundanese culture in West Java has produced a distinct Sundanese culture influenced by Islamic principles. This is evident in elements*

*such as the wawacan texts, which contain Islamic teachings, the prevalence of Islamic boarding schools, the practice of Islamic mysticism (Sufism-Tariqa), and the unique Islamic-Sundanese architectural style. The widespread acceptance of Islamic teachings among the Sundanese has led to the incorporation of these principles and traditions into Sundanese society, aligning them closely with Islamic values.*

**Keywords:** Acculturation; Islam; Sundanese Culture; West Java

## INTRODUCTION

In their daily lives, humans are deeply intertwined with the culture that naturally forms from habitual practices. Both culture and religion hold unique and significant places in human life. Islam, as a universal religion, offers teachings that are beneficial for life and the entire universe, bringing blessings to all creation. However, the relationship between culture and religion is not always straightforward. While there are times when culture and religion can easily blend, leading to mutual support and complementarity, there are also instances where the two clash, leading to conflicts (Sumpena, 2012). One of the factors contributing to the emergence of religion in society is the presence of a power perceived as immense by humans. This curiosity drives people to learn more about this great power and seek to understand its source. Additionally, humans often believe in supernatural forces. When misunderstood, natural phenomena such as those occurring in the sky, mountains, or seas can astonish people, leading them to worship this great power (Bauto, 2014).

Culture originates from the human soul, particularly through feelings and thoughts. Culture also represents the essence of an individual, reflecting how they express their feelings and thoughts in every aspect of their lives. Culture encompasses various areas of human existence, both spiritual and physical (Fitriyani, 2012). Humans live within communities that establish guidelines and rules, creating a sense of peace, tranquility, and security. These rules or norms can be cultural or religious. In indigenous communities, there are specific rules and norms upheld by all members, primarily designed to protect society and preserve nature. By fostering a healthy environment, these communities safeguard themselves against various forms of harm and disaster. This phenomenon is fascinating to study, as every society inherently embodies cultural values. Communities with distinctive characteristics are often referred to as indigenous communities. These groups pass down traditions from generation to generation, including religious practices, life conceptions, and cultural values, which are preserved and maintained as vital aspects of life (Miharja, 2016). During the process of Islamization, there has been significant

acculturation, assimilation, and transformation of Islamic teachings and traditions into the social and cultural fabric of these communities (Busni et al., 2022). Thus, there exists a mutual support system between religion and culture, where both influence and enrich each other.

Previous studies on the acculturation of religion and culture, particularly the interaction between Islam and Sundanese culture, have been extensively conducted. Several key studies in this area include: First, *Tradisi Budaya Masyarakat Islam di Tatar Sunda (Jawa Barat)* [Traditions of Islamic Culture in the Community of Tatar Sunda (West Java)] (Budi Sujati, 2019) examines Sundanese culture through the lens of Islamic law. Second, *Islam dan Budaya Lokal: Studi tentang Interelasi Islam dan Budaya Sunda* [Islam and Local Culture: A Study of the Interrelation between Islam and Sundanese Culture] (Deden Sumpena, 2012) explores the Sundanese Islamic school of thought. Third, *Sastra Islam Nusantara: Guguritan Sunda dalam Tradisi Keilmuan Islam di Jawa Barat* [Islamic Literature of the Indonesian Archipelago: The Sundanese *Guguritan* within Islamic Scientific Tradition in West Java] (Jajang A. Rohmana, 2016) discusses the use of *Guguritan* as a medium for expressing Islamic scholarly creativity. While these studies demonstrate the extensive research on the acculturation between Islam and Sundanese culture, they have not specifically focused on analyzing this acculturation within the context of West Java using acculturation theory and exploring the specific forms of acculturation that have emerged.

This article seeks to address the research question: How does the acculturation of culture and religion manifest, particularly in the context of Islam and Sundanese culture in West Java? The introduction of new cultural elements has the potential to enrich and add diversity to Sundanese society. Although numerous studies have examined the acculturation of culture and religion, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between Islam and Sundanese culture in West Java. This research employs a qualitative fieldwork approach, as it relies on qualitative data (Sugiyono, 2013). Qualitative data refers to information that is not numerical or statistical but is instead composed of thoughts, understandings, and narratives expressed in meaningful ways to achieve a comprehensive analysis and draw conclusions. The focus of this research is on the interaction between Islam and local Sundanese culture in West Java. Data for this study were collected from two main sources. First, field data were obtained through observations and interviews. Second, additional data were gathered from library sources, including books, scholarly articles, research reports, and other relevant materials. The findings are presented in a narrative-descriptive format, which involves narrating or

describing the results of the analysis based on the collected sources. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentary studies. The data analysis technique used is the qualitative analysis method developed by Miles et al., which includes data condensation, where relevant data are selected from field notes and other sources; data presentation, where the collected and analyzed data are displayed; and conclusion drawing, where findings are verified and conclusions are formed based on the evidence (Miles et al., 2014).

### THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN SUNDA REGION

Cultural acculturation is a significant reality in Indonesia (Purwaningsih & Witro, 2020). The process of religious and cultural acculturation involves the development and introduction of Islam into Indonesia, which is now widely embraced by its people. For instance, the Islamization of Java was led by the Wali Sanga, who employed a cultural approach by incorporating Hindu-Buddhist traditions, making it easier for Islam to be accepted by the archipelago's inhabitants (Laili et al., 2021). Understanding the development and history of Islam's entry into Indonesia requires examining the theories about its introduction to Southeast Asia, particularly the Indonesian archipelago.

The process of Islamization in the archipelago, particularly in the Sunda region, occurred through cultural channels, meaning that Islam interacted with the local traditions of the Tatar Sunda area. These local traditions, shaped by regional influences, were also impacted by Islamic teachings, resulting in a significant cultural shift. This interaction led to the development of a culture where community customs, passed down through generations, incorporated elements of both local traditions and Islamic practices.

Ali Puad Nasrullah, a cultural figure from Ciamis, explained as follows: "Islam and Sundanese culture are closely connected through their teachings. Sundanese teachings emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship and the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Similarly, Islam promotes the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin* (a mercy to all creation), which aligns with Sundanese teachings and has become a shared belief in the community. This shared foundation made Islamic teachings more acceptable to the Sundanese people, as there are similarities between their traditional beliefs and Islamic principles. For example, the Sundanese concept of *Hyang*, the creator of all things, parallels the Islamic belief in Allah as the one true God. Moreover, Islam's acceptance among the Sundanese was facilitated by its peaceful introduction through cultural integration and Sufism, focusing on moral guidance rather than conflict or violence" (Nasrullah,

interviewed on 20 November 2022).

Asep Muhyiddin, a Religious Studies expert from UIN Bandung, remarked: “Sundanese culture and Islamic law are closely intertwined, particularly in the realm of *muamalah* (social interactions). Culture, as a product of human creativity, and Islam, as a moral framework, intersect in shaping a society that maintains its identity. This convergence has led to the concept of *Islam teh Sunda, Sunda teh Islam* [Islam is Sunda, Sunda is Islam]. This term highlights the integration of Sundanese culture with Islamic teachings, reflecting the *ijtihad* [independent reasoning] of early Islamic preachers during the Islamization of the Tatar Sunda region” (Muhyiddin, interviewed on 20 November 2022).

Based on the interview results, it is evident that Islam can acculturate with local traditions, leading to the emergence of a new tradition known as local genius (local community intelligence or local wisdom) (Witro et al., 2021). This local genius can absorb and selectively integrate influences from foreign cultures, resulting in unique and novel creations that differ from previous forms. The characteristics of local genius include the ability to accommodate elements of foreign cultures, resist cultural impositions, integrate foreign elements into the original culture, and guide and manage cultural development on a broader scale. Regarding the process of introduction Islam to Tatar Sunda or West Java, Edi S. Ekajati’s research outlines four stages: conversion, intensification, actualization, and reform (Ekajati, 2013).

The first stage is conversion, which began with the arrival of the first Muslims in Tatar Sunda or West Java. According to local tradition recorded by J. Hageman, the first person to convert to Islam in West Java was Haji Purwa (Ekajati, 2013). The *Parahiyangan* story manuscript reveals that before his conversion, Haji Purwa was known as Bratalegawa, the second son of Sang Bunisora, also known as Prabu Guru Pangandiparamarta Jayadewabrata, who was the ruler of the Galuh kingdom. As a prominent merchant, Bratalegawa frequently traveled to Sumatra, India, China, Iran, Sri Lanka, and even Arab countries. He eventually married a Muslim woman and converted to Islam. After his conversion, he observed the Islamic pillars, including performing the Hajj pilgrimage, and was given the title Haji Baharudin. Among the Galuh community, he is more commonly known as Haji Purwa (Ripa’i, 2012). Other sources indicate that he arrived in 1250 Javanese year, or 1337 AD, traveling from Cirebon Girang to Galuh. He was the son of Prabu Kuda Lelean from Galuh and converted to Islam during a trading trip to India, where he was converted by Arab traders (Ekajati, 2013).

On the other hand, according to Prince Arya Cirebon in the Carita Purwa

Caruban Nagari (1720), the first Muslim to arrive and settle in Tatar Sunda was Sheikh Qura, also known as Sheikh Hasanudin. He was the son of Sheikh Yusuf Sidiq, a renowned cleric from Campa. Sheikh Qura became a Quran teacher in the Karawang area and introduced Islam to Nyi Subanglarang, the daughter of Jumajanti, who was known for her support of Sheikh Qura, who ruled the port of Muhara Djati. Nyi Subanglarang later married Prabu Siliwangi, the King of Padjadjaran (Ekajati, 2013, p. 78). According to Prince Arya Cirebon, other Islamic scholars also settled in Amparan Djati, including Sheikh Nuruljati, also known as Datuk Sheikh Kahfi or Sheikh Idhopi. He came from Arabia as an envoy of the King of Persia and was the teacher of Wagulungsang, the son of Nyi Subanglarang and Prabu Siliwangi. Wagulungsang played a key role in the development of Cirebon around 1445 (Ekajati, 2013).

Before Sheikh Qura arrived in Karawang, West Java had already been visited by many Muslim traders from Persia, Arabia, and India. However, the process of Islamization was not yet widespread and was primarily limited to trade. It wasn't until the military expeditions from Demak and Cirebon that the people in the ports of Banten, Sunda Kelapa, and surrounding areas became more deeply acquainted with Islam between 1526 and 1527. In 1528, Sunan Gunung Djati began efforts to introduce Islam to the interior regions of Tatar Sunda, including Kuningan, Sindangkasih, Talaga, Luragung, Ukur, Cibalagung, Pagadingan, Indralaya, Batulayang, and Timbanganten. This effort was continued by subsequent figures, such as Prince Makhdum in East Ciamis, Sheikh Abdul Muhyi in Pamijahan (South Tasikmalaya), Prince Santri in Sumedang, Aria Wangsa Goparana in Subang, and Aria Wiratanudatar in Cianjur (Ekajati, 2013).

Farid Maul, a cleric from Garut, explained why Islamic teachings were readily accepted by the Sundanese people:

He highlighted three key factors: First, the simplicity of Islamic teachings—covering aspects of faith, worship, and morals—resonated with the straightforward lifestyle of the Sundanese. Second, Islam was introduced through cultural exchanges from the East (Arabia, Persia, and India), which the Sundanese were already familiar with due to long-standing trade relations. Third, many of the early Islamic missionaries were descendants of influential figures, such as Randen Kian Santang, Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Hasanudin, and Sheikh Qura. Their high social status and power facilitated the spread of Islam, making it easier for the Sundanese to accept the religion, often unconsciously, due to the authority and social hierarchy of these figures. (Maul, Interview, 21 November 2022).



Meanwhile, in the Banten region, intensive efforts to spread Islam took place during the reign of the Banten Sultanate under Sultan Hasanudin (1528-1570), affecting both the coastal and inland areas. In Bogor, which was then the capital of the Sunda Kingdom, Islam was introduced by Maulana Yusuf, the son of Sultan Hasanudin. He sent Islamic troops from Banten to occupy the capital of Pakuan Padjadjaran. The second stage is intensification. This phase began when Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah, also known as Sunan Gunung Djati, established a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Bukit Sembung, Cirebon, where he taught Islam to the first generation of students. These students later became the first generation of scholars, who established their own centers for the spread of Islam in various regions of West Java, such as Sheikh Abdul Muhyi in Pamijahan Tasikmalaya, Prince Makhдум in Dayeuh Luhur, and Aria Wangsa Goparana in Subang. Additionally, Sunan Gunung Djati intensified Islamization in West Java through various means, including marriages, forging friendships and alliances with neighboring regions, sending religious teachers to the interior of Sunda, and establishing Islamic rule through political channels by founding sultanates like Banten and Cirebon (Ekajati, 2013).

The third stage is actualization. This stage is characterized by the establishment of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which serve as centers for educating the younger generation of Muslims. These institutions aim to equip students with religious knowledge and instill a lifestyle aligned with Islamic teachings. While the foundations for this activity were laid during the time of Susuhunan Gunung Djati, it wasn't until the 18th century AD that the establishment of *pesantren* became more widespread and intensive (Ekajati, 2013). This expansion was partly influenced by the increasing Dutch presence in Islamic territories. In Cirebon and Banten, for instance, *pesantren* were established by figures like Kiai Asyrafuddin in Sumedang and Kiai Muqoyyim in East Cirebon (1773 AD). By the 19th century, these institutions also played a role in the growing resistance to Dutch colonialism. The fourth stage is reform. This period was marked by the emergence of various Sufi orders, such as Syatariyyah, Qadiriyyah, and Naqshbandiyyah, in the 19th century. New ideas were also introduced by organizations, such as Syarikat Islam, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, the Islamic Association, and the Islamic Community Association. These developments sparked a renewed sense of enthusiasm and vitality among Muslims in West Java.

## FORMS OF ACCULTURATION OF ISLAM AND SUNDANESE CULTURE

Acculturation is a two-way interaction between cultures, where each influences the other, leading to changes in both. Acculturation as the phenomena that arise from the interaction of different cultures is as cultural change resulting from prolonged contact between cultures (Widiana, 2017). Cultural change in a region often occurs when a foreign or new culture is introduced (Ilahi et al., 2022; Latifah et al., 2021). Acculturation happens when a cultural group encounters a foreign culture and gradually incorporates elements of that culture into its own while still preserving its original identity (Kadir, 2019). However, some argue that this cultural blending can obscure the original culture to the point where it becomes unrecognizable. Acculturation can manifest in various forms, such as through language, technology, science, and art (Manu, 2018), as a result of sustained intercultural contact (Thaumaet & Soebijantoro, 2019). This process involves careful selection and absorption of foreign cultural elements, which takes time and eventually leads to the formation of a new, hybrid culture (Manu, 2018). The spread of Islam in Indonesia, for example, occurred peacefully and involved significant accommodation and acculturation with local cultures (Witro et al., 2022), which helped create the tradition of *ummatan wasathan* (a balanced community). This may explain why Islam was so readily accepted in Indonesia, leading to its status as a predominantly Muslim country (Rasidin et al., 2023; Suprianto et al., 2021).

In addition to influencing the beliefs of individuals and communities in Tatar Sunda, Islamic teachings also brought about social and cultural changes to the longstanding traditions of the Sundanese people. The integration of Islamic customs and laws often resulted in a blend of Islam with pre-existing beliefs. This is understandable, as the early spreaders of Islam employed a strategy of accommodating local traditions, taking into account the religious systems that were already in place. The first through fourth centuries of the Hijri calendar, beginning in the 7th century AD, marked the initial phase of Muslim traders arriving in coastal areas and ports throughout the archipelago (Taufiq, 2013). According to Wildan, the encounter and subsequent acculturation of Islamic teachings with Sundanese culture can be categorized into three distinct forms:

First, there is a distinct separation between the adherents of the *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings and the Sundanese Muslim community. When Islam entered the Pakuan Padjadjaran Kingdom, the *Sunda Wiwitan* community withdrew into the secluded area of Kanekes, creating a unique, insular community. This separation is evident in the stories of *budak buncireung*, *dewa kaladri*, and *pantun Bogor* of Aki Buyut Baju Rambeng version, as depicted in the

Padjadjaran Seureun Papan play. The Kanekes community, with full awareness, acknowledges the differences between their religious system and that of the Sundanese Muslim communities outside Kanekes, though they still consider themselves ethnically Sundanese. According to Djati Sunda, the Sundanese people outside Kanekes are referred to as “Sundanese Eslam,” or Sundanese who are Muslim (Taufiq, 2013).

Second, the encounter between Islam and Sundanese culture led to the emergence of new beliefs, such as the Madrais teachings developed in Cigugur, Kuningan Regency. Madrais, originally rooted in Islamic tradition, evolved into a new teaching that blended Islamic principles with pre-Islamic agrarian beliefs of the Sundanese people. Known as the Sundanese-Javanese teaching or Madraism, this belief system was formalized in 1921. It established the 1st of Syuro as a major day of celebration, known as *seren taun*, which was widely observed. The teachings revered Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice, and simultaneously honored the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday while rejecting the Qur’an, based on the belief that the authentic Qur’an would only be revealed before the Judgment Day. After Madrais’ death in 1939, his son, Prince Tejabuana, and later his grandson, Prince Jati Kusumah, continued the teachings by founding the *Paguyuban Adat Cara Karuhun Urang* (PACKU) on July 11, 1981. This organization encouraged followers to preserve the teachings of their Sundanese ancestors while abandoning Islam (Taufiq, 2013, p. 87). Third, there is the encounter between Islam and Sundanese culture that does not perpetuate old traditions like *Sunda Wiwitan* nor give rise to entirely new teachings. This adaptation is seen in the following forms.

#### 1. Reciting the *Wawacan*

*Wawacan* is one of the most cherished forms of Sundanese literature. These recitals are often performed during specific ceremonies such as seven-month rituals, *marhabanan* (recitation of prayers for Prophet Muhammad), and during *lahiran and cukuran* (birth and hair-cutting ceremonies) (Taufiq, 2013). Islamic teachings conveyed through these *wawacan* recitals have produced numerous texts that recount prophetic stories, such as *Wawacan Karios para Nabi*, *Wawacan Sajarah Anbiya* (stories of the Prophets), *Wawacan Babar Nabi*, and *Wawacan Nabi Paras*. These texts are written in Arabic script but in the Sundanese language, and they are often composed in the form of *pupuh*—traditional poetry that blends Sundanese literary art with song—such as *pupuh asmarandana*, *sinom*, *kinanti*, *dandangula*, and *pangkur*.

## 2. Islamic Boarding School

An Islamic boarding school, known locally in Indonesia as a *pesantren*, is an institution dedicated to teaching Islamic practices and beliefs (Rasidin et al., 2024). These schools play a crucial role in transforming the traditional understanding of Islam, as presented in classical scholarly works (often referred to as “yellow books”) (Asa’ari et al., 2022; Nurjaman, Yusuf, et al., 2021), into teachings for students and the broader community (Yusuf et al., 2023). Originally used to describe Hindu educational institutions, the terms *paguron* or *padepokan* have been adopted for Islamic educational contexts while retaining the name *pesantren* (*pasantrian*). In these institutions, students focus on studying Islam under the guidance of a leader known as “*Kiai*.” Historically, the title *Kiai* was associated with sacred and magical objects, but in the context of Islamic and Sundanese cultural adaptation, it has come to denote a respected *Kiai* who is an Islamic scholar or teacher (Taufiq, 2013).

## 3. Islamic Mysticism

Sundanese society has a deep connection with the mystical world, evident in some doctrines and rituals that include ascetic practices similar to those in Hinduism, intertwined with mystical and mythological elements. In Islam, this mystical dimension is reflected in Sufism, which emphasizes self-purification and spiritual growth through practices such as *ujlah* (spiritual ascension) and *hijrah* (migration or journey).

## 4. Islamic Architecture

In architecture, the design of mosques and palace squares in Sundanese regions reflects a blend of Sundanese and Islamic cultures. Since the time of Sunan Gunung Djati’s rule from 1479-1568 AD, a Grand Mosque has been constructed in every sub-district and district square. These mosques are typically located to the west of the square, near the market, palace, and prison, and have been adapted to serve as central government buildings with a mosque (*bale nyuncung*) as the primary symbol. The *bale nyuncung* represents an adaptation to the site where the *sanghyang keresa* is believed to reside in the *nyuncung rock* (upper floor) according to *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings (Taufiq, 2013). An example of this enduring tradition can be seen in the traditional house architecture of Kampung Naga in Tasikmalaya (Nurjaman, Rusmana, et al., 2021).

Ali Puad Nasrullah noted that Islamic architecture represents a significant influence of Islam on Sundanese culture. The cultural figure from Ciamis remarked:

“The acculturation between Islamic teachings and Sundanese culture is evident in various religious symbols, such as those found in mosque architecture. This influence extends to morals, which carry an Islamic nuance, as well as to religious rituals that span from birth to death. This means that in every stage of human life in Sundanese society, cultural rites are infused with Islamic teachings.” (Nasrullah, Interview November 20 2022).

The interaction between Islamic teachings and Sundanese culture has led to several outcomes including, first, integration of Customs and Traditions: Islamic society in Sundanese culture has adapted elements of old traditions into Islamic practices. This integration has resulted in new customs, ritual ceremonies, and cultural practices that harmonize both Islamic and Sundanese elements. Second, Architectural Development: both sacred and secular architecture, such as mosques, palaces, and town squares, have evolved to incorporate local building designs and ornaments. This includes integrating elements from pre-Islamic architecture into Islamic architectural styles; Third, Artistic Expression: The development of glass painting, sculpture, and other art forms has led to the creation of distinctive Islamic calligraphy. Additionally, *genjring* and tambourine arts, which originated in Arabic culture, and various traditional performances with an Islamic touch have become prominent in Sundanese art, often featured in art performances and wedding celebrations. Fourth, Religious Texts and Thought: Islamic boarding schools have played a key role in the development of religious literature, producing works such as *wawacan*, *serat suluk*, and *barzanji*. Many of these texts are preserved in the palaces of Cirebon, museums, and among the Sundanese people; Fifth, Ritual and Life Cycle Ceremonies: Traditional ceremonies, including the *tujuh bulanan* (seventh-month anniversary) ceremony, as well as ceremonies of birth, wedding, and funeral, have been infused with Islamic practices. This includes incorporating recitals of *barzanji*, *marhabanan*, *shalawat*, and *tahlil* into these events.

## THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON SUNDANESE CULTURE

Cultural acculturation refers to the blending or encounter between two or more different cultures resulting from social interaction. This process creates a new culture that differs from the original and is practiced within society (Rudiansyah et al., 2017). Based on this definition, the introduction of Islamic

teachings to the archipelago was influenced by a variety of developments that involved the acculturation of local cultures from different regions in Indonesia. In areas with rich traditional cultures, there was a blending with Islamic teachings, which can be described as a process of acculturation (Al-Amri & Haramain, 2017).

The influence of Islam on Sundanese culture is evident in the social structure of Tatar Sunda, at least up until the early 20th century. For example, the social structure of urban society was divided into classes such as the *menak* (nobility). Wibisana classifies this structure into three main groups: *priyayi* (the elite), *urang kaum* (those associated with the mosque), and *urang pasar* (traders), in addition to *sonah* (the common people). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, there are also distinctions between *ajeungans* (*kiai*) and *santri*. At the district or capital level, *urang kaum* are led by the *penghulu besar*, while the *kewedanaan* (district) and sub-district are led by the *naib*, and the village by the *lebe*. People at the district level often had strong connections with the *ajeung*, such as the notable prince Haji Hasan Mustafa (1900) who had ties with the *kiai* Kurdi in Singaparna and the Ajeungan Bangkonol in the Bandung area (Wibisana, 2013). The influence of Islam on Sundanese culture is also evident in various traditional Sundanese ceremonies, which now include prayers and thanksgiving in line with Islamic practices. Similarly, in *wayang* (shadow puppetry) stories, which originate from India and contain Hindu teachings, Islamic influence is apparent. Efforts by early Muslim missionaries in Sunda have infused these stories with Islamic elements, integrating Islamic teachings into the traditional *wayang* narratives.

Ali Puad Nasrullah, a cultural expert from Ciamis, remarked:

Before Islam arrived, the region was dominated by Hindu kingdoms such as Tarumanegara and Sunda Pandjadjaran. When Islam came to West Java, it encountered a region rich in culture and art. For instance, traditional ceremonies such as *hajat bumi* and *hajat laut* show gratitude to God and are celebrated during specific times such as harvest or the start of the fishing season. These ceremonies, which originally had Hindu influences, have incorporated Islamic prayers and rituals. Similarly, in art forms like *wayang golek*, which often explores themes of human-divine, human-human, and human-nature relationships, Islamic teachings have influenced the content and moral messages, promoting good conduct among the Sundanese people (Nasrullah, Interview, 20 November 2022).

Suarman, an artist from Bandung, remarked:

Islam has profoundly influenced Sundanese culture. Islamic teachings



have significantly impacted various aspects of Sundanese cultural life, including customs and traditions. For instance, the practice of *tahlilan*, which involves reciting prayers for the deceased, is unique to Sundanese culture and does not originate from Arabia. Similarly, the tradition of visiting or making pilgrimages to family tombs during *Lebaran* is a practice specific to Sundanese culture and is not found in Arabia. (Suarman, Interview, 23 November 2022).

The influence of Islam on Sundanese culture extends to mysticism. Pre-Islamic Sundanese society had a deep affinity for mysticism and mythology. This pre-existing interest in the mystical world made it easier for Islamic preachers in Tatar Sunda to introduce Islamic mysticism, as Islam also encompasses mystical concepts. This alignment helped facilitate the acceptance of Islam among the Sundanese people.

Suarman later remarked:

The influence of Islam on Sundanese culture is evident in various mystical practices. One example is the use of incense. Frankincense is a staple in religious rituals among the Sundanese people. Its use has been influenced by Islamic traditions, where it serves as a room freshener, similar to the burning of *buhur* in the tradition of the Prophet's descendants, known as the *habaib*. In Sundanese religious rites, incense symbolizes recognition of a power greater than humans—God. This practice reflects the Sundanese people's respect for their relationship with God, fellow humans, and nature, using frankincense to signify this reverence (Suarman, Interview, 23 November 2022).

The process of Islamization can be seen as an interaction between two or more cultures: the one spreading Islam and the one receiving it. In Tatar Sunda, this process represents a form of assimilation and acculturation, where various cultures (Arab, Persian, and Indian) blended with the local Sundanese culture, resulting in the formation of a distinct Sundanese Islamic culture.

Farid Maul, a cleric from Garut, noted as follows:

the influence of Islam on Sundanese culture is deeply embedded. For example, the term *ngahiyang*—which is similar to the concept of *moksa*—reflects how the presence of Islam has led the Sundanese people to practice ancestral teachings in a way that is framed by Islamic values. This integration encourages attitudes and ways of thinking that move beyond solely worldly concerns. Additionally, the term *pamali*, which refers to prohibitions or sinful acts, illustrates another Islamic influence. For instance, the Sundanese believe it is forbidden to sweep at night,



considering it *pamali*. This belief is linked to Islamic mysticism, as noted in classic Islamic texts like *ta'lim muta'lim*, where Sheikh Al-Jarnuzi warns that sweeping at night may bring poverty. Many such *pamali* terms are connected to Islamic concepts adopted by the Sundanese people. (Maul, Interview, 21 November 2022).

Islam was readily accepted by the Sundanese people because its principles closely aligned with their existing cultural values. As the Sundanese people developed their identity during the Islamization process, Islam seamlessly integrated into their culture, becoming a fundamental part of their collective identity. Islam entered Sunda primarily through education and preaching rather than through conquest or warfare, which contributed to a peaceful integration of Islamic practices. As a result, Islam became an integral part of Sundanese culture. Since its introduction by Sunan Gunung Djati, the process of Islamization proceeded smoothly, with the Sundanese people embracing Islam as naturally as if they were adopting their own cultural practices (Kahmad, 2013).

The influence of Islam on Sundanese society is profound, particularly in areas such as inheritance law, which follows Islamic principles of *fiqh* (Islamic law), and marriage, which blends Islamic practices with traditional Sundanese ceremonies. This influence extends throughout various stages of human life, from birth to death. Islamic teachings are reflected in ceremonies, daily transactions, and dietary practices. The belief system of the Sundanese people centers on the highest supernatural power, Gusti Allah, who is seen as omnipotent and decisive. While some remnants of pre-Islamic beliefs persist in certain circles, the majority of Sundanese people have embraced Islam wholeheartedly, including faith in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad SAW, whom they regard as the final Prophet. The celebration of *Muludan*, which honors the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, features acts of charity and extensive religious gatherings with prominent preachers from other regions (Kahmad, 2013).

Farid Maul, a cleric from Garut, noted that the acculturation of Islam with Sundanese culture is evident in various aspects of daily life. Today, expressions such as *Jodo*, *Pati*, *Bagja*, *Cilaka*, and *Pangeran nu Nangtukeun* reflect the Sundanese belief that a person's soulmate, life, death, and experiences of happiness or misfortune are all determined by God. Despite this belief in destiny, Sundanese people are not passive. Their values of *asah*, *asih*, and *asuh* emphasize mutual development and knowledge expansion. The culture of *silih asah* fosters a society with character and a passion for learning, leading to a life of independence

and discipline. Some proverbs directly linked to Islam include: *Kokoro manggih Mulud*, *Puasa manggih Lebaran* (the poor celebrate the Prophet's Birthday, those who fast celebrate Lebaran) and *Jauh ke bedug* (far from the sound of the *bedug* in the mosque). In contrast, other proverbs use terminology unique to Sundanese culture with no direct connection to Islam, such as *cul dog-dog tinggal igel* (dancing without music) and *kandel kulit beungeut* (thick-skinned face) (Maul, Interview, 21 November 2022).

It is evident that Sundanese people focus more on the essence of Islam rather than religious formalism, incorporating its principles into their everyday lives. This approach is reflected in their oral traditions, particularly in the figure of *Si Kabayan*. The character of *Si Kabayan* represents someone who has achieved both physical and spiritual well-being, remaining unaffected by external, worldly concerns. *Si Kabayan* views life as *heuheuy jeung deudeuh*, meaning that life is a source of joy and affection. This perspective aligns with the Quranic verse *Innal hayata dunya laibun wa lahwun* (Indeed, the life of this world is but play and amusement) and the Hadith of the Prophet, *Love what is on earth, and you will be loved by what is in the heavens* (Kahmad, 2013, p. 103).

## CONCLUSION

The Sundanese people were quick to embrace Islamic teachings. As the majority religion in West Java, Islam played a significant role in the acculturation process, creating a balanced practice of religion that incorporated local cultural elements rather than eliminating them. Early Islamic preachers and religious teachers in Tatar Sunda utilized a cultural approach during the Islamization process, resulting in a distinctive form of Sundanese Islam that harmonized with and enriched Sundanese culture.

Traces and forms of the acculturation between Islam and Sundanese culture can be observed in various aspects, including *wawacan* texts, pesantren education, Islamic mysticism (*tasawuf-tariqa*), and Islamic-Sundanese architecture, such as mosques in West Java. The Sundanese people have embraced Islamic teachings easily, as the simplicity of Islam aligns with their cultural values. Consequently, as the Sundanese people learn about Islam, they also engage with their own cultural traditions. This is a result of the adept methods used by early Islamic missionaries in Tatar Sunda. The Sundanese concepts of *cageur*, *bageur*, *someah ka semah*, and *nyaah ka sasama* resonate closely with Islamic teachings. As a result, many aspects of Sundanese life, such as *salametan* (communal feast), *syukuran* (thanksgiving), *nikahan* (marriage), *opatpuluhan*

(fourtieth-day celebration), and *muludan* (the Prophet's birthday), are deeply intertwined with Islamic practices. Even the laws governing inheritance and marriage in Sundanese culture are based on the principles of *fiqh* (Islamic law).

This research explores how the acculturation of Islam with Sundanese culture in West Java has led to the development of a Sundanese culture inspired by Islamic teachings. Recommendations for future research include examining the specific traditions within various Sundanese ceremonies that are influenced by Islam. For instance, investigating the Islamic teachings embedded in *wawacan* texts and their impact on these traditions would be valuable.

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## A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON ISLAMIC CONCEPTS OF *JIHAD*, *IMAN* AND *ISLAM* IN THE CONTEXT OF MINDANAO PEACE PROCESS

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper is an excerpt of a full-blown study that the author did on the role of religion in the peace process in Mindanao of Southern Philippines. It attempts to understand and analyze Islamic concepts of Jihad, Iman and Islam and their significance to the problem of armed conflict in Mindanao. Analyses of these concepts is based mainly from the perspective of Islamic liberation theology specifically on the works of Farid Esack, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Fazlur Rahman, whose thoughts on the subject are seen to have more relevance towards development of a contextual Islamic theology of peace and liberation that is reflective of the historical, socio-political, cultural, and economic conditions in Mindanao of Southern Philippines. The study attempts to understand the meanings of Jihad, Iman and Islam and draw out essential and significant theological, ethical, and political principles and values which are relevant to the issues of conflict in Mindanao of Southern Philippines, and the role of religion in the peace process. Based on the principles and values derived from the study of the said Islamic concepts, the study attempts to construct a theological and political agenda that is informed by the historical, social, and political context in Mindanao of Southern Philippines.*

**Keywords:** Christian Perspective; Jihad; Iman; Islam; Mindanao Peace Process

### INTRODUCTION

It must be recognized at the outset that Islam is so diverse, that it is hard to speak of one single Islamic interpretation or belief that could represent the different groups and entities of Islam. Within Islam itself, there are divergent groups and factions with different and distinct cultural, ethnic, social, political and theological orientation who share different views and interpretations of the Islam faith in relation to the world and society as taught in the Quran. Hisano Kato (1980) in his book, "The Clash of Ijtihad- Fundamentalist Versus Liberal Muslims" points out differences over interpretations of Islam, some of which are "diametrically" opposed to one another.



Thus, “it is a truism to say that there is no single entity called Islam only the various Islams” manifested in a widely varied geographical, cultural, political and historical milieu (Graham, 1993: 495). This is particularly true in Southern Philippines, where Islam is represented and expressed in and through varied ethno-cultural, political identities, and historical settings. These differing and sometimes conflicting views and interpretations of the Qur’an are not merely products of different ethno-linguistic, political and cultural factors. Mainly, they stem from the unresolved hermeneutical problem that raises the issue of how Qur’anic teachings are to be interpreted and understood both in their original intent and in the current peculiarly complex and pluralistic context.

Traditionalist Muslims stick to the literal, legalistic, and formalistic method of interpreting the Quran which is characteristically rigid, fixed, and inflexible. Over the years, this kind of interpretation is sort of “sacralized” and regarded as the only “valid” and “legitimate” method of interpretation. Any deviation from it may be viewed as an “assault” and “betrayal” of the true intent of the Quran. Thus, it leaves very little or no room for further interpretations (Esack, 1997 & Engineer, 1990).

This position however, is challenged by the more liberal Muslim scholars who believe in the dynamic and contextual reading of the Quran which is more open, adaptable, and contextually relevant. They see the need to interpret, formulate and develop new Islamic theological and political thoughts and actions which are more compatible with existing socio-cultural and political context. This view reflects much the Islamic Liberation theology perspective that insists on the crucial importance of the social context in shaping one’s interpretation, and therefore, one’s expression of religion. Thus, the historical, socio-political, cultural and economic context of the society in which a religion is located is important in shaping the form and scale of its influence.

To understand Islamic hermeneutics of peace and liberation, it is important to go back and understand the socio-cultural and politico-economic situations existing in Mecca before the introduction of Islam. The period before Islam was called a period of *jahilliah* (ignorance) (Khadduri, 1984: 116). The social outlook of the Arabs was very narrow and people were divided along different tribal and ethnic lines, each having its own idol and tribal god. The society was characterized by fierce competition and rivalry among different tribes for economic gains and political power. “There was no concept of humanity beyond one’s own tribe (Engineer, 1990: 11; Ahmed, 1988; Barakat, 1993).” Women were being discriminated and many of them were politically, socially and economically deprived (Engineer, 1990).

The economic scene was quite depressing. The weaker sections of society

were being marginalized and pushed to the periphery of human existence. The economic woes of the poor [*miskin*], orphans and widows, many of whom were reduced to slavery and indignity were “indescribable” (Engineer, 1990: 28). The rich and the powerful on the other hand lived a life of luxury and disregarded their obligations to help and feed the poor. In fact, they had sacrificed and exploited the poor for economic and political advantage (Engineer, 1990: 30).

It was in the midst of such despicable condition that the Prophet Muhammad emerged and launched his war of liberation against all forms of enslavement and oppression. The Prophet was a great activist who worked for the liberation of the oppressed, the poor, the slaves, the needy and the ignorant (Engineer, 1980: 19-28). He fought against the arrogant rulers and elites and all forms of unjust and oppressive systems and practices which were contrary to the teachings of the Quran and the will of God for humankind (Engineer, 1979: 45).

Islam was therefore introduced as a religion of peace and “had been a ‘harbinger’ of change and liberation” (Engineer, 1979: 11). Islam had “emancipated man (woman) from the evils of slavery and degradation. It “liberated man from the tyranny and dominance” of the powerful (Nadwi, 2006: 11). This is quite evident in the life and missionary campaigns of the Prophet Muhammad who put up a strong challenge to the status quo-the rich traders of Mecca who belonged to the leading tribe called Quraysh-who were arrogant and drank with power and greed (Engineer, 1975: 17-18). The Prophet gathered around himself the poor and the oppressed and even the slaves of Mecca in his battle against all forms of exploitation and injustice.

The prophet was a catalyst of change and transformation. His involvement in the struggle for the establishment of a just and humane society is described clearly as follows:

“The Prophet himself did not opt to live far away from the camp of men. He worked and toiled among things just as they are. He did not achieve the glory of the just, except by way of the risk of his life. He only made triumphal entry into Mecca after confronting every danger and after subjected to every taunt of sarcasm. At Mecca he was not merely content to be the preacher of the new faith; he became also the leader of the new city where he organized the religious, social and economic life. He shared personally in the construction of the mosque and dwellings of the emigrants...Charged to deliver a message, he opted for action, because he was convinced that a message can only pass from the realm of life by taking the hard road of involvement” (Talib, 1966: 109-166).

However, the revolutionary element in Islam was toned down a few decades

after the death of the Prophet Muhammad by the vested interests of the ruling elites particularly with the establishment of the powerful Umayyad Empire. The Jihad which was originally enjoined on the faithful only for fighting against *mustakbirin* (the arrogant and the powerful) for liberating the oppressed and the weak had now come to be employed for widening the frontiers and consolidating the power of the Umayyad dynasty (Nadwi, 2006: 25).

The *Ulama* came to support the powerful establishments, emphasized ritual practices and played down social justice in defense of the weak and the powerless. They came to identify themselves with the *mustakbirin* (the powerful and the arrogant) while neglecting the weak and the oppressed (*mustad' ifin*) Islam was then used to legitimize and enforce the maintenance of unjust political and economic systems (Engineer, 1990: 1; Nadwi, 2006: 25). "The history of Islam provides ample evidence of the Ulama having sided with the oppressive establishments in the name of Islam" (Engineer, 1990: 58).

Feudalism has also significantly eroded Islamic values of justice throughout the medieval ages. During this period, Islamic theology got its twist to favor those who were in power and to protect the status quo. "Islamic theology which was so deeply concerned with socio-economic justice for the protection and welfare of the weaker sections of the society such as orphans, widows, poor and needy and the oppressed began to indulge in eschatology and speculative intellectual pursuits which neglect real and existential issues." Consequently, "Islam lost all relevance to the social context" (Engineer, 1990: 5-11).

Unjust and oppressive practices still continue up to this time when Islam is used as a means to protect the interest of a few at the expense of the weak and oppressed masses. Today, as Engineer observes, "Despite so many talks of Islamization in several Islamic countries, no serious attempt has been made in anyone of them for establishing just socio-economic structures." Lamentably, "disparities of wealth so fervently denounced by the Quran continue and the upper classes indulge in conspicuous consumption while the poorer sections continue to suffer" (Engineer, 1990: 85-87). It is in this context that Islamic hermeneutics of peace and liberation must be analyzed and understood.

Given the above historical background, it is important to go back and analyze the Islamic concepts of *Jihad*, *Iman* and *Islam* and their importance to current socio-cultural, economic and political realities reigning in Southern Philippines. More specifically, it is important to see how the Islamic values and principles of peace, justice and liberation can be meaningfully employed for cooperative and collaborative efforts among different religious groups which are involved in the Mindanao peace process.

## THE THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *JIHAD*

*Jihad* literally means, “to struggle”, to “exert oneself”, or “to spend energy or wealth” (Esack, 1997: 106). Etymologically, the term comes from Arabic root *jahada* which means “to strive”, “to endeavor”, “to struggle” which applies to any effort exerted towards a certain purpose, but basically, it connotes an endeavor towards a noble and “praiseworthy aim” (Peters, 1996: 622). The term is used in the Quran to convey varied meanings ranging from warfare, to inner contemplative spiritual struggle, and even exhortations for righteous living. In the Quran, jihad is always followed by the expressions “in the path of God” and “with your wealth and yourselves” (Esack, 1997: 107).

There are three levels of jihad: personal, verbal; and physical. Personal *Jihad* is considered the most important form, the “greater jihad.” This type of jihad, called the *Jihadun-Nafs*, is the intimate struggle to purify one’s soul of evil influences, both subtle and overt. It is the struggle to cleanse one’s spirit of sin. The Qur’an and the Hadith (the collected sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) use the word “*jihad*” to refer to personal struggles. It is basically a call to put “Allah ahead of loved ones, wealth, worldly ambitions and one’s own life. It is a call to strive for righteous deeds and a struggle to live faithfully for the cause of Allah. A well-known tradition (hadith) has Muhammad say on returning from battle, “we return from the little jihad to the greater jihad, the more difficult and crucial effort to conquer the forces of evil in oneself and in one’s own society in all the details of daily life” (Armstrong, 1993: 23).

The second type, verbal *Jihad*, refers to striving for justice through verbal proclamation and non-violent actions. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged Muslims to demand justice in the name of Allah. When asked which jihad is better, he replied, “a word of truth in front of an oppressive ruler.” The life of the Prophet was full of striving to gain the freedom, to inform and convey the message of Islam. During his stay in Mecca, he used non-violent means and used armed struggle against oppressive enemies only when it was inevitable.

In Mecca, the Prophet and his followers were severely persecuted that they were forced to flee to Medina. The Meccans were not satisfied, so, they pursued Muhammad to Medina. Muhammad and his followers were then forced to fight back which resulted to a series of bloody confrontations. Thus, fighting for Muslims became a prescription that was codified in the Quran (Ridgeon, 2001: 3). War had become obligatory for the faithful who were commanded to take up arms to fight the wars of Allah. In that sense, Muslims had to speak the language of peace when there is peace and speak the language of war where it arises (Haykal, 1976: 211). But while fighting and warfare might sometimes be necessary, it is only a minor part of the whole jihad or struggle.

This last type, physical *jihad*, refers to the use of physical force in defense of Muslims against oppression and transgression by the enemies of Allah. Allah commands that Muslims lead peaceful lives and not transgress anyone. If they are persecuted and oppressed, the Quran instructs that they migrate to a safe and peaceful place: “Lo! Those who believe, and those who emigrate [to escape persecution] and strive in the way of Allah, these have hope of Allah’s mercy...” If relocation is not possible, then Allah also requires Muslims to defend themselves against oppression by fighting against those who fight against them: “To those against whom war is made, permission is given [to defend themselves] because they are wronged and verily, Allah is Most Powerful to give them victory.” War is permitted in Islam as long as it is for the cause of stopping an aggressor, aiding truth, and achieving justice. Thus, it is used against all social evils that corrupt, degrade and violate human dignity and freedom.

As it appears, *jihad* has a multiplicity of meaning and has been interpreted differently among different Islamic groups with different and sometimes contrasting theological thoughts and emphasis. For Schleifer (1982: 122), the term could mean the “sacralization of combat” with a view that Allah has decreed *jihad* as a “legitimate institution of warfare to preserve Islam and convey it to people at large and to remove the obstacles in its way” (Al-Lahim et. al., 1995: 48). Consequently, *Jihad* is understood as a call for Muslims to fight against non-Muslims who are viewed “obstacles” in the way of Islam. But even if war and aggression is allowed in Islam, it has certain instructions and limits that must be observed by every Muslim. For instance, Muslims are instructed to fight those who fight them, and not to commit aggression first, as God does not like transgressors: “And fight in the way of Allah, those who fight against you, but transgress not the limits. Truly Allah likes not the transgressors.”

The Quran also instructs Muslims to stop fighting those who wish to cease fighting them, and to accept peace with the enemy who becomes inclined towards peace: “But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your trust) in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.” Muslims are called to fight only if someone transgresses against them but they are at the same time admonished to fear God and to restrain themselves to this limit. Muslims are also enjoined not to let hatred of some people for past reasons to lead them to transgress against those people or be hostile towards them. They are also instructed to help each other in good and righteous actions, and not to cooperate in aggression and sin, and it reminds them finally of the strict punishment of God to encourage them to abide by these principles.

Against the traditional juristic understanding which gives emphasis on *jihad* as armed struggle or sacred war, Esack equates *jihad* with “struggle and praxis” Given the comprehensiveness of the use of the term *jihad*, he believes that it is “simultaneously a struggle and praxis” towards the realization of peace based on justice (Esack, 1997: 107). Despite its popular interpretation as a sacred armed struggle or war, Esack argues that the term *jihad* was “always understood by Muslims to embrace a broader struggle to transform both oneself and society” (Esack, 1997). *Jihad* therefore has both personal and social dimension that seeks to transform and liberate not only individuals but also communities, structures and institutions from the evils of greed, selfishness, exploitation and oppression.

Esack maintains that justice is “the central objective of *jihad*,” therefore, “*jihad* is a war against injustice for it seeks to destroy and eradicate unjust structures and systems” (Esack, 1997). The Quran establishes *jihad* as the path to establishing justice and praxis as a way of experiencing and comprehending truth. Therefore, the faithfuls are enjoined not to abandon the struggle towards its realization.

Engineer observes that while *jihad* could mean “striving” or “fighting” which in some occasions might call for war or armed struggle, it is never meant for “promoting one’s own interest or the interest of any establishment; it must be for promoting the cause of the oppressed and the weak” (Engineer, 1990: 6; Khadduri, 1995). *Jihad* in that sense is “to be primarily waged either for protecting the interests of the oppressed and the weak or to defend one’s self against aggression” (Engineer, 1990: 7). The interest of the weak and the oppressed is central to the teachings of the Quran so that the faithfuls are called to fight for the cause of the poor and the oppressed without fail:

“And how should you not fight for the cause of Allah, and for the weak among men, women and children who are crying: Our Lord! Deliver us from this city of the oppressors. Oh give us from your presence some protecting friend! Oh send us from Your presence someone to help us!”

A *mujahid* (one who strives, fight for the right cause) is highly esteemed in the Quran and one who receives favor from God: “Those of the believers who sit still, other than those who have a (disabling) hurt, are not on an equality with those who strive in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives.

Taken from its broader context, *jihad* has a liberationist element that liberates individuals from the evils of greed and selfishness that breeds manipulative and exploitative practices. It is striving in the path of God, the way of justice. It is



striving in the work of justice, for the liberation of the poor and the weak, from unjust structures and systems of oppression. Arrogance of power, negation of justice, oppression of the weak, suppression of legitimate aspirations of the common people, concentration of wealth and political power and everything that promotes unjust and exploitative actions and practices are to be fought against because they negate the dignity of human life and resist God's will for humankind. "The emphasis is Jihad for liberation not jihad for aggression" (Engineer, 1990: 8-10).

Despite the popular view of *jihad* as "war" or "armed struggle," a thorough study of this key Islamic theological concept shows that it has transformative and liberative character that liberates individuals and societies from selfishness, greed, and arrogance towards the realization of justice and peace. *Jihad* has to be understood in an "emancipatory way as an offensive against destructive civilization and must be established as a strategic plan to empower civil society." In that sense, religion must be understood in an "emancipatory way to accelerate democracy and civil society. Religion in this respect does not become a "political shield" that protects the interest of the status quo but one that liberates, siding with the weak and empowering society" (Madjid, et. al., 2006: 116).

*Jihad* as understood from its liberationist character as struggle and praxis towards the realization of peace and justice provides a new way of looking at the role of Islam in the whole Mindanao peace process. It suggests alternative ways of achieving justice and peace far beyond simple armed struggle and violent approaches which proved to be costly and ineffective. *Jihad* as struggle against injustice calls for a different kind of war. It is a war against every form of greed, conceit, and injustice towards the establishment of a just social order which is only made possible through concerted and collaborative peace praxis.

### THE ISLAMIC CONCEPTS OF *IMAN* AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

*Iman* is the verbal noun of the fourth form from the root a-m-n. The root suggests "being secure", "trusting in", "turning to", from which follows its meanings of "good faith", "sincerity", and "fidelity" or "loyalty". The fourth form (*amana*) has the double meaning of "to believe", and "to give one's faith". Its primary meaning is "becoming true to the trust with respect to what God has confided in one by a firm believing with the heart; not by profession of belief with the tongue only" (Lane, 1980: 1-7). It is also used in the meaning of "trust" in the sense that, one feels secure upon trusting something.

The term with different variations appears 244 times in Quran. Most frequently



recurring is the expression, “O those who have *iman*’ of which there are 55 instances. While the term is used essentially with reference to the followers of Muhammad, in 11 instances it refers to Moses and his followers and in 22 instances to other prophets and their followers (Esack, 1997: 118). It is used in the Quran in the sense of being at peace with oneself and in the sense of contentment, “security from external threats”, and in the sense of “depositing something with someone for safekeeping.” In its fourth form (*amana*), the verb is usually followed by the particle *bi* which means, “to have faith in”, “to recognize”, “to trust” (Esack, 1997: 118). The object of this “having faith” or “recognition” is God. The connection between faith and security implies the idea that those who have faith will attain peace and security (Esack, 1997). “*Iman* is an act of the heart, a decisive giving up of oneself to God and His message and gaining peace and security and fortification against tribulation” (Rahman, 1983: 171).

*Iman* can be defined in various ways (such as, “affirmation”, “verbal testimony”, “belief or righteous conduct”), but in its entirety, it is something more than just mere recognition and verbal testimony. It signifies values and qualities that must be lived out and exemplified in one’s life and conduct (Razi, 1990: 124). And so, those who have attained unto *iman*’ are admonished to “remould their lives in a particular direction, to orient themselves away from the various wrongs in society and towards God” (Esack, 1997: 120).

*Mu’min* can be defined under three levels or category namely: The essentially spiritual/personal; the socio-religious; and the socio-economic dimension (Esack, 1997: 121). Possessors of these characteristics are “the truly faithful”, “believers in truth”, and “blessed by God.” “There is a binding connection between *iman* and righteous deeds” (al-Tabari, 1954: 178). “*Iman* has to result in obedience” *Iman* is not attained until this obedience is attained and this is only accomplished when the inherent qualities are fulfilled. The connection between *iman* and righteous deeds is well founded in the Quran where the phrase “those who have *iman* and who do righteous deeds” occurs no less than thirty- six times (Esack, 1997: 121). Thus, *iman* is intrinsically connected to righteous deeds. Rahman shares the same conviction and concludes that “the separation of faith from action is totally untenable and absurd situation” (Rahman, 1983, 171). In the same vein of thought Izutsu points out that “the strongest tie of semantic relationship binds *salih* (righteousness) and *iman* together into an almost inseparable unit: and just as the shadow follows the form, wherever there is *iman*, there is *salihat* (righteous deeds)” (Izutsu, 1966: 204).

This idea goes against the traditional interpretation which defines *iman* in a

much narrow sense as the rituals reified by Islam (Esack, 1997). While *iman* as used in the Quran is in some instances connected to religious rituals, this is not always the case. There are numerous instances where the reference is made to *iman* as righteous conduct and truthful living whether in a general or specific sense. Faith bears good deeds. “Faith in a righteous and just God implies an undying commitment to the dignity and freedom of His people” (Esack, 1997). One who has *iman* must be “trustworthy, must strive for peace and security, and must himself have faith in all the good values of life-struggles toward the attainment of a just society” (Engineer, 1990: 12).

The term *iman* has been popularly used by some Muslim groups to emphasize reified Islam and promote religious exclusivism and superiority to the exclusion of “Others.” Regrettably, as Esack observes, “in many instances *iman* is no longer viewed as qualities that individuals may have, instead, it has now been regarded as the entrenched qualities of groups, bordering on ethnic characteristics”. Contrary to the popular exclusivist notion that confines *iman* within the reified Islam, Esack argues that “the term has significant pluralistic meaning that promotes interreligious solidarity and seeks to advance peoples’ liberation from all sorts of discrimination and other forms of oppression (Esack, 1997: 115). In other words, where there are individuals and groups of people (regardless of their religious affiliation), working for justice by defending the rights of the weak and the oppressed against their oppressors, *iman* is there. After all, *iman* is not mere acceptance and conformity to certain religious beliefs or systems. It is living out God’s command to do what is just for the promotion of life and harmony of all humankind.

‘Abd al-Ra’uf (1967: 98) insists on a “sociological appreciation of *iman*” In his view, *iman* which means “to become secure” or to “render security” has a sociological dimension taking into account its socio-historical background. For instance, historically it was noted that “Fear of insecurity was the major stumbling block against the faith in the early days of Islam.” To combat insecurity is “to create a social group in which members are closely knit together in a common bond” and where members are accountable to one another (Rauf, 1967: 98). A *mu’min* in that respect is someone who has both an inner deep personal conviction as well as social faith commitment. *Iman*, being deep personal response to God suggests that it cannot be confined within a particular socio-religious community such as Islam. Such attempt would be “a denial of the universality of God Himself” since “the Quran explicitly recognize the *iman* of those outside the socio-religious community of *mu’minun*” (Esack, 1997: 125).

Social justice in Islam is rooted in man’s faith (*iman*). Man’s belief in God entails

a sacred duty to do justice. There is no gap between faith and action. Faith and action must go together, for “one cannot exist without the other” (Naqvi, 1981). No one could rightly say he (she) has faith in God if he (she) neglects actual deeds of justice. Viewed from this perspective, faith has liberative character that transforms and liberates individuals and communities from the human pitfalls of selfishness, pride and arrogance. Thus, liberation and peace are rooted in people’s faith (*iman*) to God.

The peace process in Mindanao demands faith (*iman*) that produces praxis—not beautifully crafted theologies and dogmas. Peace demands action. The different religious organizations involved in the peace process must become tangible indicators of a strong and active faith (*iman*) that works, not just “paper organizations” with no genuine existence apart from organizational names with a set of approved plans, constitutions, and bylaws. Religious values and principles must not just remain as signs and symbols of faith. They must find concrete expressions in praxis that promotes justice and peace.

The challenge for the different religious actors in the Mindanao peace process is how they are supposed to relate faith in concrete terms and how they could become witnesses and bearers for God in an unjust society. Their task is not only to examine the socio-economic structures that create and entrench oppression, but also to examine their roles in response to them. Peace statements and religious dialogues will do nothing unless they are supported with actions designed to eradicate social injustice which is endemic in the current socio-political and economic system in Philippine society.

Farid Esack maintains that “Any religiosity which fails to see the connections between poverty and the socio-political structures which breed and sustains poverty and injustice but then hastens to serve the victims is little more than an extension of those structures, and therefore complicit in the original crime”. He observes that religions in many cases are guilty of playing “Santa Claus”, giving pieces of bread to the little ones who knock on their doors (Esack, 2013: 93). Charity works will do very little to solve the problem of poverty in Mindanao. There is a need to discover the forces in society that cause the problem and to work towards their eradication.

## THE CONCEPT OF ISLAM

The word Islam is derived from the root, ‘s l m’ which means *salam*, i.e., peace. The meaning of the word as peace is based on the Quranic teachings that states: “And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on earth in humility, and when the ignorant *jahilum* address them, they say, Peace, *salamun*.” From

the infinitive of *aslama*, Islam means “to submit”, “to surrender”, “to fulfill or execute” (Esack, 2013: 93; Lewis, 1988). The term also means, “reconciliation”, “peace” or “wholeness.” As a verbal noun, the term appears only eight times in the Quran, whereas its foundation verb, *Aslama*, appears twenty-four times. (Esack, 2013: 130). Like any other Islamic theological concepts, the term Islam is subject to different views and interpretations. Obviously, there is a tension between the traditional interpretation which puts so much emphasis on the reified and institutionalized aspect of Islam, and the more radical view that puts emphasis on the active and dynamic aspect of Islam.

The traditional particularist-exclusivist perspective is based on several Quranic verses which refer to Islam as the only *din* acceptable to God. For instance, the Quran describes Islam as “the perfected religion” established by God’s choice for the community of Muhammad and the completion of His favor upon it. Those whose “breasts had been opened to Islam” are described as “following a light from his (her) Lord.” Whoever goes in search of a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him [her], and in the life to come he [she] shall be among the losers”.

Taken from an exclusivist perspective, these Quranic teachings seems to suggest the superiority and singularity of Islam as the only true and acceptable religion (*din*) to God. It also follows that the only expression of religiosity that is acceptable to God is Islam which is often understood in its institutionalized and reified sense.

Among the well-known proponents of this traditional view are Al-Tabari who gives emphasis on the external aspect of Islam and insists that Islam requires the “act of joining the group who calls themselves Muslims” and on a personal level, an act of surrendering oneself to God by strict and rigid observance of Islamic laws and rituals (al-Tabari, 1954: 212). Ibn Arabi who insists that “the only true *din* (religion) is one that Allah has prescribed for Himself” implying that any religion other than Islam is false; Al-Zamakhshari who argues that “Islam is the religion according to God and all else is not *din*”; and Al-Razi who puts emphasis on the personal meaning of Islam which calls for “submission and obedience, entry into peace and purifying all service for God” This interpretation is more concerned with the interpretation of religion (*din*) as a form or systematic and institutionalized religious life which gives emphasis on “personal conduct, standard of behavior, customs, observances of certain religious rituals and practices” (Esack, 2013: 128).

The more radical interpretation is based on the idea that the term *din* as it is seen in the Quran does not frequently suggest “institutional religion” or personalized submission although some meanings may have such

implications. Radical view contends that while the exclusivist interpretation of Islam leads to the affirmation of the superiority of Islam over other faiths, “the universal underpinnings of the term Islam, in Quranic teachings lead one to the understanding that the text embraces all of those who submit to the will of God” (Rida, 1973). This embrace Rida concludes, includes the religious “Other” along with “the diversity of some of the obligations and the forms of practices in them, and with which they have been enjoined (Rida, 1973).” This view is based on Quranic teachings that recognize God’s presence and activity in other religions. Ra’uf explains that the infrequency of the use of Islam in the Quran suggests that it is concerned “not so much with the metaphysical and static thinking but with the active and dynamic meaning of the term” (Rauf, 1967: 94).

Openness, respect and tolerance towards other religions are some of the important liberative elements in Islam. The Quran makes it clear “there is no compulsion in religion.” Muslims are exhorted not to abuse those who call upon besides Allah lest they abuse Allah through ignorance. The Quran also teaches that a believer should show equal respect to all the prophets for they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers. The Quran declares unequivocally that paradise is not the monopoly of any religious group. Whoever does what is just and what is good, whoever submits himself (herself) entirely to Allah, he (she) has his (her) reward from the Lord.

From the view point of history, Jane Smith observes that while it can be recognized that in some levels and contexts, particularly in the early Meccan period, the *din* of Islam is part of the reified Islamic belief systems, it is evident that “this was not the primary reference for their understanding of Islam as *din*” (Smith, 1975: 229). The same observation is corroborated by Cantwell-Smith who insists that while Islam as *din* “could conjure up the idea of Islam as a reified entity, this was by no means the only, and indeed the primary interpretation”. He concludes that in the Quran, whenever the word Islam is employed, it is “in a manner where it can be, and in many grounds almost must be, interpreted, not as the name of a religious system, but as the designation of a decisive personal act” (Smith, 1991: 109).

Rida commenting on the weakness and limitations of a “personalized” concept of Islam maintains that “this intensely personal submission of individuals to God and the universal spirit, in which all religious communities partake, bears no relationship to conventional Islam” (Rida, 1973). Moreover, he argues that while the essence of *din* has not changed, there were changes in the usage and application of the term in various periods in the history of Islam. The same observation is shared by Haddad who maintains that while the early

Meccan period seemed to emphasize the formal and personal dimension of Islam as *din*, it is shown that in the last part of the Meccan period there was an identification of the unchanging *din* with the “community of Abraham” and “the straight path,” and from this period onwards, the emphasis was shifted from personal to communal level. This leads on to the Medinan period when the emphasis on *din* as personal commitment is switched to the use of the term for commitment in the collective sense (Haddad, 1974: 119).

The problem with the particularist interpretation is that, it reduces *din* to a mere set of norms and beliefs and confines it within the reified and formalized parameters of a religious system. It espouses the idea that the only true Islam is reified Islam. A more objective analysis of the meaning of Islam however suggests that both the personalist sense and group sense are contained in the Quran. “Both senses must therefore be acknowledged in any attempt to make space for the one within the other: the importance of personal submission within the framework of group identification as well as the possibility of personal submission outside the parameters of the historical community of Islam” (Esack, 1997: 132).

Farid Esack captures the meaning of *Islam* in the following statement:

“The Quran portrays a Muslim as someone who submits to a divinity beyond, and more abiding, than that Muslim and beyond reified religion. God is *akbar* (greater than) any conception of Him or any form of institutionalized or non-institutionalized service to Him. It is to God that the Quran persistently requires *Islam*” (Esack, 1997).

One of the distinguishing features of Islam as pointed out by Engineer is “humility and peace as opposed to arrogance, animosity and war” (Engineer, 1990: 150). A careful examination of Quranic teachings would show that peace and humility are central to the Prophet’s mission. The usual and common Islamic greeting “*as salamu ‘alaykum*” (peace be upon you) is a constant reminder that Islam is for peace, not otherwise. Believers are also enjoined to address Allah with the word peace in accordance with the teachings of the Quran: “Their greeting on the day they shall meet Him will be, “*Salam*” [Peace]! And he has prepared for them a generous reward.” Paradise is described as a place where there is no vain or sinful talk but only the saying, Peace, Peace!

*Salam* connotes safety and peace. So, when a Muslim says *salam*, he/she gives news to the other person that he confers peace on him/her and he/she wants to make peace with him/her. *AlSalam* means God Almighty thus, when someone says *salam* it means, God is your caretaker or the one who watches over you (Lashin, 1970: 223).



Islam does not necessarily mean institutionalized religion or adherence to a specific system of belief and religious practice. The “surrendering of one’s self to God” which is the basic meaning of Islam does not only happen within the bounds and parameters of Islamic religion. It could happen anywhere at different times, contexts, and historical circumstances outside of the reified community of Islam. Islam understood as a verb rather than as a noun suggests that submission to God requires not merely confession but complete obedience to His will by doing what is right and what is just.

The Qur’an regards non-Islamic belief system as “religion” and attributes a religious significance to them. Moreover, instead of focusing on its own truth claims and evaluating all religions in reference to itself, the Qur’an proposes that the basis for action should be common or universal truths that are also accepted by the other religions. Theology in that sense, must concern itself with reflection which seeks to “express the content of a particular faith (faith of an historic community) in the clearest and most coherent language available” (Fakhry, 1983; Pailin, 1986: 39).

The Quranic view of Islam as a universal and all-encompassing concept of surrendering oneself to God provides a strong theological and political basis for a cooperative and collaborative action that goes beyond religious-institutional parameters and boundaries, as well as sectarian, ideological and organizational interests. As shown in the study (chapter 3), these narrowly defined organizational goals have significantly hampered peace-building efforts in Mindanao. Along this line, Farid Esack proposes the idea of “a ‘new Muslim’ who is adamant to a stagnant, and fossilized Islam that is confined to a set of rituals that are mere motions” and meaningless (Esack, 2013: 1-2). In his view, there is a need to develop a “meaningful and socially relevant Islam which is committed to social justice, individual liberty, and the quest for the Transcendent who is beyond all institutional, religious and dogmatic constructions, an Islam that challenges us to examine our faith in personally and socially relevant terms” (Esack, 2013: 1-2).

### **MAIN CONTEXT: ISLAM, A RELIGION OF PEACE, JUSTICE, AND LIBERATION**

Historically, there is much evidence to prove that Islam arose to challenge and change the oppressive dominant status quo in favor of the oppressed and the exploited-the weaker sections of the society and the marginalized. As shown in the study, the theme of liberation and peace occupies a central place in Quranic teachings as exemplified in the three Islamic key theological concepts discussed above. The Quran lays emphasis on social justice in all aspects of



life. Social justice and equality are central to the Islamic vision of peace.

The Quran presents a universal and all-encompassing God, the God whose own unity (*tawhid*) is reflected in the oneness of His people, and the God who liberates His people from all forms of enslavement and oppression. The Quran also condemns all forms of exploitation and unjust dealings. It clearly denounces those who unjustly accumulate their wealth and use their power to exploit and oppress the poor and the powerless.

From the perspective of Islam in that sense, true religion is one that liberates and works towards the attainment of peace. Peace, means liberating and freeing humankind from injustice and servitude to other human beings. Peace is not based on a vague and undefined desire for peace but rooted in the Quranic vision of peace based on social justice and liberation of the marginalized and the oppressed. A contextual reading of the Quran would reveal that God is in the struggle for justice and freedom. Thus, a theology that accommodates and supports the structures and institutions of oppression is unscriptural and runs counter to the teachings of the Qu'ran.

Islam is ideally a religion that promotes peace and understanding among people of all faiths, and it strongly prohibits all forms of violence and aggression against all peoples regardless of their faith or race. God is the source of peace which is made possible through the execution of justice and equality among all men (women). This understanding of God provides a powerful motivation and framework of values on which promotion of justice, freedom, equality and restoration of human dignity must be pursued. It calls for a development program and policies that provide greatest benefit to the weakest and poorest sections of the society.

From the liberationist perspective, Islam does not protect the status quo and all the vested interests that go with it. "It is not passive reflection based on static medieval- oriented theology that reduced Islam to mere sterile spiritualism but a theology that is translated into concrete action, human projects achieved historically" (Engineer, 1990: 206). It means giving the marginalized masses their rightful place in determining their destinies and in achieving their aspirations. There can be no justice and peace unless the weaker and marginalized sections of society are excluded and deprived from participation in the struggle for a just and humane society.

The Islamic concept of the Oneness and Universality of God and human familyhood, provides a strong theological basis against pretended supremacy or presumptuous exclusivity. God is not confined to any religion or favors any particular nation, race, or culture. The wisdom behind dividing people into

tribes and nations is nothing more than the creation of variety, so that they may come to meet each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation, and not for the promotion of hostility and difference. Sharing and caring and competing only for righteous deeds and holy virtue, competing for the benefit of the masses and individuals and seeking the pleasure of Allah who is the Lord of all, and who watches this brotherhood (sisterhood), protects it and calls all his servants to practice and establish it (Maududi, 1976: 19).

Action is based on the consciousness that God sees every person's conduct. Seeking God's pleasure is the mainspring of economic action. It is under the influence of a firm belief in the Divine Presence that affirms the equality of all men and women before God, about the poor having a right in the rich man's wealth because all wealth belongs to Allah, about a rich man's obligation to "spend in moderation because he is a trustee not an owner of his wealth, about man being essentially a free agent with definite social responsibilities to discharge to satisfy the demand for social justice" (Naqui, 1994: 15).

The main call for Islamic religion is to establish a just social reality. The evaluation of any act or statement should be measured according to whether or not it accomplishes the desired social reality. In Islam, acting for the cause of God is synonymous with pursuing justice. Islamic teachings reject oppression and injustice on interpersonal and structural levels (Abu-Nimer, 2008: 12). Islam must be understood as the religion of humanity for it carries the message of freedom and liberation towards social transformation. Islam is present in the face of humanity and is oriented to the needs of humanity (Abu-Nimer, 2008: 117). Al-Naim rightly observes that religion is not human abstraction. It is what human beings make out of it. It is what the believers believe and do. Thus, worshipping God, means having a "profound concern for humanity's needs and problems". Here, religion serves as a "locomotive to free men and women from the shackles of oppression" (Na'im, 2002: 30). Islam is a religion of "solidarity and peace" (Madjid, et. al., 2006: 45).

Peace-building in Islam involves protecting human rights and dignity, promoting equality among all people. Addressing conflicts through Islamic values and principles is an important resource in resolving the conflict in Mindanao. The principle of one *ummah* or community can be utilized to motivate conflicting parties to come to an agreement, achieve unity, gain strength, and be empowered by working together. *Ummah* can be used to mobilize unity and support against all forms and structures of oppression. It can be used as a collaborative approach to life's challenges, assist in social and political mobilization and can be harnessed in collective actions for socio-economic development and peace-building.

The Islamic concept of community (*ummah*) also calls and demands for a participatory approach in resolving the conflict in Mindanao which requires among others, consensus, consultation, and input that includes the large majority of the grassroots and marginalized masses, to hear their sentiments and aspirations, and in the process come up with a unified socio-political and economic agenda that would be beneficial to all. Engineer, emphasizing the value of consensus and mutual consultation points out that the Quran lays due emphasis on *Shura* (consultation) thus indicating that the nature of Islamic polity is not autocratic but democratic in spirit (Engineer, 1980: 1).

Whether Islam truly lends values and ethical principles that can be harnessed towards the establishment of a just and egalitarian society which is free of exploitation is beyond question. What is needed is sincere commitment to work for the realization of this vision. The question is how and who will do it? Engineer believes that, what is required of in the realization of such a just order, is courage of conviction and a strong sense of commitment to human values (Engineer, 1980: 205). Consequently, one needs to ask, will Muslim leaders who are keen to proclaim freedom and independence for the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao give up ambitious self-power-seeking efforts for their own ends and commit themselves to an Islamic vision of a just and egalitarian society? If they do, and with the participation of the deprived masses, then Islam will perhaps become a powerful moral ideal and an instrument for the eradication of unjust system and the development of a political program that could enhance freedom, economic development, and peace for Mindanao.

Farid Esack argues that the concept of solidarity in Islam goes beyond Muslim community alone. The *ummah* must be taken to include believers outside of Islam because all those who believe in God are members of this community. He insists that the universal community under God has always been a significant element in Muslim discourse against tribalism and racism (Esack, 1997; Esack, 1998). On the same vein of thought, Nasr also asserts that from the perspective of Islam, *ummah* (community) “implies all of human collectivity held together by common bonds that are themselves the foundation of social, juridical, political, economic and ethical links between its members (Nasr, 2002: 161). Thus, Christians and Muslims in Mindanao could establish collective and collaborative approaches that aim to address the needs and aspirations of the marginalized masses, to establish covenants, agreements, to resist structurally unjust arrangements, and support the legislation of laws that promote justice and equality among all human beings. If God’s will and His command is to establish a healthy society here on earth by sharing and partaking of life, then Muslims and Christians will have to take it as a serious project to work on.

## CONCLUSION

This study on Islamic concepts of *Jihad*, *Iman* and *Islam* provides new insights on how Islam can play a significant role in the Mindanao peace process. *Jihad* as understood from its liberationist character as struggle and praxis towards the realization of peace and justice provides a new way of looking at the role of Islam in the whole Mindanao peace process. It suggests alternative ways of achieving justice and peace far beyond simple armed struggle and violent approaches which proved to be costly and ineffective. The Islamic concept of *Iman* shows that faith is liberative. It transforms and liberates individuals and communities from the human pitfalls of selfishness, pride and arrogance. The peace process in Mindanao demands faith (*iman*) that produces praxis- not beautifully crafted theologies and dogmas. Peace demands action.

The different religious organizations (Christians and Muslims alike) involved in the peace process in Mindanao must become tangible indicators of a strong and active faith (*iman*) that works, not just “paper organizations” with no genuine existence apart from organizational names with a set of approved plans, constitutions, and bylaws. Religious values and principles must not just remain as signs and symbols of faith. They must find concrete expressions in praxis that promotes justice and peace.

The understanding of *Islam* as a universal and all-encompassing concept of surrendering oneself to God provides a strong theological and political basis for a cooperative and collaborative action that goes beyond religious-institutional parameters and boundaries, as well as sectarian, ideological and organizational interests. It calls for a unified and collaborative work between Muslims and Christians in Mindanao to work together for the realization of a just and humane society.

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