Available online at
http://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/asiapacific/index
E-ISSN 2715-1816 | P-ISSN 2442-7896]

Asia Pacific Journal on Religion and Society
Volume. 8 Number 2 July-December 2024
Page. 110-122

ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, AND INDIGENOUS BELIEFS IN DIALOGUE:

The Dynamics of Religious Coexistence in Indonesia's Peripheries

Kadenun[1]*, Moh Asvin Abdurrohman[2]
[1.2] Institut Agama Islam Sunan Giri (INSURI) Ponorogo, Indonesia
*Correspondence author: Email: kadenun@insuriponorogo.ac.id; Tlp. +62 823-8944-5858

KEYWORD

Interreligious relations, Local communities, Interfaith dialogue, Collective ritual, Peripheral Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article explores the dynamics of interreligious relations in three peripheral communities of Indonesia—Jayapura (Papua), Sidenreng Rappang (South Sulawesi), and Dusun Sonyo (Yogyakarta)—based on an analytical reading of Hasse Jubba's ethnographic work (2017). Using a qualitative approach rooted in ethnographic content analysis, the study examines how Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and local religious communities (Towani Tolotang) sustain coexistence through social mechanisms, cultural values, and shared rituals. The findings reveal that interreligious relations at the grassroots level are not primarily shaped by formal state regulations or theological dialogue, but rather by everyday encounters, economic collaboration, and communal solidarity. The theoretical frameworks employed include structural functionalism, practical multiculturalism, interfaith dialogue models (Knitter), and ritual-symbolic theory (Turner). The three cases demonstrate that peripheral communities possess strong cultural capacities to manage religious diversity through pragmatic interfaith engagements and contextual collective spirituality. This study contributes to rethinking pluralism as a locally grounded, socially enacted, and spiritually embedded practice beyond formal frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

Religious pluralism in Indonesia is an undeniable social reality (Hanafi et al., 2017; Madjid, 1999). Across various regions—especially peripheral or marginal areas such as Jayapura in Papua, Sidenreng Rappang in South Sulawesi, and Dusun Sonyo in the Menoreh Hills—this pluralism gives rise to complex and multidimensional dynamics of interreligious relations. In such contexts, Islam, Christianity, and indigenous belief systems not only coexist side by side, but also interact, negotiate, and occasionally experience symbolic and structural tensions.

Interreligious relations in Indonesia have largely been examined within the broad frameworks of multiculturalism, pluralism, and religious tolerance (Hanafi & Hassan, 2022). These studies generally emphasize the importance of peaceful cohabitation among religious communities, the recognition of diversity, and the reinforcement of normative frameworks supporting freedom of religion. However, the geographical and epistemological focus of most of these studies remains concentrated on urban areas, state institutions, or regions dominated by a single religion—particularly Islam as the majority faith (Hanafi, 2011).

For instance, Robert W. Hefner (2001) highlights the role of Muslim civil society in fostering

democracy and tolerance in Indonesia, yet his emphasis is strongly centered on Islamic organizations and national discourses. Similarly, Beatty (2001), through ethnographic research in Banyuwangi, explores how local Islam and religious rituals manage intergroup relations within the context of Javanese culture, although the setting is still rooted in a Muslim-dominated community. Mujiburrahman's (2006) *Feeling Threatened: Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia's New Order* investigates the dynamics of Islam-Christian relations within the framework of state policies and collective fear narratives, with primary attention on major cities such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Palangkaraya.

Within such frameworks, the experiences of peripheral communities—geographically, demographically, and politically—remain underrepresented as central analytical lenses. Yet, in areas such as Jayapura (Papua), Sidenreng Rappang (South Sulawesi), and Dusun Sonyo (Yogyakarta), the socio-religious structures are fundamentally different from those of political centers or religiously homogeneous regions. There, interreligious relations do not always follow patterns of ideological conflict or religious politicization typical in national discourse. Instead, these relations are often constructed through *everyday religious encounters*, the negotiation of religious symbols in public spaces, and joint participation in interfaith cultural rituals.

Furthermore, the lack of scholarly attention to peripheral areas contributes to epistemic bias that narrows our understanding of Indonesia's religious diversity. Most theoretical frameworks used to explain interreligious dynamics in Indonesia are still anchored in centralist logic, state paradigms, or majoritarian hegemony. As a result, local experiences that are hybrid, accommodative, and dialogical—despite being rich sources of spiritual and cultural capital—remain inadequately represented in academic literature.

Hence, there is a pressing need to decolonize the study of interreligious relations by expanding the scope of analysis to include regions traditionally considered peripheral. Such an approach enables the construction of alternative narratives that not only reflect a more comprehensive reality of diversity but also enhance our understanding of how local communities create and sustain peace within complex pluralistic contexts. In this regard, Hasse Jubba's (2018) research is particularly significant, as it presents evocative ethnographic data from areas like Jayapura, South Sulawesi, and Menoreh, highlighting multicultural practices rooted not in state regulations but in inclusive and egalitarian local socio-cultural structures.

Through an ethnographic approach, Hasse Jubba (2018) offers a significant contribution by exploring the dynamics of construction, contestation, and negotiation of religious identity within the social spaces of local communities. By conducting fieldwork in three distinct locations—Jayapura (Papua), Sidenreng Rappang (South Sulawesi), and Dusun Sonyo in the Menoreh Hills (Yogyakarta)—Jubba constructs an alternative narrative of interreligious relations that is not imposed from above (top-down), but rather emerges from below (bottom-up) through everyday practices, cultural mechanisms, and local wisdom.

By immersing himself in the lived experiences of local communities, Hasse's (2018) ethnographic method provides deep insight into how these communities build interfaith relationships amid symbolic and structural vulnerabilities. His approach also uncovers realities often obscured by quantitative or institutional perspectives. He captures in detail how religious symbols are negotiated in public spaces, how collective rituals serve as arenas for interfaith encounter, and how peripheral communities interpret pluralism not as a threat, but as the foundation for coexistence.

Each of the three research sites demonstrates unique forms of spiritual locality. In Jayapura, contestation between Islam and Christianity is shaped not only by theology, but also by the symbolism of space and sound—particularly through the competing use of loudspeakers in houses of worship. In Sidenreng Rappang, the relationship between Muslims and the local Hindu Towani

Tolotang community reflects fluctuating dynamics of exclusivism and accommodation, contingent on surrounding socio-political constellations. Meanwhile, in Dusun Sonyo, encounters between Muslims and Buddhists are articulated through participation in village rituals such as *Bersih Dusun*, which not only reinforce social bonds but also reproduce a shared sacred space that is inclusive (Jubba, 2018).

These studies reveal that spiritual locality is not a passive or merely inherited cultural artifact, but rather a living structure actively managing diversity and mitigating conflict. More importantly, Hasse Jubba's approach challenges the formal models of tolerance often associated with the state's legalistic framework. Instead of enforcing uniformity under the banner of religious nationalism, local communities develop contextual, adaptive, and practice-based models of tolerance.

Consequently, Hasse Jubba's work enriches the study of interreligious relations by grounding multicultural discourse in local praxis. He demonstrates that interfaith relations do not always unfold in formal, hierarchical institutional settings, but are often shaped through fluid social interactions, symbolic negotiations, and communal rituals that bridge faith-based differences. In this framework, spiritual locality becomes both an epistemic resource and a practical foundation for peace—an alternative to state-centric and majoritarian models of conflict resolution.

This article seeks to explore the dynamics of religious coexistence within peripheral Indonesian communities, focusing on three key case studies: Islam-Christian relations in Jayapura, Muslim-Towani Tolotang (local Hindu) interactions in South Sulawesi, and contextual Muslim-Buddhist dialogue in the Menoreh Hills. This approach is crucial not only for understanding localized socio-religious practices but also for examining how indigenous values such as *Tudang Sipulung* and *Satu Tungku Tiga Batu* function as mechanisms for conflict resolution and religious diversity management.

Theoretically, this article draws upon the framework of *practical multiculturalism* (Sachedina, 2007), the concept of interreligious dialogue (Knitter, 2013), and *structural functionalism* (Parsons, 1990), which emphasizes a society's tendency to achieve harmony through norm adjustment and institutionalization. The emphasis on shared rituals, multireligious public spaces, and lived religious symbols forms the core analytical lens through which interfaith dialogue and cohabitation are concretely understood.

In sum, this article offers both empirical and theoretical contributions to the discourse on religious coexistence, presenting voices from the margins that are often overlooked. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of local narratives, shared ritual practices, and socio-cultural strategies that build interfaith spaces beyond the boundaries of formal state ideologies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study begins with the understanding that interreligious relations do not occur in a vacuum; rather, they are socially, historically, and culturally constructed. To grasp the dynamics of relations between Islam, Christianity, and local belief systems in peripheral Indonesia, a theoretical framework is needed—one that can capture the complexity of symbolic interactions, social spaces, and cultural mechanisms that underpin both harmony and tension among religious groups.

First, the study employs Structural Functionalism: Social Harmony as a Systemic Goal. As cited by Hasse Jubba (2018), Talcott Parsons' structural functionalist theory (1990) serves as a foundational perspective for understanding society's tendency toward social stability. Parsons argues that every social system comprises interrelated components that collectively aim toward equilibrium. Within this framework, intergroup conflict (including religious conflict) is not viewed as an anomaly, but as part of the dynamic process toward integration through normative and institutional adjustments. This concept is particularly relevant when examining how local

communities develop social mechanisms such as *Tudang Sipulung* in South Sulawesi or *Bersih Dusun* in Menoreh—both of which function as mediums for restoring social balance. However, structural functionalism is not without critique, especially regarding its tendency to overlook power relations and structural inequalities within society. Therefore, this framework is complemented by more critical perspectives.

Second, the study adopts the lens of Practical Multiculturalism: From Discourse to Daily Life. To ground the study in dynamic social practice, the concept of multiculturalism in praxis becomes a central framework. Unlike formal or normative multiculturalism—often rooted in state policy—this approach emphasizes everyday multiculturalism and local knowledge produced by communities themselves. Sachedina (2001) refers to this as *theological multiculturalism*, where religious diversity is understood as divine will rather than mere political tolerance. This approach allows us to see multiculturalism as an active practice: local communities not only recognize the presence of other religions but also collaborate through rituals, social institutions, and cultural symbols that connect them. In this context, multiculturalism is not just about coexistence, but pro-existence—an active engagement in shared life.

Third, the concept of Interreligious Dialogue: Typologies and Communal Practice is employed. In examining the relationship among Islam, Christianity, and local belief systems, interreligious dialogue becomes a crucial element. Paul F. Knitter (2013) offers four typologies of interreligious dialogue: the replacement model, the fulfillment model, the mutuality model, and the acceptance model. In peripheral Indonesia, the practice of dialogue is more reflective of the mutuality and acceptance models—where no single religion monopolizes truth, but rather, truth is recognized across diverse faith traditions. It is important to note that interreligious dialogue in local contexts does not always take the form of formal theological discourse. Instead, dialogue often materializes through communal activities—such as collective work (*gotong royong*), village rituals, management of public facilities, and even shared engagement with religious symbols in public spaces. Thus, the form of dialogue explored in this study is contextual—not always discursively articulated, but deeply functional in practice.

Fourth, the study engages with Ritual and Symbol: The Social Language of Harmony. Ritual serves as a key medium in building interfaith social cohesion. Victor Turner (2017) views ritual as a form of symbolic action that carries sacred values and functions to connect individuals to their community and to transcendent forces. In contexts of spiritual locality, rituals such as *Bersih Dusun* or interfaith prayer gatherings become arenas of meaning negotiation and inclusive expressions of faith. In addition, religious symbols in public spaces play a significant role in shaping collective identity and religious visibility. The placement of mosque minarets and church crosses in places like Jayapura, for instance, not only signifies community presence but also serves as an existential articulation that can foster both cohesion and conflict. Therefore, this study also applies a semiotic approach to interpret the social meanings of such symbols within power relations and interfaith encounters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is structured as a qualitative study based on ethnographic content analysis (Yusuf, 2012), grounding all empirical and narrative data in the work of Hasse Jubba (*Religious Identity Contestation: Spiritual Locality in Indonesia*, 2018). As the primary source, the book contains the results of field research conducted by Hasse in three different regions of Indonesia: Jayapura (Papua), Sidenreng Rappang (South Sulawesi), and Dusun Sonyo (Kulonprogo, Yogyakarta). These three regions were selected by Hasse due to their plural socio-religious configurations, representing complex yet productive dynamics of interfaith relations (Raharjo, 2019).

The ethnographic approach employed by Hasse involved techniques such as participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. For example, in the Jayapura case, Hasse utilized repeated observations conducted between 2013 and 2015, with a focus on the symbolic and spatial dynamics between Muslim and Christian communities. In Sidenreng Rappang, data were gathered through the author's long-term engagement with the Towani Tolotang community since 2003, encompassing intensive qualitative experiences of local Muslim-Hindu relations. Meanwhile, in Dusun Sonyo, the approach involved direct participation in a community service program (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata* or KKN), during which Hasse accompanied university students for two months while conducting observations and interviews with community leaders, religious figures, and residents.

As the authors of this article, we did not conduct primary data collection ourselves. Instead, we reorganized and analyzed the ethnographic data through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks previously outlined. This approach adopts the methodology of *qualitative secondary data analysis* (Heaton, 2012), in which documented data are reinterpreted to develop a new, more conceptual and comparative synthesis. The analysis procedure was carried out in two stages. First, mapping the cases and thematic categories found in the ethnographic narratives of the book—such as themes of symbolic contestation, interreligious rituals, contextual forms of dialogue, and local mechanisms of conflict resolution. Second, critically reading these narratives through the lens of theoretical frameworks: praxis-based multiculturalism, interfaith dialogue, structural functionalism, and the concept of ritual and social symbolism.

Through this method, the article not only aims to re-describe the findings of Hasse Jubba, but also to offer a theoretical elaboration that broadens the relevance of those findings within wider academic debates on religious pluralism, spiritual locality, and community-based conflict resolution in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Symbolic Contestation and Formal Coexistence: Muslim-Christian Relations in Jayapura

In Jayapura, Papua, the relationship between Muslims and Christians reflects a dynamic of symbolic contestation that is socially significant. One of the most striking manifestations of this contestation is the use of loudspeakers in places of worship—both mosques and churches—which are directed outward and left on at high volume. This practice serves not only as a call to worship or spiritual reminder but also as a symbolic expression of presence, power, and claims over public space by each religious community. In his report, Hasse Jubba refers to this phenomenon as a form of "sound warfare"—a term that reflects the intensity of existential competition through acoustic media (Jubba, 2018: 81).

According to an interview with a Christian figure in Jayapura, who also serves as an administrator of the GKI Elim Church in Kotaraja, he stated:

> "We sometimes feel the azan from the mosque is too loud and repetitive, even occurring at dawn, which disturbs the neighborhood—especially our children and elderly."

Conversely, a mosque imam in the Abepura area remarked:

> "We use external loudspeakers because it has always been like that, and it's part of our identity as Muslims in this land. If churches can use bells, then why can't we call the azan through loudspeakers?" (Jubba, 2018: 83–85).

These statements show that sound usage is no longer merely a technical issue, but has transformed into a medium for articulating religious identity in a plural urban space (Knitter, 2011).

This phenomenon can be understood through the spatial theory of religion (Knott, 2005), which sees space not as a neutral entity but as an arena of symbolic conflict. The urban space of Jayapura becomes a social field where religions compete for visibility and symbolic dominance. Sound serves as a crucial instrument for constructing *aural hegemony*—dominance within the realm of public hearing—which affects how citizens experience the presence of particular religions more intensely.

However, it is important to note that this contestation does not automatically escalate into open conflict or physical violence. The people of Jayapura possess sufficient social capital to manage these tensions within certain boundaries. Several community leaders have even formed interfaith forums to discuss the issue periodically. A neighborhood head (RT) in Kotaraja expressed:

> "We once sat together with mosque and church leaders and agreed that loudspeakers could be used at certain hours, as long as mutual respect is maintained." (Jubba, 2018: 87).

This situation reflects a form of symbolic coexistence that is ambivalent: on one hand, it shows recognition of pluralism; on the other, it still contains latent tensions. This model resembles the concept of shallow multiculturalism (Vertovec, 2010), in which diversity is nominally acknowledged but has not evolved into deep and collaborative interaction.

Thus, the case study in Jayapura illustrates that interreligious contestation does not always appear in the form of violence but can also emerge through symbolic practices such as the use of loudspeakers. This contestation reflects the complexity of religious relations in urban spaces that are plural and symbolically sensitive. It also suggests that interreligious relations in Indonesia cannot always be approached through the lens of normative harmony, but rather must be read as continuous negotiations over space, sound, and the meaning of presence.

This contestation may also be interpreted through the lens of symbolic interactionism, wherein religious symbols such as the azan and church bells are not merely ritual instruments but acts of presence—symbolic actions that mark the existence and power of groups within a given social space (Goffman, 1959). These symbols function as strong communicative tools of identity, especially in plural societies that have historically and politically experienced uneven power relations. In this context, the azan and church bells are not just "calls to worship" but also representations of claims over space, territory, and social recognition.

As noted by Knott (2005), religious space is always embedded in symbolic conflict and social negotiation. In Jayapura, loudspeakers are used not only for internal worship purposes but also to mark the reach of religious influence beyond the physical boundaries of mosques or churches. In other words, the use of loudspeakers becomes a symbolic strategy for expanding spiritual space into public space. One Christian resident interviewed by Hasse Jubba said:

> "We feel like the mosque's sound blankets the entire neighborhood. Sometimes it feels as if we are outsiders, even though we've lived here for generations." (Jubba, 2018: 83). On the other hand, a mosque caretaker stated: "If the azan isn't heard, people will think there are no Muslims here." (Jubba, 2018: 84).

This illustrates how auditory symbols are used to reinforce group existence in a constantly negotiated social space.

Although such symbolic tensions carry the potential to provoke friction, what emerges is not open conflict but a form of formal coexistence—a pattern of relations where communities live side by side peacefully, but with limited and conditional interaction or collaboration. This coexistence is characterized by minimal mutual understanding, passive tolerance, and reliance on social protocols rather than emotional or spiritual engagement (Rahayu, 2010).

According to a local community leader interviewed in the book:

> "We know each other's boundaries. For example, during major religious holidays, we don't interfere. But we also don't help each other. That's each group's business." (Jubba, 2018: 85).

This statement reinforces the idea that the form of coexistence developed here more closely resembles a tacit agreement rather than the outcome of active dialogue or mutual participation.

From a multiculturalism theory perspective, this relationship can be understood as surface multiculturalism or minimal coexistence (Vertovec, 2010)—a situation in which diversity is acknowledged but not fully celebrated or lived collectively. Interaction only occurs when necessary and has not yet touched the intersubjective dimensions that could strengthen social cohesion (Hendra, 2019).

Therefore, although Muslim-Christian relations in Jayapura are not antagonistic, the symbolic dynamics—manifested in the "sound war"—demonstrate that apparent harmony does not necessarily indicate depth in social relations. Rather, these symbols become a site of latent negotiation which, if not managed sensitively, can develop into soft exclusion and hidden segregation.

Within the framework of multiculturalism, this condition can be categorized as a form of minimal or surface multiculturalism (Vertovec, 2010), where interreligious relations tend toward passive tolerance. This study shows that high symbolic visibility does not always correlate with the quality of interreligious social interaction. It also serves as a reminder that religious symbols in public spaces must be managed sensitively to prevent the escalation of tensions.

Between Exclusivism and Acculturation: *Muslim–Towani Tolotang Relations in South Sulawesi*

The Towani Tolotang community in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, represents one of Indonesia's local religious traditions that has undergone a long historical process in preserving its identity. Although the state categorizes the group under the formal umbrella of Hinduism, their beliefs and practices significantly differ from Balinese Hindu Dharma. The Tolotang faith is rooted in ancestral reverence, local ethics, respect for nature, and agrarian ritual cycles passed down through generations (Kayam, 1981; Sardar, 2005).

Hasse Jubba (2018) notes that the relationship between the Tolotang and the surrounding Muslim majority has seen fluctuations shaped by various factors—particularly local political histories and pressures from dominant identity discourses. Since the New Order era, the Tolotang have faced identity suppression: their rituals were banned, traditional leadership structures diminished, and they were compelled to adopt one of the state-sanctioned religions to obtain civil documents. It was within this context that the Tolotang were "adopted" into Hinduism administratively. Yet, this classification did not eliminate their vulnerability within a predominantly Muslim society.

Several instances of conflict have also been documented by Hasse, such as efforts by conservative Muslim actors to prohibit the use of land for Tolotang rituals, or the exclusion of Tolotang members from village activities due to their perceived "non-religious" status (Ali, 2013). However, interfaith relations in many other instances have demonstrated robust social accommodation, especially through Bugis cultural mechanisms such as *Tudang Sipulung* (customary deliberation), *Sipakatau* (humanizing others), and *Assamaturu* (mutual agreement).

From a structural-functionalist perspective, the community in Sidenreng Rappang shows efforts to maintain social stability through normative adaptation. Despite ideological and political tensions between the Tolotang and conservative Muslim groups, local society has relied on Bugis sociocultural structures to maintain balance. *Tudang Sipulung*, as a deliberative forum, allows for conflict resolution without violence and provides a space for intercommunal compromise (Fajarini, 2014).

Interestingly, the relationship between Muslims and Tolotang in Sidenreng is not primarily based on the state's formal model of tolerance, but instead grounded in local ethical values. Here, practical multiculturalism operates tangibly. Hasse illustrates how Muslims and Tolotang share public spaces, participate in each other's social events such as weddings and harvest celebrations, and maintain harmony through the *Sipakatau* principle. Tolerance is not passive but realized through dynamic, fluid, and community-rooted social relations based on a shared national identity.

In line with Paul Knitter's (2004) theory, the Muslim–Tolotang relationship exemplifies the practice of "silent dialogue"—where interfaith engagement does not always occur through formal or verbal discourse but through everyday social acts. Muslims often attend Tolotang funerals or provide logistical support during *mappalili* (pre-planting rituals). This illustrates the mutuality model—a tacit mutual understanding that other faiths also carry value and deserve respect (Phillips et al., 1992).

Tolotang rituals such as *mappalili*, *maccera tasi* (sea purification), and ancestral veneration serve as cohesive rites, weaving shared spiritual narratives about the human–nature relationship. While Muslims may not theologically partake in these rites, they often attend socially—offering space, support, and occasionally logistical assistance. In Turner's view, such interactions represent *liminality*: an in-between space that dissolves rigid identity boundaries and nurtures a "transcendent community" grounded in shared values.

Despite this peaceful coexistence, Hasse also emphasizes subtle forms of symbolic resistance. The Tolotang community continues to uphold their ritual language, traditional leadership system, and sacred spaces as means of spiritual autonomy. Amid pressures of religious homogenization, such resistance becomes crucial to affirm that tolerance should not demand the erasure of local authenticity.

On one hand, there is indeed a tendency towards identity exclusivism from both parties. Some Muslims in Sidenreng Rappang perceive the Towani Tolotang as deviating from normative religious teachings. Within mainstream theological logic, the Tolotang are not seen as belonging to one of the "six official religions." Even though they are administratively classified as Hindu, their practices and beliefs are often viewed as inconsistent with both Balinese Hindu Dharma and Islam. This reflects a religious standardization effort that weakens the position of local faiths.

On the other hand, the Tolotang have built strong identity boundaries by strictly preserving their ancestral belief system. They resist external interventions attempting to reshape their doctrines or rituals, including pressures to adopt formal theological narratives from outside the community. Their belief in a Supreme Being (*Patotoe Riolo*) is not articulated using the formal language of Abrahamic religions but expressed through a spiritual value system based on harmony with nature, reverence for ancestors, and agrarian cycles. For them, safeguarding doctrinal authenticity is a form of loyalty to ancestral heritage, not merely religious expression.

Despite this ideological polarization, Hasse Jubba's study (2018: 95–109) finds that at the social level, Muslim–Tolotang relations are fluid, accommodative, and pragmatic. Both communities often cooperate in social and economic activities such as farming (harvests), inter-family marriages, and intercommunal traditional ceremonies. For example, during harvest festivals or *mappalili*, Muslims assist with logistics and security, even if they don't partake in the religious rituals. Similarly, Tolotang members attend Islamic celebrations such as *Maulid* and *Eid al-Fitr* as honored guests. Their presence is not a form of "cultural conversion" but a gesture of social participation that transcends religious boundaries.

This relationship can be analyzed through Paul F. Knitter's *mutuality* model (2002), wherein religious communities are not expected to unify their truth claims but to acknowledge that truth can also be found in other traditions. This model emphasizes reciprocity and theological humility—

key foundations for genuine dialogue amid difference. In the Sidenreng Rappang context, this mutuality is manifest through symbolic recognition and practical involvement, without intruding into the sensitive theological domain (Maksum, 2011).

Furthermore, Catherine Cornille (2013) introduces the concept of *dialogue of praxis*—a form of interfaith dialogue that does not take place in academic spaces or formal forums, but through real-life interactions. This dialogue is not expressed through doctrinal language, but through economic cooperation, social solidarity, and cultural encounters. Here, Muslim and Tolotang communities demonstrate high social intelligence—they understand that preserving social cohesion is more vital than winning theological arguments. They mutually respect each other's sacred spaces, refrain from disrupting religious rites, and even symbolically attend each other's sacred moments as a form of mutual recognition and respect.

According to Cornille (2013), *dialogue of praxis* is often more effective in fostering sustainable peace than formal dialogue, which tends to be elitist, exclusive, and disconnected from grassroots realities. In many cases, local communities are already engaged in far more substantial forms of dialogue—conducted with empathy, shared experiences, and collective vulnerability.

Thus, identity exclusivism does not necessarily preclude peaceful cohabitation. On the contrary, through local value systems like *sipakatau* (humanizing others), *assituruseng* (empathic understanding), and customary forums such as *Tudang Sipulung*, Muslim and Tolotang communities have created an inclusive interfaith relationship that still respects the boundaries of belief. This indicates that pluralism need not be dogmatically unified—it can be celebrated through socially cultivated differences (Supriyono & Wartono, 2020).

Moreover, the interaction between Muslim and Towani Tolotang communities in Sidenreng Rappang is not only functional at the social level but also manifests cultural acculturation that strengthens societal cohesion. A clear expression of this acculturation is the use of the Bugis language as the primary medium for cross-group communication. Despite their religious differences, both communities speak the same language in daily conversation, village meetings, and traditional events. Language thus becomes a symbolic integrative tool that enables open communication while maintaining a shared sense of belonging as Bugis people.

Beyond language, their relationship is also built upon a living and transgenerationally inherited value system. The principle of *sipakatau* (to humanize others) forms the ethical core of Bugis culture, emphasizing the dignity of every individual regardless of religion or social status. This principle is a powerful cultural foundation for sustaining peaceful relations between Muslims and Tolotang. In practice, *sipakatau* is not merely a moral slogan but is embodied in concrete actions such as mutual aid during harvest, condolence visits to bereaved families, or participation in each other's celebrations.

Dusun Sonyo: Collective Ritual and Communal Spirituality Across Faiths

Dusun Sonyo, nestled in the Menoreh hills of Yogyakarta, offers a unique model of interreligious relations—peaceful, grounded, and productive. In this community, Muslims and Buddhists live side by side in a harmony that transcends mere symbolism and manifests in tangible, everyday social life. One of the key practices that underpins the cohesion of this village is the annual *Bersih Dusun* (Village Cleansing) ritual, which serves not only as a cultural ceremony but also as a spiritual, social, and ecological medium that unites villagers regardless of their religious affiliations.

According to Hasse Jubba (2018: 134–139), the *Bersih Dusun* ritual involves all residents from diverse religious backgrounds in a communal celebration that honors the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and ancestors. There is no religious segregation in its practice—Muslims, Buddhists, and even those who are not actively engaged in formal religious rituals participate together, cooperate, and pray for the wellbeing of the village. Food is prepared collectively, offerings

are made to honor nature and ancestral spirits, and prayers are expressed in a solemn and sacred atmosphere. This reflects a form of collective spirituality united not through theology, but through shared sentiment, lived experience, and a local ecological awareness.

There are three key points related to this ritual:

First, Ritual as a Medium for Dialogue and Social Cohesion. Rituals such as *Bersih Dusun* embody what Victor Turner (Turner & Abrahams, 2017) refers to as *communitas*—a moment of shared experience that transcends social hierarchies and institutional identities, including religious boundaries. In such *communitas*, individuals do not interact as "Muslims" or "Buddhists," but as human beings sharing space, time, and values. It evokes a unifying spiritual atmosphere—a collective consciousness before nature and a higher force. From a symbolic anthropology perspective, such as that of Clifford Geertz (1988), rituals like this generate both a "model of" and "model for" society—a reflection of an ideal social structure and a guide for sustaining it. *Bersih Dusun* creates a *model of* inclusive coexistence, while also serving as a *model for* peaceful living that other communities might replicate. Here, religion ceases to be a boundary and becomes part of a shared value system emphasizing spirituality, solidarity, and sustainable living.

Second, Praxis-Oriented Multiculturalism and Shared Experience. Harmony in Dusun Sonyo is not the result of state-imposed legal-formal approaches but arises from the ground up—through local values and sustained communal experience. This aligns with the notion of *praxis-oriented multiculturalism* (Sachedina, 2001), an approach that privileges real-life coexistence over symbolic recognition or passive tolerance. In this context, the residents of Dusun Sonyo build interfaith solidarity not through theological discourse, but through collective actions rooted in local ethics (Knott, 2008). There is no perceived need to debate doctrines, as they already share a vibrant spiritual space—rituals, mutual aid, and village deliberations. Such practices affirm that interreligious dialogue does not always need to take place in formal conversations. As Catherine Cornille (2013) explains, dialogical praxis occurs through unifying acts: working together, celebrating births, mourning losses, and honoring local rites.

Third, Silent Dialogue and Social Intimacy. Hasse notes that although there is no formal interreligious dialogue forum, Muslim and Buddhist villagers maintain deep social relationships, often attending each other's religious ceremonies out of respect. For instance, Muslims might attend Buddhist rituals as honored guests, not passive observers. Conversely, Buddhists may also take part in Islamic celebrations such as *Maulid Nabi* or other community-based religious events. This is what is referred to as *silent dialogue*—a form of dialogue expressed not through words, but through presence, empathy, and mutual support. These types of dialogue have a greater impact on fostering a healthy social climate because they occur naturally, without pretense, and in alignment with the community's cultural context (Esposito, 2000).

Dusun Sonyo provides an important lesson: productive interfaith cohabitation does not need to be engineered through state intervention or formal interfaith programs. Rather, local communities with strong cultural roots and inclusive spiritual values are capable of fostering an authentic form of *living pluralism*. The *Bersih Dusun* ritual is not merely a cultural event; it is a social and spiritual instrument that creates a shared space—a *public sacred space*—where all villagers feel connected in the spirit of togetherness. It is a form of diversity that embraces without homogenizing, respects without assimilating. More importantly, it is all grounded in trust and the lived experiences of daily life that are nurtured through consistent communal practices (Pribadi, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The study of interreligious relations in three peripheral communities of Indonesia—Jayapura,

Sidenreng Rappang, and Dusun Sonyo—reveals that lived experiences of diversity at the grassroots level significantly differ from the dominant normative models at the state level. In Jayapura, symbolic contestation becomes a space for the expression of religious identities vying for visibility, yet still allowing room for social negotiation. In Sidenreng Rappang, the relationship between Muslims and the Towani Tolotang community reflects a dynamic harmony amid tension, sustained by local cultural values such as *sipakatau* and *Tudang Sipulung* as pillars of coexistence. Meanwhile, Dusun Sonyo offers a model of silent dialogue and communal spirituality, where the *Bersih Dusun* ritual creates a transcendent space that unites Muslims and Buddhists beyond theological boundaries.

These findings demonstrate that local communities possess a remarkable adaptive capacity to manage differences in more fluid, flexible, and value-based ways. *Practical multiculturalism*—not merely a normative slogan—thrives in their daily lives through shared language, collective labor, and respect for communal rites. Interfaith dialogue does not always manifest in verbal discourse, but rather emerges through empathetic and collectively responsible social actions.

This article underscores the importance of shifting the focus of pluralism studies from the center to the margins, from discourse to practice, and from formal structures to experiential dimensions. In doing so, we can learn that diversity is not only a social challenge but also a cultural and spiritual resource for building authentic and sustainable peace within the complexity of plural societies.

REFERENCES

Ali, M. (2013). *Agama dan Konflik Sosial*. Marja.

Beatty, A. (2001). Varieties of Javanese Religion: An Anthropological Account. *American Ethnologist*, *28*(4).

Cornille, C. (2013). Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118529911.ch2

Esposito, J. L. (2000). Political Islam and the West. *JFQ*.

Fajarini, U. (2014). POTRET KONFLIK KEAGAMAAN MASYARAKAT TANGERANG BANTEN DAN RESOLUSI KONFLIK BERBASIS MULTIKULTURALISME DALAM ISLAM. *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, *14*(2). https://doi.org/10.21154/al-tahrir.v14i2.76

Geertz, C. (1988). Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz. *Journal of Comparative Physiology B*, *158*(3).

Goffman, E. (1959). Regions and Region Behaviour. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Hanafi, I. (2011). EKSKLUSIVISME, INKLUSIVISME, DAN PLURALISME: Membaca Pola Keberagamaan Umat Beriman. *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, *10*(2).

Hanafi, I., Hasbullah, H., & Ahmad, Y. (2017). BASIS TEOLOGIS UNTUK PLURALISME BERAGAMA; Menimbang Pandangan Kaum Sufi dalam Memahami Tuhan. *TOLERANSI: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.24014/trs.v8i1.2469

Hanafi, I., & Hassan, A. (2022). FENOMENA KEBEBASAN BERAGAMA DAN BERKEYAKINAN (KBB) DI UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SULTAN SYARIF KASIM RIAU. In *Bunga Rampai Konferensi Nasional Pendidikan HAM: Vol. III* (p. 90). DATUM Indonesia.

Heaton, J. (2012). Reworking Qualitative Data. In *Reworking Qualitative Data*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209878

Hefner, R. W. (2001). Public islam and the problem of democratization. *Sociology of Religion: A*

Quarterly Review, *62*(4). https://doi.org/10.2307/3712438

Hendra, Y. (2019). Spiral Of Silence Theory Versus Perkembangan Masyarakat Suatu Penjelasan dan Kritik Teori. *JURNAL SIMBOLIKA: Research and Learning in Communication Study*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.31289/simbollika.v5i2.2859

Jubba, H. (2018). KONTESTASI IDENTITAS AGAMA "LOKALITAS SPIRITUAL DI INDONESIA. In *Analytical Biochemistry* (Vol. 11, Issue 1).

Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Prasodjo, Z. H., & Qodir, Z. (2019). The future relations between the majority and minority religious groups, viewed from Indonesian contemporary perspective: A case study of the coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi. In *International Journal of Islamic Thought* (Vol. 16). https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.16.2019.002

Kayam, U. (1981). *Seni, Tradisi, Masyarakat,*. Sinar Harapan.

Knitter, P. F. (2004). Book Review: Theology and the Dialogue of Religions. *Missiology: An International Review*, *32*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/009182960403200113

Knitter, P. F. (2011). Doing Theology Interreligiously Union and the Legacy of Paul Tillich. *CrossCurrents*, *61*(1). https://doi.org/10.1353/cro.2011.a783216

Knitter, P. F. (2013). Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118529911.ch9

Knott, K. (2005). Spatial theory and method for the study of religion. *Temenos*, *41*(2). https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4778

Knott, K. (2008). Inside, outside and the space in-between: territories and boundaries in the study of religion. *Temenos*, *44*(1). https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4597

Madjid, N. (1999). Mencari Akar-akar Islam bagi Pluralisme Modern; Pengalaman Indonesia. In M. R. Woordward (Ed.), *Jalan Baru Islam; Memetakan Paradigma Mutakhir Islam di Indonesia*. Mizan.

Maksum, A. (2011). *Pluralisme dan Multikulturalisme*. Aditya Media Publishing.

Mujiburrahman. (2006). Feeling Threatened : Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia's New Order. In *Feeling Threatened : Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia's New Order*. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789053569382

Parsons, T. (1990). Prolegomena to a Theory of Social Institutions. *American Sociological Review*, *55*(3). https://doi.org/10.2307/2095758

Phillips, J. R., Hick, J., & Knitter, P. (1992). The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.2307/1389992

Pribadi, Y. (2019). Fragmentasi Umat dan Penciptaan Otoritas Keagamaan: Tanggapan terhadap 'Islam Lokal' dan 'Islam Asing' di Indonesia. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya*, *21*(1). https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.828

Qodir, Z., & Rosidi, I. (2019). Popular Islam: A Contemporary Phenomenon in Indonesia. *Asia Pacific Journal on Religion and Society*, *Vol. 3*(2).

Raharjo, M. (2019). *Analisis Isi (Content Analysis) dalam Penelitian Kualitatif*. Mudjiarahardjo.Uin-Malang.Ac.Id.

Rahayu, N. T. (2010). Teori Interaksi Simbolik dalam Kajian Komunikasi. *Widyatama*, *Vol. 19 No*(1).

Sachedina, A. (2007). The Clash of Universalisms: Religious and Secular in Human Rights. *Hedgehog Review*, *9*(3).

Sardar, Z. (2005). *Islam Tanpa Syariat; Menggali Universalitas Tradisi*. Grafindo Khazanah Ilmu.

Supriyono, & Wartono. (2020). The currentliterature, religions and humanity challenges of contemporary Islam. *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, *12*(6). https://doi.org/10.5373/JARDCS/V12I6/S20201039

Turner, V. (2017). The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure. In *The Ritual Process: Structure*

and Anti-Structure. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134666

Turner, V., & Abrahams, R. D. (2017). The Ritual Process. In *The Ritual Process*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134666

Vertovec, S. (2010). Towards post-multiculturalism? Changing communities, conditions and contexts of diversity. *International Social Science Journal*, *61*(199). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2010.01749.x

Yusuf, S. (2012). *Pengantar Metodologi Penelitian,*. Mitra Wacana Media.