

Strategy for Internalizing Religious Moderation Through Community-Based Learning of Tafsir Al-Qur'an (Case Study in Tual City, Maluku)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the community-based strategy for the development of religious moderation in Tual City, North Maluku, namely through Qur'an interpretation recitation activities organized by several taklim councils. This research is a type of field research because the main data of this research was collected from the activities of majlis taklim in Tual City. The data presentation and analysis model used is descriptive analytical. The phenomenological approach is used to analyze the behavioral phenomenon of the Tual City community which upholds unity and harmony behind diversity both from ethnic, racial and religious aspects. Positive psychology theory is used for the implementation of the concept of religious moderation by the Muslim community in Tual City which can support the creation of tolerance in the community. The results of this study show that the activities of interpreting the Qur'an can build a positive attitude among the Muslim community in the context of religious moderation. The values of religious moderation have been internalized in the life of the Muslim community of Tual City with evidence of the preservation of Kei culture and customs that have been going on for a long time since before Islam entered Tual City. The recitation of the Qur'an interpretation has contributed to providing a theological argument to the people of Tual City that tolerance, preserving local customs and culture, and anti-violence are noble values taught by the Qur'an and hadith which are the main references for Muslims. This is reflected in the attitude of glorifying the teachings of the Qur'an without having to abandon the customary law of lavrul ngabal embraced by the Kei tribe, adherents of animism, who became the majority before converting to Islam in Tual City.

1. Introduction

Tual City, Maluku is one of the regions in the Kei archipelago that has the fastest process of resolving conflicts between religious communities compared to other regions. In this region, religious conflicts that occurred in 1999 can be resolved familiarly by prioritizing customary law and local wisdom. The characteristics of the Kei community in Tual City play a significant role in shaping harmony between religious communities so that conflicts can be resolved more easily. (Safi, 2017)

In the list of religious harmony index scores conducted by the Center for Research and Development of Religious Community Guidance and Religious Services of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the 5 largest rankings of the most tolerant

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provinces in Indonesia, the provinces are West Papua (82.1%), NTT (81.1%), Bali (80.1%), North Sulawesi (79.9%), and Maluku (79.4%).

Religious moderation is one way to unite the Indonesian people who have different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Religious moderation is closely related to making religion a guideline in daily life while maintaining the values of local wisdom, both of which are juxtaposed in order to achieve a peaceful religious life and statehood. (Alfaini, 2021)

The word moderation comes from the Latin word *moderatio* meaning calmness, meaning nothing more and nothing less. This can be interpreted as an attitude of self-mastery of things that are more left-leaning or more right-leaning. In Arabic, moderation is known as *the word wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which has the equivalent meaning of the words *tawassuth* (middle), *i'tidal* (fair), and *tawazun* (balance). (Junaedi, 2019)

Religious moderation can be understood as a way of view, attitude, and behavior that always takes a middle position, always acts fairly, and is not extreme in religion. Religious moderation must be understood and believed as a balanced religious attitude between the practice of religion itself (*Exclusive*) and respect for the religious practices of other believers (*Inclusive*). Balance in religious practice will avoid extreme and fanatical attitudes in religion.

To realize religious harmony in Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs socializes the concept of religious moderation as a solution to avoid extremism in religion. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has indicators where a person or a group of people can be considered moderate, these indicators are national commitment, tolerance, non-violence and accommodating to local culture. (Junaedi, 2019)

2. Literature Review

Several previous studies have discussed the reconciliation of religious conflicts in Maluku, namely *Kerjasama Antar Umat Beragama: Studi Rekonsiliasi Konflik Agama di Maluku dan Tual* (Rahawarin, 2017), and the article *Budaya Masyarakat Kei Dalam Adat Larvul Ngabal di Desa Elaar Ngursoin Kecamatan Kei Kecil Timur Selatan Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara: Suatu Tinjauan Aqidah* (Mahdi Mardani Dfinubun, 2019). Research related to religious moderation has also been very prevalent in various publications, including *Resepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Konsep Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Studi Living Qur'an di Kecamatan Dullah Utara Kota Tual Maluku* (Yasin et al., 2022). The difference in this article is in the focus and location of the research, where the focus of the research is the strategy of internalizing religious moderation of the Muslim community in Tual City, Maluku; and the use of phenomenological approaches and positive psychology theories in the study of religious moderation.

3. Methodology

This research is a field research with a research locus carried out in Tual City, Maluku. The type of research data is qualitative. Data collection techniques by conducting observations and interviews. Observation was carried out with a participatory observation model, where the researcher participated in recitation activities held by the taklim council in Tual City. The interviews were conducted to obtain verbal information from Muslim community leaders in Tual City, Maluku who manage the majlis taklim, and the community participating in the majlis taklim. The collected data was analyzed using phenomenological approaches and positive psychology theories. The phenomenological approach is used to analyze the unique phenomenon that occurs in Tual City, namely the unity of two cultures that uphold unity and harmony behind diversity both in terms of ethnicity, race and religion. Positive psychology theory is used for the implementation of the concept of religious moderation by the Muslim community in Tual City which can support the creation of tolerance in the community. The data is processed and presented again in the form of descriptive analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The discussion of religious moderation has been mentioned in various works of thinkers in the Arab world such as Muhammad Rashid Ridha, Muhammad al-Madani, Muhammad Syaltut, Yusuf al-Qaradhawi and Wahbah al-Zuhayli (Azra, 2017). There are ten moderate attitudes that are in accordance with the values of the Qur'an and become the identity of moderate Muslims, namely *Tawassuth* (moderate), *Tawâzun* (balanced), *I'tidâl* (firm stance), *Tasâmuh* (tolerance); *Musâwah* (egalitarian); *Syûra* (deliberation); *Ishlâh* (on the side of the common good); *Aulawiyah* (understanding priorities); *Tathawwur wa Ibtikâr* (innovative); *Tahadhdhur* (civilized). (Huda, 2021)

Indonesia is endowed with differences and pluralism. The plurality of the Indonesia nation consisting of thousands of islands and coming from various ethnicities, races and religions requires many differences. These differences must be

maintained with various efforts, one of which is moderation in religion. Several cases of friction between religious communities in Indonesia are inevitable. This causes the image of Muslims as adherents of the majority religion in Indonesia to often be in the spotlight. Moreover, this is contrary to the concept *of rahmatan lil alamin* owned by Islam. Religious moderation is closely related to making religion a guideline in daily life while maintaining the values of local wisdom, both of which are juxtaposed in order to achieve a peaceful religious life and statehood. (Alfaini, 2021)

A moderate attitude in understanding and behavior of diversity is indispensable in managing a pluralistic and multicultural society. One of the cities in Maluku that is full of plurality is Tual City. Geographically, this area is bounded to the south by South Dullah sub-district, the north is bounded by the Banda Sea, the east is bounded by Southeast Maluku Regency, namely the Nerong Strait, and the west is bounded by the Banda Sea. It has a total area of 91.57 km² consisting of 8 islands, including 3 inhabited islands and 5 uninhabited islands. With a total population of 23,281 people. This village is inhabited by heterogeneous differences in ethnicity, culture and religion, including the Kei, Ambon, Tobelo, Banda ethnic groups, and immigrant tribes such as Javanese, Bugis, Buton, and others. The religions adopted by the population are also diverse, such as Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholic Christianity. (BPS Southeast Maluku Regency, 2021)

Initially, the religion adopted by the Kei Islands people was animism and dynamism. This belief was generally embraced by the majority of the population on the islands of the archipelago before the heavenly religions entered Indonesia. The community's belief in the spirits of the ancestors is still firmly embedded in people's lives. The influence of the faith began to fade after the entry of religions, one of which was Islam in the Kei Islands around the 13th century through trade routes brought by Arab traders from Yemen and Morocco in the Kur and Tayando regions. The majority of the residents of Tual City are Muslims, and the rest are Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians. The percentage of the number of each religion can also be seen from the number of places of worship, namely, 27 mosques, 7 prayer rooms/mosques, 7 Catholic churches, and 2 Protestant churches.

The interaction between the new religion and the old culture of the Kei tribe resulted in cultural acculturation in Tual City. One example is the tradition of gathering every Sunday. The association has been traditionally by the Kei tribe who were originally the majority population with their animist beliefs. The Sunday gathering is believed to be a form of worship in the spiritual belief system of the Kei tribe. After the area of North Dullah was inhabited by the majority of Muslims, the tradition of gathering on Sunday was not simply eliminated. The tradition is still preserved but its activities are replaced with recitation managed by local officials in the form of *majlis taklim*. Among the activities carried out in the meeting was the recitation of the book of tafsir initiated by the *Majlis Taklim Al-Hidayah*, *Majlis Studi As-Sholihin* and the Branch Manager of *Nahdlatul Ulama Kota Tual, Maluku*.

The learning of Qur'an interpretation introduced to the people of Tual City, apart from being a means of deepening Islam by teaching the values of obedience to religious teachings, is also used to instill awareness of the importance of maintaining harmony between the Dullah community with the plurality of religions, tribes and cultures. By using a theological approach through the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, it can be seen that Islam teaches peace and does not prohibit doing good to non-Muslims, as in Q.S. *Al-Mumtahanah*: 8. So that the learning of Qur'an interpretation in the tradition of Sunday gatherings can be an inseparable element in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation in the people of Tual City. Through the process of field observation and interviews with several related parties, this study shows that the values of religious moderation have been so well lived and practiced in the daily lives of the people of Tual City, Maluku, with the following indicators:

First: Love for the Motherland and National Commitment

The diversity owned by the Indonesian nation is actually a very valuable national wealth. This wealth must be carefully cared for so that friction does not arise that can tear the unity of the nation. One of the differences that most easily ignites disputes and can become a problem for the united state of the Republic of Indonesia is religious differences. Exclusive religious attitudes are believed to be one of the causes of religious friction in Indonesia. The existence of religious moderation as a strategy to take care of Indonesianness in the country has been realized by the Muslim community in North Dullah District, Tual City, Maluku. Ahmad Raharusun, Acting Head of the Tual City Office, said that the Muslim community of Tual City upholds the values of nationality and the Republic of Indonesia which has so far succeeded in uniting all religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups in the city of Tual, Maluku. The heterogeneity of the Indonesia nation can be handled with a religious moderation approach. Religious moderation is used to eliminate exclusivity in religion so that all circles of the nation can mingle. (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019)

The Muslim community in Tual City has understood and undergone multiculturalism in religious life. The Chairman of the Tual City Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Board, Ishak Rumaf, said that the concept of multiculturalism has been well understood by the Muslim community of Tual City because multiculturalism itself is no stranger to the Islamic world. The weekly recitation of the Qur'an interpretation that is routinely carried out has succeeded in instilling the value of love for the homeland. Ishak Rumaf's statement is in line with Aini's research which states that the Muslim community of Tual City knows each other very well and always maintains intra and intercultural communication in the community. (Kabakoran, 2015)

Second: Religious Tolerance

For the people of Indonesia who have diversity, tolerance in religion is very important so that each of them can dialogue diversity, both various beliefs, religions, philosophies of life, science, to various local traditions and customs. With religious moderation, a person will be adaptable, open (*inclusive*), merge, get along with the community and learn lessons. It is not a self that is confined or closed (*exclusive*).

Tolerance is an attitude of openness or open-mindedness to differences of opinion, restraint, patience, allowing people to have other opinions on their beliefs in accordance with their religious teachings. This attitude of tolerance has been shown by the Muslim community of Tual City of Maluku for a long time in daily life. In an interview conducted with the Acting Head of the Tual City Office, Ahmad Raharusun, emphasized that religious tolerance in North Dullah District, Tual City, has been established for a long time. This attitude of tolerance is also shown by the habits of the Muslim community of Tual City who are accustomed to working together in religious life, for example to build places of worship. The general condition of Maluku province after the agreement on the peace agreement in the Malino II Agreement in 2002, in general in social and religious relations of the Maluku people can be said to have recovered. However, if explored more deeply, there is still a concern among the people of Maluku that a similar incident will be repeated. Fear and suspicion are still part of the religious life of people in Maluku. Social and religious reconciliation after the occurrence of conflict of course requires time and a joint role to re-create ideal conditions. For this reason, an attitude of tolerance in religion between communities is urgently needed to re-knit a sense of mutual security and trust (Rahawarin, 2017).

Third: Non-Violence

Anti-violence is closely related to anti-radicalism attitudes. Radicalism is often juxtaposed with extreme attitudes to the point that it can cause acts of terrorism that disturb society. This troubling attitude arises because extreme groups legalize all means, one of which is by terrorizing other parties who are contrary to their understanding. Generally, the term terrorism is associated with certain religions, but basically radicalism can be attached to all religions. (Fitriana, 2018)

The people of Kei Tual City have experienced a bad experience when there was a religious conflict that killed thousands of people. After the conflict that occurred in 1999-2000, the Kei Muslim community in North Dullah District, Tual City has established good communication between religious communities. The view of avoiding violence is understood by the Muslim community as a common need not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslims.

The weekly interpretation study held by the Tual City PCNU is considered to have been able to erode the seeds of violence based on religion. The Chairman of the Tual City Nahdlatul Ulama branch, Ishak Rumaf, explained how the Muslim community of Tual City highly appreciates peace through the Islamic name which comes from the word "*al-Salam*" and means peace. According to him, the command to maintain peace is in accordance with Q.S. al-Baqarah: 208 where Islam invites its people to practice and spread peace on earth. In the word of Allah in Q.S. Al-Baqarah :208. Allah affirms: "*O you who believe, enter into Islam (peace) thoroughly and do not follow the steps of Satan! Indeed, he is a real enemy to you*". This verse, according to Ishak Rumaf in the concept of multiculturalism, can be interpreted as the willingness to enter into peace (*as-silm*) in a total (*kaffah*) manner.

Fourth: Accommodating to local culture

The recitation of the interpretation of the Qur'an in Tual City has sown the values of local cultural acceptance. This is for example as said by Masyitah, a member of the As-Sholihin Studies Taklim Council, who through the presentation of the interpretation of QS. Al-Mumtahanah: 8, can understand that accepting local culture is part of *al-birr* taught in the verse. This proves that the role of religious messages is something fundamental to the foothold of society in behaving. (Akhmadi, 2019)

One form of local cultural acceptance is the application of Larvul Ngabal customary law in the lives of the people of Tual City. According to the Acting Head of the Tual City Regional Office, Ahmad Raharusun, he said that the articles in the Larvul Ngabal customary law mention religious harmony that has existed for a long time in the Kei community. In line with Raharusun, in an interview with the Chairman of the Tual City MUI, Ahmad Kabalmay, explained that the Larvul Ngabal customary law is a local wisdom owned by the people of the Kei Islands. This customary law is seen as very effective in resolving social problems so that it can be an important instrument in maintaining harmony between religious communities in the Kei Islands, including during the 1999 riots. (Rahawarin, 2017)

The learning activity of Qur'an interpretation in the people of North Dullah, Tual City, has formed an accommodating attitude towards local culture as long as it does not conflict with Islam. In addition to respect for human law, Larvul Ngabal describes how the Kei community places respect for the existence of human life, especially towards oneself. The Muslim community highly appreciates this law because it is also in accordance with the command of Allah swt contained in Q.S. Ibrahim: 7, where in this verse we are commanded to be grateful for the blessings of life given by Allah. Appreciation for life is interpreted as an attitude of taking care of yourself so as not to do useless and loss-making activities.

5. Conclusion

The religious conflict that occurred in Maluku in 1999 has provided experience and awareness of the Muslim community in North Dullah District, Tual City, Maluku about the importance of a harmonious religious life. The harmony of religious life is supported by various efforts that strengthen the pillar of harmony through the practice of the concept of religious moderation. The people of the North of Tual realize that violence is not the path that must be chosen, so that tolerance and non-violence become a community culture that is also strengthened in the Larvul Ngabal customary law that they have. The internalization of religious moderation is strengthened by the recitation of the Qur'an interpretation which is carried out every Sunday, the day on which the Kei tribe carries out religious ceremonies according to the belief system they believe. The recitation of the interpretation of the Qur'an has provided a theological argument for the Muslim community, that religious moderation, which is reflected in the attitude of maintaining harmony between the citizens of Tual City, is part of Islamic teachings that must be practiced. Based on the research that has been carried out, through the recitation of the interpretation of the Qur'an, the people of Tual City, have very well translated the four pillars of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

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