

## IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND INTERFAITH HARMONY IN JAILOLO, WEST HALMAHERA

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### **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini membahas resolusi konflik antarumat beragama di Jailolo, Maluku Utara, dengan latar belakang berbagai kerusuhan sosial bernuansa SARA yang pernah terjadi di wilayah ini, seperti konflik Ambon (1998), Poso (1998), Maluku Utara (2000), Tobelo (Papilo Berdarah, Sosol Berdarah), hingga Loloda dan Kao-Malifut. Konflik tersebut menimbulkan korban besar dari komunitas Muslim maupun Kristen serta merusak tatanan sosial dan budaya lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi latar belakang konflik, strategi resolusi yang ditempuh, pola relasi dan kerukunan beragama pascakonflik, serta respon masyarakat terhadap upaya penyelesaian berbasis kearifan lokal. Dengan pendekatan*

*kualitatif dan metode induktif, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Jailolo merupakan wilayah dengan kultur pluralis yang menjadikan simbol lokal Marimoi Ngone Foturu sebagai perekat sosial. Prinsip ini digunakan sebagai solusi penyelesaian konflik sekaligus model kerukunan pascakonflik. Kajian ini menegaskan bahwa konflik di Maluku Utara pada awalnya dipicu faktor ekonomi dan politik, sementara isu agama muncul belakangan, sehingga penguatan nilai inklusivitas agama dan kearifan lokal menjadi kontribusi penting bagi pengembangan resolusi konflik di Indonesia.*

**Kata Kunci:** Resolusi Konflik, Kerukunan, Umat Beragama, Toleransi.

### **Abstract**

*This study examines the resolution of interreligious conflicts in Jailolo, North Maluku, against the backdrop of social unrest with ethno-religious (SARA) nuances that erupted in various regions of Indonesia, such as the Ambon conflict (1998), Poso (1998), North Maluku (2000), Tobelo (the “Papilo Bloodshed” and “Sosol Bloodshed”), as well as Loloda and Kao-Malifut. These conflicts claimed numerous victims from both Muslim and Christian communities and severely disrupted local social and cultural harmony. The research aims to identify the background of the conflicts, the resolution strategies undertaken, the patterns of interreligious relations after the conflicts, and community responses to conflict resolution based on local wisdom. Employing a qualitative approach and inductive method, the findings reveal that Jailolo, with its pluralistic cultural and religious background, has adopted the local symbol Marimoi Ngone Foturu (“unity is strength”) as a social adhesive. This principle serves as both a conflict resolution tool and a model for post-conflict interreligious harmony. The study highlights that economic and political disparities initially triggered the conflicts, while religious issues emerged later, underscoring the importance of inclusive religious values and local wisdom in strengthening conflict resolution in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Resolution, Harmony, Interreligious, Tolerance

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## **INTRODUCTION**

North Maluku once experienced prolonged horizontal socio-religious conflicts that involved large segments of society and

claimed numerous victims from both Muslim and Christian communities. These conflicts were an extension of the Ambon and Poso clashes in 1999/2001, spreading across districts and cities throughout the province. The areas most severely affected included Tobelo (North Halmahera), Jailolo (West Halmahera), Bacan (South Halmahera), and Ternate City. The violence resulted in widespread destruction of public and governmental facilities such as housing, schools, health centers, and places of worship, while more critically, it shattered the social fabric and polarized religious life between Muslim and Christian groups, producing symbolic markers of segregation such as (*Acan*, *Obet*, white, yellow, and red).<sup>1</sup> The conflict claimed approximately 2,410 lives, with immeasurable material losses. Various studies reveal that the root causes were not purely religious but rather a combination of economic, political, and socio-cultural factors, while religion was often mobilized later to broaden support.<sup>2</sup> This finding aligns with Jati's study,<sup>3</sup> which highlights the role of local wisdom in mitigating religious conflict, and Al-Qurtuby's research,<sup>4</sup> which underscores that peace in Maluku can be sustained through the integration of religious values with community-based reconciliation mechanisms.

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<sup>1</sup> Geger Riyanto, "Precarious Coexistence in Maluku: Fear and Trauma in Post-Conflict Christian-Muslim Relations", dalam *Muslim Politics Review*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (2023), hal. 66-87. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v2i1.143>

<sup>2</sup> Armita Arvanti, *et.al.*, "Dinamika Konflik Keagamaan di Maluku serta Upaya Resolusi Mewujudkan Perdamaian", dalam *Jurnal Education and Development*, Vol. 12 No. 1 (2023), hal. 61-69, <https://doi.org/10.37081/ed.v12i1.5260>

<sup>3</sup> Wasisto Raharjo Jati. "Kearifan Lokal sebagai Resolusi Konflik Keagamaan", dalam *Walisono: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, Vol. 21 No. 2 (2013), hal. 393-416. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.21.2.251>

<sup>4</sup> Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas*, (New York: Routledge, 2019).

One of the key triggers of conflict is religion, alongside socio-economic disparities and political interests. Religion is often positioned as a dominant factor and employed as a tool to legitimize the short-term interests of certain groups, while simultaneously functioning as a destructive engine in conflicts framed by ethnic and religious identity (SARA). From the perspective of interreligious conflict resolution and the pursuit of harmony, however, religion itself does not teach violence. Rather, religion consistently conveys messages of peace and compassion—both towards fellow believers and those of different faiths. Conflicts framed in religious terms, therefore, represent a distortion of spiritual teachings, in which religion is reduced to an artificial identity marker that grants moral legitimacy to acts of violence against others. In addition to this use of religion as moral legitimacy and identity, the eruption of violence in the name of religion is also often caused by misinterpretations of religious teachings, producing narrow understandings and exclusivist attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Discussions on religion in the public sphere never seem to subside; for many, religion is considered to touch the deepest dimension of human life, yet it is also frequently associated with conflict, violence, oppression, war, and even killing in the name of God. In recent years, religion has increasingly been stigmatized as a source of interreligious conflict and division, with identity construction seen as a major driver of radicalism in Indonesia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Zulkifli Hi. Saleh, "Fanatisme Identitas Komunal sebagai Pemicu Konflik Sosial (Studi pada Konflik Sosial Kao-Malifut, Halmahera Utara)", dalam *Journal of Ethnic Diversity and Local Wisdom*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2020), hal. 74-82. <https://jurnal.umm.ac.id/index.php/jedilwisdom/article/view/622>

<sup>6</sup> Mauludy Nugraha, *et.al.*, "Identity Construction Polemic and Overcoming Radicalism: Case Study of HTI Transnationalism in Indonesia", dalam *Jurnal*

Indonesia is not a country without conflict. Indeed, it is one of the nations intimately familiar with the many faces and dimensions of conflict. Religious conflicts—often intertwined with ethnic, tribal, racial, and sectarian (SARA) backgrounds—especially when clearly political in nature, emerge repeatedly in this country. Indonesian society, which is highly plural in terms of ethnicity, culture, race, language, and religion, represents both potential and threat. Some SARA-tinged conflicts are frequently linked to the nation's failure to properly understand difference.<sup>7</sup> Conflicts with religious overtones that occur in this nation generate concern from various stakeholders, including the government. These conflicts run counter to the image seen by the world, which views Indonesia as an exemplar of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony. Indeed, throughout its history, this nation has not experienced a massive religious-conflict covering all regions recently. Thus, there has been growing discourse on preventing such conflict through various approaches. It must be acknowledged that Indonesia is recognized as a pluralist nation in matters of religion and belief. This pluralism carries both positive and negative potentials. The positive side of pluralism is that the diversity of belief is a source of cohesion and a strengthening factor for the state; religious diversity needed by citizens becomes an integrative factor for Indonesia.<sup>8</sup>

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*Tapis: Jurnal Teropong Aspirasi Politik Islam*, Vol. 20 No. 1 (2024), hal. 24-39.  
<https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/TAPIS/article/view/20215>

<sup>7</sup> Sudianto Manullang, "Konflik Agama dan Pluralisme Agama di Indonesia", dalam *Te Deum: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (2014), hal. 99-120. <https://ojs.sttsappi.ac.id/index.php/tedeum/article/view/78>

<sup>8</sup> Franklin Hutabarat, "Navigating Diversity: Exploring Religious Pluralism and Social Harmony in Indonesian Society", in *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, Vol. 3 Iss. 6 (2023), p. 6-13.  
<https://doi.org/10.24018/theology.2023.3.6.125>

In social theory, it is emphasized that the more homogeneous a country is, the lower the likelihood of conflict. Indonesia, however, is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity; therefore, the approaches taken to respond to such complex issues must differ from those employed in more homogeneous societies and should be rooted in local wisdom. More specifically, education has often been criticized for failing to foster diversity and to transcend religious boundaries, a shortcoming that reflects the broader potential for the misuse of religion. This phenomenon illustrates how humanity can instrumentalize religion for destructive purposes. Charles Kimball's seminal work clearly maps the diverse potentials and origins of violence within each religion, while also outlining possibilities for reform that would restore religion's primordial role as a bearer of love and compassion.<sup>9</sup>

Human beings are conflictual creatures (*homo conflictus*), constantly engaged in debates and rivalries, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.<sup>10</sup> Communal conflicts that have erupted in various regions of Indonesia in recent decades—such as the Ambon riots of 1998, the Poso conflict of 1999, the North Maluku clashes of 1999–2000, and several others—claimed significant casualties on both sides, Muslim and Christian alike. These episodes demonstrate that social conflicts, whether between different religious groups or even within the same religion, require appropriate approaches to achieve

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Kimbal, *When Religion Become Evil, Terjemahan Indonesia Nurhadl, "Kala Agama Jadi Bencana"* (Bandung: Mizan, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Irwan Abdullah dkk, *Agama Dan Kearifan Lokal Dalam Tantangan Lokal Dalam Tantangan Global* (Yogyakarta: Sekolah pasca sarjana UGM dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2008).

interreligious conflict resolution and to foster harmony among faith communities.<sup>11</sup>

North Maluku has long been recognized as one of the centers of Islamic kingdoms in the Indonesian archipelago, situated in the eastern part of the country, and deeply rooted in religious traditions. This is evident in the historical background of Ternate in North Maluku Province, which has consistently upheld belief in the One Almighty God as part of the Indonesian national identity, reflected in the 1945 Constitution. The key point conveyed in this study is that the conflicts that have occurred in North Maluku are inseparably linked to past conflicts. These conditions demonstrate that such events did not emerge in a “vacuum”, but rather were shaped by historical precedents and unresolved tensions.<sup>12</sup>

The complexity of the roots of conflict in North Maluku is deeply interwoven, resembling a tangled thread that is difficult to unravel. The conflicts that occurred did not have a single meaning but were mutually reinforcing, thereby producing deeply rooted tensions. The portrayal of these problems is reflected in Y.B. Mangunwijaya's novel *Ikan-ikan Hiu, Ido, dan Homa*, which illustrates the relationships among major groups (ethnic and sultanates) often marked by conflict.<sup>13</sup> One of the roots of the conflict lay in competing exclusive claims, which gave rise to interreligious tensions and disharmony both within and between religious communities. Religion was instrumentalized as political legitimacy for the interests of rival groups under the banner of “holy war” or

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<sup>11</sup> Sumanto Al Qurtuby, “Beyond Liberal Peace: Religious Violence and Tactical Peacebuilding in Indonesia”, in *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, Vol. 10 Iss. 2 (2023), p. 145-168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970231173525>

<sup>12</sup> Virginia Gorlinski, “North Maluku, Province, Indonesia”, in *Britannica: Geography & Travel*, in <https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Maluku>

<sup>13</sup> Magunwijaya YB, *Ikan-Ikan Hiu, Idi, Homa* (Jakarta: sinar harapan, 1983).

fighting in the name of God, with religious symbols placed at the forefront. As Alwi Shihab has observed, the use of religion today as a central element in the machinery of human destruction starkly contradicts the essential teachings of all faith traditions. This dynamic aligns with more recent analyses showing how religion in Indonesia is often politicized as a vehicle of mobilization during conflict.

In general, interreligious conflicts are caused by both religious and non-religious factors. These two elements frequently trigger and perpetuate disharmony among religious communities. Religious factors are often linked to theological doctrines and truth claims, while non-religious factors include economic inequality, political interests, differences in socio-cultural values, and the rapid development of information technology and transportation.<sup>14</sup> Religion itself can be understood through two approaches: the normative-theological and the socio-cultural.<sup>15</sup> North Maluku, as part of the Indonesian nation, continues to acknowledge pluralism in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion. However, this pluralism presents significant challenges in building national unity. Guided by the philosophy of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—one nation, one language, one state, and one ideology—unity and cohesion can nevertheless be realized. Therefore, efforts toward conflict resolution in religious life should be directed at preserving the purity of religion, fostering dynamic interreligious harmony, and safeguarding the unity of the nation. Such efforts must be situated within the broader framework of religious moderation, with the

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad M. Basyuni, *Kebijakan Dan Strategi Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Departemen Agama RI, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama Normativitas Atau Historitas* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996).



ultimate aim of sustaining harmony under the Republic of Indonesia, grounded in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.<sup>16</sup>

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN WEST HALMAHERA REGENCY (JAILOLO)

West Halmahera Regency is the parent regency of North Maluku, which changed its name following the regional division based on Law No. 1 of 2003. It is located on Halmahera Island and covers a total area of 14,823.16 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 3,199.74 km<sup>2</sup> of land and 11,623.42 km<sup>2</sup> of sea. Geographically, the regency lies between 10°48' north latitude to 1°48' north latitude, and between 127°16'00" east longitude to 127°16'01" east longitude. Administratively, West Halmahera is divided into eight districts (*kecamatan*) and 169 villages (*desa*). Among them, Loloda District has the largest area, while Ibu District is the smallest.<sup>17</sup>

The area of West Halmahera Regency, by district, is as follows:

No.	District	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )
1.	Loloda	614.01
2.	Tabaru	220.64
3.	Ibu	109.82
4.	Ibu Selatan	368.33

<sup>16</sup> Rathouzska, Lucie, "The Unknowability and Imagination in Mystical Doctrines of the Late Medieval English Mysticism" in *Religions*, Vol. 14 No. 7 (2023), p. 878. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070878>

<sup>17</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kabupaten Halmahera Barat, *Kabupaten Halmahera Barat dalam Angka*, (Maluku Utara: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). <https://halbarkab.bps.go.id/id/publication/2025/02/28/c612f6a5019f23d25553891c/halmahera-barat-regency-in-figures-2025.html>

5.	Sahu	122.86
6.	Sahu Timur	271.00
7.	Jailolo	226.00
8.	Jailolo Selatan	147.55

The capital of West Halmahera Regency is located in Jailolo District, which can be reached by land transportation from all districts except Loloda, which requires access by sea. In 2020, the population of West Halmahera Regency was recorded at 132,349 people, consisting of 67,549 males and 64,800 females. The largest population is concentrated in the Jailolo District, amounting to 34,757 people or 26.26 percent of the total population of the regency.

The working-age population (PUK) is defined as individuals aged 15 years and above. The PUK consists of the labor force and those not in the labor force. The labor force includes people who are employed as well as those actively seeking work. Meanwhile, those not in the labor force are individuals engaged in schooling, managing household duties, or other non-economic activities. In West Halmahera Regency in 2020, the working-age population totaled 85,869 people, of which 55,523 were part of the labor force, while 30,346 were classified as not in the labor force.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is one of the key benchmarks for assessing the success of human development in a given region. The HDI is a composite indicator constructed from several single indicators. The formulation of such indicators is essentially a measurement technique of social characteristics of individuals or groups that are theoretically defined but difficult to capture through operational definitions. There are four main components used in calculating the HDI to measure the quality of life: life expectancy, literacy rate, average years of schooling, and per capita consumption/expenditure. These four components serve as

essential tools in evaluating the level of development.

One of the key indicators of regional development progress is the Human Development Index (HDI), which UNESCO also uses as a benchmark for evaluating development achievements. At present, the HDI of West Halmahera Regency remains among the lowest in North Maluku Province. Out of the nine regencies and municipalities in the province, West Halmahera records the lowest HDI, as shown in the table released by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of North Maluku Province, which includes the Human Development Index.

The Human Development Index (HDI) of West Halmahera Regency:

No.	Provinsi/ Kabupaten/Kota	IPM		Peringkat IPM	
		2010	2011	2010	2011
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Maluku Utara	68,63	69,03	29	30
2.	Halmahera Barat	66,63	69,13	8	8
3.	Halmahera Tengah	68,67	69,13	3	3
4.	Kepulauan Sula	67,50	67,96	6	6
5.	Halmahera Utara	67,57	67,98	5	5
6.	Halmahera Selatan	67,62	67,98	4	4
7.	Halmahera Timur	67,50	67,90	7	7
8.	Pulau Morotai	64,15	64,61	9	9
9.	Kota Ternate	76,13	76,58	1	1
10.	Kota Tidore Kepulauan	69,62	69,62	2	2

Social relations among residents, both Muslim and Christian, are highly harmonious, familiar, and rooted in kinship ties that have been preserved for generations. This indicates that the people of

Jailolo Regency embody pluralism and religious diversity in their daily lives. Based on the author's observations, interreligious relations in the post-conflict era up to the present have been regarded as highly harmonious, contributing significantly to the creation of religious harmony in Jailolo and West Halmahera more broadly. The following is the distribution of the population of West Halmahera Regency by religion:

No	Agama	Jumlah (jiwa)
1.	Islam	49.320
2.	Kristen Protestan	57.521
3.	Kristen Katolik	2.267

The data above shows that,<sup>18</sup> in addition to Islam and Catholic Christianity, there are also small numbers of adherents of Hinduism (16 people), Buddhism (3 people), and other local beliefs. The total population of West Halmahera Regency by religion amounts to 109,127 people, with 30 percent identifying as Muslim and 70 percent as Christian. This indicates that Christianity is the majority religion in West Halmahera Regency.

### **The Social Kinship System of the Community in Jailolo, West Halmahera**

Human beings are social creatures who, by nature, live within a community. Every individual also possesses kinship ties, as each person belongs to a family. The kinship system begins with marriage, followed by the establishment of a household and family, and continues to expand into clans or lineages with their own

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<sup>18</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kabupaten Halmahera Barat, *Kabupaten Halmahera Barat dalam Angka*, (Maluku Utara: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025).  
<https://halbarkab.bps.go.id/id/publication/2025/02/28/c612f6a5019f23d25553891c/halmahera-barat-regency-in-figures-2025.html>

kinship structures. From such social systems emerge kinship groups. Among the people of Jailolo, two family patterns can be identified: the nuclear family and the extended family. The nuclear family consists of a husband, wife, and their unmarried children. Both biological and adopted children are generally granted equal rights and are therefore regarded as members of the family. The extended family, on the other hand, refers to a kinship group as a social unit that always consists of more than one nuclear family. This kinship structure reflects a common feature of Indonesian societies, where extended family bonds continue to play a significant role in shaping social cohesion.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the author's observations, two family patterns can be identified within the kinship system of Jailolo society. Those residing in the town tend to prefer the nuclear family model, while those living in villages are more inclined toward the extended *utrolocal* family structure. The latter usually consists of a senior nuclear family together with the nuclear families of both male and female children. In some cases, nuclear families occupy separate houses that are built in proximity, forming a single compound. Generally, the kinship system of the Jailolo people takes the form of a clan (minimal or minor lineage), that is, a kinship group comprising several extended families descended from a common ancestor. Members are still aware of their genealogical ties, maintain mutual recognition, and continue to interact socially, often living together within the same village.

This kinship system functions as a source of social and

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<sup>19</sup> Nathalia Debby Makaruku, *et.al.*, "Kai-Wait Sebagai Modal Sosial Inklusif: Tradisi Lokal dalam Membangun Solidaritas Lintas Agama di Maluku", dalam *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, Vol. 4 No. 3 (2024), hal. 1609–1622. <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i03.5453>

cultural capital, expressed in everyday practices such as family solidarity, mutual help, social cooperation, trust among religious communities, and collective responsibility. These social traits manifest in behaviors shaped by what anthropologists have described as a “shame culture,” combined with pride and strong religious emotions. Local wisdom derived from these kinship traditions serves as an important social resource, enabling communities to protect the poor and marginalized, promote civic participation, manage conflict and violence, and preserve both natural and social resources. Such localized knowledge, transmitted across generations, underpins the resilience and cohesion of Jailolo society.

Local wisdom encompasses a variety of adaptive mechanisms and ways of thinking, behaving, and acting within social structures. Its dimensions include decision-making processes, local skills, local resources, and types of social solidarity. These are manifested in local intelligence transmitted through creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness for community self-reliance. Local wisdom draws its spirit from cultural values that have been socially agreed upon. It represents a mature and enduring condition of social capital, typically embodied by individuals who internalize the essence of their community—hence the term indigenous local. Society itself is a collective of individuals living within the same territory, where cooperation among its members is a necessity to achieve harmony and peace. The Jailolo community illustrates an interesting phenomenon: within a relatively small area, multiple religions coexist, forcing residents to respect one another to prevent interreligious conflicts that could cause casualties, economic losses, and lasting social shame. This highlights the role of local wisdom in shaping tolerance and peaceful coexistence in diverse

communities.<sup>20</sup>

Residents also expressed the view that, *"If we do not respect one another, then who else will respect us? Criticizing or scrutinizing the faults of another religion will only create discomfort. It is better to improve our own faith, while simply respecting others so that we too may be respected"* (Imam of the Grand Mosque of Jailolo). This argument indicates that the community has long been accustomed to and has understood existing differences; therefore, they no longer view unsettling issues as problems. Such issues are often perceived merely as attempts to divide the community for the short-term interests of certain groups, while sacrificing the peaceful and family-oriented way of life that characterizes Jailolo society.

In the post-conflict period, interreligious relations in Jailolo—particularly between Christians and Muslims in West Halmahera—represent a complex reality that cannot be understood merely as formal interactions between adherents of different faiths. In practice, these relations are rooted in two significant bonds: first, kinship ties through direct lineage, and second, a sense of fraternity shaped by belonging to the same ethnic group or originating from the same village, reflecting primordial attachments. However, these bonds have gradually weakened in response to the social transformations taking place within the community. Several key factors behind these changes can be traced to external influences that have increasingly penetrated the daily life of the people of North Halmahera.<sup>21</sup>

The changes began in the early 1980s, influenced by the

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<sup>20</sup> Abu Hamid, *Potensi Modal Sosial Pada Budaya Lokal Dalam Pembangunan Daerah* (Makassar: Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Sulawesi Selatan, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Pendeta Jemaat Kristen P. H. Thomas, *Wawancara* (Tobelo, 2014).

issuance of a Joint Decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama* or SKB) of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs in 1979, which regulated the implementation of religious propagation. The publication of this decree can be regarded as a response to the growing number of Christian adherents, a development perceived as the result of missionary activities supported by external financial resources.<sup>22</sup>

In Halmahera itself, up until 1979, there was a significant increase in the number of Christian adherents. According to Haire, this development was driven by two main factors: first, the ongoing missionary efforts carried out by the churches, and second, the impact of New Order government policies that required citizens to adhere to one of the officially recognized religions. Haire further argues that the choice of many Halmahera people to embrace Christianity was largely motivated by their resistance to the dominance of the predominantly Muslim regional government of North Maluku.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the Joint Decree (SKB) mentioned above, another significant factor was the issuance of a fatwa by the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) in March 1981, which prohibited Muslims from attending Christmas celebrations organized by Christians.<sup>24</sup> The issuance of the fatwa received a strong response from the New Order government, as it was considered capable of disrupting relations between Christian and Muslim communities. In response, the New Order government,

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<sup>22</sup> Alwi Sihab, *Membendung Arus; Respon Gerakan Muhammadiyah Terhadap Penetrasi Misi Kristen Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> James Haire, *Sejarah Gereja Di Halmahera* (Jakarta: BPK.GM, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Alwi Sihab, *Membendung Arus; Respon Gerakan Muhammadiyah Terhadap Penetrasi Misi Kristen Di Indonesia*.



through the Minister of Religious Affairs, subsequently issued another statement clarifying that Muslims were not prohibited from attending Christmas celebrations.<sup>25</sup>

Although the government issued a subsequent statement, the fatwa was not revoked by the MUI and thus continued to serve as a reference for Muslims. The fatwa also led Muslims in North Halmahera to increasingly limit their involvement in Christmas celebrations organized by Christians. Even the customary practice of visiting relatives who were celebrating religious holidays gradually began to disappear.

In an interview, Kasuba revealed, “Christian pastors have long exploited the meaning of tolerance to lure Muslims into following some of their teachings by framing it within the context of familial tolerance. As a result, the boundaries of Sharia are violated.<sup>26</sup> For example, some Muslims are willing to serve on church committees or participate in Christmas activities. Yet, the limits set by Sharia are clear in Islam. Matters concerning worship and religious rituals must have firm boundaries: *lakum diinukum wa liya diin* (for you your religion, and for me my religion).

### **Implementation of Religious Conflict Potential Resolution**

The communal conflict that erupted in North Maluku during 1999/2000 was inseparable from a range of highly complex factors. In addition to economic, political, religious, and cultural aspects, both internal and external dynamics also influenced the condition of North Maluku at the time. This coincided with the administrative

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<sup>25</sup> Aminudin, *Kekuatan Islam Dan Pergulatan Kekuasaan Di Indonesia Sebelum Dan Sesudah Runtuhnya Rezim Soeharto* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Abdul Gani Kasuba, “Terus Jihad Sampai Hak-Hak Kami Dikembalikan” (<http://www.reocities.com/Augusta/fairway/9542/>, htm Hidayatullah Edisi Maret, 2021).

separation of North Maluku from its parent province of Maluku, which had been based in Ambon, and the subsequent debate over the designation of the provincial capital between Ternate and Sofifi, which was part of Tidore. Furthermore, political tensions arose around the candidacy for the first governor of the newly formed province, involving Bahar Andili, Abdul Gafur, and Thaib Armain. The conflict in North Maluku was also intertwined with the broader national instability following the fall of President Suharto and the collapse of the New Order. The Reform Era brought further upheaval, as Indonesia was devastated by economic and political crises and widespread unrest. The riots and conflicts in Ambon and Poso also fueled the escalation of violence in North Maluku, which spread to several districts and cities, including Ternate, Tidore, West Halmahera, North Halmahera, and South Halmahera.<sup>27</sup> The conflict left behind a heavy toll, with significant loss of life, destruction of property, and damage to public facilities and government infrastructure. Both material and non-material losses remain deeply imprinted on the collective memory of the people of North Maluku to this day.

For over a century, there has been competition between the Muslim and Christian communities since Dutch missionaries set foot in North Maluku about 157 years ago. During that period, small and localized disputes occurred sporadically, with both sides striving to defend their respective territories. However, the outbreak of unrest in North Maluku was *not* caused by religion alone. This is shown by the fact that Muslim inhabitants of Kao also

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<sup>27</sup> Abubakar Muhammad Nur, *et.al.*, "Social Changes and Conflicts in Orang Sekaum in the North Halmahera Peace Zone", in *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 8 (2018), p. 111-119. <https://journals.scholarpublishing.org/index.php/ASSRJ/article/view/4922>

attacked Muslim residents of Makian, and likewise, the “Yellow Troops” under the command of the Sultan of Ternate and the “White Troops” supported by the Sultan of Tidore—both Muslim forces—fought against one another in the city of Ternate in 1999. These events were a response to political issues and short-term interests created by political elites, who used religion as a political legitimacy to achieve certain power goals.<sup>28</sup>

Studies conducted by academics and political practitioners have produced a hypothesis that the conflict in Maluku and North Maluku was initially triggered by economic disparities and political interests. The escalation of conflict intensified rapidly because the disputing parties invoked religious sentiment to gain swift and broad support. In this regard, religion was not the root cause of the conflict; however, religious issues were nonetheless exploited as political legitimacy by interested parties who wanted North Maluku—particularly Jailolo, West Halmahera—to remain unstable at that time. The sources of conflict included:

### 1. Religious Factor

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, there are two forms of understanding religion: first, religion in the substantive definition, and second, religion in the functional definition. In the first sense, religion is understood as an effort to establish what religion itself intends or prescribes (*try to establish what religion is*). In the second sense, however, religion is often understood in terms of what is manifested in religious practices (*describe what religion does*). Substantively, religion is a matter of

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<sup>28</sup> Fatum Abubakar, *et.al.*, “Strategies for Religious Conflict Resolution in Indonesia: A Case Study of The Ja’fariyah Shi’a Minority in Ternate”. dalam *Al-A’raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat*, Vol. 19 No. 2 Tahun 2022, hal. 206-230. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v19i2.5586>

investigating what is meant or intended by religion, whereas the issue of how religion operates in practice (the implementation of religious teachings) emphasizes the *das Sollen* aspect (what should ideally emerge from religion). Meanwhile, the functional sense emphasizes the *das Sein* aspect (what actually emerges empirically in religious attitudes). It is undeniable that the ideal essence of all religions is to teach their adherents to love fellow human beings as a manifestation of faith in God. This underscores the urgent understanding that the presence of religion is, in fact, a manifestation of the deepest human awareness to know both the self and God (*the ultimate reality*).<sup>29</sup>

Religious life in North Maluku Province after the riots has been relatively safe, with each religious community—Muslims, Christians, and others—able to carry out their religious activities and worship, particularly in Jailolo, which is often referred to as a “mini metropolitan city.” The religious composition of the population in North Maluku totals 822,073 people, of whom 544,201 (74.3%) are Muslims. These data show that Islam is the majority religion in North Maluku. However, in several districts of West Halmahera, Protestant Christianity is the majority religion, such as in the subdistricts of Sahu, Jailolo, Kao, Loloda, and Ibu. Specifically in West Halmahera, according to *Halmahera in Figures* (BPS), the population is about 30% Muslim and 70% Christian. This situation indicates that the religious communities in West Halmahera must demonstrate tolerance toward minority groups of other faiths in order to create peace and interfaith harmony. This is one of the

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<sup>29</sup> Warsono, dan Muhtadi Alabyadh, “Religion: Functional and Dysfunctional, From Daily Life to Become Media Coverage”. dalam *The Journal of Society and Media*, Vol. 6 No. 1 Tahun 2022, hal. 257–271. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v6n1.p257-271>

reasons why the people of Jailolo, West Halmahera, and North Maluku more broadly have been able to show themselves as a society that values tolerance toward other religious communities.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, there is also a need for religious communities to cultivate awareness in fostering a tolerant attitude in religious life. Such an attitude of tolerance can nurture mutual respect and appreciation between one another in order to realize tranquility and peace. The manifestation of tolerance in religious life can be identified through several indicators. These indicators include acceptance of other groups to live together, the creation of spaces for interfaith dialogue, and mutual respect for the religious activities of people of different faiths.

This was driven by political issues and short-term interests created by political elites in the struggle for power in North Maluku, where religion was used as political legitimacy to achieve certain goals. The same dynamic was evident in the contestation over religious territories between Muslims and Christians in the Kao-Malifut area and across Trans-Halmahera. According to Tomagola, the competition over religious territories between Islam and Christianity in North Maluku has been ongoing for more than 127 years, ever since Christian missionaries first set foot in Tobelo, North Halmahera. Except for Galela District, which has a Muslim majority, North Halmahera can be described as predominantly Christian territory, historically aligned with the Sultanate of Ternate.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, in West Halmahera Regency (Halbar), Christians

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<sup>30</sup> Maluku Utara Open Data, "Jumlah Penduduk Berdasarkan Agama Tahun 2024. <https://opendata.malutprov.go.id/dataset/jumlah-penduduk-berdasarkan-agama-tahun-2024>

<sup>31</sup> Agus Salim Bujan dalam Kasman Hi.Ahmad(ed), *Damai Yang Terkoyak Catatan Kelam Dari Bumi Halmahera* (Ternate: Podium, 2000).

form the majority population in several areas, such as South Jailolo, Ibu, and South Loloda subdistricts. On the other hand, according to Justinus Rahilwarin, Chair of the FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) in Halbar, religion has often been used as a driving force in interreligious conflict. Several years ago, Halbar, North Maluku, experienced riots that destroyed the foundations of religious life. However, the conflict did not last long and was eventually resolved. Until today, religious communities have come to understand the issue, realizing that it was merely the result of the interests of a handful of people or political elites. Therefore, the conflict became an important and valuable lesson: both winners and losers ended up with nothing but dust, gaining no benefit but instead suffering loss and misery. In the end, both sides realized that they are brothers and sisters.

After the conflict in Jailolo, Halbar, there have often been disturbances in society triggered by youth parties, which frequently led to fights caused by alcohol consumption or drunken behavior. These brawls sometimes escalated into inter-village clashes that resulted in the burning of several houses. Nevertheless, such incidents were promptly handled by the authorities and police.

There were also other incidents after the conflict, namely the emergence of several sects that caused unrest in society, such as the Ahmadiyah movement, Jamaah Islamiyah, Shi'a Ja'fariyah, and the new religious group *Hui*, which spread its teachings in Ake Diri and Acango villages. These movements were immediately addressed by the relevant authorities, with MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) and FKUB summoning the leaders of these groups to provide understanding to the community that the *Hui* movement

contradicts the principles of Islamic creed (*aqidah*) and Sharia.<sup>32</sup>

## 2. Political Factor

Long before the riots in Maluku and West Maluku, similar riots had occurred in various regions such as Poso, Sambas, Ambon, and elsewhere in Indonesia<sup>1</sup> Other riots in Indonesia, in the chronology of the West Maluku riots, are suspected to be related to the formation of the new district (*kecamatan*) in Malifut during the volcanic threat and the exodus to the Halmahera mainland. The most fundamental case was the local government of North Maluku Regency (24 years ago) deciding that Makian people must be relocated because of the volcanic threat from Kie Besi in 1975 to Halmahera, West Maluku.<sup>33</sup>

According to the late Yusuf Badurrahman (former Chair of MUI Province West Maluku 2000–2008, now deceased), the riots had religious overtones—there was competition between Muslim and Christian groups which then expanded into political issues. Similarly, the competition for religious territories between Islam and Christianity in West Maluku has been going on for more than 127 years since Christian missionaries first stepped foot in West Halmahera. Other factors include the political elites' struggle: when the Sultan of Ternate maneuvered as chair of Golkar in West Maluku to use support from indigenous communities for a gubernatorial candidacy in both Ternate city and the Halmahera mainland under the Sultanate of Ternate. Likewise, tension occurred between the “Yellow Troops” (*adat/customary forces*) and

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<sup>32</sup> Justinus Rahilwarin Ketua FKUB Halbar, “Wawancara” (2021).

<sup>33</sup> Samad Umarama, dan Syaifuddin, “Political Contribution of the Sultanate of Ternate to Regional Government in North Maluku Province 1999-2023, dalam *International Journal of Science and Society*, Vol. 6 No. 3 Tahun 2024, hal. 40-53. <https://doi.org/10.54783/ijssoc.v6i3.1221>

the “White Troops” supported by the Sultanate of Tidore. The competition between native residents and newcomers over economic issues, labor, bureaucracy, and other social inequalities made native Ternate people feel pressured and marginalized in market control dominated by migrants from China, Java, Sumatra, Bugis/Makassar, and Buton. This affected the people of Jailolo, which is religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse.<sup>34</sup>

Historically, the Jailolo community in the past was identical with the people of Ternate who migrated to Jailolo along with several other ethnic groups to Halmahera Island. The people of Jailolo generally use the Ternate language in addition to Ibu, Sahu, Tobaru, and Loloda languages, as well as other languages brought by migrant groups. In their daily interactions, the Jailolo people are very friendly and peace-loving within the framework of the philosophy *Jou Sengofa Ngare* in Ternate and Jailolo, North Maluku. The similarity of language and culture unites the people of West Halmahera. Through various factors, they can live peacefully side by side by strengthening family ties and inter-ethnic marriages, togetherness (*gotong royong*), the practice of religious teachings, and local wisdom values. These elements are supporting factors for the creation of social harmony within the framework of the philosophy of *Marimoi Ngone Foturu* (unity and togetherness).<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Economic Factors

Another factor that triggered the outbreak of conflict in

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<sup>34</sup> Winuhoro Hanumbhawono, *et.al.*, “Potential for Religious Exploitation of Conflict in Indonesia”, in *International Journal of Religion*, Vol. 5 No. 10 (2024), hal. 5357 – 5371. <https://doi.org/10.61707/6hfhjv52>

<sup>35</sup> Rumagiar, A., & Nur, M., “Local Wisdom and Conflict Resolution in North Maluku: A Study of Marimoi Ngone Foturu Philosophy”, in *Journal of Local Culture Studies*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (2023), p. 88-104.



North Maluku was the relocation of the Makian people to the mainland of North Halmahera in 1975 due to the threat of the Kie Besi volcanic eruption. Consequently, they were forcibly transmigrated by the government to the Malifut area. On the other hand, the Makian people were known for being industrious and progressive, with a strong work ethic, which enabled Malifut to develop into a prominent community that dominated the local economic structure. The redistribution of the population through the transmigration program, particularly from Java, to Kao District, Halmahera Utara Regency, and Sahu Jailolo District in Goal also contributed to disharmony between the indigenous population and newcomers. The newcomers had taken over farmland and plantations that had traditionally been controlled by the indigenous people from generation to generation, particularly within customary land areas. This was especially sensitive among the Pagu, Modole, and Togutil tribes, who controlled the forests around Malifut and Kao, including the region surrounding the PT Nusa Halmahera Minerals (NHM) gold mine, which borders Jailolo in the West Halmahera mining ring area and North Halmahera. This situation intensified disputes over territorial boundaries and the struggle for natural resources in the area.<sup>36</sup>

Another factor was the presence of the Australian company PT Nusa Halmahera Minerals (NHM) in the 1990s, which discovered gold deposits in the Malifut area and employed many Makian people as laborers. This situation triggered resentment among the Kao people, the indigenous community that had settled in the area for thousands of years. For the subdistrict governments

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<sup>36</sup> Rahman, A., & Tjandra, S., "Resource Politics and Communal Conflict: The Case of Gold Mining in North Halmahera," dalam *Indonesian Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 11 No. 2 Tahun 2023, hal. 99-116.

of Kao and Tobelo, the presence of the gold mine was expected to boost regional revenue and help reduce socioeconomic disparities between the two groups. However, NHM's operations became a major trigger for violent conflict that later spread to the Tobelo District and North Maluku in general. Due to the overlap with religious sentiments, according to Tomagola, the rejection of Government Regulation No. 42/1999 by the indigenous population was not only motivated by efforts to balance the demographic proportions between religious groups, but also by the desire to monopolize the wealth derived from the gold mine.<sup>37</sup> This economic factor thus became a key determinant in shaping peace and harmony within the communities of Jailolo and Tobelo in North Halmahera. Moreover, the existence of NHM was also closely linked to boundary disputes between West Halmahera (Halbar) and North Halmahera (Halut), particularly concerning several definitive villages.

To realize religious harmony and cohesion, especially among the heterogeneous society of Jailolo, similar to Indonesia at large, it is necessary to conduct activities that instill a sense of brotherhood among religious communities. According to Mr. Idham Adam, Head of the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) of West Halmahera,<sup>38</sup> these activities include: first, interfaith dialogues, which foster a spirit of togetherness and fraternity in addressing issues of religious harmony by promoting mutual respect among believers; second, workshops; and third, community service programs. Such initiatives reinforce the principle of mutual respect, which is indispensable in uniting a plural society. At times,

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<sup>37</sup> Agus Salim Bujan dalam Kasman Hi.Ahmad(ed), *Damai Yang Terkoyak Catatan Kelam Dari Bumi Halmahera*.

<sup>38</sup> Kesbangpol Idham Adam, "Wawancara Kesbangpol Halbar" (2021).

however, movements carried out in the name of religion risk subordinating others, particularly in the form of religious radicalism. Mutual respect, therefore, is a non-negotiable value for preserving unity in a pluralistic society. Research analysis indicates that this is among the most urgent needs, considering that Indonesia is one of the most plural nations in the world. To achieve this, efforts must be undertaken with openness of heart to foster a life of mutual appreciation within the framework of Indonesian identity.

One of the key institutions fostering interreligious harmony and assisting the government in resolving social and communal issues is the *Forum for Interreligious Harmony* (*Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, FKUB). Established by the government at both regency/city and subdistrict levels, the presence of this institution is expected to serve as a mediator in addressing conflicts related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA), and to create harmonization in interreligious life. The FKUB remains open to coordination and consultation with the government as its working partner in efforts to build and safeguard religious harmony in Jailolo.

According to Mr. Rahil Waren, Head of the FKUB of West Halmahera Regency (2018–2020), before the establishment of the FKUB, Jailolo had already formed the *Forum for Communication among Interreligious Harmony* (FKKUB, 2003–2006), which carried out intensive dialogue and guidance activities among the religious communities of Jailolo, West Halmahera. At present, the condition of interreligious relations is generally good, although there remain certain individuals who tend to provoke tensions. Among the recurring problems is the lack of deep religious understanding among some young people—for example, those who rarely attend mosques or churches to receive religious instruction and guidance.

This has led to incidents in areas such as Bobane Hena and Payo.

In 2019, a video recording circulated that caused unrest within the Muslim community: it showed Pastor Waloni converting to Islam and delivering negative remarks about Christianity. Such incidents—where converts to Islam disparage Christians, or Muslims who convert to Christianity denigrate Islam—pose serious risks of undermining interreligious relations and must be approached with caution.<sup>39</sup>

Seeking the root causes of conflict should not be allowed to drag on. Equally important is building public awareness to end conflict for the sake of the region's interests. If left unresolved, this area will collapse, and the real victims of the conflict will be the local people themselves, while outsiders will eventually take over. Building the awareness of local youth to end conflict and reunite is essential, with the understanding that we are brothers, sharing the same lineage, ethnicity, and cultural traditions. Religious matters are personal (private) concerns for each community and should not involve mutual intervention between one another regarding belief or creed.<sup>40</sup>

The task and function of the FKUB of West Halmahera Regency in coordinating with relevant stakeholders has also included fostering interfaith communities, namely by collaborating with the local government/Kesbangpol and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Halmahera to guide religious communities and hold dialogues with disputing groups to seek solutions and the best resolutions. Conflict resolution cannot only be carried out from the top down but must also be addressed from the grassroots level by involving all components of society. It is

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<sup>39</sup> Jullius Reniwuryaan, "Wawancara Ketua FKUB Halbar" (2021).

<sup>40</sup> Halbar, "Wawancara."

necessary to identify the exact root causes, to combine perspectives, and to show courage in finding innovations or new approaches in reconciling communities directly involved in the conflict. In searching for these root causes or solutions, those who truly understand the issues must be involved, such as experts, institutions like IAIN, STT, STP Banau, community leaders, government authorities, and other traditional institutions.<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, according to the view of Hasbullah Taher, Head of the Office of Religious Affairs (Kandepag) of West Halmahera, interreligious harmony after the riots has been well maintained, with the government and society mutually supporting each other to foster religious life within the community. Religious guidance is carried out through the FKUB (Interreligious Communication Forum) of the Regency as a partner of the Regional Government in conflict resolution.<sup>42</sup> Other religious institutions that also support the creation of interreligious harmony in Jailolo include the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Jailolo–West Halmahera, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Komda Al-Khairaat, the Synod Council, and GMIH, all of which are based in Jailolo and play a highly strategic role in resolving conflicts and building interreligious harmony.

In addition to the aforementioned religious institutions, places of worship also serve as a medium for resolving issues related to the conduct of religious communities. One of the roles of churches and mosques in promoting peace during conflicts in West Halmahera, as explained by Kaliopas Dutu, SH, Head of Christian Affairs at the Office of Religious Affairs (Kandepag) of West

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<sup>41</sup> Martinus, "Wawancara Pendeta" (2021).

<sup>42</sup> Hasbullah Taher, "Wawancara (Kandepag Halmahera Barat)" (2021).

Halmahera, is that interreligious harmony after the riots has been closely maintained both internally and externally within society. Although internal disagreements occasionally occur among congregations, overall, the situation can be considered positive. One notable indicator is the joint commemoration of major religious holidays, such as Christmas and the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid), held together at the Regent's Office as a symbol of unity and religious harmony in Jailolo, West Halmahera.<sup>43</sup>

In this context, the relationship between society and the government remains very harmonious, supported by local wisdom traditions such as *Balakusu Sekano-Kano* and *Saudara Serasai* (a fraternal bond of mutual recognition among people of different religions). Similarly, the fostering of religious communities is evident in the practice of ecumenical worship within Christianity, where tolerance among different Christian denominations is expressed through joint *Oikumene* activities. Within the Christian context, such worship highlights unity across denominational lines. In contrast, within Islam, although there are different organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, Muslims can freely attend each other's places of worship. Meanwhile, in Christianity, each denomination generally maintains its own church building for worship.<sup>44</sup>

A similar view was conveyed by Mr. Fomanyirah, Head of Islamic Religious Affairs (Bimas Islam) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Halmahera, who explained that Islamic religious activities always involve representatives of other faith communities. Specifically, within the internal context of Islam, one of the recurring issues is juvenile delinquency, the main trigger of which is alcohol

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<sup>43</sup> Kaliopas Dutu, "Wawancara (Bimas Kristen Kandepag Halbar)" (2021).

<sup>44</sup> Kaliopas Dutu.

consumption. In this regard, the Office of Islamic Religious Affairs consistently undertakes concrete measures and innovative approaches to address these problems through persuasive engagement among conflicting parties. This process involves local religious and customary leaders as a form of solidarity and collective responsibility, ensuring that disputes are resolved swiftly so they do not easily spread to other villages. Other initiatives include the *Safari Jumat* (Friday mosque visits) and *Safari Ramadhan* programs.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the fostering of interreligious harmony in the post-conflict period must involve all stakeholders, beyond the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This approach is in line with the Ministry's vision and mission of promoting religious moderation, which is highly relevant to the socio-cultural context of West Halmahera. For example, during celebrations of Christmas or the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local communities actively participate and support the events until their completion. It is within these occasions that the values of interfaith harmony are cultivated and embedded in the culture of West Halmahera.

Furthermore, according to the local Office of Religious Affairs (Kandepag), the instilling of religious values has been consistently carried out through various programs designed and implemented for the community. This is reflected in the peaceful and orderly conduct of Friday prayers in mosques and Sunday services in churches.

One notable case occurred in Bobo Village, East Sahu, involving an interfaith marriage between a Christian man and a

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<sup>45</sup> Azis Fomanyira, "Bimas Islam Kandepag Halbar Jailolo" (2021).

Muslim woman. At the time of marriage, the man's parents were unaware that he had converted to Islam before the marriage contract (*akad nikah*). Four years later, the man passed away at his wife's home. His family, including his biological mother, intended to carry out funeral rites according to Christian tradition. However, the wife objected, explaining that her husband had converted to Islam before the marriage, which was legally certified by a marriage certificate issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Halmahera. As differences between the two families became more intense, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, represented by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), stepped in to mediate and resolve the issue wisely, guided by existing laws and regulations. Ultimately, the man's family respectfully accepted the situation, and the deceased was buried according to Islamic rites, in line with the wife's request and the official documentation.<sup>46</sup>

Most disputes between religious groups in the region, however, tend to arise not from theological differences but from cultural practices—especially among the youth, who often engage in excessive alcohol consumption and disruptive behavior. Nevertheless, such cases are usually resolved amicably through cooperation between both families, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and other relevant parties.

Jailolo is home to several ethnic groups, such as Loloda, Ibu, Tobaru, Sahu, and other sub-ethnic communities, whose members adhere to both Islam and Christianity. The phenomenon and atmosphere of togetherness in religious life within the Jailolo

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<sup>46</sup> Fitri Yanti Katili, *et.al.*, "Harmonization of Interfaith Marriage Law in Indonesian Legal System: Between Social Reality and Legal Certainty", dalam *International Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, Vol. 2 No. 1 Tahun 2025, hal. 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijsw.v2i1.155>



community—most of whom are traditional farmers and fishermen—reflect a blending within the plurality of ethnicity, society, and religion. As a comparison, research by Afif Rifai et al. on *The Spread of Religion, Conflict, and Integration Among Religious Communities in Sumber Arum Village, Moya and Sleman, Yogyakarta* concluded that Sumber Arum is a pluralistic village consisting of 4,426 Muslims, 2,602 Catholics, and 48 Protestants. This condition was highly vulnerable to conflict, since each religious group actively conducted religious education, which often created suspicion and prejudice. To mitigate potential conflict, the community undertook several measures, such as instilling mutual respect, socializing government regulations on religious broadcasting based on the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 70 of 1978 and No. 35 of 1980, as well as activating the KKLKMD program involving members from various religions. Through these efforts, interreligious integration was realized in social activities, life-cycle ceremonies, and formal organizational relationships. This could be achieved because local institutions continued to function as forums for bringing together social activities from different religious adherents.<sup>47</sup> A similar phenomenon is also reflected in Jailolo, where the existence of local philosophy and social practices—such as cooperation (*gotong royong*), kinship, and shared celebrations of major religious holidays—has become a strong foundation for interreligious harmony, even though historically the region had also experienced conflicts.

The above findings indicate that there are at least three main

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<sup>47</sup> Zulkarnain, *et.al.* "Model Landasan Sosial Antara Umat Beragama Dalam Memelihara Ketahanan Dan Ketertiban Masyarakat Miskin Pada Daerah Terpencil Dan Terisolasi Di Pulau Enggano Dalam Sinopsis Dan Indeks" (Jakarta: PTAI, 1999).

factors explaining why social interaction can function well despite religious differences. First, religious understanding. In this respect, the people of Jailolo have been able to develop both an internal and external interpretation of religion. Internally, they continue to uphold the truth of their own faith, while externally, they acknowledge that other religions also contain elements of truth that deserve appreciation. Second, a shared sense of cultural belonging (sense of common culture). In this aspect, the Jailolo community demonstrates strong cultural resilience, as indigenous traditions such as gotong royong (cooperation), which reinforces social solidarity among villagers, remain preserved. Third, accommodative leadership.<sup>48</sup> This is consistent with the views of the West Halmahera government as well as the Sultan of Jailolo, who emphasize that in the post-conflict era, the community has been able to live peacefully and harmoniously within the framework of customary traditions (*adat seatoran*) that are highly respected.

The kinship system of culture and religion (*adat seatorang*) embraced by the people of Jailolo serves as a unifying framework that strengthens relationships among families, regardless of differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, or social background. Religious harmony in North Maluku after the conflict, when compared with other regions such as Ambon and Poso (Central Sulawesi) or other areas in Indonesia that remain affected by social unrest, has been relatively conducive—particularly in Jailolo, Ternate, Tobelo, and North Halmahera as a whole. This is largely due to the existence of kinship bonds known as *Giadutu/Gionongoro*, which function as a cohesive force for peace and have been established as the foundation of conflict resolution in West

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<sup>48</sup> Zulkarnain, *et.al.*

Halmahera.

The findings of this research indicate that interreligious harmony between Muslims and Christians in West Halmahera, both before and after the conflict, is marked by several indicators. These include: (1) mutual familiarity between families of both communities (*makanako*), which is reflected in their open practice of visiting each other's homes (*tahu fomateke ngosa*); (2) a sense of sincerity and purity in their relationships (*sinyinga datebi*); (3) freedom in practicing religious rituals (*bebas to ibadah*); and (4) active participation in religious activities.

In addition, efforts to nurture the potential for religious harmony are also carried out through customary institutions. The development of interfaith harmony in Tobelo and Halmahera society, particularly in the post-conflict period, is facilitated by norms and values taught through culture and local wisdom. This is exemplified in Tobelo, North Halmahera, where society adheres to the Hibualamo philosophy of *Ngone O Ria Dodoto*, which embodies values of unity and reconciliation. In North Maluku society, especially in Ternate, this local wisdom is expressed through traditions such as *Adat Se Atorang*, *Istiadat Se Kabasaran*, *Galib Selakudu*, *Sere Duniru*, *Cin Se Cingare*, *Bobaso Serasai*, *Cara Sengale*, *Lao Se Bannar*, *Duka Se Cinta*, *Baso Se Hormat*, all of which serve as guiding principles of social harmony for the people of Ternate and the wider Moloku Kieraha region. According to Hasbullah Taher, the future development of interreligious relations through the *Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB)* must be strengthened by enhancing coordination and early anticipation. In cases of potential unrest, conflict resolution should involve the relevant governmental

and community institutions.<sup>49</sup>

Field observations reveal that incidents are often triggered by the actions of young people during festivities, particularly due to the consumption of alcoholic beverages and drunken behavior. For example, the incident in Popilo was not rooted in religious disputes but rather in issues of territorial boundaries and village potential. Furthermore, the *Religious Affairs Office (Kandepag)* of North Halmahera has been actively engaged in religious guidance through preachers, study circles (*majelis ta'lim*), Qur'anic learning centers (TPQ), and similar initiatives. Religious leaders also play a key role, as seen in the resolution of the Mamuya case, which was approached through security measures. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kemenag*) likewise contributes significantly to conflict resolution, particularly through the Christian Community Guidance Division (*Bimas Kristen*), in collaboration with the government. This point was further emphasized by Ramli, the then-chair of the *Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB)* in Jailolo, West Halmahera. He stated that after the riots or conflicts, reconciliation efforts were carried out involving both Christian and Muslim communities, together with the government, religious leaders, customary authorities, and society at large. As a result, community security and stability have since been maintained in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere, despite the occasional minor disturbances. The primary source of such disturbances remains the consumption of alcohol at youth gatherings.<sup>50</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Conflict resolution among religious communities in Jailolo

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<sup>49</sup> Hasbullah Taher, "Wawancara (Kandepag Halmahera Barat)."

<sup>50</sup> Ramli, Wawancara Wakil Keta FKUB Halbar (Jailolo Halbar, 2021).

must be built upon the values of *marimai ngone faturu*—local wisdom rooted in kinship and brotherhood—without distinguishing religion, ethnicity, or tradition. In the post-conflict period, interfaith harmony has been well preserved, enabling peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians that are characterized by mutual respect, concord, and the absence of suspicion toward one another. Following the conflict, both parties were encouraged to open themselves to reconciliation efforts without prioritizing questions of who was right or wrong, but rather for the collective good of the Church congregation and the GMIH institution in Jailolo, West Halmahera. This reconciliation was grounded in primordial kinship ties such as *gia dutu* and *gio nongoru* within the cultural framework of Maloko Kieraha.

Prior to the conflict, interreligious relations in Jailolo were marked by strong familial bonds, as families greeted and visited each other freely despite religious differences. However, after the conflict, such relations began to erode due to growing suspicion and mistrust between communities. Nevertheless, in the post-conflict phase, Muslims and Christians in Jailolo sought to rebuild these relations, enabling the conflict in Jailolo and North Maluku to end more swiftly compared to other regions in Indonesia.

This was made possible through kinship ties and reconciliation efforts carried out in synergy with religious institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Alkhairat, mosque youth organizations, church councils, the Synod, GMIH, and the traditional institution of Hibualamo. These institutions functioned as adhesives and unifying symbols by prioritizing the values of local wisdom embedded in Hibualamo.

Therefore, models of conflict resolution and the cultivation of interreligious harmony must be grounded in local wisdom and inclusive of all stakeholders—religious leaders, community figures, customary leaders, youth leaders, as well as the government. They must also involve all religious institutions, both Islamic and Christian. Crucially, such cultivation must begin in mosques and churches as sacred symbols for the faithful, and more importantly, it must grow from the grassroots level (cultural approach) rather than through top-down structural interventions typically implemented by the government. Ultimately, all parties involved are expected to exercise restraint and commit to ending conflicts in the region.

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