

Development of Marginalized Islamic Communities in an Isolated Indigenous Environment in Indonesia

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ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pola pengembangan masyarakat Islam marginal di Indonesia, terutama di lingkungan adat terasing Suku Akit. Penelitian dilakukan dengan metode kualitatif murni terhadap Komunitas muallaf di lingkungan adat Suku Akit Kabupaten Siak, Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan berbagai aspek mulai dari dasar keyakinan beragama, penguatan kelembagaan dan kemandirian sebagai sebuah komunitas adalah fokus penting yang harus diperhatikan. Dalam upaya mengembangkan Masyarakat Islam marginal di lingkungan adat suku terasing, pendekatan etnografi dan psikologi lintas budaya menjadi pola yang paling tepat. Peneliti merekomendasikan agar kajian-kajian akademik dalam hal pengautan masyarakat Islam menerapkan dua pendekatan di atas. Hal ini bertujuan agar proses pengembanaan masyarakat dapat berlangsung secara progresif dan produktif, namun tidak menimbulkan tegangan atau gejolak internal dalam masyarakat tersebut.

Kata kunci: Masyarakat Islam, Marginal, Adat Terasing

ABSTRACT: This study aims to describe the development patterns of marginalized Islamic communities in Indonesia, particularly in the isolated traditional environment of the Akit tribe. The research was conducted using a purely qualitative method with the Muslim convert community in the traditional Akit tribe environment of Siak Regency, Indonesia. The results of the study indicate that strengthening various aspects, starting from the foundation of religious belief, institutional strengthening, and community autonomy, are key areas that require attention. In efforts to develop marginalized Islamic communities in isolated traditional environments, an ethnographic and cross-cultural psychological approach is the most appropriate method. The researcher recommends that academic studies on the empowerment of Islamic communities adopt both of the above approaches. This aims to ensure that the community development process proceeds in a progressive and productive manner, without causing internal tension or unrest within the community.

Keywords: Islamic communities, marginalized groups, isolated indigenous peoples.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is the 4th largest population country in the world with a total of 274,790,244 in 2022. The 3rd and 2nd orders are occupied by the United States and India, while the first order is occupied by China with a population of 1,424,540,000. Viewed from the demographic aspect, the population profile in Indonesia is not only related to the number but also to ethnic and ethnic diversity. Indonesia is also known for the largest ethnic diversity in the world. (Sugiyanto et al., 2022)

The large population and unique ethnic diversity make it a challenge in the development process of Indonesian society. The issue of equity and justice in development for all citizens of the nation is a big issue that is always present at all times. This is due to the breadth and magnitude of development goals that are still not balanced with the existing budget strength conditions. This condition causes confusion for some

groups of the nation's citizens. These community groups eventually experienced a downturn, exclusion and isolation among other citizens of the nation. (Ananta, 2020) (Madjid & Latief, 2020)

Among the groups of citizens who do not get optimal development facilities are Islamic community groups in the customary environment of the Akit Tribe who inhabit part of Sumatra. The object of discussion in this paper is the Islamic community in the traditional environment of the Akit Tribe in Tanjung Pal Hamlet, Sungai Apit District, Riau Province-Indonesia. The Islamic community in the traditional environment of the Akit Tribe is viewed from the religious aspect as a group of converts. This is because most of them only declare their Islam after adulthood and do not have the toughness of their beliefs due to various factors. In this article, the Islamic community of the Akit Tribe will also be referred to as converts. (Zamzami & Putri, 2024)

The Akit Tribe Indigenous Peoples are one of the most original indigenous peoples among other indigenous peoples such as the Utan, Laut, Talang Mamak and Sakai tribes. The Indigenous People of the Akit Tribe are a group of people of the old Malay race (*proto*) who inhabited the plains of Sumatra from 3000 to 2000 years before Christ. The nomadic lifestyle and closed social life make it more difficult for the indigenous people of the Akit Tribe to develop than other community groups. (Madjid & Latief, 2020)

Backwardness of mindset and attitude of life is a fundamental problem for marginalized Islamic communities in the Akit Tribal Customary environment, even if it is just to *survive*. This problem is exacerbated by massive forest encroachment by corporations for the benefit of investment, business and settlements. In the end, the marginal Islamic community of the Akit tribe is increasingly losing hunting land areas as the only hope for survival. (Madjid & Latief, 2020)

The covid 19 pandemic that has emerged since the end of 2019 in Indonesia has further aggravated the life expectancy of marginalized Muslim communities in the indigenous environment of the Akit Tribe. The vibration of the impact of covid 19 does not only target people with an open social life pattern. Traditional indigenous peoples with closed social life patterns also feel a very significant impact. The distribution of food and the sale of forest and marine game products are one of the most difficult problems. On the other hand, they do not understand the root of the real problem that occurs due to limited access to information.

The marginal Islamic community in the traditional environment of the Akit tribe is actually a new version of the Akit tribe community group motivated by the religious conversion process. The original beliefs of the indigenous people of the Akit tribe were animism and dynamism, but after the beginning of interaction with the outside world since the last decade, there was a phenomenon of conversion of traditional religions to formal religions. Islam is one of the religions that pollution is the direction of religious conversion of the indigenous people of the Akit tribe. (Sugiyanto et al., 2022)

Religious conversions in the indigenous peoples of the Akit tribe occurred as an alternative to spiritual dissatisfaction and partly because of certain pragmatic interests. Islamic community groups in the traditional environment of the Akit Tribe as a new community have unique dynamics. On the one hand, they have the spirit of actualization of Islamic values as a new faith, but on the other hand they must also consider the

objective conditions of the customary environment which often clash from the aspect of faith (faith).

The above explanation is a general overview of the problems of marginalized Islamic communities, indigenous indigenous tribes in Indonesia. Various aspects, both internal and external, are challenges in efforts to develop marginalized Islamic communities in the indigenous environment of isolated tribes. The development of Islamic society in an isolated customary environment is in principle aimed at strengthening religious attitudes and building independence.

B. Method

This research uses a pure qualitative type of research, with a descriptive approach. The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the development pattern of marginalized Islamic communities in the customary environment of the Akit Tribe, in Penyengat Village, Sungai Apit District, Siak Regency, Indonesia. (Squirr , 2019)

The subject of this study is the converts community in the traditional environment of the Akit tribe which totals 30 people. This community of converts is a minority group living in a traditional customary environment based on animism and dynamism beliefs. Overall, the total number of indigenous people of the Akhit tribe until 2024 is 1,715 people.

Data collection was carried out by participant observation techniques and open interviews. Both of these techniques provide researchers with the opportunity to obtain data as naturally as possible. The nature of the data is a characteristic of qualitative research to provide an objective picture of the development patterns of marginalized Islamic communities in the indigenous environment of the Akit Tribe. (Nina Adlini et al., 2022)

C. Results and Discussion

1. Wirid Yasin's Study Of Space Instills Confidence

The Islamic community in the traditional environment of the Akit Tribe is one of the marginalized community groups that still has many limitations in the spirit of Islam. As a minority community in the old customary and cultural environment, the Akit Muslim community continues to strive to survive and fight to strengthen its beliefs as a Muslim.

The initial stage of the development of Islamic society is called *Takwim*. *Takwim* is a stage of community development that is oriented towards laying the foundations of belief, togetherness, and cooperation. A belief centered on the teachings of monotheism is the basis for the development of society. This is because monotheism then becomes the benchmark for the Islamic community in thinking, acting and behaving. (Sugiyanto et al., 2022)

In an effort to lay the foundations of faith in the Muslim community of the Akit Tribe, a Wirid Yasin learning program was held. Wirid Yasin is the name of an educational learning activity for the Muslim community of the Akit tribe to understand Islam. This learning program provides facilities for the Muslim community of the Akit tribe to understand beliefs, sharia provisions, worship procedures, and morals in Islam.

Wirid Yasin's activities are held once a week at the mosque under the guidance of a religious teacher. On certain occasions, religious teachers from other regions such as Pekanbaru, Siak, and Bengkalis were brought in. The existence of Wirid Yasin's activities is very helpful for the Muslim community to strengthen their belief in Islam as their new religion. The following is reported to reflect on the role of Wirid Yasin's faith and knowledge on the beliefs and knowledge of 30 wagra of the Akit tribe muslim community. The reflective aspect consists of Aikidah, Worship, Sharia, and Morals.

Yes	Aspects	Confidence-boosting reflection and knowledge		
		Increase	Not increasing	Not answering
1	Faith	77 %	5 %	15 %
2	Worship	87 %	3 %	10 %
3	Shari'ah	64 %	23 %	13 %
4	Morals	88 %	3 %	9 %

The reflection report above shows that the activities of the Yasin wirid have a great role in increasing the faith and knowledge of the Akit Muslim community on the aspects of morality, worship, and Faith. The Sharia aspect is the lowest aspect of Wirid Yasin's activities, which is 64%.

Islam is a religion of revelation that is based on faith and knowledge. God. Islam was revealed by Allah SWT to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as His last messenger and applies to all mankind. As a universal religion, the teachings of Islam cover all aspects of human life. In addition to regulating the relationship between man and God, Islam regulates the practical aspects of human life. Politics, economics, culture which are the environment of human life are perfectly regulated by Islam.

Among the most important virtues instilled in the Muslim community of the Akit Tribe is monotheism. Tauhid is the belief in the oneness of God, who has no worship except Allah. The values of monotheism are the most basic values and are obeyed by the Islamic society. These principles of monotheism then affect all joints of the life of Muslims. Starting from the most personal problems to public problems. This is as desired by Allah SWT: "*Say: verily my prayer, my worship, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.*"

In the religious life of the Muslim community in the customary environment of the Akit Tribe, strengthening and developing monotheistic beliefs is a fairly serious da'wah work. The condition of the customary environment, which is still very familiar with the beliefs of the ancestral spirits, is a challenge in itself. The subconscious condition of converts who have been psychologically filled by animist values requires strategies and communication skills so that they can be replaced with monotheistic values.

At the calendar stage, basic values about *ukhuwah* or brotherhood among Muslims are also instilled. The feeling of mutual happiness and mutual support is developed on the basis of *the same achidah of tauhid*. Islam teaches that differences in ethnicity, nation, social status, and wealth should not be a dividing gap between fellow Muslims. When a person has pledged to Islam, then from the moment they are brothers

in *the bond of Islamic ukhuwah*. Because of the importance of brotherhood among Muslims, Allah SWT explains Himself in His words:

The believers are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your two brothers and fear Allah, so that you may obtain Mercy.

With the concept of brotherhood based on monotheism, Muslims who were hostile before Islam finally became brothers and sisters who strengthened each other. This is what made the strength of Muslims in the early days very large and solid. They are like sturdy buildings, reinforcing each other. (Putri et al., 2023)

In the context of the development of Islamic society in the customary environment of the Akit Tribe, efforts to build brotherhood are taken more practically, namely creating a recitation group and a farmer group of Pineapple Wirid Yasin. Recitation groups and peasant groups have a significant influence on the existence and development of Islamic society.

The development of Islamic society in marginalized areas cannot be concentrated only from the religious aspect. Various aspects of life are very interrelated and need to be taken seriously. In terms of the development of brotherhood practices, the converts of the Akit Tribe are quite successful in capturing their identity as Muslims in the customary environment. This further became a driver for the development of other strategic areas. (Hakim, 2016)

The third orientation of the calendar stage is *ta'awun* or cooperation. Cooperation is at the heart of brotherhood. Cooperation is the implementation of the spirit of brotherhood among Muslims. Without the existence of core cooperation, a brotherhood will be empty of meaning. In terms of religious cooperation, Islam also provides basic guidance.

and do not disturb those who visit the Baitullah while they are seeking bounty and favor from their Lord, and when you have completed the Hajj, then you are allowed to hunt. And do not hate any people because they hinder you from the Grand Mosque, encouraging you to persecute (them). And help you in virtue and piety, and do not help in sins and transgressions. And fear Allah, for Allah is very severe in His punishment (Qur'an Surah Al-Maidah, Verse 2)

The development of marginal Islamic societies at the *calendar level* requires a proper psychological approach, especially from the point of view of Cultural Psychology. There are at least three most strategic things in the consideration of the calendar stage; a) Understanding of local cultural values that have enveloped their inner nature. Local values are important considerations so that the direction of development does not cause unproductive surprises, b) Understanding of the conditions of social problems that are a burden on their lives. The process of building energy in *ukhuwah Islamiyah* should be focused on solving the real problems of their lives, c) Understanding what is the direction of their life ideals. By understanding the direction of people's life ideals, the form of empowerment in cooperation will be more effective and meaningful.

2. Education as a Center for Community Development

Educational institutions are the most important institution for the development of marginalized Islamic communities. Factually, educational institutions or institutions are a priority need for the Islamic community of the Akit Tribe. Islamic educational institutions

are a necessity for converts in general. Islamic educational institutions built for converts of the Akit Tribe community certainly have a somewhat different orientation from educational institutions in general. As an effort to develop Islamic society in the early stages, the orientation is aimed at forming a complete Muslim person. (Zamzami & Putri, 2024)

Educational institutions for the Muslim community of the Akit tribe are also prepared for the widest possible development of all potentials. In turn, it will foster a harmonious relationship between individual Muslims, between a Muslim and Allah, and between a Muslim and the Universe. In line with the objectives of the educational orientation,

Islamic education is a process and system that is carried out to create a complete Muslim person. A perfect Muslim person is a person who believes and is devoted to God and is able to realize his existence as the caliph of Allah on earth based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The purpose of Islamic education is to build a society based on Islamic values. (Astomo et al., 2021)

Institutionally, the Islamic educational institutions that already existed in Penyengat Village at the time of the study were only mosques. Meanwhile, public formal educational institutions, namely Elementary Schools (SD) and Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP), have relatively limited religious development capacity. This makes the educational conditions of the Akit Tribe in general very lagging behind when compared to other community groups. This condition makes the transformation of the development of various things encounter many obstacles. Education is a strategic door in an effort to open up various opportunities and opportunities for the development of the Islamic community of the Akit Tribe.

In the context of the development of family-level educational institutions for converts of the Akit Tribe, it seems that there are still many obstacles. This is due to the readiness of the concept of parents who are still very limited about Islam. In the family environment of the converts of the Akit tribe, the old values are still very thick when compared to Islamic values. Congregational prayer activities in the family, for example, are a very rare sight to see in converts in Penyengat Village. Likewise, greetings when they leave or enter the house, they are still not used to it. Usually greetings are only heard when there are Muslim guests when visiting.

Observing the condition of families who in general experience limitations in carrying out their duties as educational institutions, new and more strategic efforts are needed. The development of formal educational institutions such as schools also requires a lot of resources. Therefore, according to the author, the institutional emphasis of Islamic education for the Islamic community in the traditional environment of the Akit Tribe in Penyengat Village can be concentrated in the Nurul Hidayah Mosque in Tanjung Pal Hamlet.

Mosques have a central position in the development of Islamic society. The mosque is not only a means of worship, but also a symbol of the unity of the people and educational institutions. Literally, a mosque is a "place to prostrate". In terminology, a mosque is a special place to carry out worship activities in a broad sense. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, the mosque was empowered as a place to solve many things, worship, economy, social, even politics and war.

With the presence of mosques as an Islamic educational institution, the development of converts as the forerunners of the Islamic society will take place more effectively and efficiently. The mosque will eventually become a center for information, discussion, and solutions for the ummah that has its own maghnit.

3. Pineapple Farmers Group as the basis of Independence

The development of marginalized Islamic communities in the context of the Akit Muslim community is oriented to build independence. The orientation of independence in this case is focused on the economic field. In terms of strengthening the economic aspect, a breakthrough was made in empowering converts in pineapple cultivation which was managed in the form of the Wirid Yasin pineapple farmer group. At first, most of the converts of the Akit Tribe had irregular jobs. Along with the narrowing of the forest area and the limited human resources, the Akit Tribe and converts in particular experience obstacles in terms of the family economy.

The breakthrough in economic strengthening was initiated by a mualag linkage activist named Ustadz Mursidin. This breakthrough received a positive response from converts in general. Until 2016, the Akit Tribe converted pineapple farmer group has managed an area of approximately 15 hectares. Pineapple cultivation began in 2013. At the beginning of the planting period, the farmer group received seed assistance from the Siak Regency Baznas and the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Riau Regional Executive.

The presence of pineapple commodities is significantly helpful and raises the morale of converts as a Muslim among other Akit tribesmen who do not have the initiative to farm intensively. Pineapple until this research was carried out as a prima donna plant that has great meaning for the Islamic community in the customary environment of the Akit Tribe. Pineapple not only revives the family economy but also strengthens their religious attitude among other Akit people.

D. Conclusion

The development of marginalized Islamic communities in isolated indigenous environments in Indonesia has a very interesting dynamic. On the one hand, converts in traditional environments have to struggle to strengthen their new beliefs. But on the other hand, they must also have the ability to adapt to old values that sometimes conflict with the beliefs of faith.

To strengthen the existence of marginalized Islamic communities in isolated customary environments, the right strategy is needed. Strengthening various aspects ranging from the basis of religious beliefs, institutional strengthening and independence as a community is an important focus that must be considered.

In an effort to develop marginalized Islamic communities in the indigenous environment of isolated tribes, a cross-cultural ethnographic and psychological approach is the most appropriate pattern. The researcher recommends that academic studies in terms of linking Islamic societies apply the two approaches above. This aims to ensure that the process of community development can take place progressively and productively, but does not cause internal tension or turmoil in the community.

D. References

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