

Islam and Local Wisdom: Integration of the Arab Community in Indramayu, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the Arab community's efforts to integrate with local wisdom in Dermayu Village, Sindang, Indramayu. These values were then turned into principles, which have remained in place to this day. Leadership, ideological cultivation, and mobility are all considered in the research. The theory of Islamic social movements is used in this study to identify patterns of movement actors framing Islamic values and collaborating with local wisdom values. The findings revealed that Arab community actors were successful in fusing Islamic values with local wisdom by instilling the values of tolerance, cooperation, and accommodation. Two of the strategies used are da'wah and education. Assimilation and acculturation can be seen in everyday activities, indicating that people are attempting to fit into society. Furthermore, the community tries to avoid conflicts and disputes by participating actively in community activities such as election days, village meetings, and village management structures. They gain sympathy as a result of this issue, and they are able to live in peace.

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas upaya integrasi yang dilakukan oleh komunitas Arab di Desa Dermayu, Sindang, Indramayu dengan kearifan lokal. Nilai-nilai ini kemudian menjadi prinsip yang terus dipertahankan hingga sekarang. Kajian ditinjau dari aspek kepemimpinan, penanaman ideologis, dan mobilitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori gerakan sosial Islam guna mengidentifikasi pola para pelaku gerakan dalam membingkai nilai-nilai Islam dan berkolaborasi dengan nilai-nilai kearifan lokal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para aktor dari komunitas Arab berhasil menggabungkan nilai-nilai Islam dan kearifan lokal dengan menanamkan nilai-nilai toleransi, kerjasama dan akomodasi. Dakwah dan pendidikan adalah dua dari beberapa strategi yang digunakan. Asimilasi dan akulturasi muncul dalam kegiatan sehari-hari dan membuktikan bahwa mereka berusaha menyelaraskan diri dengan masyarakat. Selain itu, komunitas ini mencoba untuk menjauh dari perselisihan dan konflik dan secara aktif terlibat dalam kegiatan masyarakat, seperti hari pemilihan, pertemuan desa dan struktur manajemen desa. Hal-hal ini membuat mereka mendapatkan simpati dan dapat hidup dengan harmonis.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a compound country. Its diversity manifests itself in various ethnic groups, races, religions and cultures. All of these things make Indonesia one of the largest multicultural countries in the world. The multiculturalism of the Indonesian people in addition to being questionable wealth in other countries, also keeps the embers of conflict and resistance. There are various kinds of conflicts that occur in Indonesia. Start from political, economic to religious and ethnic conflicts.

Of the various types of conflicts, ethnic conflicts with religious conflicts have frequent frequency in this republic. The age of these conflicts extends far as old as humanity. In world contestation, there are various ethnic conflicts. One of them is the slaughter of ethnic Bosnian Muslims by the Republic of Srpska Republicans who are Serbs led by General Ratko Mladic in 1995 and the slaughter of ethnic Kurds by forces led by Saddam Husein in 1987-1988. So did what happen in Indonesia. One of the biggest ethnic nuances conflicts was that which occurred in 2000 when the Dayak and Madura ethnic clashes.

Interethnic clashes are actually not new in Indonesia. This evidence can be traced during the colonial period. The decision of the Dutch East Indies Government to divide the community at that time into three classes became an upstream of the inter-ethnic dispute that arises at this time. Natives who are the lowest class often rub against the Eastern people who are one class above. Disputes between natives and ethnic, such as Chinese, Arabs or other foreign ethnicities often occur. It still appears even in the present times.

There are various causes of these disputes and conflicts. One of them is the existence of economic inequality, political domination, and cultural hegemony as well as the movement of people from one region to another that has lasted for centuries which finally united various groups of people in competition with one another for power and resources (Clarke, 2006). In addition, the emergence of discrimination and intolerance adds to the long list of causes of conflict. Discrimination means direct or indirect restrictions, harassment, or exclusion based on human distinctions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, ethnicity, group, class, social status, economic status, gender, language, political beliefs resulting in reduction, deviation or the elimination of recognition, implementation or use of human rights and fundamental freedoms in life, both individually and collectively in the political, economic, legal, social, cultural and other aspects of life (Law on Human Rights No. 39 of 1999, 1999).

Tolerance itself according to the understanding of UNESCO in "Tolerance: the Threshold of Peace A Teaching / Learning Guide for Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy", published by UNESCO (UNESCO, 1994), is not merely a "result" but also a symptom that can be detected in the form of certain actions. Intolerance is considered something that leads to the potential birth of a life-threatening social illness called violence.

Forms of tolerance and harmonization can be seen from the actions / actions of the communities of foreign residents, especially the citizens of the 'Middle East' who have proven to be tolerant and harmonious with the surrounding residents. One of the Arab communities that has proven to be tolerant and harmonious with the surrounding residents is the Arab community of Dermayu Village, Sindang, Indramayu, West Java.

The existence of the Arab community as one of the 'foreign' ethnics who entered Indonesia centuries ago was never a cause in the process of disintegration and disharmony in this country. Although according to [Baali & Wardi \(2003\)](#), the Arabs are ethnics known for their ethnicity (*ashabiyyah*) when they interact with people outside their group and according to [Al Zu'abi \(2018\)](#), political, economic, social and structural transformation has had a negative impact on Arab society which also contributed negatively to its culture of tolerance. However, the similarity of religion becomes fundamental in terms of the lack of conflict or conflict between ethnic Arabs and the natives. This then becomes a key factor of integration between Arabs and natives.

There are various examples of how the ethnic Arabs integrated and harmonized with indigenous peoples. Among these are the emergence of a new culture or the process of acculturation seen from the integration of ethnic Arabs with Javanese and Madurese in Ampel Village Surabaya ([Haryono, 2013](#)). Linguistic adaptations between Arabs and Javanese communities not only in terms of the lexicon, but also in phonetic adjustments (sounds) appear in the process of social harmonization in the Klengo Arab Village in Pekalongan, Central Java ([Azzuhri, 2016](#)). The process of assimilation in the form of intermarriage between Arab-Malay ethnic groups emerged in the efforts of community integration in Arab Village Kelurahan Dalam Bugis Pontianak ([Ramadhan et al., 2015](#)) and in Arab Village Dadapsari Semarang ([Pratiwi & Prasetyo, 2018](#)).

All forms of integration prove that Arab descendants in Indonesia have a movement strategy to easily integrate with the natives. This is the uniqueness of the efforts to integrate the Arab community. Furthermore, the selection of the Arab community in Indramayu, one of which began with the confusion about the existence of the Arab community in Indramayu in the book "Hadramaut and the Arab Colonies" by L.W.C. van den Berg who stated that the Indramayu Arab community that was once included in the Cirebon Arab colony (in 1872 the Arab colony in Indramayu was separated from the Cirebon Arab colony) in 1885 became the seventh largest Arab colony after Batavia, Surabaya, Gresik, Pekalongan, Semarang and Cirebon ([Van Den Berg, 1989](#)).

The information shows that the existence of the Arab community in Indramayu has existed since a century ago with a large number of which there has been no research on it when compared to other large cities that have quite a large Arab community such as Surabaya or Pekalongan. The search for patterns and strategies of their social and cultural movements will be the aim of this study. In addition, the process or efforts of integration and harmonization that they do need to be analyzed and examined in detail.

The analysis of the form of integration efforts or strategies of their social and cultural movements, especially the Arab community in Dermayu Village, will be the main objective of this research, as well as other issues such as how the community responds, and how their integration and harmonization movements lead to assimilation and cultural acculturation which can be accepted by all levels of society.

METHOD

This research uses analytical method with a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a detailed and in-depth study of a case or research that emphasizes the quality of data (the existence of data collection techniques such as interviews) (Sunarto, 2004). This method is research that aims to obtain facts by analyzing and interpreting data carefully a particular person, group or community. Data collection techniques in this study are observation, interview, and literature review. The problem to be studied is related to the integration effort which can be said to be a problem of social movements. Therefore, this problem will be reviewed with sociological theories and concepts, so that it can make an explanation of the integration efforts carried out by the Arab Dermayu Village.

The characteristics of social movements can be recognized through the concepts put forward by the following experts. According to Szomtko (2008), the understanding of social movements must consist of the following elements; 1) the collectivity of people acting together, 2) the purpose of their actions is certain changes in society determined by participants in the same way, 3) the collectivity is relatively scattered but lower in degree than formal organizations, and 4) the actions have a relatively high degree of spontaneity but are institutionalized and unconventional shape. Social movements are one of the main ways to reorganize modern society whereas according to Smelser (1962), social movements are collective actions to change norms and values. Of the several definitions above, the definition of social movements that will be used in this study is the act or joint effort of a group of people in making a change in norms, values, or attitudes that have been inherent to harmonize with the surrounding community in the presence of an institutionalized internal structure and unconventional form (change from an exclusive society to an inclusive one). The classification of social movements is based on the ideology that underlies it. This is based on the assumption that ideas are very influential on society (Ritzer, 2012).

The theory of social movements that will be used in this study is the theory of Islamic social movements. Islamic social movements or Islamic activism are various feuds/movements that often appear in the name of Islam, including da'wah movements, terrorist groups, collective actions originating from Islamic symbols and identities, political movements that seek to establish an Islamic State, and oriented groups in carrying out Islamic spirituality through collective efforts (Wiktorowicz, 2012). The main concern in the Islamic social movement is how ideas are socially created,

organized and disseminated. The emphasis in the Islamic social movement is on the process of developing discourse and ideational packages produced. In this case, a movement must frame its arguments to get support and community participation (Kurzman, 1994).

In this study also discussed assimilation and acculturation that occurred in the village of Arab Village Dermayu Village Sindang Indramayu District. There are four kinds of assimilation related to each other, namely: 1) cultural or behavioral assimilation (acculturation) which is related to changes in cultural patterns for adjusting to the majority group, 2) marriage assimilation (amalgamation), 3) assimilation of attitudes which is related to attitudes that move away from prejudice, and 4) assimilation of behavior which is related to the absence of discrimination (Soemardjan, 1988).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The profile of Sindang Arab village

Sindang Arab village is administratively located in the east of Dermayu village RW 003 (RT 11 and RT 12) and RW 004 (RT 13, 14, 15 and 16) Sindang, Indramayu. Other ethnic groups who also inhabit the Sindang Arab Village include Javanese (Dermayu), Sundanese, Madurese and Medan Malays. There are no data showing the number of each ethnicity. However, in Arab Village, it can be concluded that the majority of ethnic groups there are Arab ethnic groups, which are then followed by Javanese and Sundanese ethnic groups.

The condition of the Sindang Arab village is not too crowded; the houses are close together but not coincide with one another. Most locations between families that have family relationships (younger siblings, siblings or parents) will be close together. Such a pattern is commonly found in other Arab villages. This shows the influence of Islamic social culture (the presence of neighbors who have relatives) to the order of ethnic Arab settlers (Wulandari et al., 2016). While home architecture is no different from home architecture in general.

Regarding the selection of settlement sites (Dermayu Village) there are several opinions regarding this matter. According to Zaenudin, they are trying to maintain ownership of land and buildings that have been passed down for generations. In addition, the selection of the place is because it is near the city center, economic considerations (the majority of Arab communities in Dermayu village are livelihoods as traders) and in accordance with one of the environmental variables of Muslim community settlements, namely: a hierarchy of road network functions that are able to accommodate the needs of the community (Wulandari et al., 2016) and the last opinion is because of the religious environment which is supported by the existence of the mosque.

The atmosphere of the settlement is unique compared to other neighboring villages or in the Indramayu region as a whole. The specificity of the Arab Village is evident from the greetings in Arabic and Islamic songs that are heard from residents' homes. Arabic is the main and first language because it is the original language and a marker of their identity. However, the use of Arabic is not monolithic because Indonesian and Javanese (other local languages) also become a variety of daily languages. This then results in code switching and code mixing as a strategy for using Arabic (Nashoih & Ashoumi, 2018).

B. Integration and harmonization of Arab community

1. Socio-cultural Sector

As part of the urban community, the Arab community of Dermayu Village Sindang will always be influenced by the city's culture. The greatest influence is especially hard on young people who will be more likely to accept modernization or accept new elements. But their acceptance of modernization or new elements does not make them far from the values of politeness or Islamic values that they profess. This is especially evident in their daily behavior. Many young girls of Arab descent are still consistently veiled. Teenage boys still maintain relationships with the opposite sex and don't go out at night for unnecessary things. In addition, Islamic greetings are still often heard. This is slightly different when dealing with marital matters. Many Arab communities, especially young people in this area, have left the old rules which do not allow marriage to non-Arabs. Mixed marriages between ethnic groups are no longer taboo, although older groups often show disapproval. It was here that two streams emerged in view of modernity among the Arab community of Dermayu Village, Sindang. Conservative people are supported by old people who have ideas that are contrary to the progressions carried by young people (Zaenudin, interviewer).

As part of urban life, the Arab community in Dermayu Village has a variety of jobs. Based on Zaenudin's information and researcher observation, in general, Arab people work as traders, either by opening *kios*, shops that trade various Muslim worship needs such as; *mukena*, *kopyah*, prayer rugs, gloves, prayer beads, perfume, Islamic books, the Holy Qur'an, calligraphy or related to it. Besides aiming to show the identity of the owner and make it easier for consumers to identify the typical products offered, also to show that the products sold are halal products (Aribowo, 2017).

In addition, opening other related businesses such as food stalls or water refills is the work choice of the Arab community in Dermayu Village. Other work that is emerging today is entering the government system, whether at the village, sub-district or regional level, as a public or private employee. This triggers a

conclusion that integration and harmonization between the Arab community of Dermayu Village and non-Arabs has gone forward.

In addition to work, harmonization and integration of the Arab community of Dermayu Village can be seen from their attitude towards education and da'wah. There are two views of the Dermayu Village Arab community regarding education. First is a conservative view that limits the level of education of their children and the difference in education of men and women. Second is a more advanced and modern view. Education for them is important, both for men and women. Therefore, the selection of school places will not be bound by the location of the school.

In Dermayu Village there are several educational institutions related to the Arabs, such as; Al-Irsyad, PUI, and Al-Wasliyah. Although the Arabs are the majority in the school, it does not make them exclusive and anti-social. They do not limit relationships only with their fellow men. They can get along well with ethnic Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese.

In da'wah, Arab community in the village of Dermayu has the principle that preaching is the advice of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, in terms of religious knowledge they are competing to become experts or experts or involved intensively in the field. This can be seen from some Arabs in Dermayu Village who became ustaz or ustazah, and sent their children to boarding schools. The Arab community of Dermayu Village respected and considered the elder of a figure named Ustaz Abdurrahman Assegaf Ali Bahabazi. Ustaz Abdurahman is a religious figure who has good religious abilities. In addition, this charismatic cleric also has followers who with orders or advice the community will obey and follow.

Integration and harmonization in various fields can also be seen from the religious side. As a village where the majority is Arab, naturally the majority religion is Islam, which when interacting at the village level there will also be other religions. Even so, religious differences do not become obstacles to mutual respect and uphold the values of tolerance. Both within Islam itself (there are differences in worship practices between Arabic Sayid and non-Sayid) or with other religions.

According to Zaenudin, Arab communities in Kampung Arab Dermayu Sindang have a high tolerance and try to do something that does not offend others so that they can mingle with people of various ethnicities or religions. They are indiscriminate in choosing friends. Not inclined to one particular ethnicity or religion. In line with this, the reaction and acceptance of other ethnic groups towards the Arabs and the religions they profess also show the same thing. They easily and willingly accept the ethnic Arabs and respect the religion they profess. There is even a tendency to glorify the Arabs of Sayid descent. Besides that, the

form of tolerance can also be seen from the following behaviors; no use of abusive language, no stereotyping of others, avoiding ridicule on others, not being prejudiced, not scapegoating other people/ ethnicities when there is a dispute, do not discriminate, do not neglect people in need, do not abuse, do not bully other people, do not expel people who are considered problematic, do not make exceptions to others, do not commit sex and do not oppress weaker people and not to eradicate wealth and lives to the guilty (forgiving) people.

In cultural sector, harmonization and assimilation arises from the open nature of their association with non-Arab citizens, as well as tolerance and sympathy for other cultures that they apply. They do that as a process of socialization with the aim of identifying themselves as part of the same nation, Indonesia. As Arab descendants they basically have a cultural pattern that is rooted in the Arab country as well and different from the cultural pattern of the indigenous population of Indonesia (Soemardjan, 1988).

To see the process and results of assimilation carried out by Arabs with non-Arabs can be seen from the following aspects:

- a. Social system aspects; In the social system of Arab citizens in Indonesia there are two names which are signs of the strata or composition of a group; sayid and not sayid (sheikh). Sayid is the identity of an Arab group that declares itself a group 'Alawiyin/Baalawi family. This group considers that they are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatimah. Vice versa, the sheikh or not sayid are Arabs who do not have direct lineage from the Prophet Muhammad. The strata differentiation faded and gradually disappeared in the Sindang Arab Village. This arises along with the strengthening of the belief that all are equal before God, the difference is his piety.
- b. Economic Aspects. This aspect focuses on equal opportunity in the economic field for all groups of people, regardless of background, especially gender. In the past, Arab citizens in Indonesia have a characteristic about the limited area of work of women. For them, women can only work in the domestic sphere. Over time and the emergence of modernization, these restrictions are increasingly not applicable among Arab citizens. This can also be seen in the Arab village of Desa Dermayu Sindang. Many Arab women have not only struggled in the domestic sphere but also many who have worked outside, one of which is in the public sector such as being a public/private employee or becoming a teacher. The economic aspects are also related to the form of economic business. The majority of the economic activities of Arab citizens is trading. That was then increasingly limited to only selling things related to Islam. In the present time these restrictions began to disappear with the emergence of other types of economic businesses, such as office employees, teachers, online sellers and others.

- c. Marriage aspects. This aspect has to do with Arab marriage to someone who is not of Arab descent. In the past, there were many cases of refusal of Arab citizens in matchmaking for girls, both *sharifah* and non-*sharifah* with natives' people. One reason is because the people who broke up when married to a native. However, these cases are increasingly difficult to see in the present where, there are many Arab women who have married to natives in Sindang Arab Village.
- d. Art aspects. This aspect focuses on mixing the distinctive Arabic art with the arts that exist in Indonesia. One example of the assimilation of the artistic aspects that emerged in the Arab village of Dermayu Sindang Village was the existence of a *gambus* group named *Nursyabab* whose members were a mixture of Arabs and non-Arabs. This cross-ethnic member combination then gave rise to music which was a blend of Arabic music with typical Dermayu music. This group has traveled from one marriage to another. In addition, the art of painting parts of the body such as hands, feet and back to emerge for non-Arab brides using Henna. Henna paintings that are typically Arabic appear in the hands of non-Arab women with a new look that is more contemporary following the times and the construction of indigenous cultures.

2. Politics

In terms of politics, Arab community in Dermayu Village chose to be actively involved. This can be seen from their enthusiasm in participating in the election of regional leaders at the village, Indramayu and governor and president levels. Regarding collaboration and harmonization with the surrounding community, it can be seen from their collaboration in village meetings and even one of the Arabs is included in the structural members of the village.

CONCLUSION

The Arab Community of Dermayu Village, Sindang, Indramayu is a community that has a long experience of interacting with the local people. This experience brought a new face to them. A friendly and tolerant face that could have been seen easily by native people. This friendly face then manifests in a social movement in which there is a process of assimilation and acculturation in which the end of the movement's choice is an Arab society that is integrated and harmonizes with non-Arab societies.

The form of social movements, the process of assimilation and acculturation of Arab community in Dermayu Village, Sindang, Indramayu can be seen from the fields of education, da'wah, work, and religion. In addition, their movement to integrate and harmonize with the surrounding community can also be seen from the social, economic and marriage systems. From the political side, their harmonization movement can be seen from their cooperation in village deliberations and their enthusiasm to enliven and participate in democratic parties such as the election of *kuwu*, *bupati*, governor and

president. In addition, the process of assimilation and acculturation in Arab community also took the form of art forms such as *Henna* painting with Indramayu's local wisdom and *gambus* art with different musical characteristics from the originals and personnel from various ethnic groups, not only ethnic Arabs. Their integration and harmonization received a warm reception from the local residents. This can be seen from the small amount of conflict that took place in Arab community and the cooperation seen in village activities or within the village administration itself.

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