

# Moderate Islam and the social construction of multi-ethnic communities in the hinterland of West Kalimantan

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## Abstract

This article discusses the social construction of culture and inter-ethnic relations within the daily lives of the people of West Kalimantan. Religion and ethnicity have played central roles in the identity dynamics of its multi-ethnic communities; they have also contributed to communal conflicts, with religious and cultural sentiments common throughout the region. Islam has become an important religion in West Kalimantan, as it is practiced by more than half of the province's

population. This article explores the local potential of communities and the opportunity to promote better Islamic development in the region's hinterland after the collapse of the Islamic sultanates that had introduced Islam into this region. Data were obtained from ten different locations in Mempawah, Landak, and Sanggau Regencies, all of which are considered part of West Kalimantan's hinterland and are relatively homogenous in their demographics, religions, and customs. Over two years of research, we noted important local potentials and wisdoms in the region, finding that these complemented Islam within local communities' everyday lives. These local potentials and wisdoms included beliefs that serving food strengthens brotherhood, friendliness is a key to success, lineage is a gift that should be appreciated, and serving guests brings happiness, as well as an ethos that promotes hard work and good manners.

Artikel ini didasarkan pada hasil penelitian yang mendalam tentang konstruksi sosial yang meliputi persoalan budaya dan hubungan antar etnis yang menjadi isu penting pada masyarakat Kalimantan Barat. Agama dan etnisitas memiliki peran sentral dalam dinamika identitas kehidupan masyarakat yang multi-etnis ini, sehingga konflik yang didorong oleh sentimen agama dan budaya pun terjadi berulang kali di wilayah ini. Islam yang berkembang di Kalimantan Barat menjadi salah satu agama yang memiliki peran sentral, karena dipeluk oleh lebih dari separuh masyarakat Kalimantan Barat. Artikel ini mendiskusikan tentang bagaimana potensi lokal yang dimiliki oleh masyarakat dan peluang Islam untuk berkembang lebih baik dalam konteks bahwa Islam berkembang di wilayah pedalaman pasca runtuhnya beberapa kesultanan Islam yang berhasil membawa Islam ke pedalaman Kalimantan Barat. Potensi lokal tersebut terungkap dari berbagai kearifan lokal yang dimiliki oleh masyarakat yang ditemukan dalam penelitian selama kurun waktu dua tahun. Data diperoleh dari sepuluh titik lokasi yang berbeda di wilayah Kabupaten Mempawah, Kabupaten Landak, dan Kabupaten Sanggau yang dianggap sebagai pedalaman Kalimantan Barat. Daerah – daerah tersebut adalah wilayah pedesaan yang memiliki homogenitas penduduk, baik dari segi suku, agama, dan adat istiadat. Beberapa bentuk potensi lokal yang bersambut dengan Islam dari kalangan masyarakat lokal meliputi kepercayaan terhadap kuliner yang dapat mempererat persaudaraan, tradisi warisan budaya untuk persahabatan dengan alam sebagai kunci kesuksesan, keturunan sebagai

anugerah yang tidak boleh ditolak, memuliakan tamu sebagai kunci kebahagiaan, bekerja keras, dan tata karma yang tinggi.

**Keywords:** *Moderate Islam; Social construction; Rural communities, West Kalimantan*

## **Introduction**

In histories of West Kalimantan, a nation has emerged that Islam developed only in coastal areas, failing to reach the hinterland by the colonial era. Various theories have emerged regarding the development of Islam in West Kalimantan's coastal areas, both from local and Western scholars.<sup>1</sup> Such arguments can be justified, given that West Kalimantan's Muslim communities are concentrated in coastal areas<sup>2</sup>, while Christianity dominates the hinterland. Observations conducted in the hinterland of West Kalimantan over two years (March 2017 to December 2018) similarly noted that the hinterland was inhabited primarily by Christians of Dayak heritage.

However, arguments that Islam failed to penetrate the hinterland have been countered.<sup>3</sup> Based on his doctoral studies in Jongkong, Kapuas Hulu, Hermansyah wrote *Ilmu Gaib di Kalimantan Barat* (Magic in West Kalimantan). In this book, he argued that the *da'is* who had spread Islam in the region had used a *sufistic* approach to assimilate and reduce the practice of magic among the indigenous people. As Islam developed in this area, an Islamic kingdom called Jongkong was established in Kapuas Hulu Regency. In the hinterland of West Kalimantan, there is a

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<sup>1</sup>Hermansyah, *Islam dari Pesisir sampai ke Pedalaman KalBar*, Pontianak: STAIN Pontianak Press, 2010, 21. See also Chairil Effendy, "Dayak Islam dan IKDI, Usaha Mendudukkan Agama dalam Konteks Sejatinya", in *Dayak Islam di KalBar. A Colloquium Proceeding of Dayak Islam di KalBar*, Pontianak, 21-23 November 2000, STAIN Pontianak Press, 1-14.

<sup>2</sup>Syarif I. Alqadrie, *Matahari Akan Terbit di Barat*, Pontianak: Yayasan Insan Cita KalBar, 2008, 35.

<sup>3</sup>Hermansyah, *Ilmu Gaib di Kalimantan Barat*, Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2010, 1.

widespread 'longing' for the past, when Islam was well accepted by the people and ulamas utilized Sufistic values to accommodate all elements of the archipelago. They argue that it is necessary to revisit how Islam is currently taught, as a proper approach can entice both religious and irreligious communities to accept Islam and its teachings.<sup>4</sup>

This study seeks to record the local wisdom of the people in the hinterland of West Kalimantan. It stems from a side study conducted during Community Service Assignments in three regencies of West Kalimantan, namely Mempawah, Landak, and Sanggau. During our community service in these rural areas and remote villages, we found many interesting community phenomena, including a deep respect for guests with different beliefs and for nature. Thus, social capital for inter-ethnic and cultural relation has existed within the communities. This study explores various social constructions in the multi-ethnic communities of the hinterland of West Kalimantan and the importance of Islamic moderation as it is found in the recorded local wisdom. Islamic moderation offers a means of achieving the Islamic ideal of *rahmatan lil' alamin* (a blessing to all Creation). It was conducted in ten villages (Amawang, Pasir Palembang, Peniraman, Jungkat, Sekendal, Tonang, Babatn Village, Rahayu, Semongan, and Belangin) spread through three regencies (Sanggau, Landak, and Mempawah). These villages fall into two categories: 1) geographical hinterland villages (the most inaccessible villages) and 2) sociological hinterland villages (villages that still practice tradition, despite geographical proximity to the city).

Data were collected randomly, with researchers visiting places believed to have their own local wisdom. Researchers were directly involved in the community during the observation, interview, and documentation

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<sup>4</sup>Ulema in the Hinterland of West Kalimantan, such as in Embau, Kapuas Hulu, using "Magi/Ilmu" to instill Islamic *Aqeedah* to people who have strong magical traditions. Yusriadi and Hermansyah, *Orang Embau: Potret Masyarakat Pedalaman Kalimantan*, Pontianak: STAIN Pontianak, IKAPI & Ford Foundation, 2003, 24-42.

processes, which was conducted over approximately 21 months (between March 2017 to December 2018). Data were collected using the purposive random sampling method, based on data from the West Kalimantan branch of Statistics Indonesia. Villages that fell into one of the two categories (geographical and sociological hinterland) were identified based on data from the 2010 census. Sampling involved the following steps.

*First*, the ten identified villages (those mentioned above) were listed. *Second*, sample intervals were calculated (I). *Third*, the first random (AR1) was identified by multiplying the Census Block List by the interval; as such, the first random was  $AR1 = AR$  in the selected cluster  $\times$  interval; this continued through AR1. The next formula was  $R_n = AR1 + (n-1) I$ ; as such, the formula used was  $AR2 = AR1 + I$ ,  $AR3 = AR1 + 2I$ , etc. *Fourth*, several calculations were used: a) calculating the interval sample  $I = 127/35 = 3.6$ ; b) randomly selecting Census Blocks, for example 4.5; c) randomly selecting 35 households. *Fifth*, after these households were selected, interviews were conducted with the heads of these household. Several questions were asked: a) Since when had they lived in the village; b) How have they felt during their time in the village; c) What distinguishes their village from surrounding villages; and, d) What distinct activities are routinely carried out in the village. *Sixth*, the results of these interviews were verified through on-site observations, which focused primarily on respondents' answers; any findings that supported this research were documented photographically. *Seventh*, the collected data were displayed and reductively sorted in order to determine which could be categorized as local wisdom and which could not. Afterwards, data were analyzed by comparing them with data from other parts of West Kalimantan, enabling them to be classified as local wisdom. *Eighth*, when all of the data were verified, they were reviewed using the perspective of moderate Islam.

This study's main objective is to revive the understanding of moderate

Islam that was once taught by scholars. Exploring the social construction of the hinterland communities was necessary to understand how Islam was taught in West Kalimantan, as well as to show the practice of acceptance in both Muslim majority and minority communities.

### **West Kalimantan at glance: ethnicity and religiosity**

Hearing the word “Kalimantan” (or, more commonly in English, “Borneo”), most people will immediately picture a pure wilderness, untouched by humans. Kalimantan has become known as the “lung” of the world, where various types of flora and fauna that are rarely found elsewhere. Although this perception has begun to change owing to widespread migration and the burning forests for plantations, Kalimantan still attracts adventurers.

Kalimantan has an area of 743,330 km<sup>2</sup>, approximately five and a half times that of Java. It is the world’s third largest island, after Greenland and Papua, and politically divided between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. Kalimantan is also known as the island of a thousand rivers, including such prominent ones as Mahakam, Rejang, Baram, Miri, Sibuga, Kinabatangan, Katingan, Lamandau, Melawi, Pinoh, Sambas, Landak, and Pawan, as well as Indonesia’s longest river: the Kapuas River. It has a lengthy history, having been populated at least 40,000 years ago— before the first kingdoms and organized religions emerged.<sup>5</sup>

Compared to other Indonesian islands, particularly Java and Sumatra, Kalimantan is relatively undeveloped and unexplored. It hosts numerous secrets that remain unknown not only to outsiders, but even to the people of Kalimantan themselves. These include not only rare plants and animals, but also unique cultural and community characteristics that are sometimes

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<sup>5</sup>Yusriadi, Hermansyah, Ismail Ruslan, Ambaryani, and Farninda Aditya, *Pengetahuan Tradisional Masyarakat Dayak: Studi atas Masyarakat Benuaq di Tanjung Isuy Kalimantan Timur*, Pontianak: Center for the Preservation of Cultural Values, Pontianak, and STAIN Pontianak Press, 2012, 1-2.

difficult for outsiders to understand. This uniqueness should be perceived positively, as containing virtuous teachings for all.

Demographically, the largest ethnic groups in West Kalimantan are the Dayak, Malays, and Chinese. However, it is also home to other migrant groups, including the Bugis, Javanese, Batak, and Madurese.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, West Kalimantan had a population of 5,348,954, occupying an area of 146,807 km<sup>2</sup>; this breaks down to 36.43 people per square kilometer. Statistics Indonesia, through its publication *West Kalimantan in Figures 2015*<sup>7</sup> does not divide the province's population according to ethnicity; as such, no government data on its ethnic composition is available.<sup>8</sup> Eliana breaks down the province's population as follows: Dayaks(41%), Malays (30%), and Chinese (12%),<sup>9</sup>with the remainder divided between the Javanese, Madurese, Batak, Minang, and other ethnic minorities. Each ethnic group has its own religions and beliefs; for example, the Dayak predominantly practice their ancestral religions/beliefs, Malays predominantly practice Islam, and the Chinese predominantly practice Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism. Some ethnic Dayaks and Chinese have converted to Islam<sup>10</sup>; however, these Dayaks have never abandoned their customs, and customary law remains important in their daily lives.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Agung Bawantara, Putu Ebo, and Maria Ekaristi, *Khazanah Negeriku: Mengenal 33 Provinsi di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Anak Kita, 2011, 46.

<sup>7</sup>BPS of West Kalimantan Province, BPS Catalog: 1102001.61.

<sup>8</sup>Leo Sutrisno, "Tionghoa di Kalimantan, Pontianak", *Pontianak Post Daily*, Saturday, January 2, 2016.

<sup>9</sup>Eliana Yunitha Seran, "Gaya Belajar Siswa Sekolah Dasar Berdasarkan Latar Belakang Etnis (Tionghoa-Dayak) di Kabupaten Sintang Kalimantan Barat", *Jurnal Educhild*, Volume 4, Nomor 1 (Maret 2015), 1-7.

<sup>10</sup>According to PITI (the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association), no fewer than 80,000 of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese practice Islam; the organization also has a branch in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Choirul Mahfud, "Chinese Muslim Community Development in Contemporary Indonesia: Experiences of PITI in East Java", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 25, Number 3 (March 2018), 471-502.

<sup>11</sup>Zulkifli Abdillah, *Kepingan-kepingan Sejarah Umat Islam*, Pontianak: STAIN Pontianak Press, 2010, 341.

According to M. Haitami Salim, there is much debate as to whether the Malays or Dayaks are the true indigenous people of West Kalimantan; each has its own evidence. However, Haitami Salim does not discuss this issue further, as it is insignificant in the context of harmony and peace<sup>12</sup>. For this work, the debate on the indigenosity of those two is beneficial to see the dynamic of inter-ethnic relation within communities in West Kalimantan.

### **Moderate Islam**

According to Greg Fealey, as quoted by Muzayyin Akhyar and Alfitri, the blasphemy charges against former Jakarta governor Basuki Cahaya Purnama were also linked to his status as an ethnic minority.<sup>13</sup> These blasphemy charges were sensitive, and perceived as threatening the integrity of the nation. Fealey argues that these charges created a view in non-Muslim communities that Muslims would reject non-Muslims, and that ethnic minorities could contribute little to Indonesia. However, Islam strongly supports good relations between persons of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, the Qur'an and the deeds of Prophet Muhammad have provided good examples of building good relations between different communities.<sup>14</sup>

Islam is built on three main pillars: *Iman*, *Islam*, and *Ihsan*. *Ihsan* refers to belief, understood as worship and belief in God, as manifested in everyday attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts. Islam teaches that the heart

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<sup>12</sup>Moh. Haitami Salim, "Islam dan Fenomena Konflik Lokal: Pengalaman Konflik di Kalimantan Barat", in Yohanes Bahari and Ismail Ruslan (eds.), *Multikulturalisme dalam Sorotan*, Pontianak: STAIN Pontianak Press, 2009, 195.

<sup>13</sup>Muzayyin Akhyar and Alfitri, "Aksi Bela Islam: Islamic Clicktivism and the New Authority of Religious Propaganda in the Millennial Age in Indonesia", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 9, Number 1 (June 2019), 1-29.

<sup>14</sup>Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor and Issa Khan, "Analysing the Conceptual Framework of Religious Freedom and Interreligious Relationship in Islam", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 8, Number 2 (December 2018), 309-334.

must be purified (*tadzkiyat al-qalb*) to achieve *al-Ihsan*, with such purification enabling Muslims to see and be seen by God the Most Holy. *Al-Ihsan* is manifested in everyday attitudes, thoughts, and actions, in which it is called morality. We may recognize several types of morality, including morality towards God, morality towards oneself, morality towards one's fellow humans, morality towards fellow creatures, and morality toward nature. Each of these is distinct and requires a different approach.

The hinterland communities of West Kalimantan have characteristics that correlate with Islam's definition of *Ihsan*. Although the ancestral values and wisdoms of the Dayaks are not rooted in Islamic teachings, they have nonetheless been formed through lengthy interactions with their natural and social environment. The Dayaks of Kalimantan have a wisdom replete with universal values, believing that harmony can only be established when one is good to others, respects their beliefs, and treats them as equals in social interactions. Furthermore, they promote being good towards nature, the avoidance of environmental harm, and conservation.

In Islam, especially in *tasawuf* teachings, such attitudes towards nature are viewed as a means of maintaining good relations with Allah. Such a belief facilitated the spread of Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago, as it was readily accepted by the indigenous population. Islam was seen positively, and as such attracted new followers. As such, the beliefs of the people of West Kalimantan's hinterland are compatible with Islamic teachings.

Religious tolerance is also evident in the rural communities of West Kalimantan. In Islamic, tolerance is known as *tasamuh*, an attempt by Muslims to manifest Islam as *rahmatan li al'alamin* (a blessing to all Creation). Islam teaches its followers to maintain the principle of *tasamuh*, as long as it does not contradict Islamic law. Intolerance erodes the integrity of pluralistic

and multicultural societies, thereby threatening the nation and the state<sup>15</sup>.

Sufism also its own concept of tolerance: *wahdat al-adyan*, which developed during the Islamic awakening of the 11th century. Introduced by Abu Mansyur Al-Halaj, this concept was later developed by Sufissuch as Ibn Araby, Hazrat Inayat Khan, and Jalaluddin Rumi. *Wahdat al-Adyan* teaches followers to practice a particular style of tolerance in their interactions with practitioners of other faiths. *Wahdat* means one or unity, while *al-Adyanis* the plural form of the word *al-Din*, which connotes religion; as such, the term *Wahdat al-Adyan* refers to the unity of the world's religions<sup>16</sup>.

Islam also teaches various concepts of moderation. It teaches followers to practice moderation and tolerance in human interactions, recognizing that—after spreading around the world—it encompasses multi-racial, multi-ethnic communities such as those of the Indonesian Archipelago. Moderation, thus, is the best means of maintaining harmony in an Islamic society.

### **Portrait of the hinterland communities of West Kalimantan**

The following section presents findings from three regencies in West Kalimantan: Mempawah, Landak, and Sanggau. Four villages in Mempawah Regency were selected, three sociological hinterland villages (Pasir Palembang, Peniraman, and Jungkat) and one geographical hinterland village (Amawang). In Landak Regency, three villages were selected, all of which fell into the geographical hinterland category (Sekendal, Andeng, and Babatn). Finally, in Sanggau Regency, three geographical hinterland villages were selected (Belangin, Semongan, and Rahayu).

As these regencies are dominated by a specific ethnic group, their customs and cultures tend to be homogeneous. Homogeneity distinctively

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<sup>15</sup>M. Akmansyah, "Membangun Toleransi dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Spiritual Sufistik", *Kalam* Volume 10, Number 2 (2016), 517-536.

<sup>16</sup>Muhammad Robith Fuadi, "Memahami Tasawuf Ibnu Arabi dan Ibnu al Farid: Konsep *al Hubbillahi*, *Wahdat al Wujud*, *Wahdah al Syuhuddan* *Wahdat al Adyan*", *Ulul Albab*, Volume 14, Nomor 2 (Desember 2013), 147-160.

shapes the interactions between communities and their environments. This study identifies the cultural characteristics and behaviors of these local communities as their local wisdom. In further detail:

*First*, Amawang is an inland mountain village in Mempawah's Sadaniang District. Its population is predominantly Dayak (99%), and they still adhere to customary law. It covers a vast area, including the former transmigration hamlet of Parung (abandoned during the 1998 riots) and gold mine of Pendeng; these, together with Boga, are the most remote hamlets in the village. All interviewees were members of the same ethnic group; owing to this homogeneity, it was relatively easy to map the community's local wisdom.

*Second*, Pasir Palembang is a village located in the East Mempawah District of Mempawah City. Most of its residents are of Madurese heritage, and like most Madurese they generally practice Islam. The culture of this village, consequently, is an Islamic culture.

*Third*, Peniraman is a village located between Segedong District and Sungai Pinyuh District. It has a view of the hills that follow the road from Pontianak to Mempawah. These hills have been heavily mined for construction materials, and most residents earn their livelihoods by mining. Peniraman is home to a well-preserved historical site, namely the tomb of Kyai Fathul Bari—a respected cleric who provided a role model for the *Naqsyabandiyah tariqat*. He remains deeply respected by the local community, and as such his tomb is always crowded with pilgrims and his teachings continue to be adhered.

*Fourth*, Jungkat lies at the center of Mempawah's Siantan District. Most of its residents work as traders, fishermen, or farmers, and as such they depend heavily on nature (the sea and the rivers) and on local markets. Most residents are of Bugis Malay heritage, and thus come from an ethnic group with a lengthy history of nautical exploration. Residents of

this village are predominantly Muslim. Residents believe that food and drinks must be served to guests, otherwise both the host and the guest will experience misfortune. Guests, similarly, are expected to consume—or at least taste—the food/drink served.

*Fifth*, Tonang is inhabited predominantly by ethnic Dayaks; it is also home to ethnic minorities such as the Javanese, Madurese, and Sambas Malays. A small mosque stands about one kilometer from the village gate, distinguishing Tonang from surrounding villages. Muslim Malays, Madurese and Javanese minorities' religious lives are centered on this mosque. The people of Tonang live in harmony, and peacefully resolve any differences.

*Sixth*, Sekendal is an inland village, geographically distant from the seat of the district. Its community is homogeneous; all residents identify as ethnic Dayak, and adhere to customary law. Traditional approaches to farming, fishing, hunting, and other activities are still used. Residents are also very respectful of guests. During field observations, our team noted a particular practice; when we wanted to bathe in the river—where all bathing activities were done—it would be deserted, with residents prioritizing our privacy. Similarly, although the team was staying with only one resident, we were treated as guests of the village. Such a friendly, tolerant, guest-honoring attitude is increasingly rare today.

*Seventh*, Babatn is a village located on a hill about ten kilometers from Karangan Village in Mempawah Hulu District. One must be physically fit to access this village, which is connected to the rest of West Kalimantan by only a rocky road. Dense forests are found throughout the region, with homes being sparse; as such, entering Babatn is like entering a beautiful natural paradise. Most residents are rice farmers. They live in peace and harmony, maintaining a spirit of solidarity.

*Eighth*, Belangin is a village in the hinterland of Sanggau. To access this village, one must travel approximately 20–25 kilometers through forests and oil palm plantations, or use a ferry to cross the Kapuas River that divides the city of Sanggau; this ferry operates from approximately 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. Despite its remoteness, however, Belangin is administratively part of Kapuas City District, the seat of Sanggau Regency. Residents generally farm oil palms or work for private companies. Some also sell vegetables in Sanggau City, or work as civil servants and commute from Belangin to Sanggau every day. Residents live in harmony and modesty in the shade their trees provide.

*Ninth*, Rahayu is a village in Parindu District, Sanggau. It is located within a vast oil palm plantation, approximately 15 kilometers from Parindu Road. Most of its residents are Christians of Dayak heritage. One household, however, belongs to a Javanese Muslim named Slamet, who migrated from Kebumen, Central Java. When we asked him how he interacted with people of different ethnic backgrounds and beliefs, Slamet replied only that Dayaks respect people of different faiths. He serves an important role in the village administration, acting as village secretary. However, he remains low-profile, not over-emphasizing their religious identity. Although Slamet and his family are devout Muslims, their home has no pictures or decorations that show this religious identity. He stated that he has never experienced any religious conflict in the community.

*Tenth*, Semongan is the most remote village in Noyan District, Sanggau. Most residents earn their living by cultivating oil palms. Although the majority of villagers are ethnic Dayaks who have lived in the area for generations, it is not uncommon to find people who speak Javanese; many pawnbrokers, and vegetable sellers are of Javanese heritage and visit the village every day. Their interactions with the Dayak community are harmonious, and as such the people of Semongan have never questioned their presence.

Semongan is home to one Muslim household. It appears to be a devoutly religious household, as the women wear the hijab in their everyday interactions with their peers. This has never been problematized, and the family is respected by the community. According to the village chief of Semongan, this family has contributed to the variety and hopes of the community, as it has taught them much about farming and working the land. Historically, Semongan was quite isolated—especially before the government constructed roads through the area—and depended predominantly on forest products such as honey, tubers, and fruits. The introduction of outsiders, as well as the construction of roads, enabled the community to thrive economically and socially. As such, Semongan is very open to outsiders.

### **Social construction of West Kalimantan’s hinterland communities**

Reviewing the theory of social construction proposed by Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, I.B. Putera Manuaba defined social construction as encompassing the sociology of the knowledge in society and the processes that realize this knowledge; it views knowledge as a form of public knowledge.<sup>17</sup> This theory is a continuation of phenomenology, an interpretive science that utilizes social facts to analyze social phenomena.<sup>18</sup> Central to this theory is the argument that social constructs shape how community knowledge is realized; in other words, that social reality is a manifestation of the knowledge possessed by that community. Communities’ unique social realities are thus interpreted as local wisdom.

Pursuant to this theory, this study traces the practices of remote communities in West Kalimantan through in-depth interviews with

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<sup>17</sup>I.B. Putera Manuaba, “Memahami Teori Konstruksi Sosial”, *Jurnal Masyarakat, Kebudayaan, dan Politik Universitas Airlangga*, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (Maret 2008), 221–230.

<sup>18</sup>Wardi Bachtiar, *Sosiologi Klasik dari Comte Hingga Parsons*, Bandung, Remaja Rosdakarya, 2006, 150.

several key informants. According to Mat Ali, the local wisdom of the Amawang people has been passed through generations of practice, and—although their origin is not known—these forms and practices teach community members what to do and what not to do.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, according to Herkulanus, public knowledge is shaped by communities' interactions with nature.<sup>20</sup> Both statements were confirmed in interviews with heads of households in six villages with Dayak-majority populations (Amawang, Tonang, Babatan, Sekendal, Rahayu, and Semongan). Of the heads of household interviewed, 211 indicated that their communities' knowledge was obtained through ancestral teachings, and 34 stated that this knowledge was produced through lengthy interactions with nature.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, majority Madurese communities argued that their knowledge comes from the teachings of Islamic scholars (or ulamas), mostly Sufistic ulamas from Java or Madura<sup>22</sup>. Meanwhile, informants in Malay-majority communities stated that they had obtained their knowledge from their communities' teachers and elders.<sup>23</sup>

The term local wisdom is often used interchangeably with local knowledge. Local wisdom refers to the community's perspectives, knowledge, and strategies for dealing with life issues, including their religion, economy, society, culture, philosophy, and life principles.<sup>24</sup> Local wisdom is most prominent in rural communities that are found far from

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<sup>19</sup>Interview with Mr. Mat Ali, Acting Chief of Amawang Village, on May 25, 2017.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Mr. Herkulanus, Chief of Amawang Village, on June 11, 2018.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with 245 heads of household in 6 villages (Amawang, Tonang, Babatn, Sekendal, Rahayu, and Semongan).

<sup>22</sup>Interview with 70 heads of household at two villages (Pasir Palembang and Peniraman).

<sup>23</sup>Interview with 35 heads of household in Jungkat Village.

<sup>24</sup>Noor Hudha Muchsin, "Potensi Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Pembentuk Nilai-nilai Pancasila dalam Rangka Menjaga Kedaulatan Wilayah Perbatasan NKRI", in Center for Pancasila Studies UGM, *Membangun Kedaulatan Bangsa Berdasarkan Nilai-nilai Pancasila: Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dalam Kawasan Terluar, Terdepan dan Tertinggal (3T)*, Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Pancasila UGM, 2015, 539.

urban centers. Rural communities have their own ways of dealing with various life challenges, as well as their own laws that may not be found elsewhere. These laws are not made, but born, grown, and developed within local society, as reflected in individual members' complex behaviors<sup>25</sup>. Local wisdom has multiple functions, providing energy for change, maintaining local values, promoting social welfare, creating social cohesion, asserting identity, preserving the environment, ensuring tolerance, preventing social conflict, etc.<sup>26</sup>. All communities develop their own culture, actively responding to their environment; this is seen in the everyday lives of West Kalimantan's population.

### **Majority-Dayak rural communities**

This section deals with six rural villages with predominantly Dayak populations, namely Amawang, Tonang, Babatn, Sekendal, Rahayu, and Semongan. Although the Dayaks are divided into several sub-groups, these villages share similar characteristics. When our team visited selected households, they all asked about the team's willingness to be served food/drink. Initially, team members were hesitant, but after seeing that refusal would cause offense, we decided to consume the food/drink offered. As soon as we accepted the offer, respondents became warmer, friendlier, and more caring.

Such practices were observed in all research locations, and amongst the Madurese, Dayaks, Javanese, and Malays. Recognizing this as a form of local wisdom, we believed that we needed to respect and adhere to the beliefs of local people. We perceived that, if we were willing to consume the dishes they served, we would be welcomed as part of their community.

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<sup>25</sup>Ade Saptomo, *Hukum dan Kearifan Lokal: Revitalisasi Hukum Adat Nusantara*, Jakarta: Cikal Sakti and Grasindo, 2010, 26-27.

<sup>26</sup>Muhammad Hisyam and CahyoPamungkas (eds.), *Indonesia, Globalisme, dan Global Village*, Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2016, 51.

Most Dayaks knew that Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol, and thus would not serve such items to guests. They treated us like kin, and thus (according to local tradition) we had to be protected.

One day, the Village Chief of Amawang called a team and warned us to be cautious, to avoid stopping in any villages that looked deserted. If we saw a bamboo cage adorned with yellow coconut leaves, we should recognize that the community was holding a *Blalak* ritual. During the *Blalak* ritual, villagers would meditate at home and avoid any artificial lighting or economic activities. This, they believed, would help them get closer to the Creator and prepare them for the next farming season. This ritual was practiced by ethnic Dayaks in almost all parts of West Kalimantan.

According to Mat Ali, the social construction of the Dayak community is derived from the practices of their ancestors. This knowledge has been affected by several factors, namely 1) ancestral experiences; 2) local gold mines; 3) trans-migration; and 4) the influx of Muslim migrants from Sulawesi. This knowledge has guided their behavior, teaching them what to do and what not to do. When they have Muslim guests, they will not serve any foods or drinks that are prohibited by Islamic doctrine; some even have spare kitchen utensils that they use only when entertaining Muslim guests<sup>27</sup>.

### **Majority-Madurese rural communities**

Two of the villages examined in this study, Pasir Palembang and Peniraman, are majority Madurese. These communities have similar characteristics, as they tend to live in groups and reinforce each other. When our team first arrived in Pasir Palembang, the community was hosting a *kyai* from Madura. As several residents were students (*santri*) of this *kyai*, they

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<sup>27</sup>Interview with Mat Ali, Acting Chief of Amawang Village, Sadaniang District, Mempawah Regency, May 18, 2017.

welcomed him warmly, served him, and listened to his sermons. In his honor, all community activities ceased; similarly, our team could not begin its activities. This respect for teachers is part of the local wisdom of Pasir Palembang, and also found in other Madurese villages (such as Peniraman).

Our team found one family with eighteen children (with a nineteenth having died in infancy). Interviews indicated that this family had had a religious reason for having this many children. The head of the household, Marijan, cited several Qur'anic verses, including Surah Al-Nisa '[4]: 9, Surah Hud [11]: 6, Surah Al-An'am [6]: 151, as well as some hadiths; he also provided rational arguments. All of these influenced his decision to have numerous children; indeed, several of the village's residents had more than ten children.

The social construction of majority Madurese communities is heavily affected by the teachings of their Islamic teachers (*Ustadz/Kyai*). The ethnic Madurese have a particular hierarchy, with the *kyai* (or *ulama*) at the top, followed by *bindhara* (those who completed their education at Islamic boarding schools), and *santri* (those who are currently studying at an Islamic boarding school). The *kyai* wield broad authority, being responsible not only for religious matters but also political and cultural ones.

### *Majority-Javanese rural communities*

This study found only one village, Belangin, with a Javanese majority. In this village, Javanese culture remains practiced, even though their use of Javanese is not entirely correct. They still observe the principles of *kejawen*, including *ulet* (perseverance), *unggah-ungguh* (manners, courtesy), and hard work. The belief "*Yen Obah, Mamah*" (if you work, you will succeed) is still held by the community. Unsurprisingly, their houses appear quite impressive. Although most villagers are Muslim, the village hosts no Islamic learning centers (i.e. *madrassahs* or Islamic boarding schools).

### *Malay-majority rural communities*

This study found only one village, i.e. Jungkat, that had a Malay-majority population. Noor Huda, despite not identifying a Malay Islamic State in West Kalimantan, concluded that Islam had helped create solidarity between the Indonesian Archipelago's various ethnic groups since the 15th century; this reached its peak in the 19th century, when Muslim groups united to fight against colonialism. The Bugis Malay are most prominent in this region<sup>28</sup>, which can be attributed to its location near the sea/river. Islamic traditions are strong among the Bugis Malay, including those in West Kalimantan.

### **The urgency of moderate Islam in the hinterland of West Kalimantan**

The rural Dayak, Madurese, Malay, and Javanese communities of West Kalimantan have their own local wisdoms that they use to deal with social change and mediate ethnic and religious differences. What must be developed here is a means of enabling the teachings of Islam—or at least Islam itself—to be well accepted by these communities. Approaches to teaching Islam must recognize these communities' unique characteristics, thereby avoiding any frictions that could hinder the growth and development of local society. In the current situation, a strong-handed approach to proselytization seems inappropriate. Rather, a polite, tolerant, and friendly Islam is more appropriate for spreading Islam in the hinterland, as exemplified in the past by Sufistic scholars.

The hinterland of West Kalimantan has its own characteristics, including a general ability to accept social change. The Dayaks use their customary law to respect people of other ethnic backgrounds. Malays respect visitors as they uphold their customs and religion. The Madurese,

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<sup>28</sup>Noor Huda, "Perkembangan Institusi Sosial-Politik Islam Indonesia Sampai Awal Abad XX", *ADDIN* Volume 9, Nomor 2 (September 2015), 349–382.

meanwhile, clearly base everything on their religious teachings, and the Javanese maintain the teachings of *kejawen*. Recognizing this reality, a moderate approach to Islam must be applied when dealing with hinterland communities.

## **Conclusion**

This study has divided the hinterland of West Kalimantan into two categories, namely geographical and sociological hinterland. It shows that the social construction of rural communities in West Kalimantan has been shaped by the historical interactions of indigenous and migrant populations, as well as the knowledge passed from generation to generation. Each of the rural village surveyed had its own dominant ethnic group, with the ethnic Dayaks, Malays, Chinese, Madurese, and Javanese being most prominent. In the geographical hinterland, the Dayaks are dominant; meanwhile, Malays, Madurese, and Javanese dominate the sociological hinterland.

All of these ethnic groups have learned how to preserve nature, relate to others, and carry out God's commands from their ancestors, and use this knowledge to create social harmony. The Dayak and Chinese know how to interact with Muslims. They understand that Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol, and thus avoid serving such items to their Muslim guests. Meanwhile, most ethnic Malays, Madurese, and Javanese adhere closely to Islamic teaching, which is often manifested in moderate religious activities. In the sociological hinterland, the Javanese are particularly adaptable, being able to assimilate into local communities without any significant religious conflict.

These findings provide a clear description of the hinterland communities of West Kalimantan, both geographical and sociological. In these communities, a concept of moderate Islam must be developed and

applied to ensure the religion is accepted. As this article provides only a preliminary portrait, further research is necessary to understand specific Islamic concepts of creating inter-ethnic harmony within the context of the hinterland of West Kalimantan, as well as its application in the region.

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