

Investigating the Role of Islam in Shaping Political Identity in Gorontalo

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Abstract

This article examines how Islam has played a part in developing political identity in the Indonesian city of Gorontalo. It assess how Islam has changed over time in Gorontalo, how locals have interpreted it, and how contemporary perspectives on Islam's place in Gorontalo compare to those of the past. The lasting effects of Islam's sway over Gorontalo politics will then be evaluated. Islam has been practiced in Gorontalo for generations. Many historical narratives detail the first contacts between native peoples and Muslim settlers from Arabia, Yemen, and China, eventually leading to Islam's widespread embrace. Many in Gorontalo believed adopting Islam would help unify the area's disparate cultural groups and improve its political and social institutions. As a result, Shi'ite and Sunni communities developed in Gorontalo, and Islamic law and education were instituted there. Since the city of Gorontalo's founding, religion and politics have been inextricably entwined. Islamic political parties and movements have had a significant role in establishing the current government order in the area. Political authorities in the region frequently draw on Islamic ideas in making decisions, and the region's legal codes are in place to ensure social justice and political stability. Thanks to this, Islam's political legacy may be carried on from generation to generation.

Keywords: Islam; Gorontalo; Politics; Political Identity

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana Islam telah memainkan peran dalam mengembangkan identitas politik di Kota Gorontalo, Indonesia. Artikel ini melihat bagaimana Islam telah berubah dari waktu ke waktu di Gorontalo, bagaimana penduduk setempat menafsirkannya, dan bagaimana perspektif kontemporer tentang posisi Islam di Gorontalo dibandingkan dengan masa lalu. Efek jangka panjang dari pengaruh Islam terhadap politik Gorontalo akan dievaluasi. Islam telah dipraktikkan di Gorontalo selama beberapa generasi. Banyak narasi sejarah yang merinci kontak pertama antara penduduk asli dan pendatang Muslim dari Arab, Yaman, dan Cina, yang pada akhirnya mengarah pada penyebaran Islam secara luas. Banyak orang di Gorontalo percaya bahwa memeluk Islam akan membantu menyatukan kelompok-kelompok budaya yang berbeda di daerah itu dan memperbaiki institusi politik dan sosialnya. Akibatnya, komunitas Syiah dan Sunni berkembang di Gorontalo, dan hukum serta pendidikan Islam dilembagakan di sana. Sejak kota Gorontalo didirikan, agama dan politik telah terjalin erat. Partai-partai dan gerakan politik Islam memiliki peran yang signifikan dalam membentuk tatanan pemerintahan saat ini di daerah tersebut. Otoritas politik di wilayah ini sering kali mengacu pada ide-ide Islam dalam mengambil keputusan, dan aturan hukum di wilayah ini dibuat untuk memastikan keadilan sosial dan stabilitas politik. Berkat hal ini, warisan politik Islam dapat diteruskan dari generasi ke generasi.

Kata kunci: Islam; Gorontalo; Politik; Identitas Politik

Introduction

The influence of Islam on the formation of Gorontalo, Indonesia's political identity, is the subject of this article, which analyzes that function. This study addresses how religion has affected the political climate of this region for hundreds of years, as well as how religion continues to affect the political climate today. The article investigates the historical function of Islam in the formation and upkeep of political structures in Gorontalo, as well as the various interpretations of Islam that the country's citizens practice and how contemporary perspectives on the function of Islam differ from those that were held in the past. In the concluding section of this article, the ramifications of Islam's ongoing impact on Gorontalo's political affairs will be analyzed.

A long history of Islam may be traced back to Gorontalo¹²³ for several centuries.⁴⁵⁶ Several of the earliest documented sources detail the first interactions between the indigenous people of the area and Muslim settlers from Arabia, Yemen, and China.⁷⁸⁹ These interactions ultimately led to the widespread embrace of Islam in the region.¹⁰¹¹ Islam was considered a way to reinforce the political and social infrastructure of the region and to bring together the various Gorontaloese tribes and cultures. It was one of the primary motivations for its spread. It resulted in the construction of Islamic legal and educational systems in Gorontalo and the growth of Sunni communities, which continue to exist today.¹²

¹ Kau, S. A. (2019). *Tafsir Islam atas adat Gorontalo: Mengungkap argumen filosofis-teologis*. Intelegensia Media.

² Kau, S. A. (2020). *Islam dan budaya lokal adat Gorontalo: Makna filosofis, normatif, edukatif, dan gender*. Intelegensia.

³ Kau, S. A., & Yahiji, K. (2018). *Akulturasi Islam dan budaya lokal: Studi tentang ritus-ritus kehidupan dalam tradisi lokal Muslim*

⁴ Amin, B. (2017). Lokalitas Islam Gorontalo. In S. Ladiki, I. Wekke, & C. Seftyono (Eds.), *Religion, state and society: Exploration of Southeast Asia* (pp. 1–14). Political Science Program Department of Politics and Civics Education Universitas Negeri Semarang.

⁵ Lokahita, M. H. (2019). *Melacak Gorontalo masa lalu*. <http://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/id/eprint/25777>

⁶ Mashadi, M., & Suryani, W. (2018). Jaringan Islamisasi Gorontalo (Fenomena keagamaan dan perkembangan Islam di Gorontalo). *Al-Ulum*, 18(2), 435–458. <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v18i2.555>

⁷ Budijanto, B. (2003). Islam in Indonesia. *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 20(4), 216–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026537880302000405>

⁸ Formichi, C. (2015). (Re) writing the history of political islam in Indonesia. *Sojourn*, 30(1), 105–140. <https://doi.org/10.1355/sj30-1d>

⁹ Rijal, S. (2017). Internal dynamics within hadhrami Arabs in Indonesia: From social hierarchy to Islamic doctrine. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 11(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.1.1-28>

¹⁰ Warnk, H. (2010). Introduction: Islam in eastern Indonesia. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 38(110), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811003665306>

¹¹ Yasa, A. (2015). The development of Indonesian Islamic law: A historical overview. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 9(1), 101–122. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2015.9.1.101-122>

¹² Pomalingo, S., Idrus, N. I., Basir, M., & Mashadi. (2021). Literacy of Islamic Thought: Contestation, Claim of Truth, and Polemic of Religion in Islam in Gorontalo, Indonesia. *International Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, 1(1), 58–65. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijcrs.2021.1.1.8>

Since the beginning of Gorontalo's history¹³¹⁴, Islam and politics have been inextricably linked.¹⁵¹⁶ Political parties and organizations with an Islamic foundation have played a significant role in developing the region's current system of government.¹⁷ They have helped to shape and build it. Islamic legal codes exist to ensure that social fairness and political stability are preserved, and the political authorities of the region frequently base their decisions on Islamic values. Because of this, the Islamic political legacy has been able to be passed down through a significant number of generations.

Contemporary Islam in Gorontalo

In Gorontalo, various interpretations of Islam have developed over time. Alongside the two main sects of Shi'ism and Sunnism, there are also various local, traditional interpretations of the religion. These range from a more liberal, progressive form of Islam that embraces modernity to a more radical, fundamentalist version that rejects many of the values of the West, such as equality and freedom of expression.¹⁸ Today, Islam's role in Gorontalo's political climate is still significant. The Indonesian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the vast majority of the population is Muslim, making it the dominant religious group in the province.¹⁹ The data from the field show that there has been more than ninety percent of more than one million of Gorontalo population are (see also table 1).²⁰²¹²²²³²⁴ It implies that Gorontalo is one Indonesia's most homogenous province.

¹³ Kau, S. A. (2020). *Islam dan budaya lokal adat Gorontalo: Makna filosofis, normatif, edukatif, dan gender*. Inteligencia.

¹⁴ Kulap, M. (2017). Perkembangan pendidikan Islam dan humanisasi di Gorontalo. *Edukasia : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 12(2), 383. <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v12i2.2341>

¹⁵ Mukrimin. (2021). *Power sharing: local autonomy and ethnic politics in Sulawesi Indonesia* (First). Pustaka Learning Center.

¹⁶ Tungkagi, D. Q. (2017). Varian Islam Nusantara: Jawa, Minangkabau dan Gorontalo. *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 15(2), 273. <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v15i2.524>

¹⁷ Santoso, E. P. (2017). *Transformasi identitas Islam pasca pembentukan provinsi Gorontalo* [MA Thesis]. UIN Sunan Kalijaga

¹⁸ Kau, S. A. (2019). *Tafsir Islam atas adat Gorontalo: Mengungkap argumen filosofis-teologis*. Inteligencia Media.

¹⁹ Kau, S. A., & Yahiji, K. (2018). *Akulturas Islam dan budaya lokal: Studi tentang ritus-ritus kehidupan dalam tradisi lokal Muslim Gorontalo*. Inteligencia Media.

²⁰ BPS Provinsi Gorontalo. (2021a). *Gorontalo Province in Figures 2021*.

²¹ BPS Provinsi Gorontalo. (2021b). *Gorontalo Province Population Percentage by Religion*.

²² BPS Provinsi Gorontalo. (2022a). *Gorontalo Province in figures 2022*.

²³ BPS Provinsi Gorontalo. (2022b). *Gorontalo Province Population*. <https://gorontalo.bps.go.id/indicator/12>

²⁴ BPS Provinsi Gorontalo. (2023). *Gorontalo Province in figures 2023*.

Table 1: Population by Religion in Regencies & Municipality of Gorontalo Province

Regency Municipality	Muslim	Protestant	Catholic	Hindus	Buddhist	Others
Boalemo	144 038	1 885	153	2 468	6	–
Gorontalo	423 540	1 485	170	57	75	–
Pohuwato	132 769	5 132	164	1 255	14	–
Bone Bolango	140 660	140	124	8	8	–
Gorontalo Utara	109 057	3 162	12	4	–	–
Kota Gorontalo	195 885	3 981	602	123	891	–
Provinsi Gorontalo	1.145.949	15 785	1 225	3 915	994	–

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of Gorontalo Province in BPS Provinsi Gorontalo, 2023.

A robust Islamic identity in Gorontalo has impacted its politics. All internal political disputes are viewed through the lens of religion, and individuals who identify as Islamic have an edge in being elected to positions of power. It can be seen in the fact that many local officials have a background in Islamic study and that many of the laws and policies in the region are shaped by religious texts.

Furthermore, the region's schooling system and curriculum are also primarily based on Islamic principles. The vast majority of the schools in Gorontalo teach Islamic values and moral codes, and the national public school curriculum promotes religious education.^{25,26} It has ensured that most of the region's people are deeply familiar and comfortable with Islamic values²⁷, regardless of their faith.²⁸

²⁵ Asiah T., S. (2017). Transformation of Islamic education quality through regional autonomy in Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo Province. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 51. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2017.61.51-78>

²⁶ Kulap, M. (2017). Perkembangan pendidikan Islam dan humanisasi di Gorontalo. *Edukasia : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 12(2), 383. <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v12i2.2341>

²⁷ Santoso, E. P. (2017). *Transformasi identitas Islam pasca pembentukan provinsi Gorontalo* [MA Thesis]. UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

²⁸ Zaenuri, A., & Yusuf, H. (2021). Pesantren Al-Khairaat of Gorontalo: Hadrami of tradition and habaib domination. *Jurnal Penelitian*, 41–54. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v18i1.3492>

Over time, the role of Islam in Gorontalo politics and culture has changed as new generations of citizens bring in different interpretations of the religion. The presence of more progressive interpretations of Islam has opened the door for discussion of more secular values and principles. At the same time, the traditional interpretation of Islam remains strong in many areas and is still used as a basis for social organization and political decision-making. Furthermore, the continued significance of Islam in politics in Gorontalo has raised concerns among some observers. Critics fear that the region's religious identity could lead to discrimination against non-Muslims and other minority groups and the potential for extremist interpretations of the religion to take hold and disrupt civil society.

Islam has played a significant role in the history of Gorontalo. Religion has been a political force in the area since the 1500s; the Sultanate of Gorontalo, founded in 1540, was closely linked to Islam and many of its rulers. The still existed-evidence of the arrival of Islam can be seen at the presence of the Hunto Mosque (see figure 1). Subsequent Islamic rulers in the area embraced the scholarly traditions of Islam and established some schools and religious institutions in their territories. Over the centuries, Gorontalo has been home to various Islamic interpretations, including Sufism and the Salafist tradition.

Figure 1: Hunto, the oldest mosque and the symbol of Islam in Gorontalo polity



Source: The author, 2023.

Modern Interpretations of Islam

In contemporary Gorontalo, the majority of the population still identifies as Muslim. The exact interpretation of the religion varies among citizens, with some practicing a more traditional interpretation while others follow a more progressive one. Some individuals remain highly devoted to traditional beliefs and customs, following the teachings of Islam closely. Others have adopted more "progressive" beliefs, such as allowing women to dress in a way that is considered more complementary.²⁹ Several Islamic political parties in Gorontalo, including the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS) and the United Development Party (PPP), support this interpretation.³⁰

Though many individuals in Gorontalo practice an increasingly secular interpretation of Islam daily, some follow more traditional teachings in their mundane tasks. For example, traditional observances involve daily prayer, abstaining from eating pork, and fasting. On Fridays, Muslims in Gorontalo often attend the mosque for prayers and study. Additionally, some Muslims in Gorontalo wear their hijabs in public, and many still strictly adhere to traditional teachings on relations between men and women. At the same time, other Muslims adopt a more progressive approach to Islam in Gorontalo, often rejecting more traditional interpretations. Rather than focusing so heavily on religious teachings, the individuals involved in this trend favor more open-minded practices, such as ethical consumption and education. These Muslims in Gorontalo focus more on the notion of service to others, championing social justice initiatives and promoting gender equality among their followers. To them, these ideas are an integral part of a modern interpretation of Islam in which social concerns take precedence over religious rules.³¹

In the present day, the interpretation of Islam in Gorontalo still serves as an avenue for debate and sets the tone for much of the dialogue occurring in the region. There are still significant differences of opinion between those who follow more traditional Muslim teachings and those who favor more progressive ones. These discrepancies create a unique atmosphere in which Gorontaloanese must come to terms with both the old and the new regarding Muslim interpretation. That is why many religious leaders encourage their followers to move beyond the conflicts of tradition versus modernity and embrace Islamic beliefs as a whole.

²⁹ Perdana, D. A., & Panambang, A. (2019). Potret dakwah Islam di Indonesia: strategi dakwah pada organisasi Wahdah Islamiyah di Kota Gorontalo. *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya*, 4(2), 229–242.

³⁰ Santoso, E. P. (2017). *Transformasi identitas Islam pasca pembentukan provinsi Gorontalo* [MA Thesis]. UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

³¹ Kau, S. A. (2020). *Islam dan budaya lokal adat Gorontalo: Makna filosofis, normatif, edukatif, dan gender*. Inteligencia.

Many traditional Muslim communities in Gorontalo adhere to teachings from Islamic scholars such as Sheikh Yusuf al-Quradaghi and his school of thought. This school of thought believes that the Quran should be interpreted literally, meaning that one should not adjust the text to adapt it to the contemporary world.³² It includes prohibitions on drinking alcohol and participating in musical performances. These practices are still crucial to the majority of Muslims in Gorontalo.³³

In contrast, many young people in Gorontalo are challenging these traditional views. It has led to an increase in the number of progressive Islamic voices in the area. These voices advocate for reform-minded interpretations of the faith, allowing for a more malleable interpretation of Islamic teachings. This approach focuses on understanding the principles behind the Quran's teachings and using them to improve the lives of Gorontaloanese of all religions today.³⁴

In Gorontalo, efforts to promote religious pluralism have typically focused on understanding and accepting different interpretations of Islam in the region. It is achieved through debates on theological differences, inter-religious forums and conferences, and visits to other Muslim communities to learn from each other. While tensions still exist between the traditionalists and progressives, Gorontalo is becoming more open to different meanings of Islam, with increasing dialogue and understanding between the two. Religious dialog activities have also been held in schools and universities to promote religious diversity and exchange ideas. In these events, teachers, clerics, and members of different religious backgrounds present their views about traditional, progressive, and liberal interpretations of Islam to bridge cultural and religious divides. Many have also been actively involved in promoting tolerant Islamic values through activities such as debates, youth forums, religious camps, and social media campaigns. For example, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KEMENAG) has implemented strategies that promote religious moderation (*Moderasi Beragama*).^{35,36} The program launched recently provides

³² Kau, S. A. (2019). *Tafsir Islam atas adat Gorontalo: Mengungkap argumen filosofis-teologis*. Intelegensia Media.

³³ Kau, S. A., & Yahiji, K. (2018). *Akulturası Islam dan budaya lokal: Studi tentang ritus-ritus kehidupan dalam tradisi lokal Muslim Gorontalo*. Intelengensia Media.

³⁴ Kulap, M. (2017). Perkembangan pendidikan Islam dan humanisasi di Gorontalo. *Edukasia : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 12(2), 383. <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v12i2.2341>

³⁵ Achilov, D., & Sen, S. (2017). Got political Islam? Are politically moderate Muslims really different from radicals? *International Political Science Review*, 38(5), 608–624. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512116641940>

³⁶ Prasojo, Z. H., Elmansyah, E., & Haji Masri, M. S. (2019). Moderate Islam and the Social Construction of Multi-Ethnic Communities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 9(2), 217–239. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v9i2.217-239>

understanding for students and all parties from different religions who want to pursue and practice religious matters and thoughts moderately.^{37,38} The program, directly and indirectly, has affected the construction of religious communities in Gorontalo.³⁹

Furthermore, the government of Gorontalo has also been encouraging the formation of interfaith initiatives, such as the Gorontalo Interfaith Forum (GIF), established in 2018. GIF comprises religious leaders, scholars, and civil society representatives who promote communal peace and reconciliation. Through GIF, religious leaders and representatives of different religions have organized public dialogues to bridge religious gaps and build tolerant community relationships. The Gorontalo Provincial Government has also developed the Harmony Program. This long-term initiative focuses on religious issues such as teaching interfaith dialogue and understanding, youth development and using religious facilities for the common good. Furthermore, in 2018, the Gorontalo Provincial Government launched the Gorontalo Unified Halal Certification Program, which aims to standardize the province's labeling and certification of Halal products.

As a result, Gorontalo has made significant strides in promoting religious pluralism in the region through various initiatives such as dialog activities, interfaith initiatives, and Halal certifications. Through further efforts in understanding, accepting, and celebrating religious diversity in Gorontalo, this effort will bring about a more conducive atmosphere for living harmoniously with one another.

Much of Gorontalo is comprised of devout Muslims, and there is an emphasis on religious practice throughout the region. Nearly all Muslims in the area participate in daily prayers and attend the mosque for Friday prayers. Muslims also observe Ramadan, the traditional month of fasting, and celebrate the two major holidays of Eid al Fitr and Eid Ul Adha. In this celebration, the Gorontaloese celebrate the *lebaran ketupat*.⁴⁰ In addition to these practices, many Muslims in the region also follow the significant aspects of the Islamic faith, such as prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage.

³⁷ Mutawali. (2016). Moderate Islam in Lombok the dialectic between Islam and local culture. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 10(2), 309–334. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.309-334>

³⁸ Wibisono, M. Y., & Darmalaksana, W. (2022). The Idea of Moderate Islam in the Media Space for the Social Construction of Religious Moderation in Indonesia. *Khazanah Sosial*, 4(4), 719–730. <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v4i4.19291>

³⁹ Salik, M. (2019). Conserving moderate Islam in Indonesia: An analysis of Muwafiq's speech on online media. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 13(2), 373–394. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.2.373-394>

⁴⁰ Kau, S. A. (2020). *Islam dan budaya lokal adat Gorontalo: Makna filosofis, normatif, edukatif, dan gender*. Inteligencia.

In Gorontalo, Islamic religious practice dictates specific roles and responsibilities for women. Much of the region operates under a sharia law system, and as a result, women are still often seen as second-class citizens who lack equal rights to men. In addition, women are expected to dress modestly in public and are not allowed to mix freely with men. However, there have been recent changes in the area, with a more progressive interpretation of Islam favored by young and educated women.

Education is highly valued in Gorontalo, and Islamic education is essential to the system. Many people in Gorontalo attend Islamic institutions, ranging from madrasahs to universities, and several Islamic organizations are devoted to education. Most teachers in the area are Muslim, and thus Islamic religious practice and reviews are often part of the curriculum. Islamic-based courses are also offered to non-Muslims as part of the public educational system.

In recent years, various movements in Gorontalo have sought to change the traditional approach to Islam in the region. While the traditional practice of sharia law is still widely followed, some younger generations have sought to adopt a more progressive approach to the faith. These new approaches seek to bring the understanding of Islam in Gorontalo closer to the broader Gulf region and the Islamic diaspora while still valuing and seeking to conserve the region's traditions and culture.

Islam is an essential contributor to the economy of Gorontalo. The traditional economy is primarily based on trading, both in the traditional markets and through the new modern stores. Islamic culture also has an essential impact on the area, with many of its inhabitants embracing the teachings of Islam.⁴¹ In addition, the area's religious dedication to charity has positively impacted the local economy; schools and religious institutions have been established to ensure that the inhabitants of Gorontalo can receive an education and participate in other charitable activities.⁴²

In recent years, a growing political movement in Gorontalo has sought to bring together the various Islamic interpretations in the area.⁴³ These political movements have sought to ensure that all Muslims in the region can

⁴¹ Baruadi, M. K. (2012). *Sendi adat dan eksistensi sastra; pengaruh Islam dalam nuansa budaya lokal Gorontalo*. 14(2), 311.

⁴² Ismail, D., M. Nggilu, N., & Tome, A. (2019, November 22). *The urgency of regulation on Gorontalo's traditional cultures as a form of legal protection for national culture*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.10-9-2019.2289412>

⁴³ Arifin H. Jakani, Ansar Arifin, Mahmud Tang, & Muh. Akmal Ibrahim. (2023). The form of regional autonomy implemented by the governor of Gorontalo province. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 8(1), 060–065. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijra.2023.8.1.0347>

live and worship freely and are granted the same rights and liberties.⁴⁴ In addition, the growing political movement has been an essential factor in creating peace and stability in the region.⁴⁵

The presence of Islam in Gorontalo is evident in almost every aspect of the area's society. In addition to the traditional practices that are still widely observed, Islamic culture has also left its mark on language, cuisine, and education. Islamic religious practices are expected to be respectful, and self-control and moderation are highly valued. In short, Islam has played an essential role in Gorontalo's history and culture, from its political and economic activities to its effect on society. Although there are some differences in interpretation, Muslims of Gorontalo adhere to the same core values as Muslims elsewhere in the world. While there have been some changes in how Islam is practiced in the area in recent years, Gorontalo's Islamic population's traditional values and beliefs remain strong.

Impact of Islam on Politics

In contemporary Gorontalo politics, Islam continues to play a significant role. Islam is embedded in the political outlook of the local population and is often used to legitimize specific political policies.⁴⁶ Islam is also seen as a way to mediate between different regional political interests.⁴⁷ For example, local Islamic leaders have often positioned themselves as mediators, attempting to resolve political disputes without violence.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Islamic-influenced political organizations continue to be popular in Gorontalo, such as the Sufi-influenced Nahdlatul Ulama.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Mukrimin. (2018). Decentralisation and ethnic politics: a reflection of two decades of Indonesia's decentralisation. *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture*, 10(2), 233–245. <https://doi.org/10.15294/komunitas.v10i2.12752>

⁴⁵ Muna, S., Bajari, A., Soemirat, S., & Sjoraida, D. F. (2019). Dynamics, modality, and commodification of customary title bestowal in local political communication in Gorontalo, Indonesia. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 4292, 1–19. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4292>

⁴⁶ de Archellie, R., Holil, M., & Waworuntu, A. (2020). Indonesian local politics and the marriage of elite interests: Case study of elite democracy in Gorontalo. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1838090>

⁴⁷ Kimura, E. (2010). Proliferating provinces: Territorial politics in post-Suharto Indonesia. *South East Asia Research*, 18(3), 415–449. <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2010.0005>

⁴⁸ Muna, S., Bajari, A., Soemirat, S., & Sjoraida, D. F. (2019). Dynamics, modality, and commodification of customary title bestowal in local political communication in Gorontalo, Indonesia. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 4292, 1–19. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4292>

⁴⁹ Santoso, E. P. (2017). *Transformasi identitas Islam pasca pembentukan provinsi Gorontalo* [MA Thesis]. UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

Broadly, we can assert that Islam significantly impacts politics in Gorontalo. First, Islam shapes the religious identity of many people in Gorontalo and is a common source of identity for them. Most people in Gorontalo practice Islam, although various other religions are also represented in the region. As such, politicians can often reference Islam in order to appeal to the local population. For example, Islamic chants, sermons, and slogans are often utilized in political speeches to emphasize religious identity and build a connection between the politician and the people of Gorontalo.

Second, Islamic teaching and principles, such as *jizyah*, are often used by politicians in order to not only legitimize their actions and policies but also to try and win over local support. *Jizyah* is an Islamic practice allowing non-Muslims to pay a tax for security and protection. It has often been utilized by politicians to justify their imposition of taxes and other restrictions in Gorontalo, as it is seen to be sanctioned by Islamic teaching.

Third, the various Islamic organizations in Gorontalo—such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah—have often been involved in local politics. These organizations are highly influential in Gorontalo, and their endorsements or condemnations of specific policies can make or break a politician's career. Furthermore, these organizations also often participate in local political debates and struggles.

Fourth, Islam is a source of strength for many Gorontaloanese. Political leaders often draw upon Islamic teachings to strengthen and guide the population. For example, Islamic slogans—such as "God is Great"—often portray a sense of unity and support for the political cause at hand.

Fifth, Islam is often used to insulate individuals and groups from foreign influence in the Gorontalo political environment. Many Gorontaloanese view foreign influence as threatening their religious beliefs and sense of identity. Thus, they attempt to use Islamic teaching and practice to protect themselves against external pressure.

Finally, Islamic ideals and principles also shape Gorontalo's political culture and discourse. Islamic-influenced parties are often involved in local elections and actively campaign for their political agenda. Likewise, religious-based rhetoric is often used by some of the leaders in the local political landscape to gain the populace's support.

All in all, Islam's influence on Gorontalo's politics cannot be overstated. Islam plays a significant role in the religious identity of the local people and is often used as a source of legitimacy for specific policies. Furthermore, various Islamic organizations are active in local politics and offer their perspectives. Additionally, Islamic ideals and principles are often used to insulate the local population from external influence and shape the overall political discourse of the region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam has been a major political force in Gorontalo, Indonesia, since the 1500s. It continues to influence the political landscape today, as interpretations of the religion can vary among citizens, and Islamic political parties remain popular. Islam is seen as a way to mediate between different political interests and is embedded in the local political outlook. Despite modern debates on the role of religion in politics and society, it is clear that Islam is deeply intertwined with the political history and identity of Gorontalo. Islam also played an essential role in creating and maintaining political identity in Gorontalo, Indonesia. It has been a significant factor in the region's history and continues to shape today's political climate. Although interpretations of Islam have changed, religion continues to influence local politics significantly. As such, it is essential to understand Islam's role in Gorontalo politics to comprehend the region's current political climate entirely.

Islam has had a long and significant role in shaping politics in Gorontalo, Indonesia. Over the centuries, religion has been used to bring different cultures and tribes together and to establish a legal and educational framework for the region—the presence of traditional and progressive interpretations of Islam. Islam's role in Gorontalo's political landscape has been long-standing and significant. As a deeply rooted political force, religion exerts considerable influence in modern-day Gorontalo politics. With various interpretations of Islam present among its citizens, religion has been a critical factor in forming and maintaining political structures in the region. Examining the political impact of Islam in Gorontalo is essential for fully appreciating the complex dynamics of the region's politics.

Then, the political role of Islam in Gorontalo evolved. From its presence in the Sultanate of Gorontalo in the 1500s to more progressive interpretations in the region today, religion has continued to impact local politics. Whether used to legitimize policies, mediate disputes, or unify political interests, Islam continues to shape the region's political dynamics. Thus, understanding the role of Islam in Gorontalo politics is essential to grasping the current political landscape of the region.

Furthermore, Islam has been and continues to be a significant force in the political landscape of Gorontalo. Its influence stretches back centuries and continues to be reflected in modern times through various interpretations of religion. For this reason, it is essential to understand the role of Islam in Gorontalo politics and how it contributes to the creation and maintenance of political identity in the region.

Finally, it is essential to highlight that Islam has and continues to play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of the political identity of Gorontalo. As such, it is essential to understand its historical and current influence to gain a deeper understanding of the region's political dynamics.

With various interpretations in Gorontalo today, Islam's significance in the region's political landscape remains clear.

Ultimately, understanding the implications of Islamic views on local politics is essential to appreciating the region's political climate. Through its various interpretations, Islam continues to shape the region's politics and will likely continue to do so. Thus, the role of Islam in the political identity of Gorontalo is undeniable. Understanding the impact of religion is essential for understanding the current political landscape in the region. By examining its historical role, various interpretations, and implications for contemporary politics, Islam continues to be a significant influence in the region and will likely remain a significant factor for the foreseeable future.

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