

---

## Religious Experience; Harmony and Minority in Muslim Akit Tribe Society, Siak, Riau-Indonesia

Abd Madjid<sup>1</sup>, Santoso<sup>2</sup>, M. Ridwan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, <sup>2,3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau

---

### Abstract

*This article aims to examine the forms of the religious experience of the ummah when Muslims live as a minority. Qualitatively, this study conducted in-depth observations and interviews with key figures about religiosity, tolerance, and harmonious relations between religions through a sociological approach. The study results found that Penyengat Village maintains the religious freedom of its people, and customary stakeholders uphold the principles of togetherness and tolerance. The condition of religious development in the religious community is going well. Under customary protection holders and local governments, Muslim minorities living in a multicultural society can enjoy the freedom and live in harmony.*

**Keywords:** Minority Muslims, Freedom of religion, Multiculturalism

## Pengalaman Beragama; Keharmonisan dan Minoritas dalam Masyarakat Suku Muslim Akit Siak Riau-Indonesia

### Abstrak

*Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bentuk pengalaman keberagamaan umat ketika kaum Muslim hidup sebagai minoritas. Melalui pendekatan sosiologis, secara kualitatif, penelitian ini melakukan observasi dan wawancara mendalam kepada tokoh-tokoh kunci tentang praktik religiusitas, toleransi, dan harmoni hubungan antar agama. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa Kampung Penyengat menjaga kebebasan beragama masyarakatnya dan pemangku adat sangat menjunjung tinggi azaz kebersamaan dan Toleransi. Kondisi pembangunan keberagamaan dalam keagamaan umat berjalan dengan baik. Di bawah perlindungan pemangku adat dan pemerintah setempat, Muslim minoritas yang hidup di tengah masyarakat multikultural dapat menikmati kebebasan dan terjalin secara harmonis.*

**Kata Kunci:** Muslim Minoritas, Kebebasan Beragama, Kemajemukan

---

Author correspondence

Email: [madjidabdul.madjid8@gmail.com](mailto:madjidabdul.madjid8@gmail.com)

Available online at <http://journal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/au/index>

---

## A. Introduction

The triumph of Islam once extended to the peninsula of the Southeast Asian archipelago, including Indonesia. The emergence of the great Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia (Nusantara) made it easy for the spread of Islam to leave symbolic cultural inscriptions. Among other things, the Islamic kingdom that was quite active in Indonesia was the Malay Kingdom which expanded its power from the tip of Sumatra to coastal Malay even to neighboring countries. Therefore, the power of the Malay Kingdom also produced Malay cultures, both community and customary. The Malay kingdom also left traces of Malay civilization. The existence of Malay ethnicities is scattered throughout Indonesia, including in Riau. Hamidy said they were referred to as 'estranged tribes,' such as the Sakai Tribe, Akit Tribe, Forest Tribe, Talang Mamak Tribe, Laut Tribe, and others.<sup>1</sup>

This isolated tribe is the Indigenous Tribe, which has a unique style of life and religion. Indigenous tribes have multi-religious. Some are Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. The original religion of the Indigenous people is Animism and Dynamism. Religion and ethnicity have played a central role in the identity dynamics of its multi-ethnic community; they also contribute to communal conflicts, with religious and cultural sentiments being shared across the region. Religion has become a universal phenomenon in other societies. Based initially on monotheism doctrine, their belief system gradually changed to polytheism, manifested in many spirits named Dewa, who can save, protect, and provide welfare for their lives.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of starting interactions with other community groups, especially the Chinese, Javanese, and Malays, the Akit Tribe community began to recognize formal religions; Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Some of the Akit Tribe community groups then became interested in 'accepting' official religions. The use of the word "accept" is because, in principle, they still firmly adhere to the fundamental beliefs of animism and dynamism. Their acceptance of formal

---

<sup>1</sup>Act. Hamidi. *Isolated People in Riau Region at the Gate of the Xx1 Century* (New Week: Zamrud UIR, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Reslawati, "The Dynamics of the Belief Development System for the Inner Tribe in Mestong Muaro Bungo District, Jambi Province." in *The Dynamics of the Development of Local Belief Systems in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Ministry of Religion, 2012), p. 77.

religion generally is not yet a form of strong religious belief, but many are motivated by economic motives and other pragmatic orientations. However, the habits of animism and dynamism still feel strong in their lives. They want to become Actual Islam, which is a movement to build active religious action in addressing life's problems by actualizing the normative doctrinal values of Islam contained in the Qur'an and *Sunnah (Muslim's good practices)*.<sup>3</sup>

Based on statistical data from the Village Government in 2015, demographically, the population of Penyengat Village is 1,013 people with 331 families. Of the total population, the composition of the formal religious community of the Akit Tribe is as follows; 80% are Christian, 10% are religious sects (Animism-dynamism), 5% are Buddhist, and 2.5% are Muslim, and the rest do not have a faith orientation (Statistics of Penyengat Village, 2015)<sup>4</sup>. This composition is a fascinating phenomenon, considering that Riau province and, more specifically, Siak Regency is the root areas of Malay culture identical to Islam. The Akit tribe is part of one of the proto-Malay tribes who live as a minority group in a predominantly Islamic cultural environment.

The strong belief in animism and dynamism is contrary to the central teachings of Islam. The decision of an Akit Tribe to embrace Islam can certainly change all patterns of belief and daily behavior, which are very different from most other residents even though they have embraced a formal religion. Among the beliefs of animism and dynamism that are clearly at odds with Islamic teachings are beliefs about the sacredness of dogs as sacred animals, the habit of hunting and consuming pigs, traditional offerings on *punak* logs, worship of sacred objects, and the likes.

Strengthening religious understanding is the fulcrum in creating religious (religious) humans; in his article Neal Deroo said: "*To show that this spirituality is religious, we must first make sense of what it means for something to be religious.*"<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Fahrurrozi, Religious Expression of Indonesian Islamic Society: Mosaic of Indonesian Multiculturalism. *Tolerance: Religious Communication Media*. 17, No. 1. (2015), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Data Source of Penyengat Village Statistics in 2015.

<sup>5</sup>Neal Deroo, 2018, "What Counts As A 'Religious Experience?': Phenomenology, Spirituality, And The Question Of Religion", *Open Theology*, 04, (2018). p. 296.

The weak understanding of religion possessed by the Akit Tribe causes them to still hold fast to their previous beliefs so that their Islam is not guided by the main teachings of the Islamic religion. Weak religious understanding can make them move from one religion to another. Even though they have embraced Islam, they still believe in supernatural powers in certain places such as in the sea, rivers, sacred places, trees, so that they often perform rituals to honor the spirits of their dead ancestors.<sup>6</sup>

The cause of the lack of facilities is due to the low economy, which is also due to difficult jobs, thus making them prefer to work rather than have to worship so that religion is only limited to ID cards. The economic aspect is very influential in determining the direction and purpose of religion; therefore, the economy is an essential factor.

An interesting phenomenon is the tendency of the majority of the Akit Tribe in Tanjung Pal Village to convert to Catholic Christianity. This is a phenomenon that is quite contrary to the principle of Islamic Malay identity. The old Malay proverb says, "*Malay is Islam, Islam is Malay, Malay custom is based on syara', syara' is based on Kitabullah.*"

The phenomenon of different religious expressions is shown by the converts (converts to Muslims) from the Akit Tribe, who are in the minority. They have a solid desire to study Islam and explore it. As Santoso said in his research, the minority group of converts to the Akit Tribe study Islam.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, there is a strangeness or uniqueness that occurs in the Muslim community of the Akit Tribe, who embraced Islam. In addition to the spirit of studying Islam, they still carry out the previous religious rituals, which are still their strong belief as a form of respect for their ancestors.

## **B. Religious Expression of the Akit Tribe Muslim Community**

According to researchers, the religious expression of the Akit Tribe has its uniqueness. This is motivated by several reasons. The first reason is the perception

---

<sup>6</sup>Hasbullah, 2018, "The Religious Life of the Akit Tribe Community in Sonde Village, Meranti Islands Regency," *Social Culture*, 15, No 1, (2018), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Santoso, Ajeng Safitri, Essential Awareness of Motivation to Learn Islam in Akit Tribe converts, *An-Nafs, Journal of the Faculty of Psychology*. 13, No. 1, (2019), p. 1-20.

of the people of the Akit Tribe about the teachings of Islam. For the Akit tribe in Penyengat Village, Islam is perceived as the most severe religion among the religions they know. Among the teachings that they consider heavy are fasting, male circumcision, dawn prayers, and tithing.<sup>8</sup> This is different from the teachings of other religions, which are considered relatively lighter.

Islam is also a religion that has the basis of scientific discipline in every worship. This creates a reluctance for them to choose Islam as their religion. According to them, Islam is the most complicated religion compared to other formal religions. As is well known, Islam is a religion of science whose all worship activities are always based on knowledge. This condition is different from other religions that they know. If they follow other formal religions, the consequences are only to follow and obey the religious leaders.

Some forms of religious expression that exist in the Akit Tribe are as follows:

#### **1. *Wiridan*: The Spirit of Passing through Limitations**

The expression of the Akit Tribe's enthusiasm for learning Islam can be seen from their activeness in routine *wirid* (meditation through routine prayers recitation) activities. Religious learning activities or what they call *wirid* for the Akit Tribe have been held since 2003. Initially, the guidance was carried out at Ustadz Mursidin's house. Guidance is carried out only for children who happen to be familiar with Islam from an elementary school in Tanjung Pal Hamlet. Nevertheless, information about Islamic religious guidance continues to attract the interest of a small part of the Akit Tribe community to get to know the religion of the Malays, namely Islam or salam, on their terms. Ustadz Mursidin, in this case, explained:

“When they first came here, people were still foreign to Islam. If it is Buddhism and Christianity, they already know. I also wonder, how come people in Sumatra do not know Islam? That is weird. However, fortunately, there was already an elementary school at that time, so it helped me introduce religion to the children first. Because they have started to be taught by

---

<sup>8</sup> An interview with the traditional elders of the Akit Tribe in Mungkal Hamlet, Penyengat Village, March 23, 2020.

teachers in schools, it was only in the afternoon when they were playing in the schoolyard that I invited them to my house. They are already happy to be fed, so they are easy to collect. After the gathering, I brought it for a light talk about religion. After a long time, they were also interested in studying religion.”

According to Ustadz Mursidin’s explanation, the beginning of the opening of the recitation did not explore significant obstacles. There are only a few parents who object to their children studying Islam. Parents’ rejection of children’s learning activities is shown by prohibiting children from participating in learning activities. However, because his son did not want to stop learning, over time, it was the parents who were curious and asked about the lessons given to Ustadz Mursidin. Abok is a parent who is very curious about his son’s determination to study Islam. Abok honestly recounted his experience when he asked about Ustadz Mursidin’s lessons:

“I think it is strange, my son, sir, his father is Buddhist, his mother is Buddhist, he does not want him to study Buddhism. He also likes to study Islam. I am not angry, but what is being taught by this *ustadz (Islamic teacher)*? I am curious. I immediately asked Ustadz Mursidin, and I was a bit reluctant at that time. The Ustadz explained that we learn Islam and pray for our mother and father to be happy. Duhh..... it hit my heart; my whole life in Buddha, no one was taught to pray for your mother and father, we are also prayed for by our children. for real”

Feeling moved by the lessons given to his son, Abok, a few days later suggested to Ustadz Mursidin to organize an Islamic teaching and Quran recitation for adults. Abok’s proposal was then implemented in 2005. The recitation for adults was attended by a very limited congregation of approximately 5 to 7 people. Some people, including Abok, at the time of attending the recitation, had not declared Islam. They just want to know and learn about what Islam is. In this case, Abok explained:

“From my experience, sir, I have not been involved in learning, but in fact, I am not a Muslim. I do not even know what to say about everything. The important thing is that I want to know what kind of Islamic religion it is. It was only when Mr. Ustadz treated people that I would become stronger to convert

to Islam. Islam is a sacred religion, I say. In the end, I just kept studying, yes, if I did not work.”

## **2. *Nyantri*; Expression of Exemplary Learning Islam**

*Nyantri* (becoming a student in boarding school) is a religious learning tradition that has long lived in Islamic society in Indonesia. The *nyantri* tradition is a traditional and even oldest education system in the history of Indonesian education. Observing the phenomenon of the Akit Tribe’s enthusiasm for learning Islam, the researchers found a quite exciting student education system. In understanding the Akit Tribe converts, *pesantren* (boarding school) is not a formal system with building facilities or buildings in general. *Nyantri*, in the understanding of the Akit Tribe community, is to entrust their children to an *ustadz* (Islamic teacher) to be educated in religious knowledge, in this case, *Ustadz Mursidin*. Tutoring activities were centered in the mosque and *Ustadz Mursidin*’s house, which happened to be next door.

Until this research is carried out, at least 6 (six) children have declared *nyantri*. The students usually stay in their homes at night. This happens because there are no boarding facilities in the mosque environment. However, it is not uncommon for them to agree not to go home and stay at the mosque or *Ustadz Mursidin*’s house.

The daily activities of the children of the Akit Tribe students generally include the congregational *Maghrib* (dusk) prayer, *tadarus* (reciting the Quran), and memorizing *hadith* until the *Isha*’ (night) prayer. After the *Isha* prayer, it is usually followed by a conversation.<sup>9</sup> until 9.00 pm. After that, children whose houses are near the mosque usually go straight home, while those far away will still sleep in the mosque or *Ustadz Mursidin*’s house.

Children who sleep in the mosque usually turn for the *Fajr adzan* (call to prayer). The students usually routinely perform the *Fajr* prayer in the congregation when compared to the congregation in general. After the morning prayer, a short study of 10-15 minutes is usually given. In the

---

<sup>9</sup>Talking, in this case, is a simple method applied by religion. The students feel more comfortable listening to religious advice

morning, the students are active in their respective schools. The learning meeting of the students then continued in the afternoon before the Maghrib prayer.

If we look closely at the history of the *nyantri* tradition, especially in Java, *nyantri* usually starts with parents' awareness to educate their religion to their children. Usually, parents who have a high awareness of religious education will take their children to a boarding school or people who are considered capable. The child who is being *santri* then stays for some time, even years, until he can master the science of religion.

A different phenomenon is found in the background of the Akit Tribe's students. The phenomenon of studying for the children of the Akit Tribe is generally not motivated by the motives of parents to educate their children. Instead, the *nyantri* initiative generally arises from children who feel interested in learning religion. For children whose parents have converted to Islam, usually, the choice of children to study is to get support from their parents. This is shown by the parents coming to the local Islamic religion advocates and delivering their pledge to entrust their children to be educated in Islam.

However, among the *santri* (students), there are also those whose parents are not Muslim. The choice of children to study in some cases often creates tension because of rejection from parents. Even one child stated that he would not go home and remained at the mosque to study Islam even though his parents disapproved of him. This child's determination then melted his parents' refusal to allow him to study.

### **3. Learning Islamic Law in *Lancur Darah Tale***

*Lancur Darah (Blood Stream)* is a sacred community legend and familiar to the Akit people. This story has never been studied, so it is not certain whether it is a fictional story or fact. However, the story of Lancur Blood by the Akit Tribe is generally considered a true story about the past of their ancestors.



As a sacred story, Lancur Blood cannot be told haphazardly, especially to people outside the traditional environment. Traditional elders can only tell this story in the middle of the night with a particular procession. Most people usually only understand bits and pieces of this story. The usual expression of fear and anxiety seen on their faces when alluded to the story of Blood Lancur.

To obtain data on the blood-curdling story, the researchers tried to find sources who mastered it and were authorized to tell it, given that this story is considered a sacred story that not everyone dares to reveal. The researcher finally took an inventory of several traditional leaders both in Penyengat Village and outside the area of Penyengat Village. The traditional figures found in the Penyengat Village area are relatively very difficult to find and seem reluctant to tell Lancur Blood's story. Based on the reference from Batin Kiat in Tanjung Pal Hamlet, the researcher finally found a source who was relatively open with the story of Lancur Blood of the Akit Tribe, namely Mr. Apik.

Mr. Apik is an Inner in the traditional village of Pambang District, Bengkalis Regency. This resource is relatively open when invited to the discussion by the researcher. This is motivated by his fairly intensive interaction since childhood with the outside community, especially Java. Apik's name, according to his explanation, is a name taken from a Javanese term that means 'good.' From these sources, the researchers then obtained data on the story of Lancurblood more clearly.

According to sources, Lancur Blood is a historical story of the past of the Akit Tribe. In the past, the Akit Tribe had lived with the community in quite a bustling city in Sungai Rawa Village. At that time, their lives were still very familiar with the lifestyle of hunting and gathering. Hunting is a daily activity that they always do.

In a late-night conversation between Batin Apik, the researcher, and three residents of Pambang Village, Batin Apik revealed the story of Lancur Pretty dramatic blood. Batin Apik is relatively spontaneous and relaxed in storytelling. He did not prepare the various arrangements as many had said to start the Blood-curdling story. Seeing the spontaneity of Batin Apik, the researcher ventured to ask whether there were no procedures or

requirements for telling blood-curdling stories. With certainty Batin Apik answered:

“Yes, if told, in the past, people had to burn incense, use offerings of coffee and tobacco as to summon ancestral spirits. Because the real story is not the other Inner or me, but the ancestral spirits. So I am just an intermediary. It was late last night. Like in Java, there are puppets. Now, how can people stand it now at ten o’clock? I am already sleepy.”

Hearing Inner Apik’s answer, the researcher felt relieved because it meant that the researcher was not too bothered to prepare various press requirements for obtaining the Blood-curdling story. After sipping the black coffee served in a Chinese stone cup, Batin Apik spoke.

It has been said that since ancient times, the Akit Tribe is a people who like to hunt. Among their most favorite game animals are pigs. This one animal is a culinary prima donna for every member of the Akit Tribe community. However, there is one taboo that must not be violated by all members of the Akit Tribe community. The taboo is that they are forbidden to take pork liver home when they come home from hunting.

“This is forbidden in a blood-curdling story; no one may bring a pig liver goes home. For years the prohibition was obeyed. Make peace all the citizens of our society.”

Nevertheless, one day, for some reason, a young woman asked her husband to bring her a pork liver when he came home from hunting. When the village hunters were about to leave, the woman asked desperately for pork liver to be brought. The request, of course, made the husband shocked and angry. He knows precisely about the prohibitions that apply in his village, namely the prohibition of bringing, let alone consuming, pork liver. The husband firmly refused his wife’s request, but the wife continued to press and plead with compassion.

Seeing his wife’s desire is so great, the husband agreed, he promised to bring gifts of the pork liver from the prey. Nevertheless, of course, he will carry out the plan with complete secrecy and caution. While shifting his seat, Batin Apik gave a brief comment, “If it is the wife who asked for it, of course, the

husband also thought about it.” The atmosphere was broken because the other discus friends laughed. Finally, the researcher laughed out loud and entered into a familiar atmosphere.

Batin Apik then continued the story. Arriving at the hunting location, the husband, along with other residents, immediately searched for prey. When the hunters began to pay attention to each other’s prey, the young husband only wanted the pig to fulfill his wife’s wish. Until finally, he found a pig in a place far from other hunter groups. He immediately operated on the pig to take out its liver. In a safe situation, the young husband immediately kept the pork liver ordered by his wife.

When dusk approached, the hunters immediately gathered their prey to take home together. The young husband was relieved at his quarry. His happiness is increasing because he can fulfill his promise to his wife, who is waiting at home. Among the hunters, no one knows the offense committed by the young husband, bringing the heart of the hunted pig home. Arriving at the village was almost evening, and the residents had finished sharing their prey. The young husband had handed over the pork liver to his wife. So eager for the taste of pork liver, the young wife immediately set fire to it. Sure enough, what had been his imagination all this time, was how delicious it is the taste of pork liver.

After tasting the delicacy of pork liver that he had never tasted before, his desire to tell his close neighbors arose. Secretly he met a close neighbor and whispered to his neighbor’s woman about the deliciousness of the pork liver her husband had given her. News of the delicacy of pork liver that afternoon spread quickly by word of mouth. The atmosphere became hotter because every woman in the village started blaming her husband for not bringing home the pig’s liver.

War of words in every twilight family turned into a massacre between the families and the entire village. The killing goes on and cannot be stopped. In this story, the waters around the Sungai Rawa Merah village are soaked with Blood. None of the villagers survived. All were killed in the tragedy that gripping twilight.

Once upon a time, among the people of the Akit Tribe at that time, there were a pair of brothers, a man, and his younger sister, who did not participate in the Lancur Blood war. The two of them had been away from the village for several days. That evening they both went home. His condition was not what they expected. He did not get a welcome from his village family. Instead, they found their village mourning, corpses strewn everywhere, rancid blood was felt in every ditch and river. They are all dead; only the two of them are left. In the belief of the Akit people, these two brothers became the successors of the seeds of the continuity of the Akit Tribe community to develop until now.

The story of Lancur Blood, when examined more closely, has an interesting symbolic meaning to reveal. In the context of the reality of the life of the Akit Tribe, there is a contradiction with the theme of abstinence as conveyed in the story of Lancur Blood. The Akit Tribe's fondness for consuming pork and especially liver is still ongoing. This shows that the story of abstinence about pork liver is not your value which the Akit Tribe believes. In animist beliefs and dynamism in various cultures, the same thing is also rarely found.

In terms of prohibitions and strict provisions against pork, it is also not found in the literature of religious beliefs other than Islam. Islam has firmly established that pig is an animal forbidden for consumption. Most people of the Akit Tribe do not realize the essence of the meaning of the symbolic story of Lancur Blood. This story is preserved as if waiting for someone who can read the important message conveyed.

Among the critical converts of the Akit Tribe, such as Pak Yudi, it seems as if he has woken up from ignorance. After hearing the teachings of Islam that forbid pork, Mr. Yudi realized that their ancestors had previously told the same thing. At different times and places, Mr. Yudi said:

"Just realized. So far, sir, our ancestors have always advised us not to eat pork. It is *haram (sinful)*. However, our grandparents did not open up the question, so we heard the normal blood-curdling story. We did not think there were any Islamic religious teachings there. So, those who have studied Islam finally know the true meaning of the story."

In the real-life of the Akit Tribe in general, consumption of pork and pork liver is still ongoing. Even pork dishes are a favorite dish that is always present at every party and celebration. The symbolic message in the story of Blood Lancur has not been wholly captured by them. Unlike the case with converts who have received literacy from Islamic teachings, they are increasingly convinced that what is conveyed by Islam about the prohibition of pork is essentially in line with the ancestors' message since long ago.

#### **4. *Kulah Persucian* (Fountain of Purification) as a Practical Worship Learning Media**

The *Fountain of Purification* of the Akit Tribe in Penyengat Village is located in Mungkal Hamlet. This *kulah* (fountain) is located on the edge of the Buton Strait, where the water tastes salty from the sea. However, the unique thing is that the *Kulah* water has always tasted fresh. According to local stories, the *kulah* (fountain) has initially been located deep in the village. However, due to the abrasion of the Buton strait, the current position of the fountain is on the edge of the strait. The position adjacent to the strait did not affect the taste of freshwater.

Apart from being used as purification water, local people now use it to meet their daily basic needs, especially drinking and cooking needs. Therefore, the difficulty and the high cost of providing fresh water for the Akit Tribe in Mungkal Hamlet, in particular, is not so pronounced. This is different from the experience of the Akit Tribe in Tanjung Pal and Sungai Rawa Hamlets.

#### **5. Learning *Ma'rifat* (Knowing God) in the *Batin* System**

The highest structure of the Akit Tribe's traditional system is the Tribal Chief called the *Batin*. The Inner position is hereditary and lasts a lifetime. *Batin* is the holder of the highest authority in the conventional system of the Akit Tribe. Congmeng, a resident of the Akit Tribe, Pambang District, said:

“... We perceive *Batin* as our role model. What is legitimate of “Batin” means legitimate/valid for this indigenous (Akit) custom. The Batin is the origin and the end of all our affairs ...”

The above statement psychologically implies a divine consciousness and is displayed as a symbol of *Perbatinan* customs. Thus, the Akit Tribe community with animism and dynamism backgrounds has become aware of one God’s existence. This is indicated by the *Perbatinan (Batin)* system in the customary social structure.

The Batin that is considered the center of all decisions seems to be a symbol of the essential awareness of the Akit Tribe community about the existence and power of God, Allah SWT. The word Batin essentially refers to the nature of God, Allah SWT, which is described in the Holy Qur’an Surah Al-Hadid verse 3:

*He is the First and the Last, the Outward and Inner; and He is All-Knowing of all things (3).*

The term Batin when based on the statements and beliefs conveyed by the sources above, seems to refer to the word Batin in verse above. In the interpretation of the Ministry of Islamic Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, the word Batin in verse is interpreted as the nature of God whose essence cannot be explained by the ability of human reason. The Batin is the essence of God’s existence as a God who can determine all affairs. He, Allah, is the essence that no one can intervene.

### **C. Malay Islamic Characters**

The emergence of Islam among the Indigenous or Akit tribes gives a pattern to the existence of other religions. At the same time, this symbol for Malay customs is written in the predecessor’s saying, “Adat is side by side with Syara’ and Syara’ side by side with Kitabullah (God's Book).” This proves that Malay cannot be separated from the existence of Islam. Historical factors and the existence of Islamic kingdoms in the Indonesian archipelago, including the Malay Kingdom, were indeed influenced by the work of Islam in the archipelago. These factors became the background for the existence of Islam.

Maxwell explained that good character is more than just a word, but a choice built little by little, with thoughts, words, deeds, habits, courage, hard work, and even formed from the difficulties of life. A good character does not exist and grows by itself but must be cultivated and formed so that it becomes a habit that characterizes and distinguishes one individual or community from other individuals or communities. Likewise, the character of the Malay community can also be divided into certain characters.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the values contained in the characters depicted from individual behavior will describe how the pattern of development and education and the environment experienced by individuals.

In research conducted by Koentjaraningrat (2009)<sup>11</sup>, in general, the Malay community has several visible characteristics such as trying to avoid conflict in interactions that are built with others; virtuous language, which is reflected in the refined culture and language of the Malays in the form of rhymes, poems, and parables; keep a low profile, especially in matters of wealth and income; sentimental or compassionate and subtle feelings, which are reflected in Malay songs that can touch feelings; introverted or closed, so that Malays are considered as people who are slow in adapting because it requires a more protracted process; tolerant, interact peacefully and respect other groups; and have high self-esteem.

## **1. Malay is Identical to Islamic Teachings**

Malay values are built based on Islamic principles. Thus the nature of the mind and the social system of the Malay community is always based on the teachings of Islamic values. This condition makes the Malay cultural system synonymous with Islam. As such is the case in the verse in *Gurindam 12* (poetry) sung at weddings and when welcoming the month of Ramadan.

The existence of the Malay tribe is synonymous with Islam. This means that Islam as an ideology cannot be separated from the life of the Malay community. This is reflected in the Malay community's behavior and outlook, which adhere to Islamic principles and values in life. Islamic teachings have

---

<sup>10</sup>Husen, A., Japar, M., & Kardiman, Y. National Character Education Model; A Monolithic Approach at the State University of Jakarta. (Jakarta: UNJ; 2010). p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>Koentjaraningrat. Introduction to Anthropology. (Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta.2009), p. 2.

become the soul in various forms of social and cultural behavior of the Malay community.<sup>12</sup>

Mugiono's research (2016) on the integration of Islamic thought and Malay civilization. This research explains that the acculturation and assimilation between Islamic thought and Malay civilization had brought a new style of Islamic Malay civilization with characteristics that are different from Islamic civilization in other places. The study also explains that Malay Islamic thought dynamics had shaped the character of Malay civilization, which is Islamic and comprehensive in various fields of life, such as; science, politics, culture, customs, arts, literature, language, laws, and others.<sup>13</sup>

Junaidi's research shows that in *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, there are advice, messages, thoughts, and ideas to uphold Islam in the lives of Malays. In *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, the position of *adat* (custom) and *syarak* (rule) is expressed: Islam as the identity of the Malays, the recommendation to fear Allah, Islam for the formation of children's character and preparation for the afterlife. This study concludes that Islam is very influential in the formation of Malay thought so that Islam is considered the primary identity of the Malay people.<sup>14</sup>

The teaching of Malay contains many noble values of Islamic teachings, some of which are as follows:<sup>15</sup>

apa tanda Melayu jati (what is the sign of true Malay)  
bersama Islam hidup dan mati (with Islam life and death)  
apa tanda Melayu bertuah (what is the lucky Malay sign)  
memeluk Islam tiada menyalah (embracing Islam and nothing else)  
apa tanda Melayu bertuah, (what is the lucky Malay sign)  
sebarang laku menurut sunnah (any behavior according to the *sunnah*(principle))  
apa tanda Melayu berakal (what is the sign of intelligent Malay)  
di dalam Islam ia beramal (in Islam he does charity)  
apa tanda Melayu pilihan (what is the sign of preferred Malay)  
hidup matinya dalam beriman (life and death are all in faith)  
apa tanda Melayu terpilih (what is the sign of chosen Malay)  
kepada Allah tercurah kasih (to God pour out love)

---

<sup>12</sup> Zainal Kling. Malay Tradition Value System. Working Paper in the Seminar on Values and Norms of the Malay Society. Kota Kinabalu. (1980).

<sup>13</sup>Mugiono. Integration of Islamic Thought and Malay Civilization: An Exploratory Study of the Malay Archipelago Islamic Civilization Development. *Jia*, (17), (2016). p. 23-35.

<sup>14</sup>Junaidi. Islam in the Malay World of Thought. *Al-Turas*, Xx(1), (2014). p. 45-55

<sup>15</sup> Tenas Efendy, Show Teaching Malay, Items of Riau Malay Culture, Riau (2010).



apa tanda Melayu beradat (what is the sign of civilized Malay)  
syarak dipegang, sunnah diingat (hold the *syarak* (rule), remember the  
*sunnah*)

## 2. Akit Muslims as a Minority

As has been seen in the statistical data above that Islam is a minority religion because the majority religion is Buddhism. Osawa, in his dissertation, mentioned that Buddhism became an indigenous religion, not because of the significance of religion,<sup>16</sup> However, because it involves history and culture and the background of the emergence of religion in this village. Hasbullah has researched the portrait of Riau Malay culture. This study explained that the presence of Islam in Malay society had shifted the mystical values that existed in Riau Malay society towards more rational and Islamic thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Basically, differences in ethnicity, religion, and race are very likely to cause conflicts that are sometimes driven by political interests. In this era of globalization, political growth is high, causing *SARA* (discrimination) to become the target or scapegoat for conflicts between one another or between the community and the government. Huntington stated significant changes in human civilization that resulted in inter-civilization interests to win political and economic dominance,<sup>18</sup> So Religion, Ethnicity will be targeted. On the other hand, Muslims with a minuscule population can socialize and interact with the community. The Akit Tribe Muslims do not experience discrimination, intolerance, and injustice. Furthermore, the Muslims of the Akit tribe can worship properly and can celebrate Islamic holidays in good conditions.

Great public attention and religious tolerance make people understand and protect one another from one religion to another. The Muslims of the Akit Tribe build close relationships with other religious communities sequentially to collaborate with them on various issues such as religious and social harmony and understand the meaning of difference itself. For Islam,

---

<sup>16</sup>Takamasa Osawa, *At the Edge of Mangrove Forest: The Orang Asli and the Quest for Indigeneity, Ethnicity and Development*, Dissertation, University Of Edinburgh, (2016), p. 203

<sup>17</sup>Hasbullah. *Islamic Dialectics in Local Culture: Portrait of Riau Malay Culture*. *Social Culture, Social and Cultural Science Communication Media*. 11, (2), (2014), p. 166-181.

<sup>18</sup>Huntington, Samuel. P., *Clash of Civilizations and the Future of World Politics*, (Yogyakarta: Qalam: 2005).

differences are inevitable. Islam is a universal religion. According to MohHasim<sup>19</sup>Islam is a religion that understands differences and understands differences is Fitrah. Alit<sup>20</sup> explained that Islam's existence adds to the diversity of religions in this village. We give freedom to choose beliefs so that different religious styles appear, even in one house.<sup>21</sup>

The Muslim community of the Akit tribe does not feel restrictions in moving. Instead, they get good treatment from people of different faiths, with this tolerant attitude in line with Islamic teachings and Malay Customary teachings.

#### **D. The Mixing of Religious Teachings is not as Syncretism but in the Frame of Harmonization between Religions.**

The strong beliefs of Animism and Dynamism are contrary to the main teachings of Islam. The decision of an Akit Tribe to embrace Islam can certainly change all patterns of belief and daily behavior, which are very different from most other residents even though they have embraced a formal religion. Among the beliefs of animism and dynamism that are contrary to Islamic teachings are beliefs about the sacredness of dogs as sacred animals, the habit of hunting and consuming pigs, traditional offerings on *punak* logs, worship of sacred objects, and the like. Strengthening religious understanding is the fulcrum in creating spiritual (religious) human beings. In his article, Neal Deroo said: *"To show that this spirituality is religious, we must first make sense of what it means for something to be religious."*

The weak understanding of religion possessed by the Akit Tribe Muslim group causes them to still hold fast to their previous beliefs so that the main teachings of Islam do not guide their Islam. Moreover, weak religious understanding can make them move from one religion to another. Furthermore, even though they have embraced Islam, they still believe in supernatural powers in certain places such as in the sea, rivers, sacred places,

---

<sup>19</sup>MohHasim. Islam, Minorities, and Pluralism in Indonesia, Journal of "Analysis" xv, No, 01. (2008), p 147.

<sup>20</sup> The Head of the Mungkal District Customary Institution

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Alit On March 24, 2020, 20.30.

trees, so that they often perform rituals to honor the spirits of their dead ancestors (Hasbullah, 2018).<sup>22</sup>

**1. *Mixing is not in the view of Syncretism but Diversity.***

It is meant by religious mixing that it is still a tradition for the Muslim community to carry out previous religious rituals. Although the Akit Tribe Muslim Community still has not made Islam according to Islamic teachings, they still had the identity status. Some still adhere to the religion of their ancestors because they think on several points: 1) understanding the mystical powers that existed in previous gods, such as the supernatural power of trees, animals in offerings. Ustadz Mursyidin explained that the aspect of marriage only influenced Islam.<sup>23</sup> 2) Religion is only a symbol of identity, namely religion as a formality of each individual. Therefore, the variety of religions is not a barrier for them to respect each other even though they have to break through the boundaries of religious law. 3) Customary Law is strong support. Belief in custom is represented by the Inner become the main focus in every issue, so that religious law is neglected. The Strength of an Inner of *Batin* becomes the binder and resolver of all affairs. In their view, customary law is the highest law. So, in this case, the mixing of religious rituals is a common thing that only relies on peace and diversity in creating a conducive situation.

**2. *Harmonization through Religion***

The religious essence can increase the brotherly attitude into motivation from the other side towards understanding the mixing of religions. Although some people mix religions, they have a strong desire for religion. The Akit Tribe Muslim community does in increasing religious understanding, such as recitation, learning the Quran. The ties of brotherhood that arise because of emotional ties between one another make it familiar for people to live side-by-side under one roof, meaning

---

<sup>22</sup>Hasbullah. The Religious Life of the Akit Tribe Community in Sonde Village, Meranti Islands Regency, Socio-Cultural, 15, No 1(2018), p. 6

<sup>23</sup> Researcher Interview with Ustadz Mursyidin March 22, 2020, 08.00

that we find that there are several religions in one house. This attitude can lead to harmonization and tolerance in religion. Saliro said harmony and tolerance between religions would impact all aspects of life: political stability, economic growth, social and cultural development increasing and proliferating, and vice versa if there is conflict, disharmony, intolerance between religions.<sup>24</sup>

Religion is a tool to be more united and cooperative together in supporting the sustainability of society. Religious celebrations become a means of visiting each other, greeting, meeting, and sharing. Even the attitude of cooperation and mutual assistance is increasingly visible in celebrating holidays in every religion.

Mr. Aem said, “here, commonly people in one house have three or more religions, that is precisely what makes them unique, they always celebrate big days of every religion, be it Islam, Christianity or Buddhism.”<sup>25</sup> According to Ismail, these attitudes minimize the emergence of conflict and break the understanding that religion is one of the causes of conflict.<sup>26</sup> Religion can be a tool to reconcile and build social relations.<sup>27</sup>

## **E. Conclusion**

1. Through its Islamic identity, the Malay makes Malay an Islamic society and loves peace, unity, unity in diversity. Harmonization is created through the way they practice their religion, the Malay community’s understanding of religion with a strong basis.
2. Religious experience creates a tolerant attitude amid minority existence. Customs and religion in social issues go hand in hand because Malay

---

<sup>24</sup>Sri Saduno Saliro. Sociological Perspective on Tolerance Between Religious People in Singkawang City, *Khazanah*, 17, No 02, (2019), p. 284.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Pak Aem, the traditional elder, March 22, 2020, 20.30.

<sup>26</sup>Ismail Suardi Wekke, Social Harmony in the Diversity and Diversity of the Muslim Minority Community of West Papua. *Kalam*, 10, No 2, (2016), p. 307.

<sup>27</sup>M. McCormack, L. Brinkley-Rubinstein, Dan KL Craven. Leadership religiosity: a Critical in *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal* 35, No. 7, (2014), 622-636.

customs are side by side with *syara'* (Islamic law).

3. The Muslims of the Akit Tribe are a minority. Therefore, besides having limitations, they make these limitations an opportunity to create and establish cooperation so that the existence of minorities does not become a problem and does not cause conflict.

## REFERENCES

- Deroo, Neal. "What Counts as a 'Religious Experience?': Phenomenology, Spirituality, and the Question of Religion." *Open Theology*, 04, (2018), 296.
- Efendy, Tenas. *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu, Butir-Butir Budaya Melayu*. Malaysia: Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu, 2010.
- Fahrurrozi. "Ekpresi Keberagaman Masyarakat Islam Indonesia : Mozaik Multikulturalisme Indonesia." *Toleransi : Media Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 17, No. 1. (2015), 21.
- Hamidi. UU. *Masyarakat Terasing Daerah Riau di Gerbang Abad XXI*. Pekanbaru: Zamrud UIR, 1991.
- Hasbullah, "Kehidupan Keberagaman Masyarakat Suku Akit Di Desa Sonde Kabupaten Kepulauan Meranti." *Sosial Budaya*, 15, No. 1, (2018), 6.
- Hasbullah. "Dialektika Islam dalam Budaya Lokal: Potret Budaya Melayu Riau." *Sosial Budaya : Media Komunikasi Ilmu Sosial dan Budaya* 11, No. 2, (2014), 166-181.
- Hasim, Moh. "Islam, Minoritas, dan Pluralsime Di Indonesia." *Jurnal "Analisa"* xv, No, 01, (2008), 147.
- Huntingtone, Samuael. P. *Benturan Antar Peradaban dan Masa Depan Politik Dunia*, Yogyakarta: Qalam. 2005.
- Husen, A., Japar, M., & Kardiman, Y. "Model Pendidikan Karakter Bangsa; Sebuah Pendekatan Monolitik di Universitas Negeri Jakarta." Jakarta: UNJ, 2010.
- Ismail Suardi Wekke, Social Harmony in the Diversity and Diversity of the Muslim Minority Community of West Papua. *Kalam*, 10, No 2, (2016), p. 307
- Junaidi. "Islam dalam Jagad Pikir Melayu." *Al-Turas* XX, No. 1, (2014), 45-55.

- Kling, Zainal. "Sistem Nilai Tradisi Melayu. Kertas Kerja Dalam Seminar Nilai Dan Norma Masyarakat Melayu". Kota Kinabalu. (1980, 10-11.
- Koentjaraningrat. *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta, 2009.
- M. McCormack, L. Brinkley-Rubinstein, dan K. L. Craven. "Leadership religiosity: a Critical Analysis" in *Leadership dan Organization Development Journal* 35, No. 7, (2014), 622-636.
- Mugiono "Integrasi Pemikiran Islam dan Peradaban Melayu: Studi Eksploratif terhadap Perkembangan Peradaban Melayu Islam Nusantara." *JIA* 17, (2016), 23-35.
- Osawa, Takamasa. "At the Edge of Mangrove Forest: The Suku Asli and the Quest for Indigeneity, Ethnicity, and Development." *Disertasi, University Of Edinburgh*, (2016). p 203.
- Reslawati, *Dinamika Sistem Perkembangan Kepercayaan Suku Anak Dalam di Kecamatan Mestong Muaro Bungo Provinsi Jambi*. Jakarta: Kementrian Agama RI, 2012.
- Saliro, Sri Saduno. "Perspektif Sosiologis Terhadap Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama Di Kota Singkawang." *Khazanah* 17, No. 2, (2019), 284.
- Santoso, Ajeng Safitri, "Kesadaran Esensial Motivasi Belajar Agama Islam Pada Kaum Mualaf Suku Akit." *An-Nafs, Jurnal Fakultas Psikologi* 13, No 1, (2019), 1-20.