



**DYNAMICS OF A CHRISTIAN MINORITY WITHIN A MUSLIM-MAJORITY  
CONTEXT: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL STUDY OF CONGKO VILLAGE,  
SOPPENG 1940–2024**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the socio-historical dynamics of the Christian community in Batu Pute hamlet, Congko Village, Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, within a predominantly Muslim Bugis society from 1940 to 2024. The research focuses on the processes of emergence, survival, and transformation of Christian minority identity within a Muslim-majority social structure. The main research questions address: (1) the socio-cultural and spiritual factors influencing religious conversion in Batu Pute; (2) forms of adaptation, resistance, and survival strategies developed by the Christian community in response to political and ideological pressures during the colonial period, the Japanese occupation, and the DI/TII rebellion; and (3) the reconstruction of social relations and collective identity in the post-conflict period through the New Order and Reformasi era. This study employs a qualitative socio-historical approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, archival research, and literature analysis. The findings reveal that Christianity in Batu Pute did not emerge as a result of colonial religious intervention, but rather developed through local initiatives shaped by spiritual experiences and the integration of Bugis cultural values, particularly the concept of *Dewata SeuwaE* as a monotheistic theological framework. During periods of political turmoil, the community experienced marginalization and structural pressures, yet demonstrated remarkable social and spiritual resilience. In the post-conflict era, interreligious reconciliation was fostered through the internalization of local ethical principles such as *sipakatau* (humanizing others), *sipakalebbi* (mutual respect), and *sipakainge* (mutual moral reminding), which functioned as social capital for rebuilding intercommunal harmony. This study argues that the integration of minority religious identity with local cultural values constitutes a powerful social foundation for peacebuilding, social cohesion, and community resilience in plural societies.

**Keywords:** *Christian Minority, Bugis Culture, Majority Minority Relations, Interreligious Harmony, Socio Historical Dynamics*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika historis dan sosial komunitas Kristen di Perkampungan Batu Pute, Desa Congko, Kabupaten Soppeng, Sulawesi Selatan, dalam konteks masyarakat Bugis yang mayoritas Muslim sejak 1940 hingga 2024. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah proses pertumbuhan, keberlangsungan, dan transformasi identitas komunitas Kristen sebagai minoritas religius dalam struktur sosial yang didominasi oleh Islam. Permasalahan penelitian mencakup: (1) faktor-faktor sosio-kultural dan spiritual yang memengaruhi proses konversi agama di Batu Pute; (2) bentuk-bentuk adaptasi, resistensi, dan strategi bertahan komunitas Kristen dalam menghadapi tekanan politik dan



ideologis pada masa kolonial, pendudukan Jepang, serta pemberontakan DI/TII; dan (3) proses rekonstruksi identitas dan relasi sosial pasca-konflik hingga era Orde Baru dan Reformasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosio-historis melalui wawancara mendalam, studi arsip, dan analisis literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kekristenan di Batu Pute tidak berkembang melalui proyek kolonialisasi agama, melainkan berakar pada inisiatif lokal yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman spiritual serta integrasi nilai-nilai budaya Bugis, seperti konsep ketuhanan *Dewata SeuwaE*. Pada fase-fase krisis politik, komunitas ini mengalami marginalisasi dan tekanan struktural, namun menunjukkan ketahanan sosial dan spiritual yang kuat. Memasuki periode pasca-konflik hingga Reformasi, rekonsiliasi sosial dibangun melalui internalisasi nilai-nilai lokal seperti *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, dan *sipakainge* yang berfungsi sebagai modal sosial dalam membangun harmoni antarumat beragama. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi antara agama minoritas dan budaya lokal bukan hanya memungkinkan keberlangsungan identitas komunitas, tetapi juga berperan sebagai kekuatan sosial dalam membangun perdamaian, kohesi sosial, dan ketahanan komunitas dalam masyarakat plural.

**Kata Kunci:** *Minoritas Kristen, Budaya Bugis, Relasi Mayoritas–Minoritas, Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama, Dinamika Sosial-Historis*

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## A. Introduction

The existence of religious communities reflects the complex social dynamics of society. The formation of minority groups is often linked to migration processes, missionary activities, and socio-political transformations, which gradually give rise to religious-based residential areas as centers of identity and social solidarity. In the Indonesian context, the colonial legacy, particularly through missionary and zending networks, played a significant role in shaping Christian communities within predominantly Muslim societies. To this day, these minority groups continue to survive through cultural adaptation, social negotiation, and dynamic forms of local diplomacy (Iqbal, 2023).

Christian communities constitute an important element of Indonesia's national diversity and are deeply intertwined with the country's historical development. Although they are not the majority, they have created meaningful social and cultural spaces that influence broader national dynamics. In many regions, Christian settlements function not only as places of worship but also as arenas of intergroup interaction. Their presence enriches pluralism while simultaneously posing challenges to social cohesion within majority-dominated environments. As active social actors, Christian communities contribute to the strengthening of interreligious harmony and peaceful coexistence (Sirait & Istinatun, 2022).

The socio-religious history of South Sulawesi demonstrates rich and layered dynamics. Prior to the spread of Islam, Bugis–Makassar societies practiced local belief



systems known as *attoriolong*, which were rooted in animism, dynamism, and reverence for ancestral spirits and deities. Concepts of divinity were expressed through *Dewata SeuwaE* among the Bugis and *Turie A'rana* among the Makassar. Since the seventeenth century, Islam has become the dominant religious force shaping collective identity, although elements of earlier beliefs continue to persist within rituals and customary traditions (Pabbajah, 2012).

South Sulawesi is one of the regions where Christian communities developed despite being numerically smaller than the Muslim population. Their growth occurred through missionary activities, zending movements, and continuous interaction with local culture. The emergence of Christian social and cultural networks reflects a plural religious history shaped by coexistence among diverse belief systems. The roots of this development can be traced to more than four centuries of Gospel propagation within the two main Christian traditions Catholicism and Protestantism (Andri, 2024).

In Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, a distinct Christian settlement can be found in Congko Village, Marioriwawo District. Its existence represents not merely a demographic phenomenon, but also a historical manifestation of Christian influence within a predominantly Muslim Bugis society. Established in 1940, this settlement has functioned as a social and cultural space where internal and external relationships of the community are continuously formed. Its social structure reflects the interaction between religion, local tradition, and ethnic identity, producing a unique pattern of religious life within the broader social history of Soppeng (Syuhudi & Nensia, 2021).

The introduction of Christianity in Congko Village originated from the initiative of three Bugis figures La Galiti, La Matte, and La Sakka who traveled to Makassar to seek the Gospel and later brought it back to Batu Pute, Congko. Their efforts led to the formation of the first Christian congregation, marked by the baptism of 142 individuals in 1940, which became the foundation of the Christian settlement in Congko. Subsequent development was supported by local evangelists such as La Wali, who actively served Christian communities across the Soppeng region. The spread of Christianity by Bugis actors themselves makes the Christianization process in Soppeng distinctive and reinforces the formation of a local Christian identity (Andri, 2024).

The existence of the Christian settlement in Congko Village raises both academic and practical questions. Academically, this community must be understood as part of the socio-religious history of South Sulawesi, which has long been dominated by narratives centered on Islam. Practically, it raises important issues concerning how a small minority group is able to survive, adapt, and maintain its identity amid social change. Ratuwalangon et al. (2022) note that minority Christian communities often develop cultural and religious strategies to preserve their existence while negotiating their identity within majority social spaces. This underscores the need for an in-depth study of the social dynamics and survival strategies of Christian communities in Soppeng.

Existing studies on the socio-religious history of South Sulawesi have largely focused on processes of Islamization, the political role of kingdoms, and interreligious



conflicts at the macro level. As a result, Christian communities are frequently portrayed merely as products of colonial missions or zending institutions. The lived experiences of local Christian communities particularly in Congko Village, Soppeng Regency have rarely been examined as part of social history that recognizes them as active historical agents Musyarif (2018) shows that Muslim Christian relations in Soppeng are characterized by tolerance rooted in Bugis cultural values such as *ati mapaccing*, *amaredekangeng*, *assimellereng*, and *mappasitinajah*, reflecting the social interaction patterns within these communities.

Social history seeks to record the experiences of groups that are often marginalized within dominant historical narratives. The Christian settlement in Congko Village, Soppeng Regency, represents one such case. Within a predominantly Muslim environment, their presence is not merely a demographic fact but part of a long trajectory of social, cultural, and religious interaction in Bugis society. Nevertheless, their story has received limited attention in the historiography of South Sulawesi, which has tended to prioritize Islamization processes and the political roles of kingdoms in shaping religious identity.

The urgency of this research lies in its effort to uncover the experiences of Christian communities as historical actors who actively strive to preserve their identity, negotiate their social position, and sustain their collective existence within a majority-dominated environment. By documenting these dynamics, the study not only fills a significant research gap but also offers an alternative narrative that broadens our understanding of diversity and social cohesion in local community life.

Based on this discussion, the study of the Christian community in the Congko Christian Settlement, Marioriwawo District, Soppeng Regency, holds strong academic and social significance. Their existence within a Muslim-majority context raises fundamental questions regarding the origins of the settlement in 1940 and the nature of its social dynamics from 1940 to the present day. Through a historical research approach, this study aims not only to record events, but also to reveal the social meanings and adaptive strategies that have sustained the community over time.

## **B. Method**

This study employs the historical method with a qualitative approach to scientifically reconstruct past events. The research process follows four main stages: heuristics (source collection), criticism (source authentication and validation), interpretation (meaning-making and analysis), and historiography (historical writing) (Sukmana, 2021). The qualitative approach in historical research places human actors at the center of analysis, both as subjects and objects of history. This approach does not merely record factual events but seeks to interpret meanings, social relations, and cultural dynamics in a narrative and descriptive manner, enabling a deep and reflective reconstruction of history (Prayogi, 2021).



The research begins with the heuristic stage, which involves the systematic search, identification, and collection of relevant sources, including archives, documents, oral testimonies, and material historical remains (Sayono, 2021). The research site is Congko Village, Marioriwawo District, Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, a region recognized as the early center of Christian evangelization in 1940 and the establishment of a Christian settlement within a predominantly Muslim Bugis community. The selection of this location is based on its strong historical and social significance as a space of interreligious and intercultural interaction.

The research was conducted over a period of two months, from 15 October 2025 to 15 December 2025, covering the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis, and writing. The research subjects include the church council of GKSS Batu Pute, church elders, youth members, local government officials, and community members who possess historical knowledge of the Christian community. The data are qualitative in nature and were obtained through interviews, observation, document analysis, and visual documentation.

Data collection techniques consist of direct field observation, semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information, archival research of church records and village government documents, as well as the collection of photographs, recordings, and religious artifacts. Research instruments include interview guidelines, field notes, audio recorders, and cameras to ensure data accuracy and validity. All research stages were conducted systematically to produce a historical reconstruction that is both factual and meaningful. The second stage is source criticism, which functions to test the authenticity and validity of the sources obtained through the heuristic process, ensuring that only credible and accountable data are used in historical reconstruction (Alian, 2012).

Source criticism consists of external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism examines the external aspects of sources to verify their authenticity, such as the time and place of production, author identity, and the physical condition of documents. In this study, external criticism was applied to church archives, government documents, family records, and old photographs by examining signatures, publication years, and material characteristics to confirm their authenticity.

Internal criticism, on the other hand, focuses on evaluating the content of sources to assess their credibility, consistency, and potential bias of authors or informants (Herdiani, 2016). This process involved comparing oral testimonies such as church elders' narratives regarding the first evangelization in 1940 with written documents, including church archives and village reports, to minimize subjectivity. Through the application of both forms of criticism, the study ensures the reliability of sources in terms of both authenticity and content, thereby strengthening the scientific validity and objectivity of the historical reconstruction.

The third stage is interpretation, which involves the analytical process of giving meaning to verified historical facts. At this stage, the researcher connects data, explains relationships between events, and understands the social and cultural contexts in which



they occurred (Ardhana & Puspitasari, 2024). In the context of Congko Village, interpretation is used to analyze church archives, oral testimonies, and government documents in order to construct a comprehensive understanding of the evangelization process in 1940, the socio-religious dynamics of the community up to 2024, and the factors that have enabled the Christian community to persist within a predominantly Muslim environment.

The final stage is historiography. Etymologically, historiography derives from the words *history* (past events) and *graphy* (writing). In scholarly terms, historiography refers to the systematic and communicative reconstruction of past events based on valid historical sources (Hatmono, 2021). In this study, historiography represents the culmination of the historical method, integrating the results of heuristics, criticism, and interpretation into a coherent academic narrative. Through this process, data from church archives, village government documents, family records, and oral testimonies are synthesized into a comprehensive historical account of the 1940 evangelization process, the socio-religious development of the congregation to the present day, and the factors that have enabled the Christian community to survive and remain resilient within a Muslim-majority society.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. The Introduction of Christianity in the Bugis Land of Congko, Soppeng, in 1940**

Before the arrival of Abrahamic religions, the Bugis community in the Soppeng region already possessed a well-established indigenous belief system centered on Dewata SeuwaE, conceived as the One Supreme God. This monotheistic concept formed a crucial theological foundation in shaping the Bugis worldview. Belief in Dewata SeuwaE emphasized a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator, demonstrating that Bugis spirituality had a strong transcendental orientation long before the introduction of Islam and Christianity (Ridhwan, 2018). The doctrine of Dewata SeuwaE later functioned as a conceptual bridge between local belief systems and the revealed religions that followed. Islam and Christianity were not perceived as entirely foreign traditions but rather as continuations and refinements of ancestral values already embedded in Bugis cosmology. Consequently, religious conversion was not understood as a rejection of tradition but as a deepening and transformation of an existing spiritual foundation. This perspective explains the openness of Bugis society toward monotheistic teachings that emphasize moral balance and spiritual harmony (Sugiarti, 2020).

The Islamization of Soppeng in the seventeenth century was closely linked to the Musu' Selleng (Islamic War) between the Kingdom of Gowa and the Tellumpoccoe alliance (Bone, Soppeng, and Wajo). Soppeng's defeat in this conflict marked a decisive turning point in the Islamization process. The local nobility adopted Islam as part of a political strategy to align themselves with the hegemony of Gowa. Islamization thus followed a top-down pattern, in which rulers converted first and were subsequently followed by the population (Bahtiar, 2019).



In contrast, the introduction of Christianity in Congko Village particularly in Batu Pute hamlet followed a fundamentally different trajectory. Rather than emerging from political authority or colonial missionary institutions, Christianity developed through local initiative and community-based spiritual experiences. This process reflects a bottom-up religious movement, in which local actors actively interpreted, appropriated, and disseminated new religious teachings. Field interviews indicate that Christianity in Batu Pute originated from the initiative of three local figures: La Galiti, La Matte, and La Sakka:

Information obtained from Informant A (Interview, 9 December 2025, 13:25 WITA) and Informant SM (Interview, 9 December 2025, 16:40 WITA) reveals that these individuals traveled to Makassar to study Christian teachings and were subsequently baptized by Pastor Syamsuddin Denso and Van den Brokken. Upon returning to their village, they introduced Christianity to their families and surrounding community. This event marked the formation of the first Christian community in Soppeng Regency.

Interview data further demonstrate a strong spiritual dimension in the conversion process:

According to Informant A (Interview, 9 December 2025, 13:35 WITA), La Galiti received guidance through dreams and messages from the charismatic spiritual figure Petta Barang, who foretold the arrival of “white people carrying a sacred book.” This message was interpreted as a divine sign prompting the search for a new religious path. Within Bugis tradition, the counsel of charismatic spiritual authorities such as Petta Barang carries high religious and social legitimacy. This explains why Christianity was accepted relatively peacefully, as it was understood as part of a revelation already anticipated within the local belief system.

Written sources reinforce these findings. De Jong (1996:106) records that on 6 March 1940, Van den Brokken and Syamsuddin Denso baptized 142 individuals in Batu Pute. This date is commemorated as the founding day of the GKSS Batu Pute Congregation, Arafah (2017) further notes that in 1935, a Bugis noble named Petta Lolo Marhabang was baptized in Soppengriaja and later acted as a mediator connecting the pioneers of Christianity in Batu Pute with church networks in Makassar. These accounts indicate a collaborative relationship between local initiative and external influence, rather than a dominant missionary structure.

According to de Jong (1990:197-203), religious conversion among the Bugis of Soppeng particularly among lower social strata was not driven solely by theological motives but also represented a form of social protest against oppressive feudal structures. Bugis society was hierarchically organized, with nobles (*arung* and *anakarung*) occupying dominant positions, while commoners (*to sama*) and slaves (*ata*) were marginalized. Dutch colonial rule reinforced this structure by legitimizing elite authority and imposing customary levies, forced labor, and ritual obligations that burdened the lower classes.

Within this unequal social context, the spiritual experiences of the Christian pioneers in Batu Pute cannot be separated from political and economic pressures.



Conversion to Christianity functioned as both a response to social injustice and a means of constructing new meaning in a period of transformation. In its early phase, Christianity was understood not merely as a belief system but as a symbol of social liberation, equality, and an alternative spiritual space for marginalized Bugis communities seeking to escape feudal and colonial domination.

Thus, the formation of a Christian settlement in Batu Pute, Congko Village, in 1940 represents not only a religious but also a profound social transformation within Bugis society. The conversions initiated by La Galiti, La Matte, and La Sakka began as personal spiritual experiences but evolved into a collective social movement grounded in kinship networks and charismatic authority. Community support emerged from their ability to integrate religious values with local cultural symbols, thereby reinforcing collective identity within a changing social environment.

Using Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Darmawan, 2024), this conversion process can be interpreted through the interaction of habitus, capital, and field. The habitus of obedience to influential figures facilitated social reproduction through mass conversion, particularly during the collective baptism of 142 individuals on 6 March 1940. La Galiti mobilized social capital through extensive kinship networks in Soppeng and symbolic capital through narratives of dreams and the prophecy of Petta Barang, which culturally legitimized the new religion. Christianity was thus received as a spiritual continuation rather than a threat to local tradition.

Within the social field, conversion to Christianity also functioned as a strategic repositioning of lower-class communities within an oppressive feudal structure. As de Jong (1990:197-203), explains, religious conversion in Soppeng constituted a form of symbolic resistance to aristocratic domination and colonial power that reinforced socio-economic inequality. Through Christianity, communities created a new space for equality, autonomy, and identity formation outside elite control. Religion therefore functioned not only as a system of faith, but also as an instrument of social negotiation and cultural emancipation.

## **2. The Period of Turmoil: From the Japanese Occupation to the DI/TII Movement (1940–1966)**

The collapse of Dutch colonial authority in South Sulawesi in early 1942 marked a profound transformation for the Christian community in Batu Pute, Congko Village. The transition of power to the Japanese regime introduced new forms of pressure, as Christianity was perceived as a symbol of Western influence that had to be eliminated. As noted by Ilmi (2021), Japanese propaganda portraying itself as the "Elder Brother" was accompanied by deep suspicion toward Christians, who were considered affiliates of Dutch colonial power. Public worship, which had previously been conducted openly, was forced into secrecy, taking place in private homes. The climax of this repression occurred in Takalala, Soppeng, where congregants were forcibly assembled and subjected to torture, resulting in several deaths, including that of La Salomo. The internment of



European missionaries left local congregations without pastoral leadership, compelling them to organize and conduct worship independently.

This situation marked the emergence of spiritual autonomy forged under conditions of colonial repression. De Jong (1990:197-199) characterizes the Japanese occupation as a period in which churches in South Sulawesi became effectively “orphaned.” Following the arrest of Pastor Van den Brokken, congregations lost institutional guidance and missionary support. Yet this crisis paradoxically generated a form of spiritual resilience grounded in communal solidarity. From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory as discussed in (Fatmawati & Sholikin, 2020), this moment reflects a transformation of the social field, in which Christian identity previously endowed with positive symbolic capital during Dutch rule was reconfigured into a stigmatized identity under Japanese authority. At the same time, Muslim figures such as Moehsin Alwi and La Semmaila utilized Japanese political legitimacy to exert pressure on Christian communities through propaganda and intimidation. This dynamic illustrates a form of symbolic violence, whereby dominant groups imposed ideological control over subordinated communities (de Jong, 1996:109-110).

Beyond ideological repression, Japanese wartime policies such as forced labor (*romusha*) and compulsory agricultural levies deepened the suffering of local populations. Christian communities lost religious freedom and faced poverty, fear, and military coercion. Nevertheless, these pressures strengthened internal faith and cohesion. During the Indonesian Revolution (1945–1949), when Christians were stigmatized as “Black Dutch” (*Belanda Hitam*), congregations continued to sustain simple forms of worship and strong internal solidarity. Thus, the period of Japanese occupation and revolutionary upheaval constituted not only an era of suffering but also a formative phase in the construction of a resilient religious identity, where faith, solidarity, and shared collective experience became the foundations for the continuity of the Bugis Christian community in Batu Pute (de Jong, 1990:206).

After the war of independence, the social structure of Bugis society underwent fundamental transformation. In the newly established Republic of Indonesia, the feudal system lost its political legitimacy. Traditional aristocrats who had previously collaborated with colonial authorities were marginalized within the new bureaucratic order, generating frustration and a desire to restore their former status. Some of these elites joined the Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII) movement led by Abdul Kahar Muzakkar, a charismatic figure who combined Islamic ideology with revolutionary fervor in pursuit of an Islamic state. The movement functioned as a political vehicle for Bugis elites seeking to reclaim traditional authority while reasserting Islam as the ideological foundation of political legitimacy (Sari et al., 2025).

Over time, DI/TII evolved into a militant movement characterized by rigid ideological exclusivism and intolerance. De Jong (1990:205-207) documents that in Soppeng and surrounding regions, the movement promoted anti-Western, anti-Javanese, and explicitly anti-Christian sentiments. Christian communities in Batu Pute and Congko



became targets of systematic violence, including the burning of houses of worship, confiscation of property, and forced religious conversion through intimidation and coercion:

Field interviews reveal the enduring trauma of this violence. Testimonies from Informant SN (Interview, 9 December 2025, 16:00 WITA) and Informant SM (Interview, 9 December 2025, 16:50 WITA) recount the shooting of the local figure La Galiti, acts of physical torture, and mass displacement of residents to mountainous and urban areas to escape persecution. Some congregants were even forced to conceal their religious identities in order to survive. These findings indicate that the violence was not driven solely by religious motives, but also functioned as an ideological strategy to restore old social hierarchies by instrumentalizing religious symbols as tools of domination.

The collapse of the DI/TII rebellion following the death of Kahar Muzakkar on 3 February 1965 marked a crucial turning point for Soppeng society (Fikriansyah et al., 2022). For the Christian community of Batu Pute, however, the prolonged period of violence left deep social and spiritual scars, while simultaneously forging a resilient religious habitus. In Bourdieu's theoretical framework as discussed in (Dixon et al., 2025), this experience represents a process of social field reproduction in which religion operates as an arena of symbolic struggle between domination and resistance. Physical and psychological pressures strengthened collective identity and solidarity within the congregation. Survival strategies such as displacement, concealment, and clandestine worship demonstrate a high level of communal resilience. Consequently, the DI/TII period should be understood not only as an era of suffering, but also as a formative phase in the construction of an autonomous Bugis Christian identity, in which faith and collective suffering converged as sources of moral legitimacy and social strength.

### **3. The New Order Period (1966–1998)**

The end of the DI/TII rebellion in the mid-1960s marked a new phase in the social life of the people of Soppeng, including the Christian community in Batu Pute, Congko. After more than a decade of living under ideological pressure and insecurity, social conditions gradually stabilized with the emergence of the New Order regime under Soeharto. The state restructured the socio-political order by emphasizing national stability and the implementation of Pancasila as the ideological foundation for national integration (Naufal, 2024). Based on field interviews, the early New Order period brought significant changes to interreligious relations in Congko Village:

Information obtained from Informant SM (Interview, 9 December 2025, 16:55 WITA) indicates that although the Christian community initially continued to experience discrimination in access to education, the implementation of the Guidelines for the Appreciation and Practice of Pancasila (Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila – P4) during the second phase of the New Order administration encouraged public school teachers to begin accepting Christian



students. This shift represented an early stage in the restoration of trust and social acceptance across religious boundaries at the local level.

These findings demonstrate that the New Order period constituted a crucial turning point in the process of social reconciliation in Congko Village. Through political stabilization policies and the internalization of Pancasila values, the state gradually reduced the remnants of religion-based segregation. Although traces of discrimination were still felt during the early phase of the regime, the institutionalization of P4 contributed to the formation of new understandings of tolerance and citizenship. In the long term, this process strengthened social relations between Muslim and Christian communities in rural Soppeng.

According to Khaeruddin (2024), the P4 program functioned as an instrument of ideological and social integration. By promoting values of nationalism and interreligious tolerance, this policy shaped collective consciousness and everyday practices. Its implementation in rural schools had a direct impact on the mindset of the Bugis community in Congko, gradually shifting exclusive religious perspectives toward more inclusive and collaborative interfaith social practices:

Field interviews with Informant A (Interview, 9 December 2025, 13:45 WITA) further reveal that, in the early New Order period, the district government invited Islamic and Christian religious leaders to publicly introduce their teachings to the wider community. This initiative played an important role in fostering mutual respect among religious groups. The church that had previously been burned during the DI/TII conflict was later rebuilt, becoming not only a symbol of spiritual revival but also a marker of restored dignity for the Christian community within the plural Bugis society.

Alongside these interreligious reconciliation processes, the GKSS Synod adopted a strategic policy by purchasing all land in Batu Pute as an effort to strengthen internal solidarity among the congregation. This policy enabled Christians to settle in a relatively concentrated area, reinforcing collective identity and facilitating religious activities. Such residential concentration can be understood as a rational form of social adaptation shaped by past traumatic experiences, as well as a symbol of community autonomy and resilience in safeguarding the continuity of faith:

Testimonies from Informant M (Interview, 9 December 2025, 14:20 WITA) and Informant HJ (Interview, 11 December 2025, 19:43 WITA) describe harmonious interreligious relations in Congko Village during the New Order era. Christians and Muslims engaged in everyday cooperation, such as clearing agricultural land, planting rice, and building houses, without problematizing religious differences. These practices of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) functioned as an effective medium of social reconciliation, strengthening human solidarity beyond theological boundaries and reflecting egalitarian values embedded in Bugis culture.



From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's theory (Zafar & Asif, 2024), the social conditions of Congko Village reflect a transformation of the social field and the reproduction of collective habitus. The old habitus shaped by conflict-related trauma was reconstructed into a new habitus centered on harmony and coexistence. The shift of symbolic capital from exclusive religious identity toward shared values of togetherness and mutual assistance demonstrates the community's capacity to transform memories of violence into social strength. In this sense, post-New Order harmony in Congko was not accidental, but the outcome of sustained social adaptation and the internalization of shared values.

#### **4. Reform Era – Contemporary Period (1998–2024)**

Entering the Reform Era in the late 1990s, many regions of Indonesia were shaken by socio-religious and ethno-communal conflicts, such as those in Poso, Ambon, and Sampit. These conflicts caused significant human suffering and disrupted the national social order (Dewi et al., 2017). In contrast to these conditions, Desa Congko in Soppeng Regency presents a markedly different trajectory. Interreligious relations in this village have developed peacefully, demonstrating strong social resilience amid broader national political and social transformations.

Based on field interviews, Desa Congko received official recognition as a “Village of Interreligious Harmony” (Desa Sadar Kerukunan) due to its success in maintaining peaceful relations among religious communities. This information was conveyed by Informant MJ (Interview, 14 December 2025, 14:00 WITA). The village government has played an active role in facilitating interfaith interactions through social forums and collective community activities. This recognition represents concrete evidence that social harmony in Desa Congko emerges primarily from the community's collective consciousness rather than merely from formal state policies.

Field data further indicate that Bugis cultural values constitute the main foundation for sustaining interreligious social relations:

According to Informant SN (Interview, 9 December 2025, 16:07 WITA), the principles of sipakatau (mutual humanization), sipakalebbe (mutual respect), and sipakainge (mutual moral reminding) function as ethical guidelines in everyday social life. These values shape an egalitarian and respectful social habitus that embraces difference. In the context of the Reform Era marked by social instability in many regions local culture operates as a form of symbolic capital that effectively prevents conflict and strengthens interfaith social cohesion.

A similar perspective was expressed by:

Informant RI (Interview, 15 December 2025, 19:13 WITA), who emphasized that peaceful coexistence in Congko is rooted in strong kinship ties across religious boundaries. Many Muslim and Christian residents share blood relations and common ancestral lineages. This shared Bugis ethnic identity forms a collective



foundation that affirms that religious differences do not negate familial bonds. In this sense, Bugis cultural values function as a moral safeguard that preserves interfaith social cohesion.

The younger generation also plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony: Interviews with Informant RA (Interview, 15 December 2025, 13:00 WITA) reveal that digital technological developments have introduced new challenges, particularly the risk of provocation through social media. However, increased access to information has simultaneously expanded interreligious understanding and strengthened awareness of tolerance. This form of digital awareness is interpreted as a contemporary manifestation of sipakainge, whereby community members remind one another to use technology wisely in order to safeguard collective peace.

The role of youth in sustaining interreligious harmony is further reinforced by Informant SS (Interview, 12 December 2025, 17:08 WITA). He explained that Christian and Muslim youth actively collaborate in various social activities, including youth organizations (*karang taruna*), communal work (*kerja bakti*), and national holiday celebrations. Moreover, the involvement of Christian youth in the Interreligious Communication Forum (Forum Komunikasi Antarumat Beragama – FKUB) of Soppeng Regency indicates that tolerance in Desa Congko has evolved from a cultural value into an institutionalized social practice at the regional level.

Interreligious tolerance is also reflected in the educational sphere:

Based on interview data, Informant EK, a Christian student at SMK Muhammadiyah Marioriwawo (Interview, 15 December 2025, 13:30 WITA), stated that she experienced no discrimination despite studying in an Islamic-based educational institution. She emphasized that social relations within the school environment are inclusive and respectful of religious differences, both in classroom learning processes and daily interactions.

These field findings align with the research of Mu'ti & Amirrachman (2025) which shows that Muhammadiyah schools generally develop inclusive and multicultural educational approaches. In this context, educational institutions function not only as spaces for knowledge transmission but also as arenas of interfaith social interaction that reinforce national values, equality, and interreligious tolerance.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Alwi, 2025), the community of Desa Congko demonstrates a process of reproducing a habitus of social harmony through intergenerational transmission of cultural and symbolic capital. The values of sipakatau, sipakalebbi, and sipakainge operate as structured dispositions that guide inclusive social behavior. The social arena of Desa Congko in the Reform Era is characterized by logics of equality, mutual cooperation, and solidarity. The harmony that



emerges is not merely a historical legacy but the result of ongoing social praxis that is continuously reproduced and renegotiated in response to the challenges of modernity.

#### D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the emergence and development of the Christian community in Batu Pute, Congko Village, Soppeng Regency, reflect a long and complex process of religious and social transformation. Since 1940, Christianity in this area did not arise from colonial coercion, but rather grew from local initiatives led by La Galiti, La Matte, and La Sakka, whose spiritual experiences resonated with the Bugis belief in *Dewata SeuwaE*. Over time, religion became a medium of social resistance and identity formation in the context of structural inequality and political change.

During the Japanese occupation and the DI/TII rebellion, the community faced severe ideological pressure and violence. Nevertheless, their resilience, faith, and internal solidarity enabled them to survive and maintain their collective existence. Entering the New Order era, political stability and the state ideology of Pancasila created opportunities for reconciliation and strengthened interreligious harmony. Bugis cultural values such as *sipakatau* (mutual humanization), *sipakalebbi* (mutual respect), and *sipakainge* (mutual moral reminding) became fundamental foundations for sustaining social harmony.

From the Reformasi period to the present day, the Batu Pute Christian community has successfully preserved harmonious relations through education, interfaith collaboration, and the active involvement of younger generations. These findings affirm that religion, when integrated with local wisdom, can function as a powerful source of peace and social integration.

Future research is encouraged to conduct comparative studies of other Christian communities in South Sulawesi or to examine intergenerational transformations of religious identity within plural societies. The author also expresses sincere gratitude to all informants who generously shared their experiences and contributed valuable insights to this research.

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