



Theological Influences on Religious Perceptions in South Sulawesi: A *Mashlahah*-Based Study of the FKUB

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Abstrak: This article explores the influences of purificative theology on the interpretation of religious teachings, with a particular focus on the Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB) in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. As a descriptive qualitative study, it examines the perspectives of interfaith leaders, highlighting how religious understanding is shaped by individual and institutional theological interpretations. The research employs a theological framework grounded in the *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of Islamic law), utilizing in-depth interviews and literature analysis as primary data collection methods. Informants include FKUB leaders, Islamic scholars (*ulama*), and Christian pastors. The FKUB plays a vital role in promoting religious harmony in Indonesia by facilitating dialogue among leaders of different faiths. Findings reveal that theological orientation significantly affects religious understanding, encompassing tendencies such as puritanism, exclusivism, inclusivism, fundamentalism, and moderation. In this context, the FKUB promotes an inclusive and moderate theological stance that encourages interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, and the preservation of religious diversity. Members of the FKUB engage in open discussions, seeking shared values while upholding their own beliefs. From the perspective of Islamic law, such inclusivity aligns with the concept of *mashlahah* (public benefit), fostering social harmony and ensuring the well-being of the broader society. This approach helps sustain a tolerant and peaceful religious environment in Indonesia.

Keywords: Theology, puritanism, inclusivism, religious understanding, FKUB, *mashlahah*

Abstrak: Artikel ini menguraikan tentang pengaruh pemahaman teologi purifikatif dalam interpretasi terhadap ajaran agama khususnya di FKUB (Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama) Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif yang melakukan penelitian terhadap tokoh-tokoh lintas agama. Tafsir atau interpretasi agama merupakan produk dari hasil pemikiran perseorangan atau institusi suatu agama. Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan teologi dan *maqashid al-shariah*. Data dikumpulkan dengan cara wawancara mendalam dan studi literatur. Wawancara dilakukan terhadap informan, tokoh-tokoh FKUB, ulama, cendekiawan dan pendeta. Salah satu institusi yang sangat penting dalam kehidupan bernegara dan bermasyarakat di Indonesia adalah FKUB. FKUB Sulawesi Selatan sebagai institusi yang menghimpun berbagai tokoh lintas agama tentu saja memiliki dinamika dalam perdebatan dalam menghadapi suatu persoalan dalam bidang agama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman teologi berpengaruh terhadap pemahaman keagamaan seseorang seperti puritanisme, eksklusivisme, inklusivisme, fundamentalisme dan moderasi. Pada konteks tersebut peran FKUB sebagai lembaga yang menganut dan mensosialisasikan teologi inklusif dan moderat telah memainkan peran dalam dialog lintas agama dan keragaman iman. Para tokoh agama dalam FKUB saling menghormati perbedaan yang ada tanpa mengubah keyakinan orang lain menunjukkan keterbukaan untuk berdialog tentang berbagai isu keagamaan serta mencari titik temu yang dapat membantu memelihara kerukunan. Dalam konteks hukum Islam bahwa teologi inklusif dengan menciptakan moderasi, kerukunan dan harmoni dalam masyarakat merupakan langkah yang sesuai dengan prinsip *mashlahat*. Yaitu seluruh komponen bangsa, negara dan masyarakat mendapatkan manfaat dan kebaikan sehingga kehidupan beragama dapat tetap toleran dan rukun.

Kata Kunci: Teologi, puritan, inklusif, pemahaman agama, FKUB, *mashlahat*

Introduction

Islam is a religion that has demonstrated remarkable success, even in modern times, in building a civilization that originated in the harsh, arid deserts and a fragmented tribal society amid the diverse and pluralistic community of Mecca. The success of Prophet Muhammad is not merely measured by his accomplishments but by the profound moral foundation of the civilization he established.¹ Throughout history, interpretations of Islamic teachings have evolved, leading to the emergence of various theological perspectives, including

¹ Robert N Bellah, *Beyond Belief, Essay on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), h. 50-51. Ziad M. M. Shehada, "The Islamic Influence on Built Environment in Ancient Islamic Cities: A Descriptive-Analytic Study," *Journal of Tamaddun* 15, No. 2 (2020).

traditional, modernist, purificatory, inclusive, exclusive, and fundamentalist approaches.

Indonesia, as a nation rich in diversity and plurality, spanning languages, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, holds this variety as a valuable asset that can foster national progress and global competitiveness. However, theological diversity can also become a source of tension and conflict, threatening social cohesion and harmony. Such conflicts have manifested in ethnic and religious clashes, such as those between the Dayak and Madurese communities in Kalimantan and the socio-religious conflicts in Poso and Ambon.² These conflicts pose a significant challenge to Indonesia's long-standing tradition of religious tolerance and harmony, potentially jeopardizing the future of theological coexistence in the country.

A deeper examination of religious theology reveals two distinct perspectives: purificatory (or exclusive) theology and moderate (or inclusive) theology. The purificatory perspective focuses on the effort to purify oneself, spiritually, morally, or intellectually from sin, defilement, or wrongdoing. This process often involves practices such as meditation, repentance, and spiritual disciplines aimed at achieving holiness or moral perfection. However, this approach can lead to exclusivism, characterized by intolerance and an inability to accept religious differences.

Conversely, the inclusive perspective embraces the idea that while one religious tradition may hold ultimate truth, other traditions possess partial truths as well. This approach promotes openness and rejects prejudice, grounded in the logic of universal humanity, which naturally inclines toward inclusivism. When addressing questions of religious truth, three main theological approaches arise: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Exclusivism is the most rigid, asserting that only one tradition holds the absolute truth.³ In contrast, moderate theology encourages inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for religious diversity.

In the national context of Indonesia, characterized by rich social and religious diversity, the state guarantees freedom of religion to all communities. Each religious group maintains its own worldview and way of life, contributing to a pluralistic society as envisioned by the nation's constitution. This diversity is seen not as a source of division but as an opportunity for mutual development and progress. The philosophical foundation for religious tolerance in Indonesia is Pancasila, which, while deeply infused with Islamic values and Indonesian

² Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Peacebuilding in Indonesia: Christian-Muslim Alliances in Ambon Island," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, No. 3 (2013). Hasrullah Hasrullah and Nosakros Arya, "Mapping Transformation: Lessons Learned from Poso District's Post-Conflict Deradicalization," *Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia* 9, No. 1 (2024), p. 1-13.

³ Amir Gufron, "Inklusifisme Islam Di Indonesia," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 11, No. 1 (2014), p. 1.

nationalism, promotes acceptance and coexistence.⁴ Within this framework, inclusive Islamic thought has emerged as a response to the country's pluralistic reality, fostering acceptance and helping to prevent religious extremism. However, tensions between political Islam and nationalist groups continue to affect cultural expression and challenge the social and religious harmony in Indonesia.⁵

Prominent advocates of inclusive theology and religious moderation in Indonesia include figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur), and Alwi Shihab. While many others have contributed, these three stand out due to their diverse academic backgrounds and activist experiences.⁶ Gus Dur studied in Egypt and Iraq and led Nahdlatul Ulama; Cak Nur was educated in the United States and was an influential activist within the Islamic Students Association; Alwi Shihab studied in both Egypt and America. Despite their different paths, they share a common vision of Islam as a moderate, inclusive, and tolerant faith.

The ideas promoted by these modern intellectuals resonate with classical Islamic theological traditions such as the *Mu'tazilah*, *Ash'ariyah*, *Qadariyah*, and *Maturidiyah* schools, which focused on key theological issues including monotheism, the nature of God and His attributes, divine justice, promises and warnings, faith, disbelief (*kufir*), sinful behavior (*fasiq*), and polytheism (*shirk*). While these classical theocentric concepts remain foundational, contemporary thinkers have adapted them to better address today's evolving social and religious realities. This shift toward more anthropocentric, pragmatic frameworks has given rise to new terms such as pluralist theology, harmonious theology, social theology, and contemporary Islamic theology, all aimed at offering comprehensive solutions to current social challenges.⁷

⁴ Tasman Tasman, "Islam Inklusif: Konstruksi Pemikiran untuk Dialog Umat beragama di Indonesia," *Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah dan Kemasyarakatan* 21, No. 1 (2019), p. 132-146. Moh. Ali Muttaqo and Khairil Anwar, "Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue: An Islamic Perspective on Socio-Religious Relations," *Edumalsys: Journal of Research in Education Management* 3, No. 2 (2015), p. 126-138.

⁵ Badrun Badrun, "Pancasila, Islam, and Harmonising Socio-Cultural Conflict in Indonesia," *al-Jami'ah* 61, No. 1 (2023). Benyamin Intan, "Religious Violence and the Ministry of Religion: 'Public Religion' in the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia," *International Journal of Public Theology* 13, No. 2 (2019), p. 227-246.

⁶ M. Syafii Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999. Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka dalam Beragama*, Bandung: Mizan, 1999. Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 2008. Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita: Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi*, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006.

⁷ Mujamil Qomar, "The Dynamic of Islamic Theology in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesia Islam* 9, No. 2 (2015).

Indonesia has recently witnessed troubling episodes of religious violence that starkly contrast with its historical reputation for peaceful Islam. Incidents such as the conflicts in Poso and Ambon, the Bali bombings, and the attack on the JW Marriott have led some to associate Islam with terrorism. These outbreaks of violence represent a tragic and complex part of human history and evolution. Although political tensions and economic inequalities are underlying causes, rigid and literal interpretations of religion continue to fuel exclusivism and conflict.⁸

Theology, or the religious understanding of faith, plays a vital role in providing deeper insight into fundamental religious teachings, including sacred scriptures and doctrines. This understanding helps address problems arising from differing interpretations and clarifies the moral and spiritual values embedded within religious traditions. While religious theology often originates from individual believers, it can also be shaped by formal institutions within religious organizations.

In this context, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, established the Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) under Ministerial Decree No. 93 of 2022, which outlines guidelines for strengthening religious moderation. This decree mandates all regional FKUBs to actively promote harmony among religious communities in their respective areas. The FKUB serves as a platform for fostering tolerance and dialogue among society members, government officials, community leaders, and religious figures.⁹

The FKUB plays a crucial role in maintaining interreligious harmony and tolerance throughout Indonesia. It provides a forum for religious leaders to resolve conflicts, reconcile differing viewpoints, and facilitate interfaith dialogue. Moreover, the FKUB collaborates with local governments to offer recommendations on establishing places of worship and supports policies aimed at promoting social cohesion. In essence, the FKUB contributes significantly to social stability and harmony amidst Indonesia's rich religious diversity. The presence of FKUBs across various regions has strengthened interfaith relationships through five key strategies: tolerance, equality, cooperation, mutual respect, and communication.¹⁰

⁸Ahmad Salehudin, "Understanding Religious Violence in Indonesia: Theological, Structural and Cultural Analyses," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 6, No. 2 (2012).

⁹ Muis S. A. Pikahulan, "Peran Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) dalam Merawat Toleransi dan Moderasi Beragama di Kota Ambon," *Kenosis: Jurnal Kajian Teologi* 9, No. 1 (2023).

¹⁰ Nurdin AR, et.al., "Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama in Aceh: Strategies, Roles and Barriers in Maintaining Interfaith Harmony," *Ulumuna* 25, No. 1 (2021). Marhaeni Saleh, "Toleransi Umat Beragama Di Indonesia (Perspektif Nurchalish Madjid)," *Aqidah-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah* 6, No. 1 (2020).

This study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in theological and *maslahat* (public benefit) approaches. The theological analysis examines religious understanding through various theological perspectives, while the *maslahat* framework evaluates how these perspectives benefit religious harmony within South Sulawesi society. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews with FKUB leaders, ulama (Islamic scholars), intellectuals, and pastors, complemented by a comprehensive literature review that included journal articles, books, research reports, and other relevant sources.

Puritanism and Modernism and the Religious Societies

History shows that theological differences have existed within nearly all religions worldwide and across many countries. In Islam, these theological divisions emerged shortly after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One of the earliest disputes arose when the *Khawarij*—a group known for their strict, literal interpretation of Islam—declared the followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan as infidels due to their acceptance of *tahkim* (arbitration) during the Battle of Siffin.¹¹

The aftermath of this battle gave rise to several theological schools within Islam, including the *Qadariyah*, *Jabariyah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Ash'ariyah*, and *Maturidiyah*. These schools debated key concepts related to divinity, such as the nature of God, faith and disbelief, divine and human actions, God's will and justice, the relationship between revelation and reason, and accountability for major sins. At the heart of all these discussions lies the concept of God, which occupies the highest place in human belief systems. While God's unlimited power is acknowledged, theological discourse often attempts to define this power within human conceptual limits, inevitably shaping perceptions of God in ways that align with particular groups.¹²

This theological polarization is evident in the contrasting views on human free will: the *Qadariyah* emphasize human freedom to act according to their own will, whereas the *Jabariyah* assert that humans lack any real power, as all actions are determined solely by Allah's absolute will. Positioned between these extremes is the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* school of theology, founded by Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. This school advocates the doctrine of *al-kasb* the idea that while humans possess the capacity to act, their actions are inseparable from Allah's power.¹³ This middle path of

¹¹ Arifuddin, "Ketuhanan dalam Diskursus Teologi Mazhab Klasik," *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, No. 2 (2022).

¹² Muhaemin Latif, "Membincang Ulang Teologi Islam Klasik Dalam Dunia Kontemporer," *Aqidah-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah* 5, No. 1 (2019). p. 114–129. Arifuddin, *Ketuhanan dalam Diskursus Teologi*, p. 251–262.

¹³ Supriadin Supriadin, "Al-Asy'ariyah (Sejarah, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Asy'ari dan Doktrin-Doktrin Teologinya)," *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Kislaman* 9, no. 2 (2014).

theological thought became the dominant school, embraced by the majority of Muslims worldwide.

The relationship between theology and politics during the Abbasid era significantly influenced religious understanding at the time. The Mu'tazilah school, favored by the caliph, was imposed as the official theological doctrine, leading to the Mihna, a period of religious persecution. The Mihna enforced the Mu'tazilite belief that the Quran is a created entity rather than eternal. Several scholars who opposed this view became victims of the inquisition, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who was imprisoned due to his refusal to accept the caliphal theological stance.

Similarly, theological differences have long existed within Christianity, giving rise to three major branches with distinct doctrines: Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy. A significant theological schism occurred in the 11th century, dividing Eastern and Western Christianity. Catholicism, led by a centralized Pope in the Vatican, maintained a hierarchical structure. The Protestant Reformation, initiated by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin in the 16th century, challenged Catholic doctrines and gave birth to Protestant theology.¹⁴ In contrast, Orthodox Christianity operates with a more decentralized leadership, headed by Patriarchs—originally based in Constantinople whose authority varies by tradition and region.¹⁵ While these three Christian denominations differ in theology and worship practices, their divisions are not directly analogous to the theological polarizations found in Islam, though each reflects deep historical and doctrinal distinctions.

Returning to the theological differences within Islam from the period following the Prophet Muhammad's death up to the modern era, a significant purification movement emerged in the 18th century, led by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Saudi Arabia. This movement shares similarities with Salafism in its emphasis on purifying Islamic teachings but places particular focus on eradicating practices considered *shirka*, sociating partners with God, such as grave worship, the use of amulets, and rituals deemed incompatible with pure monotheism. Wahhabism rejects the veneration of saints, grave pilgrimages, and local customs viewed as contrary to authentic Islamic beliefs. It became the official religious ideology of Saudi Arabia and has since spread globally through educational institutions, literature, and *da'wah* (Islamic outreach). Its primary

¹⁴Denni H.R. Pinontoan, "Alkitab Menurut Gereja Katolik dan Protestan: Dari Keterpisahan menuju Kontekstualisasi," *Magenang: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, No. 2 (2021), p. 107-127

¹⁵ Sofiana Desraini Wau, et.al., "Perbandingan Sejarah Gereja Ortodoks dan Katolik: Asal-usul dan Perkembangannya," *Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kerusso* 10, No. 1 (2025), p. 50-59

aim is to preserve the purity of Islam by eliminating practices regarded as deviations.¹⁶

This purification phenomenon also arose in response to broader socio-political factors, including perceived failures and stagnation in the Muslim world, especially when compared to Western advancements. Muslim intellectuals, recognizing their communities' lack of progress despite modernization efforts as seen in countries like Turkey, engaged in discussions about reform and renewal.¹⁷ The idea of purification often aligns with fundamentalist tendencies, as both seek to return to foundational religious principles. However, fundamentalism is frequently characterized by a narrow, superficial, and anti-intellectual approach that lacks deep engagement with the Quran and traditional Islamic scholarship. The term "fundamentalism" is often used pejoratively to describe hardline Islamic movements, such as those in Iran, Lebanon, Libya, and Algeria.¹⁸

Wahhabism closely aligns with, and often claims to share, the same theological foundation as Salafism, emphasizing a literal interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, a rejection of local traditions deemed deviant, and a strong focus on *Tawhid* the pure worship of God without intermediaries. Its primary objective is to return Islam to the authentic practices of the first generation of Muslims (*Salaf*). Salafism exerts significant influence in various countries, particularly in the Middle East, with notable followings in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and, more recently, Indonesia.¹⁹

Key characteristics of puritan Islam include a strict return to original sources, relying heavily on teachings directly derived from the Quran and Hadith, while minimizing or outright rejecting later interpretations influenced by local philosophy, culture, or traditions absent during the Prophet's time. This movement is firmly opposed to *bid'ah* (religious innovation) any new practices or beliefs not rooted in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings or those of his companions which are viewed as deviations from the straight path. Puritan Islam also advocates for a stringent application of Islamic Sharia law across worship, family law, social conduct, and politics, emphasizing a literal adherence to religious rules. In addition, puritan Islam stresses the

¹⁶Kahar Kahar, et.al., "Sejarah Revivalisme Islam Di Saudi Arabia: Syaikh Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab," *Retorika: Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 4, No. 2 (2022), p. 128-137.

¹⁷ Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, *Krisis Pemikiran Islam Modern* (Selangor: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995), p. 1-10.

¹⁸Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan fundamentalisme dalam Politik Islam*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), p. 6.

¹⁹Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Salafi movement in Indonesia: transnational dynamics and local development," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, No. 1 (2007).

importance of emulating the *Salaf*, the Prophet's companions, their successors (*Tabi'in*), and the successors of the successors (*Tabi'ut Tabi'in*), believing that their way of life represents the purest and most accurate model of Islamic practice.²⁰

However, the Salafi-Wahhabi tendency toward a textual and literal interpretation of Islamic teachings often leads to rigid theological understandings that readily condemn groups holding differing views. This perspective influences the issuance of fatwas and significantly impacts social interactions and harmony among diverse religious communities. The Salafi-Wahhabi method of *istibath al-ahkam* (deriving legal rulings) generally follows the principles of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah*, though it leans heavily on the Hanbali school of thought. Their legal socialization begins at the grassroots level—within small social units, educational institutions, and media—focusing particularly on study circles (*halaqah*). While this approach raises legal awareness among communities such as those in North Sumatra, it also carries the risk of conflict and social discord. Certain teachings within the Salafi-Wahhabi framework, such as *tabdi'* (declaring religious innovation), *tadlil* (religious reasoning), *tahzir* (religious caution), *takfiri* (excommunication), and the exclusive reliance on Salafi-Wahhabi scholars, can generate tensions among different religious groups and communities. Moreover, extremist ideologies emerging from Salafi-Wahhabi jihadist factions pose a potential threat to national political stability.²¹

Thus, conflicts often arise from divergent religious and theological understandings a pattern seen historically in Islam, Christianity, and other faiths. As a pluralistic and diverse nation, Indonesia holds a vital role in managing these differences. The national doctrine of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) is foundational in shaping theological discourse. While puritanical theology can foster textualism, sectarianism, and exclusivism, moderate and inclusive theologies promote tolerance, harmony, and mutual respect for diversity.

Theology, FKUB, and Social and Religious Pluralism in Indonesia

Social and religious pluralism in Indonesia has always been an inherent reality. At the dawn of independence, a significant ideological clash emerged between Islamic and nationalist groups regarding the foundation of the state. The Islamic faction advocated for Islam to be the state's basis, promoting the

²⁰Velida Apria Ningrum and Zulkifli, "Penyebaran Kelompok Islam Moderat dan Islam Puritan di Indonesia: Kajian Khaled Abou El Fadl," *Zawiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 9, No. 2 (2023).

²¹Armaya Azmi, et.al., "Method of Istibath Al-Ahkam and Law Socialization by the Salafi-Wahabi Manhaj: Impacts on Social Interactions," *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 28, No. 1 (2024), p. 23

Jakarta Charter, while the nationalist group argued for Pancasila as the state's foundation, an inclusive ideology acceptable to all groups, including non-Muslims. Ultimately, the nationalist perspective prevailed in the Constituent Assembly (*Konstituante*). This debate was rooted in differing theological understandings: Islam as not only a religion (*al-din*) but also a political entity (*al-dawlah*) and a worldly system (*al-dunya*).²²

This theological-political discourse continued into the early years of the New Order regime, during which the principle of Pancasila was firmly established as Indonesia's guiding ideology. Religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) eventually accepted the government's policies. NU, the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, upholds moderate and inclusive theological values. Founded in 1926 by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in East Java, NU's theology is rooted in the understanding of *Ahlu Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*. The organization's moderation and inclusiveness are reflected in its views on the relationship between Islam, nationalism, and nationhood. According to NU scholars, there is no theological conflict between Islam and Pancasila. Indeed, love of the homeland (*hubbul watan minal iman*), meaning that love for one's country is an integral part of faith, is a fundamental principle embraced by NU members.²³

NU's acceptance of Pancasila as the sole state ideology during the New Order era played a crucial role in resolving longstanding tensions and brought about significant theological shifts in the relationship between religion and state. Additionally, KH. Achmad Siddiq, a prominent NU figure, advanced a concept of brotherhood, *Tri Ukhuwah* that harmonizes both religious and national identities. The first is *Ukhuwwah Islamiyah*, a brotherhood rooted in shared religious beliefs and solidarity, both within the nation and across the Muslim world. The second is *Ukhuwah Wataniyyah*, a brotherhood based on a strong sense of nationalism and love for the homeland. The third is *Ukhuwwah Insaniyah* (or *Basyariyyah*), a brotherhood founded on universal humanism and shared humanity.²⁴

In addition to NU, Muhammadiyah is widely recognized as a moderate and progressive Islamic organization. Founded in Yogyakarta in 1912 by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah, is best known for its extensive social and educational initiatives. Its institutions range from kindergartens to universities,

²² Bakhtiar Efendi, *Teologi Baru Politik Islam: Pertautan antara Agama, Negara dan Demokrasi*, Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2001. Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam dan Pancasila sebagai Dasar Negara: Studi Tentang Perdebatan Dalam Konstituante*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 2006.

²³ Saefur Rochmat, "Pandangan KH Abdurrahman Wahid Tentang Islam dan Negara Pancasila," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* 14, (2022), p. 182-198.

²⁴ Mohammad Haris Taufiqur Rahman and M. Noor Harisudin, "KH. Achmad Siddiq's Thoughts on The Relationship Between Religion and State," *Constitution Journal* 2, No. 2 (2023), p. 75-96.

hospitals, orphanages, and charitable organizations managing zakat, infak, and shadaqah. In the context of Islam and the state, Muhammadiyah has made substantial contributions to promoting national values and fostering a spirit of nationalism, both through its organizational work and the influence of its leaders.²⁵

Muhammadiyah, alongside Nahdlatul Ulama, stands as one of Indonesia's foremost Islamic mass organizations that actively promote Islamic moderation. Muhammadiyah serves as a guardian and disseminator of moderate Islam throughout Indonesian society, engaging in activities that extend beyond religious boundaries to all citizens.²⁶ Despite facing significant challenges in its mission to propagate Islamic moderation, Muhammadiyah's enduring contributions to nation-building, particularly in education, social welfare, and economic development underscore its longstanding commitment to moderation over many decades.

While theological tensions between Islam and the state largely subsided during the New Order era, various social issues continue to challenge Indonesian pluralism. These include religious diversity, interfaith relations such as the establishment of places of worship, concerns about Christianization and religious proselytizing, and recurring social conflicts with religious dimensions in regions like Sampit (Central Kalimantan), Ambon (Maluku), and Poso (Central Sulawesi).²⁷ In response to these challenges, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, established the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in every regency across Indonesia.

The FKUB fosters interfaith dialogue and cooperation based on an inclusive and open theological paradigm. While religious leaders within the FKUB remain committed to their own theological beliefs, they collectively uphold a theology of tolerance, recognizing and respecting the legitimacy of different faiths without feeling threatened or diminishing their own religious convictions. This approach promotes an understanding that every religion has the right to exist and flourish within Indonesia's diverse society.

The theological stance embraced by the FKUB fosters interfaith dialogue as a pathway to mutual understanding rather than the pursuit of theological uniformity or doctrinal unification. This dialogue seeks to deepen awareness and appreciation of religious differences, thereby promoting respect and social cohesion. The FKUB underscores the importance of a theology centered on

²⁵ Muhammad Kahfi, "Peranan Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam Berkemajuan di Era Modern," *Al-Risalah* 11, No. 2 (2020), p. 110-128.

²⁶ Zuly Qodir, et.al., "Muhammadiyah Making Indonesia's Islamic Moderation Based on Maqāṣid Shari'ah," *Ijtihad* 23, No. 1 (2023).

²⁷ Masyrullahushomad "Mengokohkan Persatuan Bangsa Pasca Konflik Bernuansa Agama di Ambon dan Poso," *Istoria: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sejarah* 15, No. 1 (2019).

peace, encouraging religious leaders to cultivate interpretations that prioritize harmony at personal, communal, and interfaith levels.

Rooted in universal humanitarian values, the FKUB's theological framework transcends specific spiritual beliefs to emphasize shared moral principles such as human dignity, justice, and social welfare—values upheld by all faiths. Central to this approach is pluralism, which acknowledges the existence and validity of diverse religions as different paths toward truth and salvation, each with its unique understanding. The FKUB advocates for the acceptance of religious plurality as an inherent social reality.

Moreover, FKUB religious leaders often engage in contextual theology, interpreting religious teachings in ways that address contemporary social, cultural, and political challenges. This approach ensures that religion remains relevant and constructive in addressing issues like conflict, intolerance, and injustice. Importantly, the FKUB discourages proselytism, respecting each individual's right to follow their chosen faith without coercion, reflecting a deep theological respect for religious freedom and coexistence.

Overall, the theological stance within the FKUB emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmony and peace among religious communities by respecting each other's theological beliefs without attempting to alter or merge them. The FKUB (Forum for Interfaith Harmony) plays a vital role in overseeing the establishment of houses of worship in Indonesia, in accordance with the Joint Regulations of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006.

As part of this role, any religious group wishing to build a house of worship must first obtain a recommendation from the local FKUB. Acting as a bridge for interfaith harmony, the FKUB ensures that the construction of houses of worship does not spark conflict within the community. One key requirement is that the applicant group must demonstrate at least 90 potential users from the local community. The FKUB is responsible for verifying this data and the signatures of 60 local residents, ensuring that the support is genuine and free from coercion or manipulation.

In cases where community objections arise regarding the establishment of a house of worship, the FKUB acts as a mediator to facilitate a fair and peaceful resolution. The recommendations issued by the FKUB aim to uphold religious freedom as guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution, while promoting social harmony and preventing conflict. Thus, the FKUB serves as a critical institution in regulating the process of establishing houses of worship, safeguarding both community cohesion and the right to worship.

Theology, FKUB, and Their Influence on the Society: A Benefit Perspective

As previously explained, theology, the understanding of religion within society is closely linked to how individuals act in social reality. Consequently,

the FKUB's task is complex and challenging. The FKUB starts from within by fostering relationships among religious leaders based on dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect. Leaders from diverse faiths, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others, collaborate to address religious and social issues. Through open dialogue, they seek the best solutions to preserve interfaith harmony. The FKUB provides a platform for religious leaders to discuss issues related to diversity, differing beliefs, and societal challenges openly and honestly. This dialogue plays a crucial role in reducing tensions and enhancing understanding between religious communities.

Relationships within the FKUB are grounded in mutual respect and tolerance. Each leader recognizes that religious and belief differences are part of social reality and must be accepted and respected. When interfaith conflicts arise, FKUB leaders often act as mediators, offering peaceful approaches to de-escalate tensions and prevent further conflict.

As Wahyuddin Naro, Head of the South Sulawesi FKUB, explained, differences of opinion among religious leaders are natural and require discussion to find common ground, prioritizing tolerance and respect.²⁸ While disagreements are inevitable, constructive dialogue is essential.²⁹ Moreover, not all problems especially social ones can be resolved solely by referencing scriptures; sometimes, they require deliberation, as pastors suggest. Importantly, FKUB decisions are made unanimously, aiming to foster togetherness, harmony, and peace.³⁰

When conflicts or problems arise related to religious teachings or interfaith relations, religious leaders must act with wisdom and carefully assess the situation. According to Wahyuddin Naro, the first step is to identify the underlying social problem and then seek an appropriate solution. However, if the issue pertains directly to religious matters especially those related to worship the focus should turn to the holy scriptures.³¹ As Muh. Ghalib noted, the values contained in the holy book, their explanations in the hadith, and the perspectives of Islamic scholars should be examined to find solutions.³² In addition, family customs may serve as a valuable means to resolve conflicts, provided they are based on mutual understanding and agreement.³³

²⁸ Interview with Wahyuddin Naro, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, June 25, 2024.

²⁹ Interview with Muh. Ghalib, Professor at UIN Alauddin, Makassar, July 20, 2024.

³⁰ Interview with Father Alber Arina, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, October 5, 2024.

³¹ Interview with Wahyuddin Naro, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, June 25, 2024.

³² Interview with Muh. Ghalib, Professor at UIN Alauddin, Makassar, July 20, 2024.

³³ Interview with Muh. Natsir Siola, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, June 30, 2024.

Overall, the relationships among religious leaders within the FKUB exemplify a collaborative effort to foster harmony and peace in Indonesia's multicultural society. Their interactions are grounded in mutual respect, tolerance, openness, cooperation, empathy, neutrality, and exemplary behavior. Religious leaders honor the beliefs and practices of others, recognizing that each faith tradition is unique and that respecting these differences is essential for healthy interreligious relations.

Tolerance is a core value upheld within the FKUB, with each leader striving to appreciate differences without seeking to convert others. They respect everyone's right to practice their faith and traditions freely. Furthermore, FKUB leaders demonstrate openness to dialogue on religious and social issues, willing to listen to other perspectives and work toward common ground that supports social harmony.

A cooperative attitude forms a vital foundation for the relationships between religious leaders within the FKUB. They work together to address challenges faced by Indonesia's diverse religious communities, with the shared goal of fostering peace and harmony. Cooperation is therefore paramount. Religious leaders show empathy toward the difficulties or conflicts experienced by other faith groups and strive to offer support and constructive solutions. They actively seek to understand the perspectives and needs of each religion within the broader society.

In managing interfaith conflicts, FKUB religious leaders prioritize neutrality and provide objective, fair assessments. Acting as impartial mediators, they aim to ensure peaceful resolutions to disputes. Mutual respect among these leaders is evident not only in official meetings but also in everyday interactions. Through their conduct, they serve as role models for their communities, demonstrating how to cultivate harmonious relationships with followers of other religions.

As Wahyuddin Naro explained, when conflicts of interest arise, adherence to established rules and maintaining a neutral, unbiased stance take precedence.³⁴ Similarly, Mun. Ghalib emphasized that when religious teachings are correctly understood and applied in daily life, conflicts are unlikely to occur. Central to this peaceful coexistence is the necessity of tolerance among religious communities.³⁵

Meanwhile, regarding the theology of purification in religion, the concept focuses on purifying Islamic teachings. While purifying these teachings is indeed necessary, it does not imply rejecting traditions that have developed in

³⁴ Interview with Wahyuddin Naro, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, June 25, 2024.

³⁵ Interview with Muh. Ghalib, Professor at UIN Alauddin, Makassar, July 20, 2024.

society, provided they do not violate and are consistent with sharia.³⁶ Muh. Ghalib supports this view, stating that purifying Islamic teachings is an obligation for every Muslim.³⁷ Conversely, a pastor argued that purifying religious teachings is unnecessary because religion is already complete in itself.³⁸

Therefore, purification theology does not demand the elimination of societal traditions. In Islamic law, traditions or customs, known as *al-urf* are permissible. Islamic legal principles include the concept of *al-adah al-muhakkamah*, meaning that customs can become a source of law or jurisprudence.³⁹ In this context, a moderate and inclusive theology one that tolerates differences and fosters dialogue between Islamic teachings and traditional values, especially those promoting benefit is crucial. This approach supports and nurtures the pluralistic and diverse fabric of Indonesian society.

Similarly, when disagreements arise among religious leaders, for instance, concerning the construction of houses of worship, Yongris suggests that solutions should be sought through deliberation, emphasizing shared values and the common good. He believes that when problems occur, humanitarian values should be the foremost priority, followed by goodness, and only then the pursuit of truth, including religious truth. Issues must first be approached from a humanitarian perspective, evaluating their goodness, before engaging in discussions about their truth. These principles underpin the inclusive theology developed in Indonesia.⁴⁰

Furthermore, according to Abdullah Muh. Talib, a professor at UIN Alauddin, inclusive theology can deepen religious understanding and foster an open, respectful attitude among different faiths. Inclusive theology holds that while one's own religion is fundamentally true, it does not diminish or disrespect the beliefs of others. This approach promotes mutual respect among adherents of all religions, based on the shared values of goodness and love taught by every faith. In South Sulawesi, the understanding and practice of religious inclusivity are notably strong, ensuring full protection of religious freedom for all. The concept of *tudang sipulung*, which means "sitting together" in local tradition reflects the intense and ongoing dialogue among religious leaders. Regular seminars and workshops on the importance of inclusivity and

³⁶ Interview with Wahyuddin Naro, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, June 25, 2024.

³⁷ Interview with Muh. Ghalib, Professor at UIN Alauddin, Makassar, July 20, 2024.

³⁸ Interview with Pastor Alber Arina, Administrator of the South Sulawesi FKUB, October 5, 2024.

³⁹ Sulfan Wandu, "Eksistensi al-'Urf dan Adat Kebiasaan Sebagai Dalil Fiqh," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 2, No. 1 (2018), p. 181.

⁴⁰ Interview with Yongris, Buddhist Religious Figure, Makassar, September 24, 2024.

mutual respect are routinely organized by the FKUB (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) at both city and provincial levels.⁴¹

Religious leaders within the FKUB play a vital role in fostering tolerance, peace, and harmony in society. Regarding issues like the establishment of places of worship or major religious celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Christmas, and New Year, they ensure that decisions are made to prevent conflict and promote mutual safeguarding of each other's sacred spaces. The relationships nurtured within the FKUB strengthen tolerance and togetherness in Indonesia's diverse society, with religious leaders serving as role models who demonstrate positive attitudes toward religious differences.

Theological differences between religions are inevitable and form part of Indonesia's social reality. Therefore, religious leaders in the FKUB agree that preaching which incites interfaith conflict must be avoided. Instead, they prioritize an inclusive theology aimed at peacebuilding and fostering a future of pluralism. Universal principles such as the "love" taught by Jesus and *rahmatan li alamin* ("mercy to all worlds") in Islam serve as foundational values for resolving religious conflicts. These principles promote harmony by enhancing appreciation for religious diversity and raising awareness of the heterogeneity within Indonesian society.⁴²

In line with this, the principle of "love" in the teachings of Jesus exemplifies inclusive theology in Christianity. In a pluralistic society, this principle involves engaging in dialogue, fostering tolerance, and embodying Christian values through respectful behavior. A Christian's positive attitude toward others is essential for full acceptance and peaceful coexistence. Without such openness, rejection and division are likely to arise, which can significantly impact social cohesion and survival in Indonesia's pluralistic context.⁴³ Similar inclusive principles are found in other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, reinforcing the importance of mutual respect across faiths.

From these reflections, it is clear that the inclusive understanding promoted by religious leaders in South Sulawesi through mutual cooperation and respect helps foster harmony between religious adherents and the wider community. This approach contributes to preventing conflicts and maintaining peace among religious communities in the region. Through these efforts, FKUB

⁴¹ Interview with Abdullah Muh. Thalib, Professor of Islamic Theology at UIN Alauddin, Makassar, May 1, 2025.

⁴² Moh. Anas Kholish and Siti Rohmah, "Menjembatani Antara Misi Proselitisasi Islam-Kristen dan Keharusan Merawat Kerukunan: Konstruksi Teologis Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) Kota Malang, *Islamic Insight* 2, No. 1 (2020).

⁴³ Fransius Kusmanto, "Teologi Agama Kristen di Dalam Masyarakat Indonesia Yang Pluralistik," *Scripta: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kontekstual* 17, No. 1 (2024), p. 57-68. Abdon Arnolus Amtiran, "Memetakan Mazhab Teologi di Dalam Kekristenan: Sebuah Catatan Sejarah," *Asian Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 1, No. 1 (2022), p. 59-72.

religious leaders serve as vital guardians and promoters of interfaith harmony within society.

Thus, it can be emphasized that theological understanding deeply influences not only personal beliefs but also social attitudes and actions. In this context, the FKUB's role as an institution empowered to promote inclusive and moderate religious understanding is crucial. From the perspective of Islamic law, inclusive theology aligns with the principle of *maslahah* (public benefit), which seeks to bring about good and prevent harm. This principle ensures that all segments of the nation, state, and society receive benefit through guaranteed social harmony. Such harmony supports political and economic stability, enabling effective implementation of state policies for the welfare of all.

Conclusion

An understanding of theology profoundly influences various ideological currents such as puritanism, exclusivism, inclusivism, fundamentalism, and moderation. While theological insight can foster harmonious social actions, it can also become a source of conflict. History has witnessed theological disputes not only among Muslims but also among Christians and other religious communities. As a multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-religious country, Indonesia faces unique vulnerabilities that could threaten religious harmony. To address these challenges, the government established the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB). The FKUB functions as an authorized institution that promotes an inclusive and moderate understanding of religion among adherents of all faiths. The FKUB actively facilitates interfaith dialogue and supports religious diversity by encouraging respect for differences without pressuring others to change their beliefs. It upholds the right of every individual to practice their religion and traditions freely. Religious leaders within the FKUB demonstrate openness to dialogue on a broad range of religious and social issues. They listen attentively to the perspectives of other faith communities and seek common ground to sustain social harmony. Within the framework of Islamic law, inclusive theology, which advocates moderation, harmony, and social cohesion is aligned with the principle of *maslahah* (public benefit). This principle emphasizes bringing about good and avoiding harm, ensuring that all sectors of the nation, state, and society benefit through guaranteed harmony. Such harmony underpins political and economic stability, thereby enabling effective implementation of state policies for the welfare of all citizens.

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Interview

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