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NEGOTIATING ISLAM AND ADAT: A SOCIAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE KAILI SALENA MUSLIM COMMUNITY'S CULTURAL SYSTEM IN CENTRAL SULAWESI, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The Kaili Salena Muslim community in Buluri urban village, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, maintains a distinctive cultural system in which indigenous customary traditions (*adat*) and Islamic teachings are actively negotiated rather than simply coexisting. Through four key practices—*Pompaura*, *Potamba*, marriage ceremonies, and guest reception customs (*Neaju*)—the community expresses a form of hybrid religiosity involving cultural identity, socio-ecological concerns, and relations between customary and religious authorities. Drawing on Gutiérrez's liberation theology, Paul Tillich's concept of ultimate concern, and Talal Asad's anthropological approach to religion, this qualitative study examines how these practices are interpreted, adapted, and sustained amid contemporary social and religious change. Fieldwork conducted from February to March 2025 involved in-depth interviews with eight key informants, comprising customary leaders, a religious leader, and community members, supplemented by participant observation and document review. The findings identify three interrelated mechanisms of *adat*-Islam negotiation: strategic appropriation in the reinterpretation of *Pompaura* through Islamic meanings; syncretic fusion in the combination of customary and Islamic supplications in *Potamba*; and institutionalization in customary marriage procedures and established guest-reception arrangements. In marriage ceremonies, customary practices coexist with the Islamic marriage contract, while *Neaju* reflects established customary hospitality aligned with Islamic ethical values. These practices illustrate how the community negotiates religious meanings, cultural identity, and local authority. The study recommends sustained intergenerational dialogue and comparative studies of *adat*-Islam relations across Indonesian Muslim communities.

Keywords: Social theology; Adat-Islam negotiation; Kaili Salena; hybrid religiosity; cultural system.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dimensi teologi sosial dari sistem kebudayaan komunitas Muslim Kaili Salena di Kelurahan Buluri, Sulawesi Tengah, dengan fokus pada negosiasi antara ajaran Islam dan tradisi adat. Melalui empat praktik utama, yaitu Pompaura, Potamba, adat perkawinan, dan penerimaan tamu (Neaju), komunitas Salena menampilkan religiusitas hibrid yang mencerminkan identitas budaya,

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kepedulian sosial-ekologis, serta hubungan antara otoritas adat dan agama. Dengan menggunakan teologi pembebasan Gutiérrez, konsep ultimate concern Paul Tillich, dan pendekatan antropologi agama Talal Asad, penelitian kualitatif ini mengkaji bagaimana praktik-praktik tersebut dimaknai, diadaptasi, dan dipertahankan di tengah perubahan sosial dan keagamaan. Pengumpulan data dilaksanakan pada Februari hingga Maret 2025 melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap delapan informan kunci yang terdiri atas pemimpin adat, seorang pemimpin agama, dan anggota masyarakat, serta didukung oleh observasi partisipatif dan kajian dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan tiga mekanisme negosiasi adat-Islam yang saling berkaitan, yaitu apropriasi strategis melalui reinterpretasi Pompaura berdasarkan pemaknaan Islam; fusi sinkretis melalui perpaduan doa adat dan doa Islam dalam Potamba; serta institusionalisasi dalam tata cara perkawinan adat dan praktik penerimaan tamu yang telah melembaga. Dalam upacara perkawinan, tradisi adat berlangsung bersama akad nikah Islam, sedangkan Neaju mencerminkan praktik penghormatan terhadap tamu yang telah melembaga dalam adat dan selaras dengan nilai-nilai etika Islam. Praktik-praktik tersebut memperlihatkan bagaimana masyarakat menegosiasikan makna keagamaan, identitas budaya, dan otoritas lokal. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan dialog antargenerasi yang berkelanjutan dan kajian komparatif mengenai hubungan adat-Islam pada komunitas Muslim di berbagai wilayah Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Teologi sosial; negosiasi Adat-Islam; muslim Kaili Salena; religiusitas hibrid; sistem kebudayaan.*

مستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث أبعاد اللاهوت الاجتماعي في النظام الثقافي لمجتمع كايلي سالينا المسلم في منطقة بولوري، سولاويسي الوسطى، إندونيسيا، مع التركيز على التفاوض بين التعاليم الإسلامية والتقاليد العرفية المحلية. ومن خلال أربع ممارسات رئيسية، هي بومباورا، وبوتامبا، وطقوس الزواج العرفية، وعادات استقبال الضيوف (نياجو)، يُعبّر المجتمع عن تدين هجين يعكس الهوية الثقافية والاهتمامات الاجتماعية والبيئية والعلاقات بين السلطات العرفية والدينية. ويستند البحث إلى لاهوت التحرير عند غوستافو غوتيريز، ومفهوم الاهتمام المطلق عند بول تيليش، والمقاربة الأنثروبولوجية للدين عند طلال أسد، لتحليل كيفية تفسير هذه الممارسات وتكييفها والمحافظة عليها في ظل التحولات الاجتماعية والدينية المعاصرة. واعتمد البحث المنهج النوعي، حيث جُمعت البيانات خلال الفترة من فبراير إلى مارس 2025 من خلال مقابلات معمقة مع ثمانية مخبرين رئيسيين، شملوا زعماء عرفيين وقائدًا دينيًا وأفرادًا من المجتمع المحلي، إلى جانب الملاحظة بالمشاركة ومراجعة الوثائق. وكشفت النتائج عن ثلاث آليات مترابطة للتفاوض بين العرف والإسلام، وهي: التوظيف الاستراتيجي من خلال إعادة تفسير طقس بومباورا في ضوء المعاني الإسلامية؛ والمزج التوفيقي من خلال الجمع بين الأدعية العرفية والإسلامية في طقس بوتامبا؛ والمأسسة في إجراءات الزواج العرفية وترتيبات استقبال الضيوف المستقرة في المؤسسات العرفية. ففي مراسم الزواج، تتكامل الممارسات العرفية مع عقد النكاح الإسلامي، بينما يعكس طقس نياجو تقاليد الضيافة العرفية الراسخة والمتوافقة مع القيم الأخلاقية الإسلامية. وتوضح هذه الممارسات كيفية تفاوض المجتمع حول المعاني الدينية والهوية الثقافية والسلطة

المحلية. ويوصي البحث بتعزيز الحوار المستمر بين الأجيال وإجراء دراسات مقارنة حول العلاقة بين العرف والإسلام في المجتمعات المسلمة بمناطق مختلفة من إندونيسيا.

الكلمات الرئيسية: اللاهوت الاجتماعي؛ التفاوض بين العرف والإسلام؛ مسلمو كايلي سالينا؛ التدين الهجين؛ النظام الثقافي.

A. Introduction

Palu City, the capital of Central Sulawesi Province, has long been recognized as a social space rich in cultural heritage and religious life. The majority of its inhabitants are indigenous Kaili people, who have passed down their cultural system from generation to generation.[1] Among the various Kaili sub-ethnic groups, the Kaili Unde community in the Salena area of Buluri urban village occupies a distinctive position within the city's socio-cultural landscape. The name *Salena*, meaning "to eat together," reflects the community's life philosophy of togetherness, solidarity, and respect for human values, even in circumstances where available resources are limited.[2]

The Salena community regards customary leaders not merely as social figures but also as guardians of values, moral anchors, and mediators between indigenous traditions and Islamic teachings. Historical records from the Buluri urban village indicate that the earliest generations of Salena community leaders played a pivotal role in building and preserving social cohesion. To this day, traditions such as *Adat Pompaura*, *Adat Potamba*, customary marriage rites, and guest reception ceremonies continue to be practiced as symbols of honor, means of warding off misfortune, and expressions of respect toward distinguished guests.[3]

Building on this context, Koentjaraningrat's framework, which positions religiosity, social systems, and material culture (the realm of technology and physical objects) as integrated manifestations of a community's way of life, provides a useful initial lens for understanding how the Salena community weaves Islamic teachings and customary practices together.[4] However, when this phenomenon is examined through the lens of social theology understood as the theological analysis of social practices and cultural dynamics within religious

[1] Muhammad Fath Azzajjad et al., "Inter-Ethnic Local Wisdom-Culture Integration in Muslim Family Environment in Palu City," *Athena: Journal of Social, Culture and Society* 2, no. 4 (January 14, 2025): 435–46, https://doi.org/10.58905/athena.v2i4.361.

[2] Suparni Suparni and Rian Saputra, "Semiotic Study: Decoding the Symbolic Meaning of the Nokeso Tradition in the Salena Environment," *Pulchra Lingua: A Journal of Language Study, Literature & Linguistics* 2, no. 1 (July 11, 2023): 32–55, https://doi.org/10.58989/plj.v2i1.23.

[3] Suparni and Saputra.

[4] Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1990).

communities, these patterns appear not merely as normative overlaps but as cultural practices that are actively preserved and continually negotiated,[5] and reconstructed as a response to the pressures of modernization and the homogenization of global values amid ongoing social change. Recent scholarship on the negotiation of values and religious practices affirms this dynamic. Sumarni and Kalupae demonstrate that diverse religious values can be socially negotiated to strengthen community cohesion and harmony.[6] In a similar vein, Tahara find that community resilience depends on the ability to adapt and negotiate culture in discreet yet effective ways.[7] In the Indonesian context, Hasibuan et al. affirm that mystical rituals not only preserve cultural heritage but also strengthen religious beliefs and cultural identity, as observed among the Batak Angkola community.[8] These findings are relevant for understanding the function of Salena's rituals as centers of social cohesion and cultural resistance.

Building on this theoretical grounding, from Gutiérrez's perspective of liberation theology, the preservation of customary traditions can be understood as a form of cultural liberation. Customary traditions serve not merely as aesthetic heritage but as a collective tool for safeguarding dignity and exercising social control amid the dynamics of global change that exert pressure on local communities.[9] Several studies examine how social movements employ religious creativity to address environmental and social challenges, revealing a mechanism in which religious practices are re-created as collective strategies that bridge spirituality and social action.[10] This indicates that the customary rituals integrated with Islam in Salena have the potential to serve as both a medium of social transformation and a symbol of cultural resistance.

In a complementary sense, Paul Tillich, with his concept of *ultimate concern*[11], helps explain why customary traditions and Islamic teachings function as existential points of orientation for the community. Studies on the continuity of rituals and the transformation of

[5] Tom Boland, "The Wholly Social or the Holy Social?: Recognising Theological Tensions in Sociology," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 81, no. 2 (March 14, 2020): 174–92, https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2019.1705176.

[6] Sri Sumarni and Abdulaziz K Kalupae, "Preserving the Values of Cultural Negotiation through Social Learning: 'Two Religion Community Life' Case Study in Phattalung, Southeast Thailand," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (July 27, 2020): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.5947.

[7] Tasrifin Tahara, "Cultural Resilience and Syncretism: The Towani Tolotang Community's Journey in Indonesia's Religious Landscape," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (December 19, 2023): 233–46, https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1863.

[8] Armyn Hasibuan, Miswari Miswari, and Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, "Religious and Cultural Demarcation: The Mysticism Dimension in the Pajonjong Bagas Tradition by the Batak Angkola Muslim Community," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 2 (August 1, 2024): 283, https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i2.19585.

[9] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation 50th Anniversary Edition* (Orbis Books, 2023).

[10] Jonathan Davis Smith, Ronald Adam, and Samsul Maarif, "How Social Movements Use Religious Creativity to Address Environmental Crises in Indonesian Local Communities," 2023, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4420843.

[11] Paulina Sosnowska and Piotr Zańko, "Three Kairoi – Three Aions. Paul Tillich, Ultimate Concern and Pedagogy of Radical Hope," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 41, no. 4 (July 8, 2022): 389–404, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-022-09834-8.

religious practices in various Muslim communities reveal similar patterns in the negotiation between religion and culture. For instance, Bowen found that the Gayo community transformed Islamic elements within funeral rituals while maintaining non-religious social bonds.[12] Furthermore, Saefudin et al. demonstrate that the Aboge community preserves its ritual traditions through creative adaptations to social and cultural changes.[13] These studies affirm that rituals are not merely habits but shape the meaning of life and collective priorities. In other words, the Salena rituals that intertwine Islamic values and customary traditions serve as expressions of the highest concern, guiding the community's social ethics and way of life.

Furthermore, Talal Asad reminds us that religious practices are the product of historical and cultural constructions that are continually renegotiated.[14] This provides a useful lens for interpreting the dynamics of Salena's ritual practices within changing social conditions, including the period following the 2018 Palu earthquake. Studies on local Islamic traditions in Indonesia confirm that cultural and religious practices function as social capital that communities can mobilize for resilience and cultural continuity in the face of crisis and rapid social change, though the effectiveness of such cultural resources is always shaped by specific local conditions and community dynamics. This approach positions Salena's customs as a dynamic entity, constantly evolving yet maintaining the core values that ensure their relevance for the present generation.

Situating the Study within the Literature on Islam and Local Culture

A review of the literature reveals that the relationship between Islam and customary traditions has been discussed across various disciplines. Studies in Islamic Studies, such as those by Bowen[15] and Hefner,[16] highlight the process of adapting Islamic teachings within the context of local cultures in Southeast Asia. Research in the Anthropology of Religion examines how rituals and cultural symbols are integrated with religious values, while Woodward examines paradigms of decolonial Islam in Indonesia.[17] However, most of these studies remain focused on regions such as Java, Sumatra, or Lombok, with relatively few examining Muslim

[12] Robert W. Hefner and John R Bowen, "Muslims Through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society.," *Man* 29, no. 4 (December 1994): 1012, https://doi.org/10.2307/3034011.
[13] Arif Saefudin et al., "History, Cultural Shifts, and Adaptation in Social Change: An Ethnographic Study in the Aboge Islamic Community," *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research* 4, no. 2 (April 14, 2023): 303–10, https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i2.596.
[14] Talal Asad et al., "Portrait," *Religion and Society* 11, no. 1 (September 1, 2020): 1–29, https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2020.110102.
[15] Hefner and Bowen, "Muslims Through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society."
[16] Robert W Hefner, "Islam and Politics in Asia," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford University PressNew York, NY, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.2200.
[17] Mark Woodward, "Paradigms, Models, and Counterfactuals: Decolonializing the Study of Islam in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 32, no. 1 (April 30, 2025): 101–35, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v32i1.46005.

communities in Central Sulawesi, particularly the Kaili Salena ethnic group from a social theology perspective that combines the analytical frameworks of liberation theology, Islamic anthropology, and the philosophy of religion.

Recent studies have reinforced the understanding of religious identity negotiation within pluralistic societies. Sari et al. assert that Islam in Indonesia possesses a multicultural character that allows for the internalization of local cultural values without losing its theological essence.[18] Sirnopati et al., in their study on Wetu Telu Islam, reveal a reciprocal dialectic between Islamic law and local traditions, in which adaptation is undertaken not only by customary communities toward religious teachings but also by religious authorities toward traditional practices.[19] Fakhrurrozi and Mashuri document the transformation of the *Balia* ritual into *Sakaya* within the Kaili community in the aftermath of the Palu disasters, a process that carries social, cultural, and political implications.[20] These findings reinforce Asad's view that religious practices are dynamic, contextual, and continually reconstructable in response to social needs. A related perspective is offered by Manan et al., whose findings show that funeral rituals in Aceh are not merely religious obligations but also distinctive customary practices that affirm regional identity and maintain community cohesion.[21] This perspective provides a relevant comparative framework for the study of the Salena community, in which custom and Islam are not merely coexisting but are interwoven to form a unified set of values that serves as the guiding principles of community life.

Research Gap, Questions, and Theoretical Framework

A review of the existing literature reveals an underexplored dimension in studies of the Muslim Kaili Salena community in Central Sulawesi, particularly from a social-theological perspective. Previous research has examined the symbolic meanings of the Nokeso tradition, a Kaili rite associated with adolescence, in the Salena environment, while other studies have explored the transformation of the Balia ritual into Sakaya within the wider Kaili community.[22] Although these studies provide important insights into local ritual practices and cultural

[18] Hotna Sari, Hasan Sazali, and Faridah Faridah, "Culturally Based Religious Moderation Communication in Bagansiapiapi for Interfaith Harmony," *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)* 10, no. 2 (July 28, 2025): 93–120, https://doi.org/10.18326/inject.v10i2.4736.

[19] Retno Sirnopati, Abdul Rasyad, and Ahmad Tohri, "Islamic Variant of Sasak: Transition and Dialectics in the Wetu Telu Community in Lombok, Indonesia," *Journal of Asian Social Science Research* 4, no. 2 (December 20, 2022): 165–82, https://doi.org/10.15575/jassr.v4i2.66.

[20] Hatta Fakhrurrozi et al., "Sakaya: Balia Tradition Transformation in The Kaili Tribe Community of Palu, Central Sulawesi," *El Harakah: Jurnal Budaya Islam* 24, no. 2 (November 19, 2022): 175–92, https://doi.org/10.18860/eh.v24i2.17238.

[21] Abdul Manan et al., "The Unity of Community in Cemetery: An Ethnographic Study of the Islamic Burial Rituals in Aceh, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 1 (February 15, 2024): 21, https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i1.14965.

[22] Suparni and Saputra, "Semiotic Study: Decoding the Symbolic Meaning of the Nokeso Tradition in the Salena Environment."

adaptation, the present study focuses more specifically on how Pompaura, Potamba, marriage ceremonies, and guest reception customs reflect the relationship between Islamic teachings and customary traditions. This relationship is examined not merely as a process of formal acculturation but also as an ongoing negotiation of religious meanings, cultural identity, and customary authority. Such an approach is consistent with Nakamura's emphasis on integrating anthropological analysis with an understanding of the Great Tradition of normative Islam in the study of local Muslim communities.[23]

In the broader context of Muslim communities in Indonesia, studies such as that of Zuhri and Wahyudi have highlighted the relationship between Islamic faith, cultural identity, and existential concerns among minority Muslim communities.[24] Building on this broader discussion, the present study examines the negotiation between Islam and *adat* in Salena through three analytical categories: strategic appropriation, syncretic fusion, and institutionalization. These categories are used to interpret the ritual practices discussed in this article, particularly the ways customary meanings and Islamic values interact within specific social and religious contexts.

This study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do the Kaili Salena community's major ritual practices reflect the negotiation between Islamic teachings and indigenous customary traditions? (2) What mechanisms of negotiation characterize the relationship between *adat* authority and Islamic religious authority within Salena's cultural system? (3) How do liberation theology, Tillich's concept of ultimate concern, and Asad's anthropological framework illuminate the dynamics of *adat*-Islam integration in the Salena context?

The theoretical framework of this study integrates three complementary perspectives. Gutiérrez's liberation theology provides a perspective for understanding the preservation of customary traditions in relation to cultural dignity and collective agency, particularly in the context of social change.[25] Tillich's concept of ultimate concern helps explain the religious and existential significance that community members may attribute to their customary practices. [26]

[23] Mitsuo Nakamura, "Anthropology of Civilization: Personal Reflections on Anthropological Approach in the Study of Muslim Societies in Southeast Asia," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 2 (2020): 140–53, https://doi.org/10.18196/AIIJIS.2020.0118.140-153.

[24] Achmad Muhibin Zuhri and Winarto Eka Wahyudi, "Teologi Sosial Muslim Tionghoa: Keimanan, IIdentitas Kultural Dan Problem Eksistensiasi," *Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudyaan Islam* 29, no. 2 (2020): 103–11, https://jurnalfuda.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/empirisma/article/view/170.

[25] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation 50th Anniversary Edition*.

[26] Samuel Andrew Shearn, "Tillich's Theodicies," *Modern Theology* 39, no. 1 (January 13, 2023): 19–46, https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12808.

Asad's anthropological approach provides a perspective for examining how religious practices are interpreted and negotiated within particular historical and social contexts.[27] Together, these three frameworks offer a multi-layered interpretation of the relationship between Islamic teachings, customary traditions, and the socio-theological meanings of Salena's cultural system.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design, combining theological, sociological, and anthropological approaches to examine the cultural practices of the Kaili Unde ethnic group of the Salena community in Buluri urban village, Palu City. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration of lived meanings, cultural practices, and the social dynamics of *adat*-Islam negotiation that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. Fieldwork was conducted from February to March 2025, encompassing multiple visits to Salena, the Bantaya customary hall, and the Buluri urban village Office.

The study reports interviews with eight key informants selected purposively for their knowledge of Salena's customary and religious practices. These included customary leaders, a religious leader, and other community participants familiar with local rituals. The study also draws on informal conversations with community members during fieldwork. Recruitment involved local gatekeepers and snowball referrals. These interviews capture the perspectives of local actors involved in Salena's customary and religious practices.

Data were collected through three primary methods. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with both formal and informal community leaders, focusing on the meanings, functions, and legitimacy negotiations embedded in each ritual practice. Second, direct participant observation was carried out during community gatherings and preparatory activities for ritual events, including deliberations at the Bantaya. Third, supporting documentation was reviewed, including subdistrict administrative records, community historical accounts, and prior ethnographic studies of the Salena area.

The researcher served as the primary instrument in data collection and interpretation. The analysis involved organizing the available interview, observation, and documentary materials around the meanings and practices of the four selected rituals. The discussion compares customary elements, Islamic interpretations, and the roles of customary and religious authorities across these practices. The three categories of strategic appropriation, syncretic fusion, and institutionalization are used to organize the interpretation of the relationship

[27] Asad et al., "Portrait."

between *adat* and Islam. Interview accounts are examined alongside observational and documentary materials to identify similarities and differences across the four ritual practices. These analytical categories provide a contextual interpretation of the relationship between *adat* and Islam in Salena.

C. Discussion

1. The Position of Salena in Government Structure, Geography, Demography, and Culture

Buluri urban village, located in Ulujadi District, Palu City, Central Sulawesi Province, covers an area of 14.45 km² and comprises eight neighborhood units (*Rukun Tetangga*, RT) and two community units (*Rukun Warga,* RW).[28] Within Buluri urban village, the Salena neighborhood includes RT 02/RW 01 and was historically identified as RW 6 before administrative restructuring.[29] This administrative setting places Salena within urban village governance and local RT/RW coordination.[30]

Geographically, Salena is situated on the western slopes of the mountains surrounding Palu City at an elevation of approximately 120 meters above sea level, with a terrain that requires an uphill ascent to reach.[31] This topographical condition inspired the name "Salena," which in the Kaili language means "to ascend" or "climb." Local historical accounts also note that in the Kaili Unde dialect, "Salena" means "to eat together," referring to a community tradition in the 1960s of inviting every passerby of Mount Kaombo to share a meal. As Datu Mustika Adam, the Kaili Salena community leader, explained during fieldwork:

> "The name Salena carries two meanings, both equally important. To climb, because our place is high on the hill. And to eat together, because our ancestors always shared food with anyone who passed by. This is who we are as a people."[32]

This area borders Silae Subdistrict to the north, Kamonji Subdistrict to the east, Tipo Subdistrict to the south, and Watusampu Subdistrict to the west. Land use is dominated by residential settlements and dense forests in the hilly areas, with potential for agricultural land, plantations, and production forests.[33] This geographic isolation has historically reinforced the

[28] Findings from Observations and Document Reviews on the Geographic Location during a Visit to the Buluri urban village office, February 12, 2025. For the official 2023 figures for Buluri urban village, see Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Palu, Kecamatan Ulujadi Dalam Angka 2024 (Palu: BPS Kota Palu, 2024), 4, table 1.1.1, https://palukota.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/09/26/358515be1b47359e5639a880/ulujadi-district-in-figures-2024.html.
[29] Interview with the Buluri Subdistrict Head (Akmal, S.H.), February 12, 2025.
[30] Interview with the Buluri Subdistrict Head (Akmal, S.H.), February 12, 2025.
[31] Findings from Observations during a Visit to the Kaili Salena Customary Area, February 13, 2025.
[32] Interview with the Kaili Salena Community Leader (Datu Mustika Adam), March 21, 2025.
[33] Findings from Observations during a Visit to the Kaili Salena Customary Area, February 13, 2025.

community's strong sense of collective identity and contributed to the sustained practice of customary traditions as markers of place-based belonging.

From a demographic perspective, 2023 data indicate that the population of Buluri urban village reached 4,057 inhabitants, according to BPS Kota Palu.[34] Specifically in Salena, records show a population of 613 residents, comprising 319 males and 294 females, distributed across three neighborhood units (RTs).[35] The population composition shows a male predominance, while the majority of the community (approximately 97.6%) adheres to Islam, with 598 Muslims and 15 non-Muslims.[36] Nonetheless, belief in ancestral customs remains strong, especially among the older generation, so that customary law functions as a social control mechanism regulating community behavior alongside Islamic norms.[37]

The customary legal culture of Salena regulates various offenses ranging from disputes and immoral acts to property violations, with sanctions imposed in the form of fines consisting of goods such as white plates, machetes, chickens, goats, or cattle, depending on the severity of the violation. As Like Sando, the Salena customary leader, explained:

> "Our customary law has its own system of accountability that runs alongside religious law. If someone violates community norms, they must appear before the customary council and pay the required fines. The type and quantity of the fine depends on the seriousness of the offense. This is how we maintain social order and preserve harmony in our community."[38]

This mechanism is led by the customary leader with the support of other traditional figures, reflecting the social function of customary law as a binder of solidarity and a guarantor of community order.[39] This phenomenon aligns with the structural functionalist perspective, which positions local norms as pillars of social stability, while also confirming the findings of Bowen[40] and Hefner[41] regarding the role of religion and custom in shaping social structures within local Muslim communities in Southeast Asia.

[34] Findings from Observations and Document Reviews on the Geographic Location during a Visit to the Buluri urban village office, February 12, 2025. For the official 2023 figures for Buluri urban village, see Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Palu, Kecamatan Ulujadi Dalam Angka 2024 (Palu: BPS Kota Palu, 2024), 26, table 3.1.1, https://palukota.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/09/26/358515be1b47359e5639a880/ulujadi-district-in-figures-2024.html.

[35] Findings from Observations and Document Reviews on the Geographic Location during a Visit to the Buluri urban village office, February 12, 2025.

[36] Findings from Observations and Document Reviews on the Geographic Location during a Visit to the Buluri urban village office, February 12, 2025.

[37] Findings from Observations during a Visit to the Kaili Salena Customary Area, February 13, 2025.

[38] Interview with the Salena Customary Leader (Like Sando), February 19, 2025.

[39] Findings from Observations at the Bantaya Customary Hall, Salena, February 19, 2025.

[40] Hefner and Bowen, "Muslims Through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society."

[41] Robert W Hefner, "How Indonesia Became a World Leader in Islamic Education: A Historical Sociology of a Great Transformation," *Muslim Education Review* 1, no. 1 (July 26, 2022): 3–18, https://doi.org/10.56529/mer.v1i1.25.

Thus, Salena's cultural system is situated within the interaction of local governance, geographical conditions, community relationships, and customary institutions. The community's hilly landscape and historical narratives contribute to a distinctive sense of place-based identity, while customary rules continue to shape social relationships and communal responsibilities. Within this setting, the relationship between Islam and adat is expressed through customary practices that involve both religious meanings and local forms of social authority.

2. The Implementation of the Kaili Unde Cultural System: A Social Theological Perspective

The Salena community in Buluri urban village, Palu City, continues to maintain a cultural system inherited through generations. Among the cultural practices still upheld are the *Pompaura* custom, the *Potamba* custom, the guest reception custom, and the marriage custom. These four traditions are carried out based on ancestral customs that are carefully preserved and passed down to subsequent generations. As Datu Mustika Adam explained in direct terms:

> "Our customs are not separate from Islam. They are how our ancestors expressed their faith in ways that made sense in this land, in this community, and at that time. We preserve them because they carry both spiritual and cultural meaning. To abandon them would be to lose part of who we are."[42]

Historical value refers to the continuity of ancestral heritage that must be preserved and passed down from generation to generation as a form of local wisdom.[43] The relationship between mystical elements in customary practices and Islamic beliefs is also reflected in the interpretation offered by Datu Mustika Adam, who explained:

> "Islamic doctrine acknowledges the existence of the unseen world. So, when our customs engage with these unseen forces, we see this as being consistent with our religion. The two do not contradict each other."[44]

This interpretation illustrates how customary beliefs are understood by local traditional authorities in relation to Islamic teachings, forming part of the community's understanding of its religious and cultural identity.

3. The *Pompaura* Custom

Pompaura is a customary ritual involving the offering of agricultural products to the beings believed to inhabit the sea. The word *pampa* means "agriculture" or "plantation." Agricultural products such as rice, tubers, corn, cocoa, and other commodities are collected by

[42] Interview with the Kaili Salena Community Leader (Datu Mustika Adam), March 21, 2025.
[43] Findings from Observations during a Visit to the Kaili Salena Customary Area, February 13, 2025.
[44] Interview with the Kaili Salena Community Leader (Datu Mustika Adam), March 21, 2025.

the Salena community and brought to Palu Bay, placed in a boat, and then set adrift in the middle of the sea by the customary leader, accompanied by rituals and offerings according to ancestral belief systems. The purpose is to ward off calamities and disasters. Like Sando, the Salena customary leader, described the ritual as follows:

> "In *Pompaura*, we bring the boat to Palu Bay and set it adrift. The farther the boat goes, the farther our misfortunes go with it. This is our way of asking for protection for the community."[45]

Tamin, another influential customary leader in the Salena community, provided a complementary explanation:

> *"Pompaura* is about feeding the spirits of the sea so they leave our community in peace. We make offerings called *numpakoni puentasi*. Without this, we believe the ocean could bring harm to our people."[46]

The *Pompaura* procession begins at Bantaya Salena, where boats are carried to the shores of Palu Bay.[47] This ritual is led by the Tutua Nuada, a customary ritual leader, beginning the previous night with the Balia ceremony, a Kaili tradition rooted in the belief that supernatural forces can both assist and bring misfortune or disease. Suhendi, the Imam of Salena Mosque and a key religious leader, offered the following perspective:

> "As imam, I understand that *Pompaura* is the community's way of expressing gratitude and seeking divine protection. The offerings and rituals carry the intention of asking God to keep the sea safe. The form may differ from formal Islamic prayer, but the underlying intention aligns with Islamic values of reliance on God."[48]

Suhendi also noted that the execution of this custom is tied to harvest abundance; the more plentiful the agricultural produce, the more complete the offerings prepared for the sea. The accounts of *Pompaura* reveal different emphases in the interpretation of its religious meaning. While Tamin associates the offerings with the spirits believed to inhabit the sea, Suhendi interprets the ritual through the Islamic understanding of gratitude and reliance on Allah. These perspectives illustrate how the meanings of an inherited customary practice are negotiated through different religious interpretations. In this context, *Pompaura* exemplifies strategic appropriation, whereby the customary ritual form is retained while its intention is articulated in relation to Islamic values of gratitude and divine protection.

[45] Interview with the Salena Customary Leader (Like Sando), February 19, 2025.
[46] Interview with the Salena Customary Leader (Tamin), March 10, 2025.
[47] Findings from Observations during the Pompaura Ceremonial Activities, Salena, February 2025.
[48] Interview with the Imam of Salena Mosque (Suhendi), February 19, 2025.

4. The *Potamba* Custom

The *Potamba* custom is performed during prolonged dry seasons as a prayer for rain to support the irrigation of agricultural fields and plantations, which are the primary sources of livelihood for the Salena community. Water scarcity negatively impacts crop yields, making this ritual an essential means for sustaining the community's economy. The ceremony is led by customary leaders and attended by community members, beginning with careful planning and preparation of offerings made from the harvest.[49] Tamin explained the *Potamba* ritual in direct terms:

> "*Potamba* is our prayer for rain. The community comes to the customary leader, who leads us in asking the Creator for water for our fields. Without rain, our crops fail and the whole community suffers. We are not praying to nature; we are praying to God through our customary form."[50]

This framing is significant: it positions *Potamba* simultaneously as a supplication to God, a customary practice, and an ecological response to environmental risk. Suhendi, the mosque imam, described how the religious and customary dimensions of the ritual converge in practice:

> "In *Potamba*, I recite Islamic prayers while the customary leader recites the traditional Noviata supplication. We are both asking God for rain. The customary form and the Islamic form exist side by side. We reinforce each other."[51]

The *Potamba* sequence begins with the *Balia* ceremony at night, followed the next morning by the recitation of the *Noviata*, a traditional supplication for divine blessing and rainfall. Potamba thus exemplifies what this study terms "syncretic fusion," in which the traditional Noviata supplication and Islamic prayers are brought together within a shared ceremonial setting.[52] This combination reflects the relationship between customary ritual forms and Islamic expressions of dependence on God.

5. Marriage Custom

Marriage in the Salena community shares similarities with the general Kaili tradition, beginning with a formal proposal (*neduta*) from the groom's side to the bride's family. Once the proposal is accepted, two important matters are discussed: (1) the amount of money brought by the groom's family, and (2) the wedding date, which is determined by the customary leader based on lunar calculations. A unique aspect of the Salena community lies in the symbol of

[49] Findings from Observations and Community Records on Agricultural Practices in Salena, February-March 2025.
[50] Interview with the Salena Customary Leader (Tamin), March 10, 2025.
[51] Interview with the Imam of Salena Mosque (Suhendi), February 19, 2025.
[52] Findings from Participant Observation during Potamba Preparation Activities, Salena, March 2025.

acceptance during the proposal: the groom's family offers cigarettes and a lighter to the bride's family. If the cigarettes and lighter are taken and used, the proposal is considered accepted.[53]

The marriage ceremony integrates both customary and religious elements. Customary components include *nantale pingga* (the groom's declaration of responsibility), *nantunu manu* (the slaughtering of a chicken as a marriage marker), and *nanggovo eo pempone* (the determination of the day the couple begins marital relations). Following the customary rituals, the Islamic marriage contract (akad nikah) is performed in accordance with Islamic law (*Sharia*) by an imam or official from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). The ceremony is attended by customary leaders, religious figures, the families of the bride and groom, and community members, with food prepared collectively through *gotong royong* (communal mutual assistance) as an expression of social solidarity.[54]

The marriage ceremony demonstrates a clear relationship between customary procedures and Islamic marriage requirements. Customary practices, including the proposal process, symbolic exchanges, and the determination of the wedding date, regulate social and familial relationships, while the *akad* nikah establishes the marriage within an Islamic legal framework. These practices operate within a shared ceremonial sequence in which customary and religious authorities perform complementary roles. This arrangement illustrates institutionalization in the context of Salena marriage traditions, whereby inherited customary procedures are maintained alongside established Islamic marriage practices. The combination strengthens the social significance of marriage as both a religious commitment and a communal institution.

6. Guest Reception Custom (*Neaju*)

The arrival of guests, especially honored guests such as officials or customary leaders, is regarded as a special event. The community therefore conducts the *Neaju* ceremony, which in the Kaili Unde language means "to shout." This procession involves two or more customary leaders who shout, jump, and wield spears (*tavala*). Guests are welcomed by walking over a spread of betel leaves and leaves locally known as *kamonji* toward the *Bantaya*, the customary meeting hall. The welcoming is complemented by customary equipment such as spears and symbolic foliage to create an atmosphere of festivity and honor for the guests.[55]

[53] Interview with the Kaili Salena Community Leader (Datu Mustika Adam), March 21, 2025.
[54] Findings from Observations and Interviews with Community Members on Marriage Customs, Salena, February-March 2025.
[55] Findings from Observations during a Neaju Welcoming Ceremony, Bantaya Salena, February 2025.

From a social-theological perspective, the *Neaju* ceremony expresses customary authority through the ceremonial roles of traditional leaders, the use of ritual objects, and the procession toward the Bantaya. These elements communicate collective identity, respect, and the continuing significance of customary institutions in community life. The practice of honoring distinguished guests also corresponds with the Islamic ethical principle of *ikram al-dayf* (honoring guests). The established customary hospitality arrangements of *Neaju* illustrate how institutionalized adat practices can be interpreted in relation to Islamic values of generosity and respect. Through this ceremonial expression, the community affirms its cultural identity while maintaining forms of hospitality that are meaningful within both customary and Islamic ethical traditions.

The cultural system of the Salena community in Buluri urban village reflects the interaction of *adat* and Islam within its social, cultural, and ecological setting. *Pompaura* expresses communal concerns about misfortune and protection, *Potamba* addresses rainfall and agricultural uncertainty, marriage ceremonies combine customary procedures with Islamic marriage rites, and *Neaju* represents customary hospitality and respect for visiting guests. Together, these practices connect religious meanings with communal cooperation, social relationships, and the preservation of local cultural identity.

From a social-theological perspective, these rituals demonstrate how customary practices acquire meanings through their relationship with Islamic teachings and local religious authority. The interaction between customary institutions and Islamic practices reflects broader discussions of Islam and local culture in Southeast Asia.[56] Ritual symbolism and the expression of collective identity have also been examined in the Banda Neira customary community in the Maluku Islands[57] and in studies of traditional ceremonies among Bugis communities in South Sulawesi. [58] These comparative cases highlight the continuing significance of ritual traditions in expressing cultural identity, while the Salena case illustrates how such practices are interpreted through different forms of *adat*-Islam negotiation.

Paul Tillich's concept of ultimate concern offers a perspective for understanding the religious and existential significance attributed to customary rituals within the community.[59] The practices also express social relationships, cultural identity, and the authority of traditional

[56] Hefner, "Islam and Politics in Asia."
[57] Hendrajaya Isnaeni et al., "Sacred Places, Ritual and Identity: Shaping the Liminal Landscape of Banda Neira, Maluku Islands," *Land* 14, no. 5 (May 20, 2025): 1109, https://doi.org/10.3390/land14051109.
[58] M Fais Satrianegara et al., "Cultural Traditional and Special Rituals Related to the Health in Bugis Ethnics Indonesia," *Gaceta Sanitaria* 35 (2021): S56–58, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2020.12.016.
[59] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, vol. 124 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

institutions. Their ceremonial forms communicate shared meanings through symbols, collective participation, and inherited social obligations. In this respect, the Salena rituals are consistent with Bell and Kreinath's understanding of ritual as a dynamic practice through which social relationships and collective identities are constituted. [60]

7. Negotiating Cultural Traditions and Islamic Values in Kaili Salena Rituals within a Social Theological Perspective

The practices of *Pompaura*, *Potamba*, marriage ceremonies, and guest reception among the Kaili Salena community illustrate different relationships between Islamic teachings and inherited customary traditions. These practices demonstrate how religious meanings are interpreted through ritual forms, communal relationships, and local cultural experiences. Such interactions reflect the significance of lived religious practices in everyday social life, as discussed by McGuire.[61] In the Salena context, the coexistence and reinterpretation of Islamic and customary elements can be understood as a form of hybrid religiosity.

The relationship between customary traditions and Islamic teachings may involve both convergence and differences in religious interpretation. Comparative studies of religion and conflict in South and Southeast Asia provide a broader context for understanding the interaction between religious beliefs and social practices.[62] Within the Kaili context, the transformation of Balia into Sakaya illustrates how customary traditions are adapted to changing social conditions.[63] Similar interactions between local ritual practices and Islamic values have also been examined in the Kadhisah tradition in East Java.[64] In Salena, the contrasting interpretations of *Pompaura* and the combined supplications of *Potamba* demonstrate how inherited ritual practices continue to acquire religious meanings through local interpretation.

Differences in the interpretation of customary rituals also emerge across generations within the Salena community. The relationship between ancestral practices and Islamic monotheism becomes particularly significant when younger community members encounter different forms of religious education. As one community member noted informally during fieldwork: "The older generation does not question these customs. For them, *adat* and Islam are one thing. But among younger people, there are questions. Some go to Islamic boarding

[60] Catherine Bell and Jens Kreinath, "Ritual," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Wiley, 2021), 382–99, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119092797.ch27.
[61] Meredith B McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2008).
[62] Linell E Cady and Sheldon W Simon, *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia* (Routledge New York, 2007).
[63] Fakhrurrozi et al., "Sakaya: Balia Tradition Transformation in The Kaili Tribe Community of Palu, Central Sulawesi."
[64] Iftilah Dian Humayroh, Muhammad Faiz, and Imam Muhsin, "Nilai-Nilai Budaya Islam Dan Lokal Dalam Tradisi Ritual Kadhisah Di Desa Arjasa Kecamatan Arjasa Kabupaten Jember," *Batuthah: Jurnal Sejarah Padaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (March 2, 2025): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.38073/batuthah.v4i1.2210.

schools and come back with different views." This account illustrates how religious education and generational experiences contribute to the continuing reinterpretation of customary traditions. The negotiation of *adat* and Islam therefore involves both the preservation of inherited practices and the emergence of differing religious understandings.

Marriage ceremonies and guest reception customs demonstrate different expressions of the relationship between *adat* and Islamic values. In marriage ceremonies, customary procedures operate alongside the Islamic marriage contract, while *Neaju* expresses customary hospitality that corresponds with Islamic ethical teachings. These practices reflect the continuing interaction between religious meanings and cultural traditions in local Muslim communities. Comparable relationships between Islamic thought, cultural identity, and social practices are discussed in Ahmed's work on Islamic anthropology[65] and in the volume edited by Masud, Salvatore, and van Bruinessen on Islam and modernity.[66]

From the perspective of Gutiérrez's liberation theology, the preservation of customary traditions can be interpreted in relation to cultural dignity, collective agency, and the continuity of communal identity.[67] Tillich's concept of ultimate concern offers a complementary perspective on the existential significance that community members attribute to their religious and customary practices.[68] Talal Asad's anthropological approach further highlights the role of historical context, religious interpretation, and local authority in shaping ritual practices.[69] Within this theoretical framework, the Salena rituals illustrate several patterns of *adat*-Islam negotiation: strategic appropriation in *Pompaura*, syncretic fusion in *Potamba*, and institutionalization in customary marriage ceremonies. In *Neaju*, institutionalization is reflected in established customary hospitality arrangements whose ethical meanings correspond with Islamic values of respect and generosity.

[65] Akbar S Ahmed, "Toward Islamic Anthropology," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 3, no. 2 (December 1, 1986): 181–230, https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v3i2.2893.
[66] Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, and Martin van Bruinessen, eds., *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009).
[67] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation 50th Anniversary Edition*.
[68] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*.
[69] Asad et al., "Portrait."

Table 1
Negotiation of Cultural Traditions and Islamic Values in the Rituals of the Kaili Salena Community from a Social Theology Perspective

Ritual/ Tradition	Cultural Elements	Islamic Elements	Negotiation Mechanism	Social Theological Meaning
Pompaura	Offerings, ancestral incantations, symbols of communal protection	Intentions of gratitude to Allah and reliance on divine protection	Strategic appropriation: reinterpretation of ritual to align its intention with Islamic values	Space for communal protection and communal concern about natural misfortune through prayer-like engagement with the sea
Potamba	Harvest offerings, traditional incantations, ecological rituals for warding off drought	Islamic prayers, concept of reliance on Allah (*tawakal*)	Syncretic fusion: simultaneous recitation of traditional Noviata and Islamic prayers for rain	Protection and blessing within the framework of communal reliance on God
Marriage	Customary symbols (*neduta, nantunu manu*), local procession, lunar calendar consultation	Marriage contract (*akad nikah*), prayer recitations, Islamic wedding norms	Institutionalization: integration of customary symbols into an Islamic ceremonial framework	Strengthening social solidarity and constructing an inclusive communal identity
Guest Reception (*Neaju*)	Traditional welcome symbols (tavala spear, ceremonial leaves), customary hospitality procedures	Islamic ethics of *ikram al-dayf* (honoring guests)	Institutionalization of customary hospitality, interpreted in relation to Islamic values.	Symbol of honor and communal respect consistent with both *adat* authority and Islamic hospitality values

Source: *Authors' analysis of field interviews, observations, and documentary materials*

Table 1 demonstrates that the negotiation of cultural traditions and Islamic values in the ritual practices of the Kaili Salena community operates through three distinct but interrelated mechanisms. The cultural elements encompass customary practices, local symbols, and environmental wisdom characteristic of each ritual, while the Islamic elements highlight the values of sharia or theological teachings integrated into these practices. The negotiation mechanisms describe the community's processes of reconciling these two systems. These aspects collectively illustrate the emerging socio-theological meanings, namely the

strengthening of solidarity and the preservation of cultural identity, [70] and the harmonization between faith and tradition. These findings provide a concise overview that the Kaili Salena community does not merely perform rituals through inherited tradition but actively negotiates Islamic teachings with local cultural heritage, resulting in a form of hybrid religiosity in which theological values and customary symbols interact to shape a distinctive collective identity.

The relationship between *adat* and Islam in Salena is also shaped by differences in religious interpretation among community members. These differences contribute to the continuing negotiation of ritual meanings, customary authority, and collective identity. Similar dynamics of cultural adaptation and identity preservation have been documented in studies of cultural resilience and syncretism in other Indonesian communities.[71] This recalls the concept of "lived religion," which emphasizes everyday religious practices that often transcend doctrinal boundaries, allowing space for cultural adaptation and innovation.[72] This approach challenges reductionist paradigms that view religion solely as a system of doctrine and reinforces the understanding of Islam as a living and evolving faith engaged in contextual dialogue with local cultures.[73]

Thus, the integration of *adat* and religion in Salena is not merely the preservation of cultural heritage but the creation of a productive dialogical space between tradition and faith, which socio-theologically can be understood as a medium for articulating identity, solidarity, and concerns about community resilience in facing the challenges of modernity and globalization. These findings enrich the discourse of social theology and the anthropology of religion, while also contributing to the understanding of how Islam is practiced in a pluralistic and dynamic manner at the local level, both in Indonesia and globally.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the cultural system of the Kaili Salena community in Buluri urban village, Palu City, constitutes a distinctive model of *adat*-Islam negotiation in which four key rituals, *Pompaura*, *Potamba*, marriage ceremonies, and guest reception customs, can be interpreted as expressions of cultural liberation, responses to socio-ecological

[70] Hawa La'ala Nabilla et al., "Religion, Tradition, and Modernization: Portrait of the Shift in Dawuhan Tradition in the Ngerso Community, Tawangmangu Karanganyar," *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 9, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 290–307, https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v9i2.2547.

[71] Tahara, "Cultural Resilience and Syncretism: The Towani Tolotang Community's Journey in Indonesia's Religious Landscape."

[72] McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*.

[73] Joseph Camilleri and Sven Schottmann, *Culture, Religion and Conflict in Muslim Southeast Asia: Negotiating Tense Pluralisms* (Routledge, 2013).

concerns, and arenas of legitimacy negotiation between customary and religious authorities. Drawing on liberation theology, Paul Tillich's concept of ultimate concern, and Talal Asad's anthropological framework, the study shows that the Salena community actively interprets, adapts, and sustains these practices through three main mechanisms: strategic appropriation, syncretic fusion, and institutionalization. Together, these mechanisms illuminate a form of hybrid religiosity in which Islamic values and customary traditions interact in the construction of collective identity.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integration of three complementary frameworks for examining the cultural and religious practices of a local Muslim community in Central Sulawesi. By combining liberation theology, the philosophy of religion, and the anthropology of religion, the study offers a multi-layered interpretation that goes beyond mere description to engage with the socio-theological meanings of cultural practice. The study also contributes to the growing body of literature on hybrid religiosity and *adat*-Islam integration in Indonesia, while highlighting the specificity of the Kaili Salena case as a peripheral Muslim community with a distinctive ecological and cultural context.

The main limitation of this study is its focus on one community in one urban village, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. Although fieldwork in February–March 2025 included some ritual activities and preparations, longer-term observation across different ritual cycles could yield richer ethnographic data. Additionally, the study relies primarily on perspectives from established community leaders, and broader surveys of younger generation attitudes would provide a more complete picture of the ongoing negotiation processes.

On the basis of these findings, the study offers three main recommendations. First, sustained intergenerational dialogue within the Salena community should be supported, creating spaces for younger members to engage with the meanings and significance of ritual practices without feeling compelled to choose between Islamic orthodoxy and customary tradition. Second, comparative studies across other sub-ethnic Kaili communities and other regions of the Indonesian archipelago with similar dynamics of *adat*-Islam integration are essential for building a broader understanding of how peripheral Muslim communities negotiate cultural identity and religious authority. Third, the model of adat-Islam negotiation observed in Salena, particularly the mechanisms of strategic appropriation, syncretic fusion, and institutionalization, can provide a useful reference for community-based religious and cultural dialogue initiatives that seek to honor both religious integrity and cultural diversity.

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