DECONSTRUCTING THE DICHOTOMY OF *AGAMA* AND *KEPERCAYAAN*:
A Transformative Strategy in the Politic of Recognition towards Marapu Indigenous Religion

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Abstract: The category of agama is mainly referred to the six recognized world religions in Indonesia while *kepercayaan* is a general terminology that is used to accommodate the Indonesian indigenous religions. The indigenous religions are excluded from the category because agama has been perceived in a very essentialist way making it being differentiated. Recently, the Constitutional Court Decision in 2017 allowing indigenous religions to put their religious identity in their ID Card has been considered as the most progressive changes in the politics of religion in Indonesia. In that regard, this work will deconstruct the problematic dichotomy as a form of transformative strategy for gaining recognition. This research uses Nancy Fraser and Kristian Stokke's frameworks of the problem of misrecognition and its affirmative and transformative remedies as the main theoretical frameworks. This research found that what has been done mostly so far in the effort of gaining recognition is arguably a part of affirmative strategy. By examining the specific case of the Marapu community, this work would also have significance to the Indonesian indigenous religions in general whose problem of recognition is also rooted in the dichotomy.

Keywords: Misrecognition; *agama-kepercayaan* dichotomy; transformative strategy; indigenous religions; Marapu community.

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Introduction

Indigenous religions in Indonesia have experienced a long history of struggle for recognition under the politics of religion in the country. The main issue is arguably that there emerged some restrictive regulations related to religion while there is no any clear legal definition of religion in the constitution.[1] There are even some efforts of making categorization of what could be defined, recognized, as religion. The earliest came in 1952, seven years after the independence, by the Department of Religion (*Depag*) offering such a definition comprising three elements; a religion should have a prophet, a scripture, and international recognition,[2] and more importantly a belief in God (monotheism). This proposal, and its other subsequences, is never accepted and registered in any legal documents but has influenced the way people mostly perceive religion. Hence, indigenous religions become the victim of these constructed categories of what could be counted as religion. Some of the people of indigenous religion having no written scripture, for example, are stigmatized as irreligious.

After the long tides of their recognition along history, the recent influential progress of the struggle of indigenous religions is the Constitutional Court Decision in 2017 allowing the followers of indigenous religions to put their religion or belief in their family and ID card. Despite such huge progress, the new problem emerged is the categorization of indigenous religion as *kepercayaan* as stated in the circular letter (*Surat Edaran*) of the Ministry of Homes Affairs. *Kepercayaan* is differentiated from, but equalized to *agama* (religion). Such differentiation emerges in the implementation of the decision in the form of differentiated ID Cards of *Agama* and *Kepercayaan*. The problem then is that the category of *kepercayaan* is still seen as non-religious.[3] Non-religious, still having no religion, backwards, and heretics are the examples of such stigmas labelled on the followers of indigenous religions.

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[1] Zainal Abidin Bagir, "The Politics of Law and Religious Governance," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 286.

[2] Samsul Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2017), 25.

[3] Samsul Maarif, "Indigenous Religion Paradigm: Re-Interpreting Religious Practices of Indigenous People," 哲学・思想論集= *Studies in Philosophy* 44 (2019): 104.

The community of Marapu indigenous religion in Sumba is one of such differentiated groups that labelled as *kepercayaan*. Marapu community is also one of the forerunners that became the basis of the petition to the Constitutional Court in 2016 since the practice of advocacy towards this community has been done before the decision by accommodating them in the registration of citizens database thank to the efforts of non-governmental organization and local actors in the regional government.[4] Therefore, after the Constitutional Court Decision, policy changes and public service are going better in giving more accommodation to the followers of Marapu. However, social acceptance, another element of the trilogy of Social Inclusion Advocacy (policy changes, public services, and social acceptance), still seems stagnant and even not totally changed.[5] There are also progress in term of social acceptance such as social participation and self-determination but the main issue here lies on the stigmatization in society that cannot easily change after the 'top-down' Constitutional Court decision as legal recognition. The lack of social acceptance is related to the way Marapu community being perceived as inferior to *agama*, especially Christianity; the major religion in Sumba. Because they are seen as not having religion yet, from the perspective of many Christians, Marapu followers are viewed as the object of Christian mission which still emphasizes the matter of conversion. These paradigms are indicated in some terminologies being used by both Sumbanese Christians and Marapu; "*masih marapu*" (still Marapu) and "*sudah kristen*" (have been Christian).[6]

This work would argue that the lack of social acceptance towards the Marapu community is due to the distinction of *agama* and *kepercayaan* in which the latter is seen as inferior to the former. In this regard, Marapu community has been misrecognized because what have been done so far, and discussed by academia, in the struggle of recognition for Indonesian indigenous religions in general and especially Marapu community are mostly part of the affirmative strategy, thus a transformative strategy is very necessary as another endeavor in order to touch, and even challenge, the underlying structure of the problem, which is the problematic constructed

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[4] Husni Mubarak, *Advokasi Inklusi Sosial: Praktik Baik Advokasi Penghayat Marapu Di Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur*, seri monog. (The Asia Foundation, 2021), 68–69.

[5] Ibid., 94.

[6] Ibid., 4.

dichotomy. In arguing so, this paper will be explained by first, explaining the problem of misrecognition and its affirmative and transformative remedies as the theoretical frameworks; second, exploring the way Marapu being recognized initially and so far; third, examining the way the terms religion, *agama*, and *kepercayaan* have been constructed, thus deconstructing the dichotomy, as a transformative strategy and an alternative way of gaining full and proper recognition for Marapu community and Indonesian indigenous religions in general.

Misrecognition and Its Remedies: Affirmation and Transformation

Many discussions on the topic of recognition are started by firstly showing the four conditions of recognition by Axel Honneth; a personal identity, love, equal treatment in law, social esteem.[7] Some other studies also go deeper to see how recognition on paper based on law and regulation works compared to that of everyday life based on informally interpersonal relations and efforts of the subject of recognition.[8] However, the most fundamental question on the topic should be taken into account first; What does recognition really mean? How does it relate to redistribution? Should both issues be connected? In this regard, one question from Nancy Fraser could help to frame the issue; is recognition a matter of justice or a matter of self-realization? This question is related to Fraser's concern with the issue of misrecognition which for her is unacceptable because it indicates a form of injustice. It happens when the status as full partners in social interaction of someone or groups are denied simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in which they do not equally participate thus disparaging their distinctive characteristics or sometimes that assigned to them.[9] This kind of

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[7] A. Honneth, "Recognition and Justice: Outline of a Plural Theory of Justice," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 4 (2004): 351.

[8] G. v. Klinken and W. Berenschot, "Everyday Citizenship in Democratizing Indonesia," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2018; Laela Fitriani Sahroni, *Antara Agama Dan Kepercayaan: Menguji Praktek Kewargaan Ingenious Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu)*, seri monog. (Yogyakarta: The Asia Foundation, 2021).

[9] N Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, Participation," *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) Discussion Paper*, no. No. FS I 98-108 (1998): 3.

injustice, for Fraser, is relatively independent of political economy and more than just a superstructural issue that has been often addressed only by redistribution. In other words, the problem of recognition, in this case; misrecognition, in the framework of justice, needs to be addressed independently but not separated from the issue of redistribution. It should be perceived as the problem of social relations, not individual psychology.

By addressing the issue of misrecognition in Fraser's manner, putting it under the framework of justice, Stokke's discussion on the politics of citizenship gives more detailed layers of citizenship in which recognition is one of the main issues. Stokke provides a very helpful measurement for examining the dimensions of citizenship which consist of citizenship as legal status, as rights, as participation, and as membership.[10] Those dimensions are understood in Fraser's conception of justice which emphasizes the three dimensions; politics of recognition (the membership dimension of citizenship), politics of redistribution (citizenship as social rights), and politics of representation (political citizenship). Any form of injustice related to those three has its respective form of remedies whether affirmative or transformative.[11] This work then will be only focusing on the politics of recognition to address the problem of misrecognition by examining both its affirmative and transformative strategies.

The two strategies of affirmation and transformation are used to see the interrelation of the problem of redistribution and recognition which are often prioritized dividedly. As explored by Stokke, affirmation is any form of remedies that emphasize the effort to remove injustice without changing the underlying structures of injustice, while transformation emphasizes more on making fundamental changes in the structures of injustice.[12] Regarding the issue of misrecognition, affirmative recognition strategies are meant to revalue certain distinctive identities while transformative recognition strategies aim to deconstruct the existing pattern behind the differentiated identities. Stokke uses the case of homosexual identity politics as the example. While the affirmative seeks to revalue gay and lesbian identity as equal to heterosexual identity, the

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[10] K Stokke, "Politics of Citizenship: Towards an Analytical Framework," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography* 71, no. 4 (2017): 195.

[11] Ibid., 202.

[12] Ibid.

transformative aims to deconstruct the homo-hetero dichotomy, rather than perpetuating the distinction, as implied by queer theory so that the homosexual identity is not seen inferior to the heterosexual identity because such view would preserve inequality in the identity politics .[13] In this sense, both redistribution and recognition could be done either affirmatively or transformatively, but combining affirmative and transformative recognition or redistribution is contradictory because while the former focuses on promoting, the latter focuses on deconstructing.

Recognition of Marapu

The Marapu community in Sumba is never detached from the impact of the politics of recognition in Indonesia which is very much influenced by the broader context of European domination of the discourse of religion. Their encounter with the World Religions had been started since the coming of Christian missionaries to Sumba in the colonial era.[14] One result of this encounter is the establishment of the Christian Church of Sumba (*Gereja Kristen Sumba*) in which until now Christianity becomes one of the major religions that is very influential in shaping the dominant paradigm of Sumbanese society. Since the independence era, the Marapu community has experienced the tides of recognition both from the state and the society holding the world religion paradigm discriminative for indigenous religions. One historical sign of the dynamics is a picture of Sumbnese ID Card appeared in the 1970s in which 'Marapu' was put on the column of *agama*, indicating that there was not yet differentiation of Marapu as *kepercayaan*.

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[13] Ibid., 202–203.

[14] F. D. Wellem, *Injil Dan Marapu: Suatu Studi Historis-Teologis Tentang Perjumpaan Injil Dengan Masyarakat Sumba Pada Periode 1876-1990* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2004); W. Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007), 8.
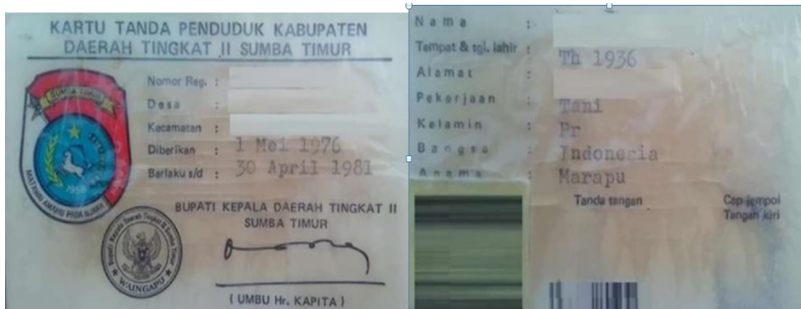
This fact could be understood seeing that the column of agama was not in the ID Card until 1976/1977.[15] Besides, in 1973, the aspiration asking the constitutional position of *kepercayaan* to be acknowledged on a par with that of *agama* was granted in the new Outlines of State Policy (*Garis Besar Haluan Negara*) formulated by the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*) which formally declared *kepercayaan* and *agama* as equally legitimate expressions of the 'Belief in the One and Only God'.[16]

That ID Card was valid until 1981, but there is no information on whether it should be changed following the TAP MPR 1978 implying the justification of the political policy about *'kepercayaan'* whose existence was recognized, but as merely a culture (*budaya*), not *'agama'*. However, in many other cases, the difficulty of Marapu people after their religion was recognized only as a culture could be seen in the ID Card of Marapu followers with Christianity as their religion. They did that to make their administrative affairs easier and this is actually common for the adherents of *'kepercayaan'*. This may be not a big deal for them, but it is precisely a sign of political oppression of a state. This is one reason bringing the groups of Indonesian indigenous religions to petition the 2006 law stipulated that they have to fill in the religion column with one of six recognized religions or leave the column blank as stated by the 2013 law, the improvement of the former law. The effort then resulted in the Constitutional Court Decision 2017 which has disrupted the long-accepted exclusive definition of religion in Indonesia by stating that

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[15] Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia*.
[16] Michel Picard, "Introduction: 'Agama', 'Adat', and Pancasila," in *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contentions in Java and Bali*, ed. Michel Picard and R Madiner (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 15; Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia*, 44–46.

the category of *agama* should be understood to also include *kepercayaan*.[17]

As mentioned before, Sumba was where the process of petitioning a judicial review to the Constitutional Court in 2016 was started. Mubarak mentions that the work of advocacy has been started in Sumba since before the petition and resulted in a success of registering the marriage of more than 500 couples of Marapu follower and providing birth certificate for around 1000s children which then is used to register themselves in school without declaring themselves as the followers of one of the six recognized religions like before.[18] This then became an inspiration to endeavor the same progress for the other groups of indigenous religions in Indonesia and the petition became the starting step to work on this. The Constitutional Court Decision in 2017 is one of three strategies of the advocacy work called the trilogy of social inclusion advocacy. The petition is part of the policy changes strategy while there are two other strategies focusing on public services and social acceptance or recognition.[19] The three strategies are done simultaneously according to the specific condition and context of the subject of advocacy.

Mubarak[20] uses Kristian Stokke's frameworks of citizenship to examine the citizenship status of the Marapu followers and figures out that the Marapu community experiences exclusion in the aspect of law or legal documents, civil rights, and politics, and only gets recognition in terms of cultural recognition which sustains their existence up to now. This is because almost all Sumbanese, including those who do not belong to Marapu any longer, still strongly hold their Sumbanese culture, while the culture of Sumba, or what have been categorized as Sumbanese culture, cannot be detached from its Marapu characteristic,[21] although nowadays there have been constructed distinction between what counts as culture and what

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[17] Zainal Abidin Bagir, "Religion, Democracy, and Citizenship, Twenty Years after Reformasi," in *Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizhensip, and Democracy*, ed. R. W. Hefner and Zainal Abidin Bagir (United States of America: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 218.

[18] Mubarak, *Advokasi Inklusi Sosial: Praktik Baik Advokasi Penghayat Marapu Di Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur*, 3.

[19] Samsul Maarif et al., *Merangkul Penghayat Kepercayaan Melalui Advokasi Inklusi Sosial*, Laporan Ke. (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2019), 4.

[20] Mubarak, *Advokasi Inklusi Sosial: Praktik Baik Advokasi Penghayat Marapu Di Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur*, 2021.

[21] Ibid., 57.

counts as Marapu religious traditions with no clear standard. The often-found standard being used is according to Christian teaching; if it is in contrast with Christian teaching then it is Marapu religious tradition, but if it could be approved by Christianity, then it is considered as Sumbanese culture. Hence, both consciously and unconsciously, many of them still practice that kind of cultural practice that is always based on the Sumbanese worldview either by labelling it as *adat*, culture, or tradition.

In that regard, the citizenship of Marapu followers could be understood in two ways; formal and informal citizenship. The former implies that citizenship is according to the perspective of the state. This sense is very strong in the terminology of citizenship in Indonesia; *kewarganegaraan* which consists of two words of *warga* (citizens) and *negara* (state). The emphasis of this view is on the legal regulation accommodating the marginalized and the implementation of that law,[22] although in practice the state-based citizenship of Marapu is not as it should be in the ideal of state-citizen relation. In the advocacy trilogy, this might be related to policy changes and public service. Meanwhile, the latter implies that the interaction among citizens is formed not by that formal regulation, but rather the personal relation and the reciprocity among citizens and the state agent. In this sense, the focus of citizenship discourse is shifted from the formal institution to the daily experiences of citizens and goes "beyond the state".[23] This point might have much to do with the social acceptance in the trilogy of advocacy strategies, which strongly connected to stigmatization that still becomes a challenge for the case of the Marapu community while the two other strategies, related to formal citizenship, have been going much better especially after the Constitutional Court Decision and the subsequent advocacy works.

The underlying assumption of the informal citizenship, or what is called "everyday citizenship" by Klinken, is that the matter of exclusion and inclusion does not simply depend only on the laws or policies, but rather it is about how those boundaries are negotiated on

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[22] Ibid., 102.

[23] Ibid., 103; Klinken and Berenschot, "Everyday Citizenship in Democratizing Indonesia," 152; R. W. Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy," in *Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizhensip, and Democracy*, ed. R. W. Hefner and Zainal Abidin Bagir (United States of America: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 15.

the everyday life.[24] Klinken even argues further that in spite of the progressive move of the policy changes, the capacity of citizens to realize their rights is actually stagnant and even decreased because there are such gaps between law on paper and law in practice, and that has, for him, much to do with the informalized character of Indonesia. Hence, the reality of citizenship life is very dependent on their personal-informal networks and social connections. The impact of this 'habit' is the lower pressure on state institutions to effectively implement such formal regulation because of putting more concern on informal negotiation.[25] In addition, it also makes the interaction of citizens with the state unpredictable and thus degrades the quality of democracy.[26]

The informal character of citizenship in Indonesia is not always negative. In the case of Pangestu, whose problem is actually rooted on the dichotomy of *agama* and *kepercayaan* in which they do not belong to any of it, informal citizenship becomes the main capital for them in negotiating their position under the power of the state. This is examined by Sahroni[27] in her research entitled Between *Agama* and *Kepercayaan*: Examining the Practice of Ingenious Citizenship of Pangestu. For her, *agama* and *kepercayaan* are actually a form of governmentality of the state. Seeing from Foucault's idea of governmentality, she argues that, through the politics of religion, the government tries to control the citizens and makes them obedient.[28] In addition, certain religious institution like MUI, which initially established to connect the state and the Muslim community, eventually makes the state their partner in conducting discriminative practices towards Indonesian citizenship rights.[29] However, using the concept of ingenious citizenship from Charles T. Lee (2016), she insists that the state control has much to do with the role of the citizens who continuously conduct various negotiations and resistance

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[24] Klinken and Berenschot, "Everyday Citizenship in Democratizing Indonesia," 153.

[25] Ibid., 154, 155, 156.

[26] Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy," 21.

[27] Sahroni, *Antara Agama Dan Kepercayaan: Menguji Praktek Kewargaan Ingenious Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu)*.

[28] Ibid., 5.

[29] Ibid., 38; Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy."

with their ingenuity in which they actively and creatively find the gap in the vacuum of control of the state.[30] In that manner, the Pangestu community could sustain their identity as a spiritual organization by refusing to be trapped in the dichotomy of *agama* and *kepercayaan* and at once counterbalance the state exclusion with tactical resistance.[31]

In the case of the Marapu community, the informality, personal relation among citizens, non-governmental organization, and local actors (government), has raised the effort to recognize the Marapu community in some administrative affairs and then it has become the pioneer of such endeavor to gain both formal and informal recognition for Indonesian indigenous religion. Mubarak actually argues that the case of Marapu advocacy, as well as the national social inclusion advocacy, seems closer to formal citizenship because the result is policy changes and the non-governmental organizations involved in the effort have no personal relation with the subject of advocacy and do their job as part of the democratic political system.[32] However, the informal sense seems clear in the way the advocacy has been done since before the Constitutional Court Decision (policy changes), meaning it was done without sufficient accommodative regulation but then influenced the changes on regulation. Among citizens, in certain particular context especially where the non-Marapu people is still strongly tied to Sumbanese traditional culture, there have been a considerably social acceptance that is based on Sumbanese culture itself as the lingua franca of both the Marapu and the non-Marapu.[33] In this regard, citizenship is not totally based on paper and dependent on the state, but rather it depicts a bottom-up model of grassroot context and advocacy.

Despite those progressive changes in the recognition towards Marapu community especially after the Constitutional Court Decision 2017, as mentioned in the very beginning of this work, there is still a challenge in the field. Formally, since followers of Indonesian indigenous religion could put their religion or belief in the ID Card, a

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[30] Sahroni, *Antara Agama Dan Kepercayaan: Menguji Praktek Kewargaan Ingenious Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu)*, 7.

[31] Ibid., 68.

[32] Mubarak, *Advokasi Inklusi Sosial: Praktik Baik Advokasi Penghayat Marapu Di Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur*, 103–104.

[33] Krisharyanto Umbu Deta, "Oral-Based Christian-Marapu Interreligious Engagement: Manawara as a Shared Virtue for Common Liberation," *Dialog* 4, no. 2 (2021): 178–189.

sign of a strong formal recognition seems clear. It is stated that they are differentiated, but equalized to *agama*. This point is surely sufficient to be a base of many necessary subsequent regulations related to the citizenship rights of indigenous religions, especially for overcoming the exclusion towards the Marapu community which comprises the social, political, and juridical dimensions. Regarding the cultural dimension, as mentioned before, it has been the only space in which the Marapu community could get recognition. However, as mentioned by Mubarak, although Marapu tradition and culture strongly stick to the daily life of most Sumbanese, perception towards them is still negative.[34] In this regard, there is clearly a paradox in which the Sumbanese society recognizes the worldview and practice of Marapu, again; consciously or not, but still perceives the Marapu community in a negative way.

Since the very beginning of the advocacy work in Sumba, stigmatization has been identified as one of the most challenges in advocating the Marapu community. *Kafir* (heathen) is one of the most problematic terminologies labelled to the Marapu community. They are also accused of being backwards and irrational.[35] Such stigmatizations in social relation have been continuously reproduced[36] and thus weaken the social acceptance. This problem of stigma contains the long-standing perception seeing *kepercayaan* or Indonesian indigenous religions as inferior to *agama* or world religions. Even more, the Constitutional Court 2017 has been implemented problematically by making the dichotomy of *agama* and *kepercayaan* legal terminologies. As Hefner argues, the religious recognition in Indonesia has much to do with the growing popular acceptance and normalization of the *agama-kepercayaan* distinction promoted by Muslim reformists and Christian missionaries since 1950s, although in the constitution *kepercayaan* actually enjoyed near-equal standing and legal protection with *agama*.[37] This then impacts on the less legitimacy and even legal protection of the non-*agama* groups.

Perceiving Indonesian indigenous religions inferiorly both in terms of legal and social recognition is surely a sign of misrecognition.

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[34] Mubarak, *Advokasi Inklusi Sosial: Praktik Baik Advokasi Penghayat Marapu Di Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur.*

[35] Ibid., 76.

[36] Maarif et al., *Merangkul Penghayat Kepercayaan Melalui Advokasi Inklusi Sosial*, 9.

[37] Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy," 29.

In Fraser's framework, indigenous religions like Marapu have never been involved in the process of establishing such categories of religion and thus become excluded from it. The process of establishing, although not legally, the categorization of *agama* which then shapes the public paradigm, seems like the process of public reasoning resulting in a consensus.[38] This is indicated in what MUI called as "national consensus" when they refused the Constitutional Court Decision 2017 by referring to various regulations from the 1970s that formalized the distinction between the six recognized religions (*agama*) and the *kepercayaan* considered as culture.[39] However, this Rawlsian model of democracy, strongly emphasizing the idea of consensus, has been criticized by Mouffe with her concept of agonistic pluralism.[40] For Mouffe, that kind of public reasoning has hidden the excluder, whose aspiration is not accepted in the deliberation process, behind the so-called consensus. She adds in a pluralistic society there will always be a tension between the consensus of underlying principles like justice and dissensus of the ways to interpret those principles. The Rawlsian model then tends to hegemonize and homogenize their own reason and neglect the agonistic characters of the plural society. In this regard, Indonesian indigenous religions are not actually lost in the deliberation process but even not involved. Hence, they are not fully recognized or even misrecognized under the paradigm, homogenizing the category *agama*, promoted by the hidden hegemony and reproduced by the society politically and academically. As Hefner argues, despite the great progress of creating a significant measure of linguistic, economic, and political integration across its great expanse, Indonesian efforts to establish an operating consensus on religion, ethnicity, and social recognition is still a sort of work in progress, in other words; unfinished.[41]

In the realm of Indonesian society, at least in Sumba, the hegemonic way of perceiving *agama* as superior to *kepercayaan* like

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[38] J Rawls, *The Law of Peoples with The Idea of Public Reason Revisited* (United States of America: Harvard College, 1999).

[39] Bagir, "Religion, Democracy, and Citizenship, Twenty Years after Reformasi," 218.

[40] C Mouffe, *The Limits of John Rawls's Pluralism* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005); C Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking The World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).

[41] Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy," 16.

Marapu is actually part of a social recognition problem rooted on many factors such as production of knowledge, political influence, and the exclusive doctrine of world religions. Hefner insists that "social recognition refers to the social-psychological, ethical, and political practices through which actors evaluate, acknowledge, and otherwise engage their fellows in society." It also refers to "the more general and less state-focused through which actors perceive, categorize, and evaluate their social fellows within a particular sociopolitical community and then draw on those processes of recognition to understand and enact their own identities, rights, and obligation in relation to those around them".[42] These frameworks are helpful for examining how Sumbanese society perceives or recognizes the Marapu community.

The problem of social recognition towards the Marapu community could be indicated at least in two points. The first is related to the most underlying perception of society in labeling the Marapu followers as 'not yet religious' and thus making them the object of mission for conversion or proselytization. As Bagir mentions, the 1979 Joint Decree of the Ministers of Religious and Domestic Affairs prohibits proselytization to people who "have embraced a religion" and leaves those whose faiths are not recognized as the only group open for proselytization.[43] Up to now, the Christian Churches of Sumba keep doing their missionary program to the Marapu community because they are understood as not yet religious. The second is the more concrete impact of such a paradigm as the result of such stigmatizations. It is seen when there is a land conflict between the Marapu community in East Sumba with a state-licensed corporation opening a plantation on the customary land. Most of the society support the plantation for the sake of economic growth and the support for the community is so low and even comes from the outsider's non-governmental organization, not even the religious institution like the churches. In short, the problem of recognition towards Marapu lies in the intertwined matters of both formal or state-based and informal or social recognition in everyday life, in which the latter is the most challenging as it is shaped by the very complicated issues which by Stokke are called as the underlying structures of injustice.

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[42] Ibid., 2–3.
[43] Bagir, "The Politics of Law and Religious Governance," 290.

Constructed Terminologies of Religion, *Agama*, *Adat*, and *Kepercayaan*

To use Fraser and Stokke's conceptual frameworks, some explorations of certain terms are important seeing that the issue of recognition is related to the way someone or groups are recognized based on certain categories. In Fraser's words, the problem of recognition starts from the institutionalized pattern of cultural values in which some groups are unrecognized. This work then will firstly explore how some terminologies in relation to religious governance, or politics of religion, in Indonesia are constructed historically and politically, by which some groups then become unrecognized and misrecognized. The three main terminologies are religion, *agama*, and *kepercayaan*, with also *adat* often used not in religious sense. Those terms, especially the first two, are gradually constructed differently but in a very similar pattern. The emergence of the first term could be traced in the history of the establishment of the world religion paradigm which has much to do with colonialism. In a similar manner, the term *agama* was also used for the political aim of excluding certain groups for the sake of domination of certain groups over others, and the term *kepercayaan* was very recently constructed and legally used to categorize those excluded from *agama*.

The term religion, as well as *agama*, are academically and politically constructed. The process of inventing the term is coloured by the sense of colonialism, subjugation, and europeanizing; generalizing European ways of many things, including the idea of religion, to the subjugated countries. As Picard argues, due to its Eurocentric characteristic, religion is a prescriptive and normative term rather than descriptive or analytical. It is originated from Roman term *religio* which means *traditio*; a set of ancestral practices transmitted over generations but then was appropriated by Christian theologians who substituted the textual for ritual characters and orthodoxy for orthopraxy.[44] In talking about this issue, the influence of the politics of knowledge as argued by Richard King[45] should be taken into account seriously. King insists that in examining certain concepts, what should be taken more seriously is not only the social location of the concepts but also the involvement of power relations

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[44] Picard, "Introduction: 'Agama', 'Adat', and Pancasila," 1.
[45] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

in its wider cultural field.[46] Regarding the term religion, for King, the notion of religion is certainly a Christian theological category. In other words, it is a culturally specific social construction with its own particular genealogy. In that sense, applying that category to non-Western cultures is problematic and the assumption implying that there are such things as religions outside a Christian-influenced context is surely questionable.[47]

As quoted by King, Goody argues that the advancement of literature has effectively allowed certain religious world-views from their particular and local context to spread and become 'world religions'.[48] For Western scholars, the World Religions surely embody essential similarities to Christianity in terms of having formal structures of fixed doctrines, resting on canonical authority, being enforced by a priestly hierarchy, and sustained by congregational worship, thus, the world religions were considered superior to the local religions which were stigmatized as primitive or animist.[49] As mentioned by Masuzawa, the nineteenth-century Europe believed that through the encounter and confrontation with any world religions, the indigenous religion would inevitably disappear in the process of assimilation or banishment.[50] The awareness about this hegemony and the need to respond to it appropriately have emerged years before, including from King. In order to broaden the parameters and transgress the hegemonic philosophical trends of modern Western intellectual orthodoxy, King introduces the indigenous forms of Indian constructivism as such an alternative to Western ways of understanding the world. [51] For King, there is a need to raise other ways of seeing the world other than modern Western epistemologies that emerged in their cultural and social particularity.

The issue of the western domination is related to the split of the West and the East where, by the colonizers in the past and the dominant paradigm in present day, the former is considered modern, civilized, rational, logical, and educated, while the latter is considered

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[46] Ibid., 1.

[47] Ibid., 40.

[48] Ibid., 65.

[49] Picard, "Introduction: 'Agama', 'Adat', and Pancasila," 2.

[50] T Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism. Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 18.

[51] King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 182.

primitive, uncivilized, irrational, illogical, and uneducated, in short; full of superstitions. Consequently, the epistemic domination and the particular identity of the West were imposed to the East by the colonizers. This is then maintained by the majority of the people including the government, society, and even scholars as the enterprise of enlightening, civilizing, and other terms that depict the inferiority of the East. In academic discourse and the public sphere, the differentiation of the world religions and other than that which are often considered as 'not religion' has preserved the exclusive definition or presumption of what religion is or what can be counted as religion. In short, just precisely argued by Masuzawa, the modern discourse on religion from the very beginning was ironically a discourse of othering and thus resulting in the trend of exclusion.[52]

The term *agama* is an appropriation of the category religion in Indonesia which has been taken for granted as if it is an Indonesian pure translation of religion, although it actually covers narrower semantic fields than religion does. Historically, *agama,* a Sanskrit term brought from India to Indonesia, refers to a traditional precept, doctrine, body of precepts, and collection of such doctrines.[53] The term was firstly adopted by Islam and then by Christianity. The adoptions dissociate the term from its original senses in Sanskrit which has strong emphasis on law and tradition. Along with the shift from orthopraxy to orthodoxy, the dissociated entity of tradition was accommodated under the Arabic word of *adat.* In the subsequent process, there emerged a strong tension between *agama* and *adat.* The tension is rooted on the policy recommendation from Snouck Hurgronje meant to polarize the society and thus weaken the resistance to the colonial government.[54]

The differentiation of *agama* and *adat* then makes a further shift on the paradigm of the Indonesian society about religion. As Picard insists, Indonesian traditional societies previously did not have any kind of separation between religion and ethnicity, religious and secular sphere, natural and social worlds, the human and the non-human, the transcendental and the immanent because their main orientation is to maintain proper relations between people, the natural

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[52] Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism. Chicago*, 20.
[53] Picard, "Introduction: 'Agama', 'Adat', and Pancasila," 3.
[54] Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia*, 12.

world, and the world of the spirits and ancestors for the sake of the wellbeing of community and cosmos.[55] In other words, the indigenous traditions actually never have any clear-cut restriction between what then be counted as *adat* and *agama*, but then *agama* becomes more exclusive and purified from the so-called *adat*, culture, and *kepercayaan*.

Not until the beginning of Indonesian independence, the differentiation was strengthened and the religious dimension of *adat* was increasingly marginalized. However, *adat* was strengthened by indigenous religion as the synonym of *kepercayaan* (belief). Indigenous religion just after the independence had been categorized as *kepercayaan*, differentiated from those citizens who adhere to *agama*.[56] The term *kepercayaan* informally emerged to justify the existence of the citizens who declare to be different from *agama* groups. There had been an awareness since the tension between Islam *santri* and *abangan* groups which also ended up with the establishment of *Departemen Agama* that *agama* will be used as a tool of political exclusion since *agama* had been imposed to the constitution with an aim to provide special service to those counted as *agama* after the failure to realize Jakarta Charter.[57] As a defensive response, those not counted as *agama*, propose the term *kepercayaan* as a protective equipment against the political tool of *agama*. One of the signs of using *agama* as a political tool of exclusion was the proposal of *Departemen Agama* imposing several exclusive categories of *agama*, namely the existence of prophet, scripture, and international recognition.[58] To this extent, *agama*, just precisely similar to religion, has been perceived in an essentialist way, by contrasting it to the non-*agama* based on the exclusive categories.

As noted by Maarif,[59] Indonesian indigenous religions, since the establishment of *agama* as a political tool, have been experiencing long tides of recognition. While the pressure against them being stronger, the indigenous groups also make a variety of resistances. They make a consolidation declaring themselves as *kebatinan* group in order to put their groups at par with *agama* groups. However, in history, they have

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[55] Picard, "Introduction: 'Agama', 'Adat', and Pancasila," 6.
[56] M Tuhri, "Adat, Land, and Religion: The Politics of Indigenous Religions in Indonesia" (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2019), 86.
[57] Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia*, 21.
[58] Ibid., 25.
[59] Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur Dalam Politik Agama Di Indonesia*.

often been institutionalized as merely culture or *budaya* and even stigmatized as black magic, heresy, and other pejorative terminologies. In this regard, there have been some forms of differentiation of *agama* with *adat,* with *kepercayaan*, and with *culture*. These kinds of essentialist views on *agama* and religion are actually the paradigm of mostly Indonesian society who take the terms for granted. The discriminative impacts toward Indonesian indigenous religion then are the tendencies of *agama*ization and religionizations because of perceiving indigenous religions as not yet religious (*belum beragama*) and expected to be religionized or *agama*ized.[60]

Some shifting paradigms have been indicated in the state perspective towards the indigenous religion. The recent regulation related to this issue, UU NO. 5/2017 Article 5-point c, explains that:

"*Adat istiadat adalah kebiasaan yang didasarkan pada nilai tertentu dan dilakukan oleh kelompok masyarakat secara terus-menerus dan diwariskan pada generasi berikutnya, seperti tata kelola lingkungan dan tata cara penyelesaian sengketa.*"

(*Adat istiadat* is a custom based on certain values and carried out by community groups continuously and inherited in the next generation, such as environmental governance and procedures for dispute resolution).

The progressive paradigm is seen in the intention of this explanation which is in the context of the regulation about the advancement of culture (*Undang-Undang Pemajuan Kebudayaan*). This issue is very related to the recent discourse of Indonesian indigenous religions that occurred in 2017 following the Constitutional Court decision recognizing the indigenous religion as equal to the current recognized religions in Indonesia by allowing them to put their religion or belief on the ID Card. According to Maarif et al.,[61] the decision actually implies that the indigenous religions could put their religion or belief in the column of *agama*, but its implementation through the circular letter of *Dukcapil* differentiates the ID Card of *agama* and *kepercayaan*, and this differentiation is arguably legally defective. This kind of implementation could be understood as the impact of many refusals and pressures towards the decision especially from MUI who insists that the decision is against what they called as

[60] Michel Picard and R Madiner, eds., *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), xi.

[61] Maarif et al., *Merangkul Penghayat Kepercayaan Melalui Advokasi Inklusi Sosial.*

the "national consensus".[62] However, it is argued that this dichotomy of *agama* and *kepercayaan* could be understood at two different extents; *forum externum* and *forum internum*. The former implies that that dichotomy is merely an administrative tool that should be effective in guaranteeing the equality of all citizens both those who belong to *agama* and that of *kepercayaan*. They are different, or differentiated, but normatively and administratively equal. The latter refers to the content of both *kepercayaan* and *agama* which cannot be intervened by anyone, even the state.[63] In this manner, which meant to accentuate the inclusive spirit, those who belong to neither *agama* nor *kepercayaan* could be included.

In conclusion, it is shown how religion, *agama*, *adat*, and *kepercayaan*, have evolved as academic, social, and political constructions. Seeing the fact that those terminologies have been essentialized thus make them seem as fixed categories that are different to one another, they cannot be taken for granted as the product of discourse, but rather as a phenomenon that still develops and is still practiced by the people.[64]

Conclusion

Regarding the problem of recognition towards Indonesian indigenous religions, as explored before, there have been various efforts to decrease the discrimination and injustice. It is done with both top-down and bottom-up models. The Constitutional Court Decision in 2017 could be seen as the most recent progressive change in the discourse and policy of religious recognition in Indonesia. However, the problem of social recognition as mentioned before is still there because such legal decisions and its subsequent policy changes cannot instantly change the long-standing paradigm of the society. As Stokke argues, cultural injustices are rooted in patterns of symbolic representation manifested as cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect.[65] These three points have been indicated more or less in previous discussion about how the Marapu community is being perceived up to now. Such cases, Stokke adds,

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[62] Bagir, "Religion, Democracy, and Citizenship, Twenty Years after Reformasi," 218.

[63] Maarif et al., *Merangkul Penghayat Kepercayaan Melalui Advokasi Inklusi Sosial*.

[64] Tuhri, "Adat, Land, and Religion: The Politics of Indigenous Religions in Indonesia," 132, 133, 134.

[65] Stokke, "Politics of Citizenship: Towards an Analytical Framework," 201.

need politics of recognition either through affirmative action or transformative strategy in order to deconstruct and thus transform the categorial identities which become the core of misrecognition.[66]

In Stokke's frameworks, what have been mostly done so far to overcome the problem could be considered as part of affirmative strategies, focusing on the maldistribution of justice towards indigenous religions due to the lack of, or even, the absence of recognition toward them. The array of efforts to negotiate the recognition both formally and informally tends to be conducted by arguing, accentuating, and promoting, or in Stokke's word; revaluing the Indonesian indigenous religions in order to put them at par with *agama* groups. However, justifying the essence and equality of them with that of *agama* tends to strengthen the dichotomy; distinction and tension between the two constructed categories. It is not to degrade the current tactical strategies whose structures have to do with the context of *agama* domination upon *kepercayaan*, but as depicted in the case of the Marapu community in Sumba, another endeavor is really necessary for responding to the remaining problems.

While keeping the attention to the implementations of the result of the affirmative strategies, the transformation is really necessary to touch the underlying structure of the problem, which in this case is the dichotomy of *agama* and *kepercayaan*. To do so, the flow of this work actually has examined the genealogy of the terminologies which in fact are constructed in the long course of history. In so doing, the need to deconstruct such categories of identity has been partly done. By being aware of the context of the emergence of each category, the paradigm of society could be gradually deconstructed and then transformed to be more inclusive. The ideal inclusion this work imagined is the situation in which the interaction of citizens, in this case the Marapu community and the rest of society, develops not with stigmatization but full recognition of the fact of pluralities, in Mouffe's words: agonistic pluralism in society.

In order to decrease the stigmatization and increase the social recognition, there are at least two important points to do and actually have been being done. The first is to raise the awareness about the other ways, or the agonistic ways, of being religious in which Abrahamic or Western ways is not the only one. This has been started by many scholars including in Indonesia. Maarif for example opens

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[66] Ibid.

the possibility to understand Indonesian indigenous religions through their perspectives as subject matter within the framework of indigenous religion paradigm in order to avoid the judgmental attitudes in studying them.[67] The second is to show the universal significance of the distinctive religiosity of the indigenous. In this point, the issue of ecological crisis could be a very good base to show the significance of indigenous religions in responding to the issue with their religious worldview and practices which are very ecological.[68] This point is important since the former only, arguing their existence as a religious group, is not enough. In the context of social recognition, as Hefner emphasizes that any social movement aiming to effect a far-reaching transformation of state and society must endeavor to secure that transformation by anchoring its discursive frames in the ethical and affective experience of real-world actors, so as to make the more abstract discourse resonant with everyday experience,[69] like ecological crisis that everyone, including followers of world religions are experiencing. In so doing, further progress could even move forward to gain the full recognition of indigenous religion which not only recognizes the people but also their environment since the identities of the indigenous people are inseparable with their land and nature. This matter is examined in the discourse of ecological citizenship which is not covered in this work and could be explored further.

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[67] Maarif, "Indigenous Religion Paradigm: Re-Interpreting Religious Practices of Indigenous People."

[68] See more the discussion of the Ecological dimension of Marapu indigenous religion in Krisharyanto Umbu Deta, "Marapu Resisting the Corporation to Protect the Land: Perceiving Land through Inter-Subjective Cosmology," *Satya Widya: Jurnal Studi Agama* 4, no. 2 (2021): 50–66.

[69] Hefner, "The Politics and Ethics of Social Recognition and Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Democracy," 12.

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