NEGOTIATING RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AND MODERNITY IN MALUKU:
A Socio-Historical Perspective

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Abstract: This research article was based on a literature review using the lens of a socio-historical perspective on the dynamic relationship between Islam and Christianity in Maluku throughout the social history of the Maluku archipelago. The research question "How did the metamorphosis of religious identities (Islam and Christianity) take place through the history and contemporary social reality in Ambon?" becomes a reference to trace the historical trajectory of relations between the two religions in Maluku. The religious conflict that occurred from 1999-2005 still leaves social residues that must be carefully considered for the future of these two religions in Maluku and Indonesia. A hermeneutic analysis of social history was used to map the sociological variables that determine the existence and interaction of Islam and Christianity in Maluku, which in turn also determine interfaith relations at large in the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society. A multidisciplinary approach was used to synthesize various documents and analyses of some experts, especially Pierre Bourdieu's sociological analytical framework. The result of this research is the construction of historical understanding that must be understood in managing religious pluralism, especially in the relations between Islam and Christianity in Maluku and Indonesia.

Keywords: Interreligious dialectics; habitus; social history; religious studies.

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Introduction

This article focuses on the aspects of Islam and Christianity in constructing Malukan religious identity until today, notably in southern Maluku. Islam and Christianity were introduced in different times and ways, accepted by Malukan in various expressions, and took place in dynamic multifold sociopolitical and cultural spaces. This is an important research topic in religious studies, especially in Maluku where people are struggling to reorganize religious relations that were destroyed during the 1999-2005 sectarian conflict. Many studies on Maluku have been conducted by researchers from various disciplines. However, not many researchers have paid attention to the construction of social/cultural identity in the historical trajectory of Maluku.

In contrast to other previous researchers who have emphasized sociological and anthropological research, especially on the conditions of post-conflict Maluku society, this article is a cultural history research in which the process of identification of self and others takes place at each different historical moment resulting in a dialectical and dynamic construction of identity. This perspective distinguishes this research from several other previous research. In other words, this research aims to fill the spaces of cultural discourse from the perspective of the cultural history of Maluku society.

This research is guided by the research question "How did the metamorphosis of religious identities (Islam and Christianity) take place through the history and contemporary social reality in Ambon?". Through this research question, the article emphasizes the shifts in cultural and historical consciousness that influence the way Ambonese perceive the various social changes that have taken place in their cultural history from generation to generation. For us, this historical perspective is an issue that has never been seriously examined by previous researchers and, therefore, a novelty aspect of this research.

This article is historical research that considers various other scientific approaches, especially sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. The cultural reality of society is examined as an interweaving series of social events and experiences that shape the self-identification of a community living in a certain time and space. Thus,

this research contributes to the building of comprehensive religious studies because it places contemporary culture in a dynamic historical chain, through which history is not only understood as a perspective on the past but is accepted as one of the important elements in the construction of contextual epistemology of religious studies.

Literature Review

Dieter Bartels wrote a thick description and critical analysis of the intervillage alliance called *pela* and the construction of identity among Ambonese-Muslims and Ambonese-Christians through *pela* relationships.[1] In his later two-volume book, Bartels presents an ethnographic epistemic range that comprehensively encompasses the various dimensions of anthropological studies.[2] His review is a comprehensive reflection that tries to knit historical, sociological, anthropological, political, and religious data that he worked on through a long process of ethnographic research (1970-2017) so as to present a perspective on the epistemic bridge of two cosmos: the *Salam* (Muslim) cosmos / *Sarane* (Christian) cosmos and the Eastern cosmos/Western cosmos. The *Salam-Sarane* in Central Maluku is a hybrid concept, which is at the same time a cultural and religious perspective and praxis that lives the historical and human dynamics of the Malukan people.

Another scholar, Richard Chauvel pays attention to political historiography in the history of Ambon.[3] His analysis of the Ambon Islands from colonialism to the rebellion of the *Republik Maluku Selatan* (1880-1950) is a comprehensive historical investigation that reveals the religious and political dimensions of Ambonese-Muslim and Ambonese-Christian relations. It also emphasizes the interconnected identities and ideological constructions of the Ambon people as important areas for understanding Ambon society today. The construction of identity in the Ambon islands has been determined by what he calls a common historical tradition.

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[1] Dieter Bartels, "Guarding the Invisible Mountain: Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism and Ethnic Identity among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Cornell University, 1977).

[2] Dieter Bartels, *Di Bawah Naungan Gunung Nunusaku: Muslim-Kristen Hidup Berdampingan di Maluku* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017).

[3] Richard Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists: The Ambonese Islands from Colonialism to Revolt 1880-1950* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1990).

Chauvel carefully examines the rise of the nationalist movement at the beginning of the century, especially among Muslims in the region who were effectively excluded from the benefits of colonial society. The sudden and comprehensive collapse of the Dutch before the Japanese attack in World War II laid the groundwork for the complete transformation of Ambon society. The narrative of the socio-political history of Ambon and Maluku is one that demonstrates the exploitation and social divisions that resulted from colonialism and shows how such historical processes can impact society long after independence.

John Ruhulessin, an Ambonese theologian, critically analyzes Chauvel's review.[4] He sees that local political upheavals, including the RMS proclamation and rebellion, cannot be seen simply as a "separatist movement" because the Indonesian state at that time had not yet emerged as a viable political entity with strong centralized state power. At this point, in the complexity of understanding the implications of international politics for local power dynamics, Ruhulessin shows the historical fragments of locality in Maluku that are intertwined with power shifts at the national, regional, and international levels through a comprehensive study of the RMS. The strength of Ruhulessin's analysis rests on his "local perspective" and "subjective" as a Malukan who tries to dissect the history of his community and that also means skinning his Ambonese identity in a broader socio-political context, namely the emergence of Indonesia itself.

The massive social conflict in Ambon (1999-2005) encouraged many scholars to conduct further research.[5] Their research has

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[4] John Chr. Ruhulessin, *Mencari Cita Kemanusiaan Bersama: Pergulatan Keambonan dan Keindonesiaan* (Salatiga: Satya Wacana University Press, 2016).

[5] Lukas Batmomolin, "Religious Conflict in Ambon, Indonesia: Reconciliation through the Pela-Gandong System." (Thesis – American University, 2000); Brauchler, Birgit, "Der Molukkenkonflikt Online: Religion Identitat, und Imagined Communities im Internet." (Ph.D. Dissertation – University of Munic, 2003); Kathleen T. Turner, "Competing Myths of Nationalist Identity: Ideological Perceptions of Conflict in Ambon, Indonesia." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Murdoch University, 2006); Tonny D. Pariela, "Damai di Tengah Konflik Maluku: Preserved Social Capital sebagai Basis Survival Strategy." (Ph.D Dissertation – Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, 2008); M. Najib Azca, "After Jihad: A Bibliographical Approach to Passionate Politics in Indonesia." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2011); Sumanto, "Interreligious Violence, Civic Peace, and Citizenship: Christians and Muslims in Maluku, Eastern Indonesia." (Ph.D.

opened up some broader perspectives on social change and cultural configurations in Maluku, particularly during and post-conflict.

Responding to the reality of social segregation in post-conflict Ambon society, Hatib Abdul Kadir shows that the polarization between Muslims and Christians in Ambon has been entrenched since the Dutch government established its dominance in Maluku in the seventeenth century.[6] This religious polarization continued into the postcolonial period and became more visible with the emergence of occupational segregation and discrimination based on religion.

The polarization of the two religious communities also manifested itself in the interests of political parties, education, and bureaucracy. Kadir observed the long history of different religious identities manifested in the realm of politics and social life. Political groupings based on religious communities existed before the revolution. In general, Christians were behind the colonial government, while Muslims were in a crisis of confidence in government policies during the colonial period. He analyzes how political parties adapted to a situation where allegiance to religion and ethnicity was strong.

In another article, Kadir reviews the exchange of objects (trees) that creates mutual trust and belonging between migrant farmers from Buton, who are generally Muslim, and indigenous groups (landowners) in Maluku.[7] The multifunctionality of trees and the flexibility of the land tenure system in Maluku have shaped the Butonese migrants' sense of belonging and built their social and economic relationships with the host community that provide the land. His article focuses on the proposition that tree crops sustain reciprocal relationships between communities in Maluku. Crops play a role in changing the landscape and can even become the property of migrants who when they first came to Maluku did not have the right

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Dissertation – Boston University, 2013); Yustinus Tri Subagya, "Support for Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, 2015); Alpha Amirrachman, "Peace Education in the Moluccas, Indonesia: Between Global Models and Local Interests." (Ph.D. Dissertation – University of Amsterdam, 2017).

[6] Hatib Abdul Kadir, "Muslim-Christian Polarization in the Post Conflict Society-Ambon," *Jurnal Universitas Paramadina*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (December 2013): 824-838.

[7] Hatib Abdul Kadir, "(Re)Building Interethnic Relations through Sharecropping in Post-Conflict Maluku," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 2022: 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/14442213.2022.2155233

to own land. Kadir builds an argument that although such reciprocal relationships, which were established over generations, could not prevent the ethnic and religious conflicts that occurred in 1999-2005, both Ambonese and Butonese farmers have developed their ways of restoring their social relationships and economic transactions.

Conceptual Framework

In the 1960s, Frank Cooley, a Presbyterian missionary and American anthropologist introduced the term *agama Ambon* or religion of Ambon. The term was the crystallization of his research on the relationship between religion and culture, especially in Central Maluku. In his study, the term *agama Ambon* provides a critical analytical space for understanding the characteristics of religiosity in the cultural context of Central Maluku. It refers here to the characteristic of Ambonese religiosity expressed by Muslims and Christians that have the flexibility to absorb local cultural elements and worldviews into Islamic and Christian precepts and practices in different ways and experiences. The interpenetration between religion and local culture (*adat* or custom) evinced a typical religiosity of both Islam and Christianity in Ambon.

Although he attached the label *agama Ambon* only for the model of Protestantism in Ambon, we observe that it also fits to understand the characteristic of Islam in Ambon.[8] Before the Westerners brought Christianity into the islands, Islam existed and intensively absorbed elements of local culture as an integral part of its religious expression. The term will be used as an ideal type to call both Islam and Christianity in the Ambonese islands. As Olson states:

> Such "ideal types," or configurations of meaning for Weber, were found among the priest, prophet, magician, and shaman. Such ideal types were configurations of meaning, functioning as abstractions to assist sociological analysis and ultimately enhance understanding… The ideal types gave history a pattern to enhance understanding, enabled one to compare historical data, allowed one to compare among types, and

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[8] Frank L. Cooley, "Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies: A Study of the Relationship between the Institution of Religion and the Institution of Local Government in a Traditional Society Undergoing Rapid Social Change." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Yale University, 1961), 153.

motivated one to compare between ideal types and historical data.[9]

Peter Burke and Richard Jenkins provide two definitions of identity as the combined working definition frames identity discourse in this article. Burke states "An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person."[10] While Jenkins states that identity "is the human capacity—rooted in language—to know 'who's who' (and hence 'what's what'). This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities."[11] These definitions demonstrate that identity has a dual-constructive dimension, i.e. individual and social.

The term Christianity refers to Protestantism, which is conspicuously related to the Reformed tradition as bequeathed to the Protestant Church of Maluku or *Gereja Protestan Maluku* (GPM) today from Dutch missionaries and Dutch Reformed churches.[12] There are many studies and literature on Islamic studies in Indonesia by which the article has been enriched to comprehend the general characteristic of Islam in Indonesia as well as in Southeast Asia.[13]

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[9] Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings* (Belmont: Wadsworth Press, 2003), 211.

[10] Peter Burke & Jan Stets, *Identity Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

[11] Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*. Third Edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 5.

[12] Steve G. C. Gaspersz et al (eds.), *Delapan Dekade GPM Menanam, Menyiram, Berbuah dan Bertumbuh* (Salatiga: Satya Wacana University Press); Steve G. C. Gaspersz & Nancy N. Souisa, "Sailing through the Waves: Ecclesiological Experiences of the Gereja Protestan Maluku Archipelago Congregations in Maluku." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 77 No. 4 (2021): 1-7.

[13] Greg Fealy & Virginia Hooker (eds.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006); K. S. Nathan & Mohammad H. Kamali (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social, and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005); William R. Roof, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2009).

Research Method

The descriptions in this article use the method of document analysis. A systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (those transmitted over the Internet) is known as document analysis. Document analysis entails examining, interpreting, and interpreting data to make meaning, understand, and gain knowledge about empirical knowledge. Documents contain images and text (words) recorded without the intervention of the researcher. Other silent or trace evidence, such as cultural artifacts, are not included in this discussion. According to Atkinson and Coffey, documents are considered "social facts" because they are created, shared, and used in a socially organized way.[14]

Many different types of documents can be employed for a study's systematic examination. They consist of things like flyers, agendas, attendance lists, and meeting minutes as well as manuals, papers, books, brochures, diaries, journals, programs, letters, memos, charts, maps, newspapers (clippings/articles), press releases, program proposals, application forms, and summaries as well as scripts for radio and television shows, institutional or organizational reports, survey information, and various public records. Scrapbooks and photo albums can also offer research-related factual evidence. Libraries, newspaper archives, community office archives, and organizational or institutional archives all contain these kinds of records.

Finding, choosing, assessing (making meaning of), and synthesizing data from documents are all parts of the analytical process. Excerpts, quotations, or complete sections are obtained via document analysis, and these are then precisely organized by content analysis into primary themes, categories, and cases.

The researcher reviewed previous literature and incorporated the information in the description of the study. Previous research is a source of data needed to make descriptions and interpretations of the data rather than using the raw data as the basis for analysis. Social hermeneutics is used here to assemble various historical interpretations with sociological and anthropological analyses so that

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[14] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method." *Qualitative Research Journal* Vol. 9 No. 2 (2009): 27-40.

the mosaic of reality can be comprehensively understood contextually both in the past, the changes that occurred, to the present.

Islam and Trading Networks in Southeast Asia

Long before the arrival of European traders, *Nusantara* traders, such as Javanese and Makassarese, had had trading connections with traders from the Middle East, subcontinent India, China, and some other places known today as Southeast Asia.[15] The *Nusantara* refers to a pre-Indonesia history and cultural identity for so-called Indonesia as the political entity just invented by the proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945. Before the date, there was no Indonesia.[16] The trading connections were not only paving the way for the exchange of goods but also ideas, living values, languages, religions, and cultural practices.[17] Those processes have been invented in Southeast Asia as multicultural areas displayed a spectrum of cultural exchanges and enormously interpenetration of living values.

There is no accurate evidence of when Hinduism and Buddhism became two big religions in Nusantara which generated great kingdoms, such as Sriwijaya and Majapahit. Some historians recognized the deep-rooted influence of Hinduism and Buddhism that for centuries became the foundation of Nusantara culture and remains in a few Indonesian customs until today. The 'harmonious' widespread influence of Islam raised an assumption that to some extent Islam has been accepted in peaceful ways by the Nusantara society. Tensions ended up with the subjugation of Hinduism and Buddhism kingdoms by Muslim rulers were considered as merely a political struggle among the ruling class, but it had little to do with religious affairs.[18]

In addition to trading networks, however, the role of Sufi wanderers, who introduced Islamic mysticism in the seventh century, also determined the widespread influence of Islam and the vast

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[15] Bernard Vlekke, *A History of the East Indian Archipelago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 75.

[16] R. E. Elson, *The Idea of Indonesia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-4.

[17] Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 1-4.

[18] M. C. Ricklefs, *History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200*. Third Edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 15.

acceptance of Nusantara society. Their teachings transformed Middle East Islam into a sort of contextualized Islam by absorbing and syncretizing Islamic precepts with elements of Nusantara local cultures. On the other side, furthermore, some people played remarkable roles by studying Islam for several years in the Middle East, then went back to be prominent *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) in Nusantara, mainly Sumatera and Java islands.[19]

It may be estimated that since the thirteenth century, the influence of Islam was ubiquitous in the Ambonese islands. Islam was introduced by Arabian, Indian, and Javanese traders who endeavored to discover a sea route head for Ambonese islands for getting spices, primarily clove, and nutmeg.[20] Through personal relationships, the influence of Islam incrementally spread out to all indigenous communities.

The influence of Islam gained political momentum mainly because it was adhered to by traditional rulers' families. In other words, the widespread of Islam might be also determined by political factors where the rulers usually demanded their people to embrace the same religion as he had. Some historians argued that probably it seems to be the influence of a hierarchical religious system of Hinduism in which ordinary people should follow the ruler, including his religion.[21]

The sociocultural factors of indigenous communities also affected the spread of Islamic precepts. Foreign Muslim traders who dwelled impermanently in the islands have played important roles to share religious practices and understandings; these were infused through social interaction with indigenous people and gradually accepted as part of the indigenous worldview. The flexibility in adopting local cultural practices accelerated the proliferation of Islam.

The interpenetration of Islam as the 'foreign religion' and local culture of Malukan occurred through unwitting contextualization which in turn engendered syncretic Islam as Ambonese called *Salam* (traditional Muslim). For instance, *Salam* Muslims believe that unnecessary for them to conduct *haj* in Mecca. They shall go to one 'sacred' mountain nearby their village and live there for some months

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[19] Fealy & Hooker (eds.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia*, 42.
[20] Ibid., 41-42.
[21] Leonard Y. Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 2.

for contemplating and praying, and afterward, go down back to the village with new status as *haji* meant someone who conducted sacred pilgrimage or is a pious Muslim. This kind of contextual Islamic ritual was deeply internalized so that Ambonese Muslims did not perceive Islam as a 'foreign religion' but an 'indigenous religion'.[22]

Christianity in Colonial Political Economy

The different processes occurred in the history of Christianity in the Ambonese islands. The increased value of spice in international markets around the fifteenth century urged European merchants to search for a sea route to discover Ambonese islands. The advent of Portuguese and Dutch respectively for economic interests and monopolized spice trading brought about significant social changes in terms of the social order and culture of Ambonese.[23]

Along with the Portuguese merchants, some Rome Catholic missionaries taught and served indigenous Malukan about the principles of Catholicism. Several villagers were converted to Catholicism and were the first Catholic parishes on Ambon Island. However, tensions happened frequently between Catholic priests and indigenous authority since the former applied very institutionalized and structured religious teaching and practice, while the latter had a different understanding deal with what they called 'sacred authority' such as gods, ancestors, magics, amulets, and so on. The Catholic priests mostly denied such local customs or *adat* by accusing them of the representation of 'pagan', 'heathen', 'backwardness', 'uncivilized', and 'evil'.

When the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) took over smoothly Portuguese fort in Ambon, there were no subsequent changes in Christian villages. The VOC focused much energy and attention only on how to control the trading system and get more and more benefits. They had no serious concerns about religious issues or developing Christian parishes inherited by the Portuguese. Instead, they merely converted all Catholic parishes to Protestantism without further nurturing concrete programs to maintain spiritual manners.

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[22] Birgit Brauchler, "Integration and Exclusion: Islam Adat in Central Moluccas." *Indonesia and the Malay World* Vol. 38 No. 110 (2010): 70.

[23] Gerrit J. Knaap, "The Demography of Ambon in the Seventeenth Century: Evidence from Colonial Proto-Censuses." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 26 No. 2 (1995): 230.

Several years later some Dutch missionaries came to the Ambonese islands. They had different church denominations and theological backdrops due to they were not under one single Protestant church authority as Catholic Church did. Tensions and divergences occurred frequently among other things inasmuch as different Western-style theological understandings and religious practices vis-à-vis local system beliefs and practices.[24]

Social tensions often took place because of the resistance by Ambonese Muslims against the VOC. They presumed the Company destructs existing trading links with Asian traders by enforcing a monopoly system. The tensions sometimes raised polarization as enmity of Islam *versus* Christianity that brought about clashes between two Ambonese religious communities.

On Ambonese islands, Leihitu has been established as the important entrepot as well as the axis of Ambonese Islamic tradition whose different characteristics are from northern Maluku. Leihitu had a different governmental system so-called *Uli* in which every village was quite independent to rule its land and people. There was no single leader as sultan as occurred in northern Maluku. The great leader of *Uli* typically was trusted for his charismatic performance. Even though Leihitu previously had a good relationship with the Dutch but it broke down later caused of the monopoly system of the VOC. For Leihitu traders, the system completely devastated the traditional partnership between Leihitu and Muslim traders from other places in Nusantara. It also engendered an internal economic crisis in Leihitu which triggered insurgence by Leihitu communities.

The VOC implemented an *apartheid* policy by giving discriminative privileges to Arabian and Chinese businessmen in Ambon town.[25] This policy marginalized Leihitu traders in the local market of Ambon town and frequently triggered resistance from them. The VOC responded to Muslim resistance by deploying soldiers recruited from Ambonese Christians in Leitimor, the southern part of Ambon Island. This became evidence that the identification of Christians, which originally was directed to the Dutch, has been shifted to the Ambonese Christian communities of

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[24] Jan S. Aritonang & Karel Steenbrink (eds.), *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 288.
[25] Gerrit J. Knaap, "A City of Migrants: Kota Ambon at the End of the Seventeenth Century." *INDONESIA* 51 (1991): 120.

Leitimor. By implementing its policy, the VOC constituted social segregation among Ambonese based on religious-line: Leihitu (Muslim) *versus* Leitimor (Christian); informal sector (Muslim), and formal sector (Christian).

Islam and Christianity in the Dutch East Indies Colonial Administration

After the bankruptcy in the 1850s, the Dutch government took over all of the Company's assets and proceeded with colonial administration under the Dutch East Indies' authority. Since then, all regions that previously were controlled by the VOC for its economic interests subsequently became Dutch colonization whose function was to manage sociopolitical systems steadily.[26]

The Dutch government in principle had the unwillingness to intervene in religious affairs. The *Regeeringsreglement* (Government Act) article 119 in 1854 stated that the government granted religious freedom and took neutrality on religious affairs except if it is proof that sort of religious practice violated a law or disrupted *rust en orde*. Based on the Act, the government required all Christian priests and missionaries to get special permission from the governor-general for entering certain regions of 'Indonesia'.[27] The official neutrality of the government, first and foremost, aimed to avoid protests from Muslim groups due to the political partiality of government dealt with Christian activities and, second, eliminated conflicting relationships among Christian sects at that time.

Nevertheless, the government's neutrality in religious affairs was practically difficult to be implemented. First, the government worried about and suspected the opposition movement by Muslim groups so they enforced restrictions and supervision toward any Muslim activities that potential to be political agitation and resistance. Second, there was fierce confrontation within the government body itself dealing with the future of the Dutch East Indies between, on the one hand, the liberal wing (non-religious) whose neutrality in religious affairs and desired the Western culture can be internalized by indigenous communities as their culture, so-called politics of

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[26] R. Z. Leirissa, "Social Development in Ambon during the 19th Century." *Cakalele: Maluku Research Journal* 6 (1995): 8.

[27] Raden A. Widjojoatmodjo, "Islam in the Netherlands East Indies." *The Far Eastern Quarterly* Vol. 2 No. 1: 50.

association, and, on the other hand, Christian wing whose willingness to Christianized all population of Dutch East Indies.

The establishment of *Kantoor voor Inlandsch zaken* or Domestic Affair Office by the government was an effort to keep neutrality in religious affairs and control oppositional tendencies by Muslim groups. Christian Snouck Hurgronje was the leading figure and thinker behind the office and its policies.[28] During the Japanese occupation, the office became a proto-ministry of religious affairs in Indonesia. Religion was no longer an individual matter but socio-political discourse by which the colonial state had a formal intervention to deal with it. The interreligious relationship has been overloaded by political nuances which consequently juxtapose religious identity with political identity.

Islam and Christianity in the Indonesia Nation-state

When the Japanese military occupied Indonesia (1942-1945), they radically diminished all Dutch-related political systems and bureaucracy, such as replacing all Christians in the bureaucracy with Muslims, prohibiting the usage of the Dutch language, closing most of the Dutch schools and arresting Christians who were suspected as Dutch allies. During their short occupation, the Japanese were effectively embedding the spirit of nationalism and strengthening their sense of identity as Asian and Indonesian. The Japanese strategy was practiced by imposing military discipline in civil bureaucracy as well as military training and indoctrination for Indonesian youth. The situation opened wide opportunities for the awakening of Islamic awareness of Indonesian Muslims in the political sphere.[29] The Japanese occupation constructed a combination of nationalist ideas and Islamic social movements which asserted Islam as a 'national[istic] religion' *vis-à-vis* Christianity as the 'colonizer's religion'. The discourse continued in a process to determine the state's ideology and foundations: democracy (secular) or theocracy (Islamic shariah).[30]

In Maluku, the identification of religion and politics overtly appeared since the revolt of *Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of

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[28] H. Aqib Suminto, *Politik Islam Hindia Belanda: Het Kantoor Voor Inlandsche Zaken* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986), 15-20.

[29] Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists.*

[30] John A. Titaley, "From Abandonment to Blessing: The Theological Presence of Christianity in Indonesia" in Sebastian C. H. Kim (ed.), *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 80.

South Maluku – RMS). The revolt was triggered by worries of traditional political elites (*raja* or head of a village and their families) and former soldiers who remained their loyalties to the Dutch in facing the reality of independence of Indonesia. They—mostly Ambonese Christians—assumed that since Indonesia has been dominated by two majorities—Javanese and Islam—they would lose many privileges and their positions within the Indonesian nation-state.

Ambonese Christians might be divided into two strongholds: nationalist and federalist; whereas Ambonese Muslims confirmed their position in alliance with Muslim groups of other regions who strive for a unitary Indonesian nation-state. The federalists, i.e. traditional political elites supported by former soldiers of KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger*), then, proclaimed the establishment of RMS on 25 April 1950 when their proposal for federalism was rejected by Republican rulers or *ad hoc* central government of Indonesia.[31]

In Ambon, the federalist group took the opposite side against the nationalist whose political insight that Ambon must be integrated into the Republic of Indonesia and detached Ambonese from the Dutch colonization.[32] The RMS guerrilla eventually was defeated by the Indonesian army after some bloody battles in the Ambonese islands. The revolt was a crucial historical event when the identity demarcation confirmed the binary opposition of Ambonese Muslims and Christians as two different opposite religious identities containing political tendencies—Muslim was nationalist and Christian was colonialist.

Nationally, at the ideological level, there were three mainstreams: Islam, nationalism, and socialism-communism. Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, strived to reconcile those three ideologies through his concept of 'nasakom' (*Nasionalisme-Agama-Komunisme*).[33] He described it further in most of his writings as the original concept of *Pancasila* based on the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal*

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[31] Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 179-180.

[32] Steve G. C. Gaspersz, "Peristiwa Namlea 1946: Dialektika Lokalitas dan Nasionalitas Pascakolonial di Maluku." *Jurnal Masyarakat & Budaya* Vol. 21 No. 2 (2019).

[33] Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Company, 2006).

Ika means 'Unity in Diversity'.[34] However, Muslim representatives in the Committee for Preparing the Independence of Indonesia still endeavored to insert Islamic values explicitly within the state constitution, but they faced bitter objections from other religious representatives.[35] After long debates, Pancasila eventually was accepted as *modus vivendi* and by consensus functions as a national ideology even though few Muslim representatives could not accept it at all but Islamic Shariah law.[36]

The regime change from Sukarno to Suharto brought about crucial implications for interreligious life in Indonesia. Through his 'security approach' Suharto's administration or New Order (*Orde Baru*) suppressed previous ideological disputes and discourse on the Islamic state. To secure the national development program and increase economic growth, the New Order regime pulverized some existed radical Islamic movements whose ideas for the Islamic state and offered strategic positions for Christians in the earlier cabinet. However, near the end of his presidency, Suharto faced resistance from the military generals and he tried to embrace Islamic groups to gain their support. His closed association with Islamic groups during the last years of his presidency re-opened discourse about political Islam and the Islamic state in Indonesia's political realm.[37]

Islam-Christianity and the Challenge of New Religious Movements in Indonesia

In 1998, the massive Indonesian student movements toppled Suharto from his presidency. The moment that was known as *Reformasi 1998* opened channels for the uncertain wave of changes. Democratization becomes a magic word to legalize whatever is being oppressed under the security approach of the New Order. Several horrible ethnic and religious conflicts occurred massively in some

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[34] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 37-43.

[35] Saafroedin Bahar, Ananda B. Kusuma & Nannie Hudawati (eds.), *Risalah Sidang Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPUPKI)/Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) 28 Mei 1945 – 22 Agustus 1945* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 1995), 125.

[36] Faisal Ismail, "Islam, Politics and Ideology in Indonesia: A Study of Process of Muslim Acceptance of the Pancasila." (Ph.D. Dissertation – McGill University, 1995).

[37] Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000)

regions at the expense of thousands dying, wounded, and in material destruction.

The 'tolerance' and 'harmonious' relationship of inter-ethnic and interreligious groups which marked Indonesia under Suharto's New Order immediately reversed into hostility and suspicion among different groups in public life.[38] The worst religious conflict in the post-Suharto time was the Muslim-Christian conflict in Maluku from 1999 to 2005. What happened actually during the conflict was the strong identification based on religious demarcation.

The conflict has been embedding perception into both Ambonese Muslim and Christian minds that religious identity is a source of violent conflict. Muslim-Christian became an overt and fragile identity marker that has been changing social and interreligious relations in Ambon.[39] The situation strongly influenced political processes in Maluku as well, especially in the five-year election of governor and mayor of Ambon which since the conflict has been seen as an arena of religious identity contestations between Ambonese Muslims and Christians. The involvement of *Laskar Jihad* mostly from Java Island and internal radical Christian groups in Ambon during the conflict demonstrated the deep transformation of quasi-harmonious interreligious relationships either in their substances or forms. Religious languages have been used as legitimacy to do violent acts on behalf of a particular religious understanding of the situation.[40]

Reading Maluku Social World through Bourdieuian Sociological Lens

The description of the five historical periods above shall be used as an orientation map to further analysis of interreligious relations between Islam and Christianity in Ambon. The key concepts

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[38] Lambang Trijono, M. Najib Azca et al (eds.), *Potret Retak Nusantara: Studi Kasus Konflik di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: CSPS Books, 2004).

[39] Steve G. C. Gaspersz, "Church and Religious Conflict: Some Experiences of Theological Reflection during Years of Riots in Maluku" in D. van Keulen and M. E. Brinkman (eds.), *Christian Faith and Violence* (Amsterdam: Meinema, 2005); Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[40] Noorhaidi, "Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia." (Ph.D. Dissertation – Utrecht University, 2005).

of Pierre Bourdieu are used as a theoretical framework to read religious identity construction in Ambon.

By combining the structuralist perspectives on the social system and the role of human agency individually, Bourdieu attempts to understand patterns of human behavior and how such patterns are structured and structuring society. His concept of practice as developed in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* demonstrates how he explains processes by which the patterns of social behavior reproduced structures of domination.

About 'practice', Bourdieu refers to everything that one *does* as opposed to what one *says*. It is related to his attention on agency: how do individuals contribute to the reproduction of social restrictions and what it is possible and not possible to do in a particular cultural context?

Bourdieu develops an idea of practice through the concept of habitus as: A system of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules.[41]

In other words, habitus is a set of dispositions that stimulate and structure all human behavior and attitude. Habitus shapes all practices and it is not received as repressive but as influencing human life unwittingly.

Habitus is not only linking the past, the present, and the future but also social and individual, objective and subjective, structure and agency. Therefore, habitus aims to overcome dichotomies to understand social reality comprehensively. It relates to social and individual since experiences of human life are unique in their particular *content* but common in their structure in terms of social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, and so on. The relation is the essence of habitus.[42] Habitus hence is not a fixed or static system.

Habitus is not merely socialization or enculturation processes into a set of practices but is also associated with power relations in

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[41] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72.
[42] Michael Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), 61.

existing social classes, i.e. how social inequality is preserved and maintained. It functions to distinguish social classes in society. This is a unique version of Bourdieu on ideology. Habitus contrasts various sets of dispositions (social expectation, chosen way of life, and so forth) within different classes.[43]

The relation takes place in a field. Here the field is not in the sense of a meadow but Bourdieu uses *le champ* than *le prés*. Field is used to describe *inter alia* (among other things), an area of land, a battlefield, and a field of knowledge. Bourdieu frequently analogizes the field to a football field for he thought of social life as a game.[44] As in a football game, a social field consists of various positions held by many social agencies (individuals or institutions) and all things moved within border lines. There are borders of "what can do within" and "what can do within" that are structured by conditions of the field or, in my words, "what cannot do due to external conditions or rules."

In that field, players are structured by rule game, and at the same time, they are structuring the game through changing positions, negotiations, and improvisations. Field and rule are a representation of 'social structure'; players and referees are a representation of 'agency'. They both are interplaying in the field. Bourdieu steps forward beyond subjectivism and objectivism dichotomies as overwhelmed by the sociological discourse on the trinity of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.[45]

The social field is not stand alone for it is a part of the means to investigate human activities. Bourdieu develops a methodology for simultaneously discerning interdependent and co-constructed trio: field, capital, and habitus. These three are integral to understanding the social world.[46] Game in social spaces or fields is more competition between various social agencies using a variety of strategies to defend or improve their positions.

In the field, there is also capital accumulation, that is, process-in and product-of a field. Bourdieu discusses four capitals: economic (money and asset); cultural (forms of knowledge, taste, aesthetic and cultural preferences, languages, narratives, and voices); social

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[43] William E. Deal & Timothy K. Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 50-52.

[44] Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 68.

[45] Tore Lindbekk, "The Weberian Ideal-Type: Development and Continuities." *Acta Sociologica* Vol. 35 No. 4 (1992): 285-297.

[46] Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 69.

(affiliation and networking, family, religion, cultural heritage); and symbolic (anything representing other capital forms and can be exchanged in other fields).

Several key concepts of Bourdieu are used as an analytical framework to comprehend Malukan's social world, especially in the process of religious identity construction. Historical narratives and contemporary social reality are subjects of discourse to discern negotiating process of religious identity as a manifestation of power relations. Religions are becoming structured structures and structuring structures through power relations in historical narratives and contemporary social reality.

They are manifested into habitus which then influences human's way of being a religious and interreligious relationship in the social context of Maluku and Indonesia. Religions play significant roles as social capital which are, on the one hand, stimulating social transformation but, on the other hand, preserving social distinctions that potentially create social segregation and even violent conflict.

From the Bourdieuian lens, religion may be seen as a field in which undergoing interplay between 'social structure' (state, organization, theology, doctrine, liturgy, belief system) and 'agency' (believers, *ulama*, theologian, cleric, monk). They have their positions and roles concerning other positions and roles, which are ruled by social commitment, cultural obligation, consensus, knowledge, negotiation, and improvisation.

Then, all have a contribution to constructing habitus. But the habitus can be altered when the context (social, cultural, political, economic, educational system, power regime, etc.) changes so that the meaning of position and rule are changing accordingly. The core business of Bourdieusian sociology is not the social change *per se* but the way an agency negotiates his/her position in the field of a social realm which is influenced his/her structure of thought and structuring the new strategy to play his/her role in altered social structures.

Religious Contestation and Power Strategy on Ambonese Islands

The understanding of religious dynamics and the construction of religious identity in the present day cannot be separated from a series of events in the past as it has been articulated through social history narratives. 'Dynamic' and 'process' are key words in observing

religion as a social phenomenon which indicates religion in itself is not static but runs into transformation and metamorphosis in every historical trajectory.

Mostly in historical narratives of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, religion plays an influential role to generate social movement in one nation, especially in dealing with oppressive powers during colonization. In historical narratives of Maluku, Islam, and Christianity were two important religions that were able to set sociological foundations for each manifestation within local, national, and global histories.

The flexibility of Islam to absorb considerable elements of local culture in Maluku may be considered as the yield of contextualization of Islam for being so-called 'local religion'. In this issue, the manifestation of Islam is a combination of agencies (traders and Sufi wanderers) who shared Islamic values and transmitted the structure of Islamic teachings in different cultural areas. Uniqueness is preserved while a set of different cultural means is used to unveil such uniqueness notably in local language expression.[47]

The power relations between Muslim traders or Sufi wanderers and indigenous communities situated Islam not only as the convergence of various identities under one single religious identity but also created new social structures that changed patterns of social behavior of indigenous communities. For instance, giving respect to *raja* or *sultan* who also acts as *imām*. Someone whose charismatic performance could be elected by the people as *raja* and *imām* that hold simultaneously divine and political authority.

It has been forming people's habitus, the structure of consciousness and behavior through mimesis and objectification of new values as their own. Islam is no longer regarded as a 'foreign religion' but become an 'indigenous religion'. For Ambonese Muslims, this kind of Islam has functioned as social capital to dominate power relations with both colonizers (Portuguese and Dutch) and Christians (Dutch Christian and Ambonese Christian); or to resist domination by others (Ternatean Muslim).

Christianity, especially in Maluku, had been facing a different situation. Religion was introduced concomitantly with the domination of economic and sociopolitical powers. Malukan accepted Christianity

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[47] Steve G. C. Gaspersz, "Islam di Kota Ambon pada Masa Kolonial: Perspektif Sejarah." *Jurnal Sundermann* Vol. 15 No. 2 (2022): 15-25.

not by cultural and personal medium but through structural acts of intimidation and marginalization by which the colonizers preserved the social class distinction between 'white' (Dutch) and 'color' (*inlander* or Ambonese); 'truth' (Christianity) and 'pagan' (indigenous religion); 'civilized' (Dutch language) and 'uncivilized' (Malay, local language); 'superior' (Western well-educated) and 'inferior' (uneducated indigenous people).

Although they shared a common religious identity (Christianity) social class distinction and segregation still existed. For example, the Dutch authority built a special church for a Dutch-speaking congregation located inside the fort and a church for Ambonese who used Malay placed outside the fort to maintain inequality between Dutch and *inlander*.

For the economic interest of colonial administration, the Dutch recruited Ambonese Christians mostly from noble families as lower officers than Muslims. In order to support the needs for human resources of governmental administration the Dutch established schools that preferred to admit students from noble families (few Muslims, mostly Christians). The Dutch language is used for working communication in higher-level schools and the Malay language for lower-level and daily life. Only a few students from noble families got an opportunity to enter Dutch-speaking elite schools.

The Dutch system of education prohibited Christians to speak in the local language and used Malay as an alternative in daily conversation and also as a panopticon to control the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of indigenous people. In addition, the Dutch Protestant church in Ambon was an important religious institution that imposed the systematic eradication of Ambonese local languages. Consequently, Ambonese Christians gradually lost their mother tongue replaced by Ambon-Malay, a creolization language of Portuguese, Arabic, Malay, and Dutch words.

Ambonese Muslim parents did not allow their children to learn in Dutch-initiated schools for they thought it same with to be 'Christian'. Ambonese Muslims established their own 'schools' which mostly provided religious-oriented instruction and preserved their local languages rather than speaking Malay or Dutch. In another field of life, while Ambonese Christians mostly occupied official positions as lower officers of administration or soldiers, their Muslim fellows dominated the economic sectors of the traditional market; Ambonese

Christians were alienated from cultural relations with the Muslims for they no longer had local languages as a shared cultural media. Furthermore, as Christianity developed in Ambon, the internalization process of Christian values into the structure of the Ambonese cultural worldview occurred.[48]

Dutch missionaries and some Ambonese Christians were agencies whose roles in the process through their preaching by articulating local cultural elements (language and ritual); some others did it when they, especially indigenous Christians, were motivated to express Christian faith through personal experiences and stories as local communities. The process of Christianization hence took place in agency and social structure relationships because of personal spiritual expressions then were experienced also as communal expressions as Frank Cooley labeled as *Agama Ambon*.

The historical context invented different habitus on Muslims and Christians which affected social relations between two different religious communities in Ambon. An effort to understand Christianity in its contextual forms is not effective to omit the image as the colonizer's religion in the perception of Ambonese Muslims. Christianity is regarded as a colonizer's religion because it was introduced by Christian Westerners, who colonized Maluku people and was positioned as a superior belief to indigenous ones, which implies rejecting ritual practices of indigenous religion.

In other words, being a Christian means being alienated from cultural worldviews and practices. For Muslims, it meant that Christianity cannot absorb local culture or be localized faith. In addition to the political reason that most Christians joined with colonial troops to fight Muslims, Ambonese Muslims regard that Ambonese Christians cannot be accepted as indigenous people because they had lost their local languages, the one of signifier human being identity.

Meanwhile, religious identity contestation in Muslim communities also occurs between those who are preserving Islam through cultural expressions, on the one hand, and a growing number of Muslim youth who are insisting on ideas of Islamic purification, on

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[48] Steve G. C. Gaspersz & Fabian Souisa, "Cultural Signification within Interreligious Encounter in the Post-Conflict Ambon: Negotiation and Contestation of Identities." Proceeding of International Conference on Religion in Public Life (2019).

the other hand, after they studied Islam at several *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in other places Indonesia. The contestation divides Ambonese Muslim communities internally into two groups: *Islam Adat* (adat-based Islam) and *Islam Syariah* (Shariah-based Islam). Those groups co-exist in Muslim communities even though always in hidden disputes with one another.

Ambonese Christians also have a division between mainstream Christianity whose concern with using cultural elements as media to express contextualized Christian faith and charismatic-evangelical Christianity whose struggle to purify Christian practices and theological interpretation from *adat* elements by emphasizing more westernized-underestimate theological interpretation and biblical message literary.

These all demonstrate that religions, notably Islam and Christianity, in Maluku have been moving over time to negotiate religious identity, local cultures, and modernity. *Ulama* or priest as agency plays a significant role to determine the structure of religious consciousness properly for existing in the cultural field of Maluku and Indonesia as well. Theological reinterpretation and contextualization of rituals or liturgies become an arena for negotiating power relations among God and ancestors, formal religious precepts and contextualization of ideas or modification of liturgies, intertwining religious leadership and traditional concept of powers, articulating language as a common signifier of identity and language game to signify existing distinction among them.

In the whole complexity of identity construction in Maluku, negotiating religious identity, local culture, and modernity open discourse space which drives the emergence of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capitals as the convergence of contextualization of interreligious relationships in Maluku. From religious studies perspective, this all figures out that religion inevitably has been playing important positions in the arena of identity contestation and power strategies that influence the social dynamic and production of the contemporary culture of Ambonese today.

Further observation is needed to analyze how such an interreligious relationship can be sustained in the multicultural context of Maluku, Indonesia even Asia. At least, however, by this elaboration one academically discerns the importance of observation on the social field in different historical trajectories as an effort to comprehend the

position and function of religions as well as power relations in the societal life of certain societies.

Conclusion

The historical narrative of Ambonese society demonstrates a dynamic process of identity construction and power contestation which significantly constituted the self-meaning in individual and social realms. In that process, religions (Islam and Christianity) have influential contributions to creating a religious identity as an integral part of cultural and political identities. Therefore, social structure and culture might be seen as an arena whereby religious identity has been transformed and undergoing a metamorphosis as a strategy to accommodate changes driven by political and economic factors.

Agama Ambon as the term was introduced by Frank Cooley to identify the process of contextualization in Ambonese Protestantism should be deconstructed by the dynamic social changes in Maluku. To a certain extent, the term helps to understand the characteristic of religiosity of Ambonese who lives in cultural tensions of being Ambonese and being Christian and also struggles to comprehend their hybrid identity as the product of colonization and Christianization.

However, the term *agama Ambon* may be enhanced to discern the different processes of religious identity construction in Ambonese Muslim communities. They have no crucial problems absorbing elements of local culture as ways to express their Islamic faith and spirituality. The Ambonese Muslim religiosity is also a product of contextualization and creative interpretation of Islamic precepts in their local contexts.

Both Islam and Christianity may be called *agama Ambon*. The term contains meaning and historical trajectory demonstrating the metamorphosis of religious identity of those religions in different times and spaces, by different agencies and social structures and has been producing models of religiosity which open to negotiating their religious basic tenets with the socio-cultural contexts as a strategy to survive and exist in modern society.

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