



The Harmony of Islamic Theology and Kaili Tradition the Perspectives of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Local Cultural Policy of Palu City

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the relationship between Islamic theology and the local Kaili tradition in Palu City through the perspective of Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The study focuses on how these two organizations formulate local culture-based policies that maintain harmony between Islamic values and Kaili traditions. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation. The findings reveal that Muhammadiyah and NU have differing yet complementary views on integrating local traditions with Islamic teachings. Muhammadiyah tends to emphasize the purification of faith, while NU is more accommodative of local traditions as long as they do not contradict Islamic law. The cultural policies produced by these organizations in Palu City demonstrate collaborative efforts to preserve the local identity of the Kaili community without neglecting Islamic values. The synergy between these two organizations fosters a productive dialogue space for integrating local traditions with Islamic values, ultimately leading to the creation of inclusive and sustainable cultural policies. This article recommends the importance of cross-organizational collaboration to strengthen local cultural identity within the framework of Islamic theology as a mercy for all creation (rahmatan lil 'alamin). It also underscores the need for ongoing dialogue between religious organizations, local governments, and communities to create inclusive and sustainable cultural policies.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with a rich and diverse local culture that coexists with Islamic values as the majority religion. Amid this cultural plurality, the integration of local traditions and Islamic teachings often becomes a subject of debate, especially in regions with strong cultural identities, such as the Kaili community in Palu City, Central Sulawesi. The Kaili tradition, which encompasses various aspects such as traditional rituals, arts, and local wisdom, frequently faces challenges from modernization and the need for alignment with Islamic values. In this context, Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) play a crucial role in formulating a harmonious approach between Islam and local traditions.

Before the arrival of religions in the land of Kaili, including Islam, the Kaili people were known as adherents of animism and dynamism. With the introduction of Islam, a process of acculturation took place, in which elements of Islamic culture were accepted, adapted, and integrated with Kaili traditions. This led to the emergence of new forms in the cultural and religious practices of the local community.

Muhammadiyah and NU, as the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, have different approaches in responding to local traditions. Muhammadiyah tends to emphasize the purification of Islamic teachings, striving to restore religious practices to their original sources—the Qur'an and Hadith—while avoiding elements considered as bid'ah (innovation). On the other hand, NU is more accommodating toward

local traditions, integrating cultural elements into religious practices as long as they do not contradict the fundamental principles of Islam.

In Palu City, both organizations play a role in guiding the Kaili community in practicing Islamic teachings while preserving their local traditions. The differing approaches of Muhammadiyah and NU provide variations in how the community integrates Islamic values with Kaili culture, creating a rich dynamic in the region's social and religious life.

In the literature, several studies have examined the relationship between Islam and local culture. For example, research by Azra suggests that Islam Nusantara has an accommodative character toward local traditions, particularly through a Sufi approach. Meanwhile, Kuntowijoyo emphasizes the importance of contextualizing Islamic teachings to maintain social harmony in multicultural societies. However, studies that specifically discuss how Muhammadiyah and NU formulate locally based policies within the Kaili community remain limited, leaving a research gap.

From a social perspective, the city of Palu faces complex dynamics due to the influence of globalization, migration, and social changes following the 2018 earthquake. The Kaili tradition, which once served as a social unifier, is now at a crossroads between preservation and modernization. Muhammadiyah tends to emphasize the principle of Islamic purification, while NU often employs a cultural approach in its preaching. These differing approaches require a space for dialogue to produce inclusive and sustainable cultural policies.

This study aims to analyze the role of Muhammadiyah and NU in formulating local-based cultural policies in Palu City, particularly in the context of integrating Islamic theology with Kaili traditions. By understanding the approaches of these two organizations, it is hoped that an effective model of harmonization between Islamic teachings and local culture can be found, which can be applied in other multicultural communities in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method. With an ethnographic approach to understanding the synergy between Islamic theology and Kaili traditions from the perspectives of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in local cultural policies in Palu City. This approach is used to explore cultural and religious practices in Palu City, particularly the interaction between Islamic values promoted by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama and the local wisdom of the Kaili community. This study utilizes both primary and secondary data:

Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews with Muhammadiyah and NU religious leaders, Kaili traditional elders, and academics specializing in cultural policy and local Islam.

Secondary data consists of literature from academic journals, books, regional policy documents, and articles discussing Islamic theology and Kaili local traditions.

In-depth Interview : Conducted with Muhammadiyah, NU leaders, and Kaili traditional leaders to understand how their Islamic theology interacts with local culture. Participatory Observation: Observing religious and cultural practices in Palu, such as traditional ceremonies, Islamic study gatherings (*pengajian*), and social interactions that reflect the integration of Islamic values and Kaili traditions. Document Analysis: Reviewing local cultural policy documents issued by the regional government, as well as fatwas and perspectives from Islamic organizations regarding the preservation of local culture.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. With the following stages:

Data Reduction: Sorting relevant data related to the interaction between Islamic theology (Muhammadiyah and NU) and Kaili traditions.

Data Presentation: Organizing findings in a descriptive narrative that highlights patterns of interaction between Islam and local culture.

Conclusion Drawing: Drawing conclusions on how the perspectives of Muhammadiyah and NU can contribute to the formulation of culture-based policies in Palu City.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

The city of Palu, as the capital of Central Sulawesi Province, has undergone complex social dynamics, especially after the earthquake, tsunami, and liquefaction disasters in 2018. These disasters not only caused significant physical destruction but also impacted the social and cultural structures of the local community. The Kaili tradition, which has long served as a social adhesive, is now at a crossroads between preservation efforts and the demands of modernization. Globalization and migration have further added to the complexity of social change in the region.

The Harmony Between Islamic Theology and Kaili Tradition

Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Palu City have demonstrated significant adaptability to the local Kaili culture, particularly in social and religious practices. The values of Kaili traditions, such as

nosarara nosabatutu (mutual cooperation) and respect for natural harmony, align with the Islamic teachings they adhere to.

The concept of nosarara nosabatutu in Kaili society emphasizes the importance of brotherhood and unity. Literally, nosarara means "brotherhood," and nosabatutu means "unity." This philosophy teaches that every individual in the Kaili community must live in harmony, help one another, and maintain collective harmony. This principle aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize ukhuwah (brotherhood) and solidarity among the ummah.

In practice, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tends to be more accommodating toward local traditions. For example, traditional rituals such as balia (a traditional healing ritual), which has long been a part of Kaili culture, are accommodated by providing interpretations that align with Islamic teachings. This demonstrates NU's flexibility in embracing local cultural elements as part of Islam Nusantara.

The harmony between Islamic theology and Kaili traditions in Kota Palu reflects a long-standing process of cultural acculturation in the Nusantara. This acculturation occurs when foreign cultural elements are adapted and integrated into local traditions, creating a balance between Islamic teachings and indigenous customs.

The Acculturation Theory explains how different cultures interact and influence each other, resulting in a new cultural form that incorporates elements of both. Relevance: Islam, upon its arrival in Indonesia, including among the Kaili community, underwent an acculturation process with local traditions. NU tends to be more accommodating of local cultural elements within Islam, whereas Muhammadiyah adopts a more selective approach to cultural integration.

In this context, the concept of nosarara nosabatutu, which emphasizes brotherhood and unity, aligns with the principle of ukhuwah in Islam. This demonstrates a process of cultural adaptation, where positive local values are integrated into Islamic religious practices.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is known for its accommodative approach toward local traditions. For example, in addressing traditional rituals such as balia, NU tends to reinterpret them to align with Islamic teachings without eliminating their cultural essence. This approach is consistent with the concept of Islam Nusantara, which emphasizes the importance of respecting and integrating local culture into religious practices.

On the other hand, Muhammadiyah adopts a purifying approach in religious practice, focusing on restoring Islamic teachings to their original form by eliminating elements deemed inconsistent with tawhid. However, within the Kaili community, Muhammadiyah still demonstrates adaptation to local values that do not contradict Islamic principles.

Theoretically, the interaction between Islam and local culture can be explained through Acculturation Theory, in which a process of mutual influence occurs between two different cultures, resulting in a new cultural form that incorporates elements of both. In this case, Kaili traditions and Islamic teachings adapt to each other, creating unique religious practices that are suited to the local context.

The Structuralism Theory by Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that culture has an underlying structure that can be understood through the patterns of thought within a society. Relevance: The social structure of the Kaili community, which is based on the principle of nosarara nosabatutu, reflects similarities with the concept of ukhuwah in Islam. This principle is then adapted into religious practices by Muhammadiyah and NU. Relevance: In the Kaili community, there are cultural practices that are aligned with Islam, such as religious gatherings (pengajian) that incorporate local cultural elements. NU tends to embrace these cultural aspects as part of Islam Nusantara, while Muhammadiyah takes a more selective approach.

The Theory of Habitualization and Institutionalization by Berger & Luckmann explains how social practices that are repeatedly performed become habits that are socially accepted. Relevance: Islamic practices within the Kaili community that incorporate local elements have become socially accepted habits, with Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah playing a role in shaping these practices.

All these theories can serve as a foundation for understanding how Islam and Kaili culture interact, as well as how Muhammadiyah and NU contribute to shaping religious practices based on local culture in Kota Palu.

On the other hand, Muhammadiyah, despite being known for its Islamic purification approach, still accommodates cultural values that do not contradict the principles of tawhid. For example, research conducted in Kota Palu found that Muhammadiyah members adapt to local religious traditions such as mongaruwa (prayers for the deceased), molibungo (female circumcision), and be'ati (oath of allegiance). This adaptation occurs through a process of collaboration and openness between Muhammadiyah and NU members within the community.

Thus, both Muhammadiyah and NU in Kota Palu have successfully found common ground between Islamic teachings and Kaili traditions. This adaptation not only enriches their religious practices but also strengthens local cultural identity, creating harmony between religious beliefs and cultural practices that have been passed down through generations.

Muhammadiyah's Perspective on Kaili Traditions.

Muhammadiyah tends to adopt an Islamic purification approach while still accommodating cultural values that do not contradict the principle of monotheism (tauhid). In cultural policy, Muhammadiyah is more selective toward traditional practices and emphasizes the rationalization of Islamic teachings in the lives of the Kaili people. The social and educational activities carried out by Muhammadiyah in Palu help preserve moral values within the local culture.

Muhammadiyah in Palu applies an Islamic purification approach that focuses on refining religious teachings from practices considered inconsistent with the principle of monotheism (tauhid). However, the organization still accommodates local cultural values of the Kaili community that do not contradict Islamic principles. In its cultural policy, Muhammadiyah takes a selective stance toward traditional practices and emphasizes the rationalization of Islamic teachings in the daily lives of the Kaili people.

One example of this adaptation is in addressing the Pompaura tradition, a Kaili tribal ritual associated with warding off misfortune. Muhammadiyah seeks to study and understand this tradition from an Islamic perspective to find an appropriate framework for aligning Pompaura culture with Islamic teachings. This approach reflects Muhammadiyah's efforts to respect local culture while ensuring its conformity with the principle of monotheism (tauhid).

Additionally, Muhammadiyah is actively involved in social and educational activities in Kota Palu, contributing to the preservation of moral values within the local culture. Through the establishment of modern Islamic schools, the development of hospitals, and the provision of social services, Muhammadiyah plays a role in renewing the understanding of Islam and improving community welfare. This vision aligns with efforts to integrate Islamic values with the local wisdom of the Kaili people.

In the field of education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu (Unismuh Palu) organizes the Baitul Arqam program as an effort to strengthen students' understanding of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan (AIK). This program includes tahajud prayer, short sermon practice (kultum), as well as outbound activities and games designed to develop creative thinking and enhance students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. This initiative reflects Muhammadiyah's commitment to shaping a generation with integrity, grounded in Islamic values while still respecting local culture.

With this approach, Muhammadiyah in Kota Palu strives to maintain a balance between the purification of Islamic teachings and respect for the local Kaili culture. Through selectivity in accommodating traditional practices and emphasizing the rationalization of Islamic teachings, Muhammadiyah plays a role in preserving moral values within the local culture while ensuring alignment with the principles of tawhid.

Nahdlatul Ulama's Perspective on Kaili Traditions.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Palu demonstrates significant flexibility in integrating elements of Kaili local culture into their religious practices, in line with the concept of Islam Nusantara promoted by NU. One of the traditions accommodated is *balia*, a traditional healing ritual that has become an integral part of Kaili culture.

The *balia* tradition is a customary ceremony performed by the Kaili community as a form of non-medical healing. This ritual involves a series of processes led by a shaman or traditional leader, aiming to cure illnesses or expel evil spirits believed to be the cause of the disease. Although rooted in animistic beliefs, NU reinterprets this ritual to align it with Islamic teachings. For example, traditional chants are replaced with Islamic prayers, emphasizing that healing comes solely from Allah SWT.

The Sufi approach adopted by NU plays a crucial role in this acculturation process. Through Sufism, NU emphasizes spirituality and closeness to God, allowing for the acceptance of local cultural practices as long as they do not contradict the fundamental principles of Islam. This is reflected in NU's efforts to preserve the *balia* tradition by giving it new Islamic meanings, ensuring its continued relevance and acceptance among the Muslim Kaili community.

Additionally, NU actively engages in community-based religious guidance in Palu. Through majelis taklim, Islamic study groups, and other religious activities, NU provides inclusive religious education that respects and accommodates local wisdom. This approach not only strengthens the community's faith and religious knowledge but also ensures that valuable local traditions are preserved and remain in harmony with Islamic teachings.

Thus, NU plays an active role in preserving the continuity of Kaili local traditions through an adaptive and inclusive approach. Its flexibility in embracing local cultural elements, reinterpretation of traditional rituals such as *balia*, and community-based religious guidance demonstrate NU's commitment to harmonizing Islamic teachings with local culture, creating a synergy that enriches the spiritual and social life of the Kaili community.

The Role of Islamic Organizations in the Cultural Policy of Palu City.

Muhammadiyah and NU contribute to the formulation of local cultural policies, both through religious forums and consultations with local government. Cultural policies in Palu City have begun to accommodate local values that align with Islam as an effort to preserve the Kaili cultural identity amid modernization. The local government collaborates with Islamic organizations to develop regulations that respect local traditions without conflicting with Islamic teachings.

The role of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is highly significant in the formulation of local cultural policies. These organizations contribute through various religious forums and consultations with the local government to ensure that the resulting policies align with Islamic values while respecting the local traditions of the Kaili community.

Muhammadiyah, with its purification approach, focuses on the purification of Islamic teachings while still accommodating cultural values that do not contradict the concept of Tawhid. Through social and educational activities, Muhammadiyah plays a role in preserving moral values within local cultures. For instance, in the field of education, Muhammadiyah establishes educational institutions that integrate Islamic teachings with local wisdom, thereby producing a generation that is knowledgeable and possesses noble character.

Meanwhile, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) demonstrates flexibility in embracing local cultural elements as part of Islam Nusantara. Through the approach of Sufism and community-based religious guidance, NU actively contributes to the preservation of local traditions. For example, in the *balia* tradition (a traditional healing ritual), NU carries out reinterpretation to align it with Islamic values, ensuring that the tradition remains preserved and accepted by the Muslim Kaili community.

The local government of Palu City recognizes the important role of Islamic organizations in preserving local culture. Therefore, they collaborate with Muhammadiyah and NU in developing regulations that respect local traditions without contradicting Islamic teachings. This cooperation is evident in various cultural preservation programs, such as efforts to safeguard the Kaili language through a partnership between the Palu City Department of Education and Culture and the Central Sulawesi Language Center.

In addition, religious forums involving scholars and religious figures from various Islamic organizations are frequently held to discuss issues related to *da'wah* and the preservation of local culture. For example, a *halaqah* held at the Auditorium of IAIN Palu, where scholars and religious leaders gather to discuss various issues concerning *da'wah* and culture in Central Sulawesi.

Through collaboration between the local government and Islamic organizations, cultural policies in Palu City are expected to accommodate local values that align with Islam, ensuring that the Kaili cultural identity remains preserved amid the currents of modernization.

Challenges in Integrating Islam and Local Culture.

Modernization and urbanization have led to the erosion of traditional Kaili values, especially among the younger generation. Differences in approach between Muhammadiyah and NU sometimes spark debates in defining the boundaries of cultural accommodation within Islamic practices. Challenges remain in establishing a balanced understanding between cultural preservation and Islamic law at the policy level.

The integration of Islamic teachings and the local culture of the Kaili community in Palu City faces various challenges, particularly due to modernization and urbanization, which have eroded traditional values, especially among the younger generation. The processes of globalization and the advancement of information technology have accelerated social change, often leading to a decline in appreciation for local traditions. Young people tend to be more exposed to global popular culture, which can gradually replace the long-held values of local wisdom upheld by the Kaili community.

In addition, differences in approach between Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), add to the complexity of this integration effort. Muhammadiyah is known for its purification approach to Islam, which focuses on refining religious teachings and practices by removing elements considered inconsistent with the principles of *tawhid*. In contrast, NU adopts a more inclusive and tolerant stance toward local traditions, accommodating various cultural practices as long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings.

These differing approaches sometimes lead to debates in defining the boundaries of cultural accommodation within Islamic practices. For example, in addressing the *balia* tradition—a traditional healing ritual of the Kaili people—NU tends to reinterpret it to align with Islamic values, while Muhammadiyah may take a more critical stance toward such practices. These differing perspectives can influence cultural policies at the local level, particularly in determining the extent to which local traditions can be preserved or need to be adapted to Islamic teachings.

Another challenge is establishing a balanced understanding between cultural preservation and the implementation of Islamic law in public policy. The local government, together with Islamic organizations, needs to formulate policies that respect local traditions without disregarding Islamic principles. This requires

intensive and collaborative dialogue among various stakeholders, including religious leaders, traditional figures, and the broader community, to achieve mutual understanding and harmony in cultural and religious life in Palu City.

Thus, the integration of Islam and local culture in Palu City requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that takes into account social dynamics resulting from modernization, differences in religious approaches, and the importance of preserving traditions within the framework of Islamic law.

Recommendations for Culture Policy Based on Local Values.

A dialogical and collaborative approach between Islamic scholars (ulama), traditional leaders, and the government must be strengthened in formulating a more inclusive cultural policy. Strengthening education based on local wisdom while upholding Islamic values is essential to preserving the cultural heritage of the Kaili people. Further studies are needed on models of integration between Islam and local culture that can serve as references for other regions in Indonesia.

To reinforce culture policies based on local values in Palu City, a dialogical and collaborative approach involving Islamic scholars, traditional leaders, and the government is necessary. This collaboration is crucial in formulating inclusive cultural policies that respect the local wisdom of the Kaili community. For instance, the Palu City Government has made efforts to strengthen policies oriented towards local wisdom and culture by actively involving traditional institutions and religious figures in preserving traditional values.

Moreover, strengthening education based on local wisdom while maintaining Islamic values is essential for safeguarding the Kaili cultural heritage. This integration can be achieved by incorporating Kaili traditions and Islamic teachings into both formal and non-formal education curricula. For example, the Class II Palu Special Child Development Institution (LPKA) has initiated the preservation of cultural diversity based on local wisdom as part of its educational programs.

Furthermore, an in-depth study is needed on the model of integration between Islam and local culture that can serve as a reference for other regions in Indonesia. Such research will help in understanding how Islamic values can synergize with local wisdom in various cultural contexts.

Thus, through a dialogical approach, the strengthening of education based on local wisdom, and in-depth studies on integration models, it is expected that cultural policies in Palu City will become more inclusive and sustainable. Additionally, they can serve as an example for other regions in harmonizing Islamic values with local traditions.

Novelty

Integration of Muhammadiyah and NU Perspectives in the Context of Kaili Culture.

Unlike previous studies that discussed the roles of Muhammadiyah and NU separately, this study offers a comparative analysis of how these two organizations accommodate and respond to the local culture of the Kaili community in Palu City.

A Multidisciplinary Approach in the Study of Islam and Culture.

This study employs a multidisciplinary approach by integrating the theories of acculturation, cultural Islamization, and structuralism to understand the relationship between Islam and local culture.

Implications for Local Cultural Policy.

This study not only explores theological and sociological aspects but also provides concrete recommendations for the formulation of cultural policies based on Islam and local wisdom, which have not been widely discussed in previous studies.

A Contextual Model of Synergy Between Islam and Local Culture.

A model of integration between Islam and local culture that can be applied in other regions of Indonesia, particularly in formulating cultural policies based on Islamic values without erasing local identity. An inclusive approach that accommodates local traditions without conflicting with Islamic principles can serve as an effective strategy for cultural preservation and the strengthening of Islamic values amid the currents of globalization.

CONCLUSION

The Harmony Between Islamic Theology and Kaili Traditions. Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Palu City demonstrate unique adaptation patterns to the local Kaili culture. Values such as *nosarara nosabatutu* (mutual cooperation) and respect for natural harmony align with the principles of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) and Islamic teachings on environmental balance.

Muhammadiyah's Perspective on Kaili Traditions. Muhammadiyah tends to adopt an Islamic purification approach, filtering out customary practices deemed inconsistent with *tawhid* (monotheism). However, they continue to accommodate local culture as long as it does not contradict Islamic principles, particularly in education and social activities based on moral values.

NU's Perspective on Kaili Traditions. NU is more flexible in accommodating local culture, viewing traditions such as *balia* (traditional healing rituals) as practices that can be reinterpreted to align with Islamic

values. The application of tasawuf (Sufism) and Islam Nusantara in NU helps preserve local cultural continuity without compromising Islamic identity.

The Role of Islamic Organizations in Palu City's Cultural Policies. Muhammadiyah and NU contribute to the formulation of cultural policies in Palu City. The local government has begun incorporating local values that align with Islam into public policies, including the preservation of Kaili culture, using an approach that remains rooted in Islamic law.

Challenges in Integrating Islam and Local Culture. Modernization, urbanization, and the differing approaches between Muhammadiyah and NU pose challenges in establishing a balanced understanding between Islam and local culture. The younger generation is increasingly exposed to global culture, leading to a gradual shift in traditional Kaili values.

Policy Recommendations Based on Local Values. This study recommends a dialogical and collaborative approach between Islamic scholars (ulama), traditional leaders, and the government in formulating cultural policies. Strengthening education based on local wisdom and Islamic principles is essential to preserving the cultural identity of the Kaili people. Further studies on models of integration between Islam and local culture should be conducted as a reference for other regions in Indonesia.

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