

Religious Life of the Mototonan Community of the Mentawai Islands (1997-2023)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji kehidupan beragama di Desa Matotonan, Kepulauan Mentawai, dari tahun 1997 hingga 2023, dengan fokus pada hubungan antara komunitas Muslim dan Nasrani serta kegiatan tradisional Arat Sabulungan. Masyarakat Matotonan menunjukkan kehidupan beragama yang damai, saling menghormati, dan penuh kerja sama. Toleransi tercermin dalam upaya bersama untuk membangun fasilitas umum, pertemuan sosial, serta saling menghormati dalam menjalankan ibadah masing-masing. Kegiatan Arat Sabulungan, yang dikenal sebagai Liat Pulaggajat, melibatkan semua warga desa tanpa memandang agama, di mana umat Muslim dan Nasrani berbaur. Meskipun mereka tidak bertemu saat menjalankan ritual keagamaan, hal ini tidak menimbulkan konflik. Toleransi sosial terlihat jelas dalam upacara-upacara penting seperti kelahiran, kematian, dan pernikahan, yang melibatkan gotong royong dan kerjasama. Kesimpulannya, kehidupan beragama yang harmonis telah terbentuk dengan baik di Matotonan sejak sebelum tahun 1997, dengan masyarakat yang bersatu dalam interaksi sosial meskipun memiliki perbedaan agama.

Kata kunci: kehidupan beragama, toleransi antarumat beragama, gotong royong.

Abstract

This research examines religious life in Matotonan Village, Mentawai Islands, from 1997 to 2023, focusing on the relationship between Muslim and Christian communities and the traditional Arat Sabulungan activities. The Matotonan community exhibits a peaceful, respectful, and cooperative religious life. Tolerance is reflected in collective efforts to build public facilities, social gatherings, and mutual respect in practicing their faiths. Arat Sabulungan activities, known as Liat Pulaggajat, involve all villagers regardless of religion, where Muslims and Christians mingle. Although they do not meet during religious rituals, this does not lead to conflict. Social tolerance is evident in important ceremonies such as births, deaths, and marriages, which involve mutual aid and cooperation. In conclusion, harmonious religious life has been well-established in Matotonan since before 1997, with the community united in social interactions despite religious differences.

Keywords: religious life, interfaith tolerance, mutual cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a pluralistic society rich in religious, ethnic, cultural, racial, and customary diversity. This diversity enriches social life and creates harmony. Indonesia consists of thousands of islands and hundreds of tribes that adhere to monotheistic religions and local religions before monotheistic religions came (Siti Nadroh, 2012). The issue of religious life

in Indonesia is often sensitive because religion touches on emotional aspects and beliefs about truth, which affect various social aspects such as clothing, food, and marriage. Religion functions as a social glue and separator, so that differences of belief can disrupt harmony. However, religion also plays an important role in realizing unity and peace. For this reason, the founders of the nation stipulated

freedom of religion in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the right to embrace and practice worship without interference (Aisyah, 2015).

the government provides guidelines while protecting the freedom to embrace religion and practice one's worship without any interference from other believers. This is related to the function of the state in religious affairs, namely establishing regulations, facilities and protection in religious life. Religious harmony is a pattern of relationships between various religious groups that are harmonious, respect each other, honor each other and are peaceful, there are no quarrels and all problems can be resolved amicably and do not disrupt the harmony of relations between religious communities in a particular area (Mursyid Ali, 2009).

Matotonan Village in South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands, consists of five hamlets: Kinikdog, Onga, Mabekbek, Matektek, and Maruibaga. This inland village relies on canoes as the main transportation on the Rereiket River. The majority of the population is Muslim (1.184 people or 90%), while Christians number 271 people (10%). Despite being the majority, Muslims do not position themselves as dominant, but rather protect the Christian minority, with both groups respecting each other (Ghofur, 2011).

Islam and Christianity entered Matotonan in the 1950s, replacing the

ancestral beliefs of the Arat Sabulungan, who believed that nature had spirits. Religious symbols such as two mosques (Abu Ubaidah Bin Zarah and Madinatul Munawwarah), two prayer rooms (Darul Ulum and Jihad), and the St. Lukas Catholic Church show a strong religious identity. In addition, the traditional "uma" house is still owned by each tribe. The Matotonan Village community, the majority of whom are Muslim, live in harmony with Christians. Even though they have embraced both religions, the Arat Sabulungan tradition which believes that nature has spirits is still maintained. Tolerance plays an important role in maintaining harmony between religious communities, in line with the principles of Pancasila. Despite having different beliefs, both groups live side by side with mutual respect, encouraging good social interaction between religious communities (Anita et al., 2016).

The religious life of the Matotonan Village community, Mentawai Islands, is very unique because it intersects with the old belief, Arat Sabulungan. Although the majority have embraced Islam and Christianity, ancestral customs are still maintained. One example is the celebration of Matotonan's Anniversary, "Lia Pulaggajat," which is held every August, where Muslims and Christians work together in the cultural ritual. The harmony between religious communities in this village is very strong, with no religious

conflict ever occurring. This phenomenon is interesting to study in a study entitled "Religious Life of the Matotonan Community, Mentawai Islands 1997-2023."

METHODS

According to Louis Gottschalk, the historical method is the process of critically examining and analyzing records and relics of the past. Imaginative reconstruction of the past based on data obtained through this process is called historiography or historical writing. By using the historical method of historiography (which is often combined with the name of the historical method) historians try to reconstruct as much as possible from the human past (Louis Gottschalk, 1986).

The first stage in this research is heuristic, namely collecting data from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews with Islamic and Christian religious figures in Matotonan as well as related archives, such as the decree prohibiting Arat Sabulungan. Secondary sources in the form of relevant books and journals, obtained from online libraries. The second stage is source criticism, which involves testing the authenticity (external criticism) and validity of the information (internal criticism) (Basri, 2006). The third stage is interpretation, which includes analysis and synthesis to combine and explain the data. The final stage is historiography, which is

the presentation of research results in the form of historical narratives based on interpreted facts (Mestika Zed, 1991).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious life in Matotonan Village from 1997 to 2023 shows a harmonious relationship through integration, cooperation, and mutual cooperation between Muslims and Christians. However, this relationship can also be influenced by prejudice, intolerance, and even conflict that is not always rooted in religion, but also political, social, and economic factors. Religion can be a unifier or a divider, but in Matotonan, the community has succeeded in establishing cooperation and mutual respect despite different beliefs (Ika Rasyani, 2013).

Religious Activities of the Muslim Community (Islam) of Matotonan Village

Religious activity consists of two words, namely activity and religion. Activity means activity or busyness (Poerwodarminto, 2003). Activity comes from English, namely "activity" which means work, activity, busyness, movement and use of energy (Rudy Hariyono and Antoni Ideal, 2005).

In Psychology, activity is a concept that contains the meaning of an individual's function in interaction with his/ her surroundings. Activity is an effort or work owned by someone who will give or be directed to people who are related

to the results of the activity itself (Akmal Hawi, 2008)

The meaning of religion itself comes from Sanskrit which means "not chaotic". Religion is taken from two root syllables, namely "a" which means no, and "gama" which means "chaotic" (Dadang Kahmad, 2012). Religion as a set of symbolic forms and actions that connect humans with the final conditions of their existence. So religion can be formulated as a system of beliefs and practices where a group of people struggle to face the final problems of human life (Rohadi Abdul Fatah, 2004). So if we look at the meaning, the true meaning of religion is rules or order to prevent chaos in human life (Said Agil Husin Al Munawar, 2005)

According to Mr. Sabri, the people of Matotonan village are Muslim. "What is meant by religious activity is an activity carried out by an individual or group to achieve the goal, in carrying out religious activities must respect each other between one religion and another, for example Islamic religious activities such as circumcision, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha" (Hendro Puspito, 2006).

According to Mr. Nasarudin, a Muslim Community Leader in Matotonan Village, "Religious activities are activities or activities carried out by the community in the form of religion, which are carried out together to establish good relationships and help each other, in

religious activities of Muslims, usually on Eid al-Fitr."

Some of the opinions of the Matotonan village community above can be interpreted that Religious Activities are activities carried out by an individual or group to achieve certain goals in the sense that the activities have a religious nuance or form. There are four religious activities of Muslims in Matotonan, including circumcision, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Ngaji Diniyyah (Astuti, 2017).

1. Circumcision

Circumcision in language means cutting the foreskin that covers the head of the penis (*dzakar*). According to Islamic law, circumcision is cutting a circle of skin at the tip of the penis. So in general, circumcision means cutting the skin covering the tip of the penis or male genitals (Muhammad Sholikhin, 2010)

Interview with Mr. Nasarudin as a Muslim Leader "In general, circumcision is only performed by Muslims because in Islam the law of circumcision is mandatory. However, something else happened in the Matotonan Village community, both Islam and Christianity, all men undergo circumcision. Mass circumcision is carried out in the South Siberut District once a year."

2. Eid Al-Fitr

The Eid al-Fitr celebration in Matotonan Village shows high tolerance between religious communities. Christians often give Eid greetings and participate in

Muslim family events, such as shaking hands and eating together. According to Mr. Sabri, a Muslim, his Christian relatives always come to wish him Eid and receive THR (Kosim, 2013).

Christian figure, Mr. Beni, stated that Christians also witnessed and sometimes followed the takbiran around the village. Likewise, Muslims congratulated Christians when they celebrated Christmas.

This tolerance prevents religious conflict, despite differences in beliefs. Citizens remain united in social life and respect each other's beliefs.

3. Eid al-Adha holiday

The celebration of Eid al-Adha in Matotonan Village begins with Eid prayers centered at the Abu Ubaidah Bin-Zarrah Mosque, the first mosque in the village. Although there are two mosques and two prayer rooms in the five hamlets, Eid prayers are still held at this mosque.

A unique tradition in Matotonan is the burning of sacrificial animals after slaughter, a legacy of pre-Islamic meat processing techniques. After being burned and its fur singed, the sacrificial animal is cleaned and cut into pieces to be distributed. This burning also facilitates the distribution of animal skins, which in many places is often a problem.

The distribution of meat in this village follows the principle of "occai," where all parts of the animal, from meat to bones, are divided equally among the

community. The sacrificial meat is distributed based on tribe and is also given to widows, widowers, and non-Muslim families, as a form of sharing ethics. This tradition reflects the strong harmony and social solidarity in Matotonan Village.

4. Studying the Koran

This activity is for young children who study religious studies. Which is done every day at 3 pm. In addition to studying the Koran, another activity is congregational prayer. In activities like this, the ustadz can give advice to children to live in harmony with friends, both fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. Because it is very important to teach children from an early age to be kind to other people. The reality now is that many teenagers are exposed to the virus of intolerance, feeling the most correct. So it is important to understand early on about tolerance and find the best teacher who understands it.

Religious Activities of the Christian Community of Matotonan Village

Religious activities are an application of activities carried out by every human being regarding religious activities in the sense of activities concerning religion in order to change the human personality to be better than before (Alfiandri, 2018).

1. Christmas Day

The implementation of the Christmas ceremony in Matotonan Village

is carried out from December 15 to January 1. But the reception is held twice on December 25, precisely at night starting from 18.00 WIB to 03.00 WIB in the morning and on January 1, when welcoming the New Year, the reception is held by Christians.

Those invited to enter the church were from the village, the village head and his staff, BPD and LPM and community leaders of the Muslim community. At that time, the invitees who entered the church did not attend the worship service but they entered only to appreciate and respect the Christians. Usually the Muslims who are invited only watch what the Christians do.

2. Easter Day

Easter is an important celebration for Christians in Matotonan Village, which begins with a church service to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus, followed by family celebrations and church decorations. Mr. Gunawan (2018) a church administrator, stated that Muslims in this village always appreciate the celebration of Easter, even supporting the reception held on Easter night. Tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities in Matotonan Village are very strong, reflecting a harmonious religious life (Delfi, 2012).

3. Family Service

Conducted on Thursday afternoon and in groups. Family worship is conducted in turns from house to house or

called *anjang sana*. The worship event begins with praises for the Lord Jesus. In this service using Indonesian and Mentawai languages then continued with a sermon led by the group leader. The sermon material is taken from the Bible. The group leader also gave advice on the importance of living in harmony and respecting each other. We must respect each other so that problems do not arise. If there is something bothering you, it's better to talk it out properly.

Tolerance of the Muslim and Christian communities of Matotonan Village in religious life

Hamka Haq (2009) stated that tolerance is the willingness to acknowledge and respect the existence of other groups, and to cooperate in worldly affairs on the basis of kinship. Religious people can unite and make peace with differences to achieve common good. Mr. Hendrizal, an Islamic religious figure, emphasized that tolerance is the main goal of Islam, by paying attention to aspects of faith and *muamalah* so that harmony is maintained. Mr. Basilius, a former church cleric, explained that tolerance is an attitude of living side by side with mutual understanding, appreciation, and respect to create peace. The Head of Matotonan Village, Mr. Ali Umran, emphasized that tolerance in this village is based on religious freedom guaranteed by law (Daulay, et.al, 2020).

1. Forms of Tolerance Between Muslims and Christians in Matotonan Village

One way to strengthen brotherhood and tolerance between religious communities is through good communication between fellow Muslims and Christians in Matotonan, because good interaction will create a more conducive atmosphere of tolerance and reduce conflict between communities (Ali Hisyam, 2015). The ability of the community to find certain social mechanisms, both naturally and planned, which can guarantee legal and social order. One form of social mechanism that is attempted in a planned manner, has been carried out by the government through the development of harmony patterns, such as encouraging the formation of religious assemblies, forming a forum for harmony between religious communities, developing understanding between leaders and religious figures. The forms of tolerance carried out between Muslims and Christians in the Matotonan Community are as follows:

a. Mutual cooperation

In Matotonan Village, mutual cooperation is an important form of cooperation to achieve common goals and maintain tolerance between religious communities. The attitude of kinship and mutual assistance between Muslims and Christians plays a major role in creating harmony and reducing conflict. The

people of Matotonan Village uphold tolerance, as seen from the mutual cooperation activities that have existed since before 1997. Mr. Basilius, a Christian community leader, emphasized that mutual cooperation is a symbol of cooperation between Muslims and Christians in the village. In addition to mutual cooperation, silaturahmi is also an important way to build tolerance between religious communities (Mitra Zalman, 2018).

b. Silaturahmi

Tolerance in Indonesia, with diversity as a strength, can accelerate national unity. Religion plays a role as psychological support and a guideline for life, including teachings of friendship that uphold social values. In Matotonan Village, friendship between Muslims and Christians is the key to harmony. Mr. Irfan, chairman of the Kirekat foundation, stated that visiting each other regardless of religion is a way to maintain tolerance. A familial attitude and mutual respect in worship also play an important role in maintaining harmony and preventing conflict. Interview with Mr. Irfan as the chairman of the Kirekat Foundation in Matotonan Village said, "The harmonious event between Muslims and Christians is visiting each other among fellow religious adherents in the Matotonan Village community, so that tolerance is well established, the Matotonan community must visit each other without looking at

the religion they believe in, without visiting each other, we will not know the things that happen in the community environment where we live."

In Matotonan Village, the friendship and kinship between adherents of different religions are clearly visible. People visit each other and live in harmony, which helps maintain harmony and avoid conflict. In addition to friendship, mutual respect in worship is also important to foster tolerance between religious communities.

c. Respect each other in worship

In Matotonan Village, religious tolerance is seen in the attitude of mutual respect and openness between adherents of different religions. The community respects each other's worship processes and is involved in celebrating other religions, such as making banners for Eid al-Fitr for Muslims. The Head of Matotonan Village, Mr. Ali Umran, emphasized the importance of tolerance as the basis of community and state life. Tolerance must be a collective awareness to avoid conflict and understand religious differences constructively.

d. Trust and Support Each Other

In Matotonan Village, the Muslim and Christian communities understand and support each other's religious experiences, creating a peaceful and safe life without conflict or inequality. A real example of tolerance is helping each other in building places of worship; Christians help build

mosques and prayer rooms, while Muslims support the repair of churches. This attitude of mutual support has existed since before 1997 and continues to be maintained to this day.

Arat Sabulungan activities among the Muslim and Christian communities in Matotonan Village.

In the past, the beliefs of the Mentawai people, especially in Matotonan, were known as Sabulungan or Ulau Manua. The salvation ritual is carried out through animals (pigs and chickens) and plants, with the ritual center at Bakkat Katcailah. Ulau Manua refers to an invisible entity that approaches divinity, while Sabulungan is the spirit of a deceased person and is used in making medicine by Sikerei (shaman). Although the Kerei believed in God, the teaching had not been fully reached by the preaching of da'wah at that time (Jon Efendi et al., 2020).

For the Mentawai people, Arat Sabulungan is used as a philosophy of life, values, norms or behavioral rules that existed in the past, the existence of which is very necessary according to the level of civilization at that time in order to reflect oneself towards others, the environment, and the supernatural world. Although Arat Sabulungan was once upheld and maintained by the older generation of Mentawai in the past, however, the Mentawai people never considered it a

new religion, let alone tried to fight for it to be on par with the official religions recognized by the government today, as in the cases of other beliefs (Refni Yulia, Zulfa, Hendra Naldi, 2018).

Arat Sabulungan, a traditional Mentawai belief, is considered a threat by the government because it involves worship that is contrary to the principles of monotheistic religions and has the potential to disrupt the stability of the country. In 1954, the government banned Arat Sabulungan not because its teachings were misleading, but to avoid threats to the state and to encourage the development of Mentawai society. This ban was announced at the Three Religions Meeting. Arat Sabulungan activities in Matotonan Village involve rituals in important events such as marriage, birth, death, and the Liat Pulaggajat ceremony.

1. Three Phases of Life (Marriage, Birth, and Death).

Social traditions in Matotonan Village are closely related to the culture that has been preserved from generation to generation. In the birth phase, there is an arat sabulungan event, including liat toga (welcoming and naming the child), which is attended by extended families from all religions. Mr. Hendrizal, an Islamic religious figure, explained that the welcoming of the birth was carried out through Matotonan customs and aqiqah according to Islamic teachings, with

Christian neighbors also attending the event.

In marriage, both Muslims and Christians help each other regardless of religion. The Pangurei tradition involves customary preparations such as pigs, chickens, and traditional flowers. Likewise, when someone dies, people help each other even though religious rituals are carried out according to their respective beliefs. Mr. Jakobus and Mr. Didimus mentioned that tolerance is seen in all social activities, including weddings and death commemorations, where all citizens participate regardless of religious differences.

2. See Pulaggajat

Liat Pulaggajat is a big party in Matotonan Village that lasts for three days and three nights, starting with the Lia Siboitok ritual, including the beating of traditional musical instruments and the making of uma roofs from sago leaves. This event is led by Sikerei, a traditional leader who is considered to have the ability to communicate with spirits, and is held every August 10.

Mr. Irfan, the chairman of the Matotonan Village anniversary celebration, said that although Muslims do not consume pork and chicken that is slaughtered in a way that is not in accordance with Islamic law, this does not interfere with good relations with Christians. All parties respect each other's beliefs.

Mr. Ali Umran, the village head, added that before Liat Pulaggajat, there were always meetings between Muslim and Christian figures to discuss joint participation. The researcher concluded that this activity reflects the high tolerance in Matotonan Village, where cooperation and mutual assistance between Muslims and Christians are always prioritized, even in events involving customs and religion.

CONCLUSION

Religious life in Matotonan Village is an example of understanding a pluralistic society to build harmony and tolerance between religious communities. The community understands that tolerance is a necessity that creates an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation for differences, so that harmony is formed. The people of Matotonan Village live in harmony without conflict. The religious attitudes they adhere to are the main factor in creating harmony. Despite differences in religious doctrine and rituals, they still meet in social matters such as birth, marriage, and death. In religious activities, they respect each other and have a strong principle of tolerance between Muslims and Christians. The differences that exist actually strengthen attitudes of mutual respect and appreciation, rather than becoming a source of conflict.

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