



Local Wisdom Practices In Preserving Multiculturalism In The East Amanuban Community, South Middle East District Of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Religious disagreements frequently lead to conflicts and divide in society. A minor portion of the issues that arose in East Amanuban is the case of certain individuals rejecting Muslim places of worship. The goal of this study is to make clear how local knowledge can be applied to problem-solving. According to the research findings, when building Islamic halls of worship, local wisdom can reconcile problems between Islam and Christianity. The first reason that Christian groups opposed building Muslim halls of worship was because they were suspicious of the Islamization efforts made by Muslim communities. Talk between religious leaders, the government, and traditional wisdom practices is given priority in conflict resolution. The term *Oko Mama* is used to symbolize unification. Because the king's Amanuban Kingdom fairly divided its people to adopt Christianity and Catholicism in the past and because intermarriage occurred during the spread of Islam, local wisdom is strong. Their interaction with each other is the foundation for fostering harmony without recognizing distinctions; for the locals, they are brothers who preserve the principles of indigenous wisdom. Even when family members hold different ideas, the custom of local knowledge placing a higher value on religion is a private matter that shouldn't be tampered with. Because of this, the local knowledge of the East Amanuban community has preserved multiculturalism in the face of information and technology disruption, which frequently results in the disruption and even the fading of the values of variety in contemporary society's social interactions.

Keywords: East Amanuban, local wisdom, multiculturalism, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

This research explains the practice of local wisdom in caring for the multicultural community of East Amanuban District, South Middle East Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Indonesia's multicultural society is characterized by racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences with more than 300 tribes and 1340 ethnic groups as recorded by the Central Statistics Agency. The diversity of Indonesian society is outlined in the national motto, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" symbolizing all cultural differences as the basis for national policy, doctrine, philosophy, ideology and reality since the beginning of the formation of the Indonesian nation and state.

The research location was carried out on the island of Timor, which is inhabited by various tribes, namely the Rote tribe, Helong tribe, Dawan tribe, Tetun tribe, Kemak tribe, Marae tribe and Timor tribe. This tribe is

spread across 4 districts, namely Kupang, South Central Timor (TTS), North Central Timor (TTU), Malacca, and Belu, East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT), Indonesia. The various tribes that inhabit the island of Timor are bound by the same local wisdom culture as social capital to establish harmonious relationships in society. However, it is difficult to deny that these differences threaten social life if not correctly maintained. The cases in Pisan village and Teluk village, East Amanuban District, South Central East Regency (TTS) are a form of threat to one of the religious communities. The incident began when the Muslim community in these two villages built a house of worship and was rejected by the Christian alliance group. Christian groups demanded that the construction of houses of worship not continue even though Catholic churches and Christian churches were free to exist without any interference from Muslims. There should not be instances of intolerance within the religious community; NTT has Indonesia's highest religious harmony index at 81.07%. Other provinces with similar high scores include Papua (80.20%), West Papua (78.63%), Bali (77.95%), DIY Yogyakarta (76.03%), Central Kalimantan (76.29%), North Sulawesi (78.35%), West Kalimantan (77.61%), Maluku (76.30%), and Riau Islands (76.20%). (Source:<https://www.kemenag.go.id/>).

A study by (Mohammad Takdir, 2017), Model of Religious Harmony Based on Local Wisdom in NTT, shows that the value of local wisdom is enormous social capital for creating harmony between religious communities. Maintaining unity and harmony between communities is a treasure of local culture, kinship, the spirit of communality, traditional house culture, and togetherness in carrying out religious rituals. Meanwhile, the role of religious leaders and the younger generation also occupies a strategic position in encouraging the creation of an integral spirit of brotherhood. Study (Moses Kollo, et al 2020) Internalization of Multicultural Values to Strengthen Tolerance of Christians and Muslims in Kupang City shows that (1) the emergence of religious multiculturalism (Christians and Muslims) is caused by Kupang City being the centre of government, economy, education for the people of NTT, and marriage mixed across religions and ethnicities; (2) there are two steps taken by Christian and Muslim families in Kupang City to internalise multicultural values in children, namely educating and practising directly. First, Educate and provide understanding to children to always have a cooperative, communicative, tolerant, appreciative, respectful and friendly spirit towards others; second, get involved in social activities such as celebrations of joy and sorrow, and (3) "Beta Orang Kupang" is a new civilisation that emerged as a result of the fusion of Kupang City people from various backgrounds.

The latest study (Moh. Mul Akbar Eta Parera and Marzuki 2020) Local Community Wisdom in Building Religious Harmony in Kupang City, NTT shows that religious harmony in the perspective of local wisdom in Kupang City is through Nusi (cooperation). Butukila (binding and maintaining a sense of brotherhood). Suki Toka Apa (supporting and helping each other). Muki Nena (sense of belonging and belonging). This philosophy is a guideline for the people of Kupang, namely "Lil Au Zero Dael Banan", in building and maintaining the City of Kupang for those who It is the obligation of all citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity or race. Several studies above explain that in the multicultural society of Kupang City, which occupies the island of Timor, they live in harmony through local wisdom values, which can reduce conflict and division, able to withstand sentiments of religious and ethnic identities and serve as a foundation for strengthening multiculturalism in Indonesia.

On the other hand, disagreement in cases of rejection of places of worship has factors influenced by the national situation, such as the strengthening of identity politics, which has entered the social life space. Identity politics, based on the same identity, is often the main cause of political conflict, especially related to tensions between superior and inferior groups or between the majority and minorities. No exception in Indonesia, the understanding of liberal democracy, which glorifies Pancasila above all else, makes religion a substance whose existence is considered a threat to diversity, especially towards religious minorities (Lestari, 2018). The positive thing that can be taken from identity politics is that there is an effort to continue to preserve the cultural values that are characteristic of the group concerned so that the strengthening of culture will not fade and disappear (Muhammad Habibi, 2018). In national and state life and multiculturalism in Indonesia, national, ethnic and religious identities play a vital role (Chusniyah, 2016).

The problem of multiculturalism still threatens Indonesia; diversity has the potential to trigger conflict, which leads to violence, attacks, destruction, arson, abuse, arrests and intimidation. During the 1998 reformation, there was a conflict involving the people of Ambon, Poso, and Sampit; there were closures and burning of places of worship; also in 2015, Indonesia faced mass protests between Christians and Muslims in the Karubaga district, Tolikora, Regency, Papua New Guinea which resulted in the burning of several kiosks wood and a mosque (Rosyid D 2017). Based on this explanation, this research seeks to complement research that has not been carried out by other researchers and to answer how local wisdom practices maintain multiculturalism in East Amanuban District, Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this research is qualitative with a case study type of research. (A Muri Yusuf 2014) Case research is a process of collecting data and information in depth, detail, intensive, holistic, and systematic about people, events, social settings (social settings), or groups using various methods and techniques as well as many sources of information to effectively understand how people, events, natural settings (social settings) operate or function according to the context. A detailed description of cases of rejection of places of worship in Pisan Village and Teluk Village was carried out by the Christian Community Alliance, seeking truth and justice.

According to (Creswell,2016), the data collection technique includes in-depth interviews, observations, focus group discussions (FGD), and documents. In-depth interviews are conducted directly (face to face) and in in-depth discussions or dialogues. So, interviews are not just questions and answers guided by the interviewee's guide. In the interview, you will hear about the history of multiculturalism and local wisdom practices. Research informants were descendants of King Amanuban, community leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, village heads, youth groups, and local government.

Data analysis takes place simultaneously with data collection. It is conducted because the researcher is a significant instrument in qualitative research, as (Neuman, 2011) and (Creswell, 2016) stated. Therefore, a researcher does not just collect data but is also involved in understanding and providing assessments. Thus, searching for data, investigating, writing field notes, arranging them systematically, and integrating them are carried out simultaneously. It is the qualitative data analysis process, according to (Neuman,2011). During this data analysis, following (Miles and Huberman,1994), the data is arranged categorically and chronologically, and a list of important ideas is generated. After that, the compiled data will be reflected and reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rejection of Construction of Muslim Houses of Worship

History The spread of Christianity in East Amanuban occurred because of colonialism in Indonesia (Andrianus Sirait and Malau 2019). The greatest number of Christians occurs in northern Tapuli compared to the Simalungun region which was a little late in accepting the arrival of Christianity. If in Tapanuli, missionaries had arrived in 1861, then the attention of the RMG (Rheinische Missions Gesellschaft), a missionary organization from Germany, had only been around since 1903 when a missionary named August Theis was assigned to the Pamatang Raya area. The result of his hard work was the establishment of the Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS), the largest church organization whose members mostly come from the Simalungun area.(Agustono 2012). In East Amanuban District point of entry of religion whenever the 30 September Rebellion Movement carried out by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965, local people who adhered to the Halaika religion were forced to embrace one of the religions determined by the government (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism) otherwise they would be arrested because considered part of the PKI (does not believe in religion).

In history, the spread of Islam was due to the influence of a Usif (Local King) named Gabriel Isu, who converted to Islam and then followed by all the people until now. It continues to develop into the second-largest religion in East Amanuban. Before Christianity, Catholicism and Islam arrived, local people adhered to the religion of their ancestors called Halaika to preserve their ancestral culture. In the study field (Ginting & Anita, 2020), before Islam developed in Siantar Regency, the people adhered to the ancestral religion Habonaron Do Bona, which means everything must originate from what is right. Currently, religious life continues to develop based on research data findings Christianity as the largest religion numbered 16,847 people, the second religion was Islam with 2,446 people, and lastly the Catholic religion with 2,144 people. As a widespread religion, Christianity has 40 churches, Muslim houses of worship have 10 mosques and 10 prayer rooms and then 4 Catholic churches (BPS, South Central East Regency 2021).

The socio-religious life of the East Amanuban people originates from the same history as the colonized people, the same land and culture as the Timorese people. Religious differences are not a major problem because in the past they lived side by side with their respective beliefs. The occurrence of cases of rejection of the construction of Muslim houses of worship by Christian alliance groups is a form of disagreement that damages multiculturalism. The incident that occurred in Pisan Village began with a protest by 10 native village people and people from outside the village (Source from the head of Pisan Village). Meanwhile, there was no problem with the rejection of the construction of a house of worship on the private land of the landlord in Teluk Village (the first person to occupy the village) at the start of construction, and the entire village community lived in peace and security. In the middle of the construction process, several Muslim households around the prayer room area were given letters of refusal to stop construction. Because construction continued, community groups held demonstrations in front of the prayer room, throwing and destroying buildings that were being built (interview results from the head of Teluk Village). Religious conflict is caused by the belief of adherents of certain religions that other religions are not attractive, do not bring peace and do not lead to entry into heaven (Odak 2021).

This incident received attention from the security forces, police and TNI to secure the conflict. Further efforts were made at mediation by the sub-district government down to the district level. Mediation presents the various parties in conflict with the conclusion that development can continue and rejection is deemed to have never occurred so there is no prolonged conflict. To achieve harmonious conflict resolution, the role of government institutions, religious leaders, and community participation is very important(Qurtuby 2012). Mediation also involves forums for harmony between Christians and Muslims. Expanding the network of these communication forums can reduce the occurrence of religious conflicts (Riansyah et al. 2021). Conflict resolution is carried out by prioritizing local wisdom values to ensure peace for all parties involved. The same experience occurred in Nigeria, famous for the conflict between Islam and Christianity. They can resolve or reduce the conflict through local culture, especially by practicing traditional religious practices during birth, marriage and death ceremonies (Kitause et al. 2007).

The cause of rejection of places of worship is not a problem that comes from the local community but rather due to interference from outside parties and the entry of outside values into the life of the multicultural East Amanuban community. One of the factors that caused the rejection was because there was assistance to the Muslim community from Muslim networks on the island of Java as a place to pursue Islamic religious education. This network provides attention and assistance to local communities to construct places of worship, school education scholarships, sacrificial animals, necessities, and others. For example, aid for basic necessities and sacrificial animals; because we live in a heterogeneous society, this aid is also given to our non-Muslim relatives. This has become commonplace among people because they give and help their fellow brothers and sisters, but outside people see it as Islamization, which threatens Christianity. This condition is seen as a separate (hidden) agenda that is dangerous and threatens the lives of Christians who follow the teachings of certain people (the source of an informant who did not want to be named).

These efforts were initially based on good intentions but later caused tensions in good relations with followers of other religions (Nasution 1995:266-267). For the East Amanuban community, it is considered normal; the relationships that exist are built and carried out based on a sense of brotherhood or kinship because, basically, they have an intermarriage relationship and even still have a family lineage. Studies (Dalimunthe 2016) explain that one form of the spread of religion is the marriage process. Differences and conflicts then disappear and can be resolved based on family values and local wisdom that have grown, developed and been maintained over time. Traditional and cultural values are still good mediators in people's lives.

Practice Local Wisdom in Caring for Multiculturalism

The practice of local wisdom or cultural values that are the habits of the Amanuban people today is a legacy of the past Amanuban kingdom. As a great Kingdom, Amanuban became one of the swaprajas and two other swaprajas that formed the South Central Timor Regency (TTS). These three self-governments are known as Banam (Amanuban), Oenam (Molo), and Onam (Amanatun). Here is a picture of the Amanuban kingdom which is now TTS Regency.

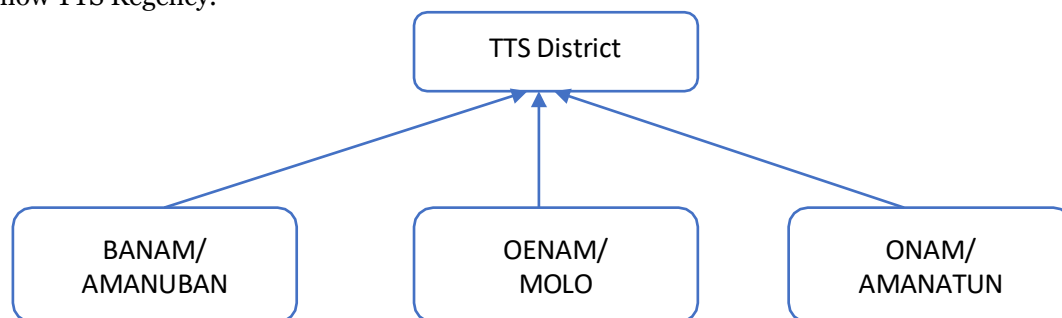


Figure 1. Origins of TTS Regency from the Three Great Kingdoms/ Swapraja

The Amanuban kingdom was led by a king in the Timorese language called "Usif" Nubatonis. Based on field findings, when it comes to Dutch colonialists to the island of Timor, the leadership of the Amanuban kingdom was wrested from the hands of the Nubatonis by the Nope Derivatives, who were immigrants from the area Region Rote. Until now, people on the land of Timor Regency South Middle East (TTS) are divided into two groups; some still recognize the Nubatonis family as the rightful owner of the Amanuban kingdom. However, some Timorese people recognized Nope as king of the Amanuban kingdom because he followed the Dutch government (interview with descendants of the Manes clan)

The traditional and cultural values of the Timorese people are those of their older brother's civilization and sisters or brothers who came from West Timor (Malaka Regency). Based on older stories Banam, Oenam, and Onam were three brothers who came from the West and then split up to build their own lives in the areas known as Amanuban, Molo, and Amanatun. This then causes the traditional and cultural values of the Timorese people, especially in TTS, to be largely the same.

East Amanuban District itself, during the Amanuban self-government period, was divided into four regions, namely East Amanuban, Central Amanuban, West Amanuban, and South Amanuban, where these Amanuban areas were under the rule of King Nope who lived under area Niki-Niki, Central Amanuban region. Meanwhile, in other regions such as East Amanuban, West Amanuban and South Amanuban, it is headed by Usif-used in the region, which remains under the auspices of King Nope.

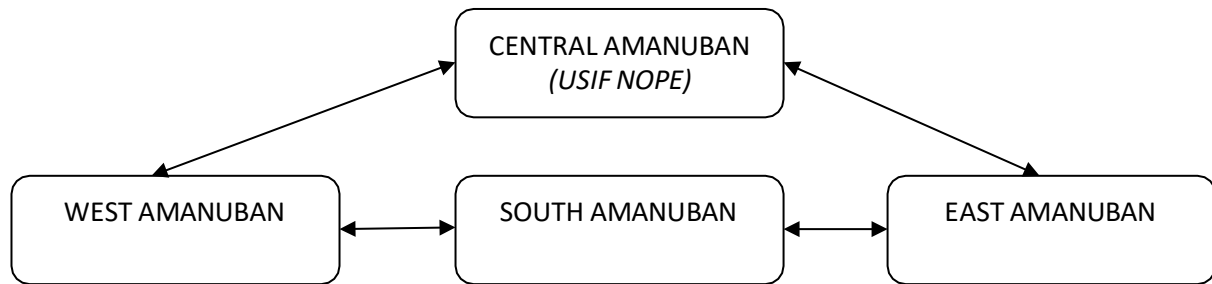


Figure 2. Map of the Amanuban Kingdom Territory Under Usif Nope's Government

East Amanuban was under the government of Usif Gabriel Isu (the former government centre is currently in Silu Village). Under Usif Gabriel Isu's government, initially, there were only two neighbourhoods (in 1928), namely Fallo District and Nitiano District. Furthermore, in its development, because the distance between the Fallo and Nitiano areas was quite far and it was difficult for messages to be conveyed to each other, one area was created between the Fallo and Nitiano areas, namely the Manes area. The three temukung Fallo, Manes and Nitiano later became the forerunners of the current East Amanuban District area.

Coming from the same kingdom and culture, the people of the island of Timor use an object called Oko Mama (a container for storing goods), which contains goods in traditional terms called "*Tua Boit Mese Noin Sol Mese*" which means one bottle of sopi (a traditional drink) and a thousand or two thousand in cash along with betel leaves and areca nut. Giving Oko Mama is a sign that any problem and any purpose will be resolved through kinship and brotherhood relations. Despite differences in ethnicity and religion, family relationships can be maintained well. Differences in Islamic or Christian religions between husband, wife and children are common. After all, they believe in the value of "Kle Kamuif Talas Es Es Mutuin Hopal Saiti", which means there is no prohibition on anyone embracing religion because everyone has their own beliefs. This value is the basis for resolving the problem of Christian groups rejecting Islamic places of worship. Religious communities can live side by side in harmony due to local wisdom as cultural capital and heritage; religious communities, including Muslims, Hindus and Christians, believe they come from the same ancestors, and even in the same family, people of different religions live in harmony. (Gede Agung et al. 2024).

Values *Boit Mese Noin Sol Mese* Also used when conveying good intentions at the event "Tamana Tut When two people want to get married, the man and the woman will appoint someone from their relatives, old people to be the spokespersons of the two big families. The man carries Oko Mama contains a certain amount of money one thousand which means sincerity is given according to ability. The reply from Oko Mama, which contains areca nut and betel leaves, will be accepted by the woman. This means that the heart's intentions have been well received because, according to Timorese customs/values, the person who came with Oko Mama understands the values and customs, so it is not appropriate to reject them. Carrying Oko Mama can also be used when an error and apologize or admit one's mistake. In traditional terms, it is called "Noin Solo", which means admitting mistakes. Because this is a form of traditional settlement, they traditionally forgive each other without feuding between fellow brothers. As a sacred place, Oko Mama, whose closed-form explains that giving something without other people knowing, avoids forms of mutual suspicion and full sincerity.

In religious, and social life, local wisdom can be seen in the togetherness of Muslims and Christians in various social assistance. If Muslim residents receive assistance from parties outside the village, it will be distributed to non-Muslim residents. When there are major holidays for each religion, each party supports each other by visiting each other to maintain brotherhood. During the Eid al-Adha holiday, Muslims give sacrificial animal meat to the entire community regardless of differences in religious background. The community is always open; for example, at weddings, Timorese people always buy pigs for consumption. To maintain tolerance towards Muslims, cooking places and equipment are kept away from Muslim food locations. Even in the Pisan village, where there was resistance to the construction of a place of worship, the Christian community did not consume pork because it was considered a nuisance to the Muslim population and replaced it with chicken or beef so that they could be consumed together. This practice of tolerance can be seen among Muslims and Christians in South Tapanuli when a Muslim visits his Christian relatives, and the Christian host offers special Muslim dishes and tableware (Abdullah, 2001). Christians recognize that important differences between Muslims and Christians must be respected, especially in matters of equipment and food. Experiences of multiculturalism in studies (Harahap et al., 2023) in North Sumatra, which is called a miniature Indonesia because it lives and develops into a population with diverse ethnicities, cultures and religions from various provinces in Indonesia. Eight major tribes inhabit the region, namely Malay, Batak (Toba Batak, Karo Batak, Mandailing Batak, Simalungun Batak, and Dairi Batak), Nias, Javanese, Minangkabau, Sundanese, Acehese, ethnic immigrants such as Chinese, Arabs, Indians, and others. The majority tribe in North Sumatra is Batak or Batak Ethnicity (Jaya, 2020).

The practice of local wisdom can also be seen in welcoming guests from abroad and then providing a respectful greeting with a greeting from Ahoit. society taught us to build good relationships with all people with a good way of greeting. This cultural value teaches a lesson that anyone you meet must always give respect and appreciation to each other to keep going in good relationships. Another experience of local wisdom practices

occurred in South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. To strengthen social relations, Indonesian cultural festivals, culinary festivals, dance performances and clothing shows were carried out. Inter-religious involvement was fluid and dynamic (Ropi, 2019).

The brotherhood between Timorese people is strongly supported by local wisdom values that have been planted since ancient times with the mark "Ulif Tataf", which means brother or sister applies to everyone who comes or meets. This value teaches that relationships between people must be built based on siblings and older brothers to make the relationship close and strong. Also, the values put into practice are "Lais Manekot", which means to love each other/love each other. In the built sibling relationship, there must be a feeling of mutual love and hope that relations between communities will be good. If there are differences in understanding, they are resolved with these two values. If there are difficulties and needs, there is no need to hesitate to convey or be called the term "Ulif Tataf and Lais Manekot. The values described are local wisdom practices, which are instruments for resolving problems of religious differences and fully caring for multiculturalism. kinship, affection, tolerance and respect for one another. On the other hand, religion is seen as inciting violence and war, perpetuating oppression and marginalization and, contributing to ecological disaster, imposing a hegemonic moral matrix on society; religion can take an authoritarian form and suppress individuals to maintain mainstream beliefs and practices (Riyanto 2023).

Conclusion

The practice of local wisdom in maintaining multiculturalism in East Amanuban is a cultural treasure that continues to survive today. The problem of rejection of the construction of Muslim houses of worship by Christian groups can be resolved through local wisdom "Kle Kamuif Talas Es Es Mutuin Hopal Saiti" meaning that there is no prohibition on anyone embracing a particular religion even though they are related by blood relationship between father, mother and child but the choice of religion is personal rights are upheld. The cause of the conflict was the Christian group's suspicion of Islamization activities carried out by the Muslim community, as well as interference from parties outside the village which made the situation worse. Religious leaders, traditional leaders, local governments, and the affected populations should prioritise discussion regarding conflict resolution. Every customary activity, wedding, funeral, or dispute resolution incorporating the local wisdom known as "Oko Mama" signifies the community's connection and togetherness. In addition, indigenous wisdom traditions date back to the Amanuban Kingdom, when the monarch arbitrarily split his subjects into groups to convert to Christianity and Catholicism and instituted marriage laws to promote Islam. They may coexist peacefully in familial relationships, but for the community, they are brothers and sisters who preserve the principles of local wisdom despite their differences. Thus, these indigenous wisdom traditions have contributed to the current state of peace in the East Amanuban community.

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Compliance With Ethical Standars

We adhere to the code of ethics throughout the study, protecting and accounting for the confidentiality of informants who provide data.

Notes

I Made Satya Nanda is a researcher with an intermediate expert position at the National Research and Innovation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia. Satya's primary areas of study include multicultural and religious history. His research has been conducted on religious history, social life activities within the group, and cultural identification in local communities. Apart from that, Satya is also keen on studying local personalities who have shaped the archipelago's cultural heritage.

Akhmad Syafruddin is a lecturer at Nusa Cendana University. He completed his master's degree in political science at Gadjah Mada University, where he focused on regional autonomy and local politics. Akhmad is interested in municipal politics, elections, and social disputes as research topics. In addition to giving lectures, Akhmad is a frequent writer on modern political dynamics for internet publications—topics that consistently generate headlines.

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