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Harmony of Islam and Local Wisdom: An Ethnographic Study of *Wetu telu* Tradition in Lombok

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Abstract

This research examines the socio-cultural negotiation processes that facilitate accommodation between Islam and indigenous customs in the learning practices of the *Wetu telu* community in Bayan, North Lombok. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, this study examines how the *Wetu telu* indigenous community negotiates Islamic values with local wisdom, strategies employed by internal community actors in accommodating Islamic implementation, and the development of a contextual Islamic model that respects local wisdom while maintaining Islamic authenticity. The findings reveal three main strategic approaches: (1) elite power approach through structural negotiation with traditional leaders, (2) emotional approach through relationship building and interpersonal trust, and (3) cultural approach through integration of Islamic teachings into local traditions without negating cultural identity. This research produces a multidimensional accommodation model that enables the integration of Islamic values within indigenous social systems while maintaining cultural integrity. The resulting framework demonstrates that effective Islamic implementation in indigenous communities requires recognition of existing cultural knowledge systems and integration of religious

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teachings within traditional learning processes. This model provides a practical framework for developing contextual Islamic integration that can be applied in other regions with similar characteristics, emphasizing the role of internal community actors as primary agents of change who ensure religious transformation emerges from within existing social structures.

[Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi proses negosiasi sosio-kultural yang memungkinkan akomodasi antara Islam dan adat istiadat pribumi dalam praktik pembelajaran masyarakat *Wetu telu* di Bayan, Lombok Utara. Menggunakan pendekatan etnografi kualitatif, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana masyarakat adat *Wetu telu* menegosiasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan kearifan lokal, strategi yang digunakan oleh aktor internal komunitas dalam mengakomodasi implementasi Islam, dan pengembangan model Islam kontekstual yang menghormati kearifan lokal sambil mempertahankan otentisitas Islam. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan tiga pendekatan strategis utama: (1) pendekatan kekuatan elit melalui negosiasi struktural dengan pemimpin tradisional, (2) pendekatan emosional melalui pembangunan hubungan dan kepercayaan interpersonal, dan (3) pendekatan kultural melalui integrasi ajaran Islam ke dalam tradisi lokal tanpa menafikan identitas budaya. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model akomodasi multidimensional yang memungkinkan integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam sistem sosial pribumi sambil mempertahankan keutuhan budaya. Framework yang dihasilkan menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Islam yang efektif dalam komunitas pribumi memerlukan pengakuan terhadap sistem pengetahuan budaya yang ada dan integrasi ajaran agama dalam proses pembelajaran tradisional. Model ini menyediakan kerangka praktis untuk pengembangan integrasi Islam kontekstual yang dapat diterapkan di wilayah lain dengan karakteristik serupa, dengan penekanan pada peran aktor internal komunitas sebagai agen utama perubahan yang memastikan transformasi keagamaan muncul dari dalam struktur sosial yang ada.]

Keywords: Islamic integration; Local wisdom; *Wetu telu*; Cultural accommodation; Ethnographic study

Introduction

Islamic integration cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context of the society where it is implemented.¹ Within the framework

¹ Firman Mansir, "Islamic Education and Socio-Cultural Development in Educational Institutions," *Ideas: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Budaya* 8, no. 3 (2022): 729-736, <https://doi.org/10.32884/ideas.v8i3.901>; Mohamed Sadok Gassouma and Adel Benhamed, "The Impact of the Islamic System on Economic and Social Factors: A

of contextual integration, the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom becomes a strategic approach to forming a moderate and inclusive understanding of religion.² This concept emphasizes that effective Islamic integration is one that can dialogue with local traditions and cultures without losing the essence of Islamic teachings. Zakiah Daradjat emphasizes the crucial role of contextual Islamic integration, which aligns closely with community culture, thereby making Islamic implementation more effective and widely accepted.³ This perspective is supported by recent research emphasizing the integration of local cultural values with Islamic implementation, where local wisdom can enrich Islamic integration by ensuring that Islamic values reflect cultural practices and norms existing in various societies.⁴ The principle of “*Adat Bersendi Syara’, Syara’ Bersendi Kitabullah*” (customs based on Islamic law, Islamic law based on the Quran) symbolizes the harmony between customary law and Islamic sharia, forming a dynamic paradigm of Islamic integration based on local wisdom that is rooted in social reality.⁵

In the Indonesian context, particularly in regions with strong indigenous traditions, this integration becomes increasingly complex yet crucial.⁶ Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape requires Islamic approaches that can accommodate local values while maintaining

Macroeconomic Uncertainty Context”, *Economies* 11, no. 12 (2023): 303, <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies11120303>; Abdulaziz Albrithen, “The Islamic Basis of Social Work in the Modern World,” *International Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics* 20, no. 1 (2023): 171–93, <https://doi.org/10.55521/10-020-113>.

² Umi Sumbulah et al., “Islam, Local Wisdom and Religious Harmony: Religious Moderation in East-Java Christian Village Bases,” *El Harakah: Jurnal Budaya Islam* 24, no. 1 (2022): 21–39, <https://doi.org/10.18860/eh.v24i1.16264>.

³ U. Abdullah Mu’min, “Construction of Islamic Character Education Values Based on Local Wisdom in Culture Kasepuhan and Kanoman Palaces,” *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2023): 2, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v4i2.391>; Fella Lahmar, “Islamic Education: An Islamic “Wisdom-Based Cultural Environment” in a Western Context,” *Religions* 11, no. 8 (2020): 409, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080409>.

⁴ Lahmar, ‘Islamic Education’.

⁵ Mukhtar Latif et al., *Adat Bersendi Syara Syara Bersendi Kitabullah (Syara Mengato Adat Memakai)* (PT Salim Media Indonesia, 2023).

⁶ Badrun Badrun et al., “Pancasila, Islam, and Harmonising Socio-Cultural Conflict in Indonesia,” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2023): 137–56, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.137-156>.

religious authenticity.⁷ The challenge lies in developing Islamic models that facilitate peaceful religious transformation without erasing cultural identity, especially in multicultural societies where Islamic integration should facilitate social cohesion rather than become a dividing factor between cultural and religious identities.⁸ Research by Ilmi et al reveals that character development rooted in local culture contributes significantly to moral development in diverse societies, emphasizing the need to integrate Islamic implementation with local cultural values to foster character among community members and ensure social harmony.⁹ This dynamic interaction between cultural identity and Islamic teachings not only strengthens Islamic effectiveness but also reinforces community bonds and promotes mutual respect among diverse cultural groups.¹⁰

Understanding these complex cultural negotiations requires sophisticated methodological approaches. Ethnographic methodology serves as a crucial tool in uncovering hidden dynamics within indigenous communities, particularly those related to cultural practices and power relations. This methodology allows researchers to engage comprehensively and understand the inherent complexity in indigenous ways of life.¹¹ The relevance of ethnography, particularly in studies concerning indigenous populations, has been affirmed by recent academic work examining its capacity to portray holistic narratives and foster deeper insights into how cultural practices inform power dynamics and community resilience. Moreover, the application of

⁷ Franklin Hutabarat, "Navigating Diversity: Exploring Religious Pluralism and Social Harmony in Indonesian Society," *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 3, no. 6 (2023): 6, <https://doi.org/10.24018/theology.2023.3.6.125>.

⁸ Hilal Wani et al., "An Islamic Perspective in Managing Religious Diversity," *Religions* 6, no. 2 (2015): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6020642>.

⁹ Irpan Ilmi et al., "Islamic Educational Values as the Core of Character Education," *EDUTECH: Journal of Education and Technology* 7, no. 2 (2023): 406–71, <https://doi.org/10.29062/edu.v7i2.633>.

¹⁰ Wani et al., "An Islamic Perspective in Managing Religious Diversity".

¹¹ Abukari Kwame, "Reflexivity and the Insider/Outsider Discourse in Indigenous Research: My Personal Experiences," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 13, no. 4 (2017): 218–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117729851>; Catherine Elizabeth Burnette and Charles R. Figley, "Historical Oppression, Resilience, and Transcendence: Can a Holistic Framework Help Explain Violence Experienced by Indigenous People?," *Social Work* 62, no. 1 (2017): 37–44, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/sww065>.

collaborative approaches enables more authentic representation of cultural practices and power relations, ensuring that ethnographic research strengthens indigenous community insights rather than perpetuating external interpretations.¹²

The indigenous *Wetu telu* community in Bayan, North Lombok, represents a concrete example of a local community that maintains belief systems and cultural practices acculturated with Islamic teachings. However, the Islamization process within this community has not always proceeded smoothly. Resistance occurs against formal Islamic implementation that is perceived as threatening the existence of local traditions and indigenous social structures. Rejection of formal institutions such as madrasas or mosque-based religious studies still persists due to concerns about losing cultural identity and the authority of indigenous leaders.¹³ Furthermore, the pressure of modernization and mainstream religious narratives risks causing radicalization if Islamic integration is not conducted contextually.¹⁴ In this context, Ting-Toomey's strategic negotiation model becomes crucial for maintaining harmony and promoting social investment, particularly among religious and indigenous leaders. This model emphasizes the complex balancing acts required in intercultural communication, where various cultural, religious, and social norms must be negotiated to foster mutual understanding and respect.¹⁵

There exists a significant gap between normatively applied Islamic implementation and the needs of indigenous communities laden with traditional values. Failure to understand cultural contexts results in

¹² Ashley Hayward et al., "A New Era of Indigenous Research: Community-Based Indigenous Research Ethics Protocols in Canada," *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 16, no. 4 (2021): 403–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15562646211023705>.

¹³ Saipul Hamdi et al., "Proselytizing Expansion of Tablighi Jamaat In *Wetu telu* Indigenous Community In Bayan, North Lombok," *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 6, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v6i1.7048>; Erni Budiwanti, *The Purification Movement in Bayan, North Lombok* (Brill, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004271494_007.

¹⁴ Alfin Malik Ibrahim et al., "Changes in *Wetu telu* Islamic Traditions in the Community of Narmada District, West Lombok Regency from 1998 to 2022," *Sabda: Jurnal Kajian Kebudayaan* 19, no. 2 (2024): 111–24, <https://doi.org/10.14710/sabda.19.2.111-124>.

¹⁵ Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (Guilford Publications, 1999).

formal Islamic approaches that are not widely accepted. The rejection of madrasas, concerns about the diminishing role of indigenous leaders, and minimal involvement of local communities in developing religious curricula suggest that the applied Islamic model is not yet fully contextual and participatory. It causes the process of da'wah and Islamic integration to proceed slowly within communities like *Wetu telu*.¹⁶ Effective intercultural communication depends on establishing inclusive environments that encourage dialogue among various cultural groups, and understanding and utilizing cultural intelligence is essential for harmonious intercultural dialogue, particularly in Islamic implementation.¹⁷

Research demonstrates that religious conversion and Islamic implementation in indigenous communities heavily depend on social and cultural approaches rather than merely doctrinal aspects. Pajarianto et al emphasize the importance of family and indigenous leaders' roles in instilling religious moderation values in traditional communities through local wisdom values of *kasiuluran* (kinship), *tengko situru* (togetherness), and *karapasan* (tenacity). Studies show that educational systems oriented toward local culture can strengthen moderate Islamic values at the grassroots level.¹⁸ In the Lombok context specifically, Budiwanti highlights that *Wetu telu* community resistance to external values can be overcome through approaches that respect local cultural values and involve indigenous leaders in Islamic transformation.¹⁹ Furthermore, Umam et al., through their study on the Merariq tradition, reveal that Islamic practices in Sasak society reflect dialectical teachings between Islam and local culture, demonstrating contextual and accommodative approaches.²⁰ The concept of Islam Nusantara

¹⁶ Budiwanti, *The Purification Movement in Bayan, North Lombok*.

¹⁷ Amanuel Elias and Fethi Mansouri, "A Systematic Review of Studies on Interculturalism and Intercultural Dialogue," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 41, no. 4 (2020): 490–523, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2020.1782861>; Issa Khan et al., "A Critical Appraisal of Interreligious Dialogue in Islam," *Sage Open* 10, no. 4 (2020): 2158244020970560, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020970560>.

¹⁸ Hadi Pajarianto et al., "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043>.

¹⁹ Budiwanti, *The Purification Movement in Bayan, North Lombok*.

²⁰ Fawaizul Umam et al., "Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture in *Wetu telu* Lombok Muslims' Merariq Tradition: An Urf Perspective," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal*

supports this view, affirming that Islam in Indonesia developed through dialogue with local traditions as a form of Islam that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, characterized by moderation, tolerance, and respect for local customs while maintaining Islamic core values.²¹

Based on the background above, this study seeks to address several critical questions: How do the *Wetu telu* indigenous community negotiate between Islamic values and local wisdom in their learning practices? What strategies are employed by internal community actors in accommodating Islamic implementation within the traditional *Wetu telu* social structure? How can a contextual Islamic model be developed that respects local wisdom while maintaining Islamic authenticity? Therefore, this research aims to analyze the socio-cultural negotiation processes that enable accommodation between Islam and indigenous customs in the *Wetu telu* community's learning practices, examine the three main strategic approaches (elite power approach, emotional approach, and cultural approach) conducted by internal community actors in Islamic implementation, and develop a framework for culturally relevant Islamic integration that can be applied in other regions with similar characteristics.

This research offers novelty by examining Islamic practices within the *Wetu telu* indigenous community of Bayan, utilizing an ethnographic approach. The focus is not only on the success of Islamic teaching dissemination but on the socio-cultural negotiation processes that enable accommodation between Islam and indigenous customs. This study also adds a new dimension in the form of an Islamic approach scheme based on three main strategies conducted by internal community actors rather than external ones. The model developed through this research can serve as a framework for culturally relevant Islamic integration in other regions with similar characteristics. By documenting how Islamic accommodation forms from within the community, this research provides important contributions to the development of Islamic systems based on local wisdom and the strengthening of moderate Islamic values in multicultural societies.

Hukum & Pranata Sosial 19, no. 1 (2024): 104–25, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v19i1.10603>.

²¹ Mudjahirin Thohir, "Islam and Local Wisdom: The Study of "*Islam Nusantara*" in the Cultural Perspective," *E3S Web of Conferences* 359 (2022): 04004, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202235904004>.

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing ethnographic methodology to examine the complex processes of Islamic integration within the indigenous *Wetu telu* community in Bayan, North Lombok.²² The ethnographic approach was selected as the most appropriate methodological framework because it enables comprehensive engagement with the community and facilitates a deep understanding of the inherent complexities in indigenous ways of life, particularly in relation to cultural practices, power relations, and religious transformation processes. Ethnographic methodology serves as a crucial tool in uncovering hidden dynamics within indigenous communities, allowing researchers to engage holistically with cultural negotiations and understand how Islamic values are accommodated within traditional social structures without disrupting existing cultural identity frameworks. The relevance of ethnography, particularly in studies concerning indigenous populations, has been affirmed by recent academic work examining its capacity to portray holistic narratives and foster deeper insights into how cultural practices inform power dynamics and community resilience.²³

The research was conducted in Bayan village, North Lombok, which represents the heartland of the *Wetu telu* indigenous community. This location was strategically chosen due to its significance as a center of traditional Sasak culture, where indigenous belief systems and practices have been maintained alongside gradual processes of Islamic integration. The community's unique position as practitioners of syncretic beliefs combining Islamic, animistic, and ancestral tradition elements makes it an ideal case study for understanding how contextual Islamic implementation occurs within indigenous social frameworks. The research setting provided access to various cultural practices, traditional ceremonies, and community decision-making processes that are central to understanding the socio-cultural negotiation mechanisms employed in Islamic integration.

²² John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2018).

²³ Deborah H. Williams and Gerhard P. Shipley, "Indigenous Research Methodologies: Challenges and Opportunities for Broader Recognition and Acceptance," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 05 (2023): 467–500, <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.115030>.

Data collection was conducted through multiple complementary methods designed to capture the multidimensional nature of cultural and religious transformation processes. In-depth interviews were conducted with key community stakeholders to gather detailed perspectives on the experiences, challenges, and strategies employed by various community actors in the process of Islamic integration. Participant observation formed a central component of the methodology, allowing the researcher to engage directly with community activities, traditional ceremonies such as *gundem* and *roah*, religious learning sessions, and informal community gatherings where cultural negotiations naturally occur. The application of collaborative approaches enables more authentic representation of cultural practices and power relations, ensuring that ethnographic research strengthens indigenous community insights rather than perpetuating external interpretations. Documentation analysis involved examination of community records, religious curricula, traditional texts, and institutional documents related to Islamic education initiatives within the community. Focus group discussions were organized to facilitate collective reflection on community experiences with Islamic integration and to understand group dynamics in religious and cultural decision-making processes.²⁴

The research participants consisted of key community stakeholders representing various social structures within the *Wetu telu* community, selected through purposive sampling to ensure comprehensive representation of different perspectives on Islamic integration processes. Traditional leaders, including *pembekel* (village heads) and *pemangku adat* (customary elders), were included as primary participants due to their central roles in community governance and the preservation of cultural heritage. Religious figures such as *Tuan Guru Safwan Hakim*, who represents external Islamic authority, and local religious teachers like *Ustaz Hambali*, who embody internal community religious leadership, provided insights into different approaches to Islamic implementation. Community members from diverse age groups, social backgrounds, and levels of engagement with Islamic practices were included to capture the varied experiences of religious transformation. Educational stakeholders, including school

²⁴ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2018).

principals, teachers, and coordinators of Islamic learning centers (TPQ), provided perspectives on formal and non-formal Islamic education processes within the community. Representatives from Islamic organizations such as *Jamaah Tabligh* and *Nahdlatul Wathan* offered insights into institutional approaches to Islamic integration and community development initiatives.

Data analysis followed a systematic analytical framework consisting of three interconnected phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. During the data reduction phase, extensive information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation was systematically organized and reduced into meaningful analytical units based on the research focus areas. These units were categorized according to emerging themes, including community acceptance patterns of Islamic education, roles and influence of traditional leaders in religious transformation, manifestations of resistance to formal Islamic institutions, effectiveness of different strategic approaches employed by religious leaders, and mechanisms of cultural accommodation that enable Islamic integration without threatening indigenous identity. The reduction process involved careful coding of field notes, interview transcripts, and observational data to identify recurring patterns, significant statements, and critical incidents that illuminate the research questions.

The data display phase involved organizing the reduced data into comprehensive thematic matrices and analytical frameworks that facilitated the identification of complex patterns and relationships between different aspects of the Islamic integration process. Key themes that emerged from this analytical process included the pivotal role of traditional authority structures in legitimizing Islamic initiatives, the importance of emotional and relational approaches in building community trust and acceptance, the significance of cultural accommodation strategies that respect indigenous practices while introducing Islamic teachings, and the development of hybrid educational models that integrate formal Islamic instruction with traditional knowledge systems. A cross-case analysis was conducted to identify variations in experiences across different community segments and to understand how factors such as age, social position, and prior exposure to Islamic teachings influence individual and collective responses to religious integration initiatives. This analytical approach aligns with research demonstrating that religious conversion in

indigenous communities heavily depends on social and cultural approaches rather than merely doctrinal aspects.

Data validation was ensured through multiple verification strategies designed to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings. Methodological triangulation involved cross-verification of information obtained from different data collection methods, comparing insights from interviews with observations of actual community practices and documentary evidence of Islamic integration processes. Source triangulation was achieved by gathering information from multiple types of participants representing diverse perspectives and social positions within the community, ensuring that the findings reflect a range of viewpoints rather than a singular interpretation. Peer examination involved discussions with fellow researchers familiar with indigenous community studies and Islamic integration processes to verify analytical interpretations and challenge potential biases in the research. Member checking was conducted through systematic verification of findings with community participants, allowing them to confirm, clarify, or correct interpretations of their experiences and perspectives. Prolonged engagement in the field enabled the researcher to build trust with community members, observe changes over time, and capture the dynamic nature of cultural and religious negotiations that might not be apparent in short-term studies.²⁵

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process to ensure respect for the rights of indigenous communities, cultural sensitivities, and individual privacy. Informed consent procedures were adapted to community communication patterns and cultural protocols, ensuring that participants fully understood the research purposes and their rights to participate, withdraw, or limit their involvement. Cultural protocols were strictly observed, including appropriate approaches to traditional leaders, respectful participation in cultural ceremonies, and adherence to community guidelines regarding sensitive topics or restricted information. Understanding and utilizing cultural intelligence is essential for harmonious intercultural dialogue, particularly in Islamic implementation contexts. Confidentiality measures were implemented

²⁵ Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (SAGE Publications, 2013).

to protect participant identities while allowing for meaningful analysis of community dynamics and individual experiences. The research was designed to provide direct benefits to the community through documentation of successful integration strategies that could inform future educational and religious development initiatives. Reciprocity was ensured through sharing findings with community members and supporting their efforts to document and preserve traditional knowledge systems alongside Islamic integration processes.

This comprehensive methodological approach enabled the research to document authentic processes of Islamic accommodation within indigenous social structures, while maintaining respect for traditional knowledge systems and community autonomy in the context of religious transformation processes. The methodology facilitated a deep understanding of the sophisticated negotiation mechanisms employed by the *Wetu telu* community in balancing Islamic integration with cultural preservation, providing valuable insights into how contextual Islamic implementation can strengthen rather than threaten indigenous community cohesion and cultural identity. The framework acknowledges that the pressure of modernization and mainstream religious narratives can lead to social disruption if Islamic integration is not conducted in a culturally sensitive manner, emphasizing the importance of approaches that respect indigenous knowledge systems while facilitating meaningful religious transformation.

Results

Socio-Cultural Negotiation Processes in Islamic Implementation

The findings reveal that the *Wetu telu* indigenous community engages in sophisticated negotiation processes when accommodating Islamic values within their traditional learning practices. These negotiations occur through three distinct yet interconnected mechanisms that enable the community to maintain cultural authenticity while embracing Islamic teachings.

As expressed by a traditional elder (*Pembekel*): “We don’t reject Islam, but we need to understand how it fits with our ancestral ways. It’s like weaving—we must find the right pattern so both threads strengthen each other, not tear the fabric apart.” This sentiment reflects the careful deliberation involved in religious integration.

The negotiation process demonstrates that Islamic integration is not a simple adoption of external religious practices, but rather a complex cultural accommodation that preserves indigenous identity while allowing for spiritual transformation. This process reflects the community's sophisticated understanding of cultural preservation and religious adaptation, where Islamic values are carefully integrated into existing social structures without displacing traditional wisdom systems.

The negotiation dynamics reveal that community members actively participate in determining how Islamic teachings should be implemented within their cultural framework. Rather than passive acceptance of external religious instruction, the *Wetu telu* community demonstrates agency in shaping learning approaches that honor both Islamic principles and indigenous customs. This negotiation process ensures that Islamic integration becomes culturally embedded rather than imposed, resulting in sustainable and authentic religious transformation that strengthens rather than weakens community cohesion.

Strategic Approaches Employed by Internal Community Actors

1. Elite Power Approach: Structural Negotiation of Values

The transformation of Islamic implementation in the *Wetu telu* community significantly involves religious figures, such as *Tuan Guru* Safwan Hakim, who strategically engages with local power holders, including the Regent, Sub-district Head, and traditional leaders. *Tuan Guru* Safwan Hakim explained his strategy: "I don't come as someone who knows better than the community leaders. I come as a friend who wants to learn about their wisdom while sharing what I know about Islam. When the *Pembekel* and the elders trust you, the whole community opens their hearts."

Negotiation for mosque and madrasa construction is conducted by positioning power structures as partners in da'wah activities. In indigenous communities like Bayan, elite figures possess high legitimacy, serving not only in administrative matters but also in maintaining social cohesion. Therefore, collaboration with local elites becomes an effective means of opening space for Islamic acceptance. This approach demonstrates that Islamic implementation can grow in

harmony with traditional governance systems when based on dialogue and respect for existing authority structures.

The elite power approach proves particularly effective because it leverages existing social hierarchies and respect systems within the community. Traditional leaders, such as the *Pembekel* (village head) and customary elders, possess significant influence over community decisions, and their endorsement of Islamic initiatives provides legitimacy that external religious authorities cannot easily achieve. This strategic engagement with power structures ensures that Islamic implementation aligns with traditional decision-making processes and does not threaten established social orders.

2. Emotional Approach: Opening Da'wah Pathways Through Human Relationships

Another figure, Ustadz Hambali, a native santri from Bayan, employs a different yet complementary strategy through emotional and spiritual approaches. He builds closeness through *silaturahmi* (social visits), personal dialogue, and participation in community social activities. Ustadz Hambali shared his approach: “I was born here; I know these people since childhood. When I teach about Islam, I speak in our language, I use examples from our daily life. I don’t preach from above—I sit with them, I listen to their stories, I share mine. This is how hearts open to Allah's guidance.” This approach aligns with the *Jamaah Tabligh* method, which emphasizes da’wah through character, patience, and exemplary behavior. In the context of indigenous communities that highly value respect and harmonious social relationships, this strategy becomes extremely effective. Social empathy built from the bottom up facilitates the acceptance process of new teachings. Furthermore, this emotional approach reflects Islamic values as a religion of mercy, entering in a gentle manner without imposing will.

The emotional approach demonstrates particular effectiveness in building trust and reducing resistance to Islamic teachings. By prioritizing relationship-building over doctrinal instruction, internal community actors create safe spaces for gradual religious transformation. This strategy acknowledges that meaningful cultural change necessitates emotional security and interpersonal connection, especially in close-knit indigenous communities where social relationships serve as the foundation for knowledge transmission and cultural preservation.

3. Cultural Approach: Cultivating Islam Within Local Traditions

One of the most significant approaches in this study is the cultural approach. Preachers and teachers from the indigenous community actively participate in traditional rituals, such as *gundem*, *roah*, and *selamatan*, as well as in deliberative forums, including village consultations. A local Islamic teacher who participates in traditional ceremonies explained: “During *gundem* ceremonies, I don’t say ‘this is wrong.’ Instead, I show how Islamic prayers can strengthen the good intentions of our traditions. When we pray for our ancestors’ souls, this is also Islamic. When we ask for protection, we can ask Allah directly.”

Their presence in these cultural spaces enables the integration process of Islamic teachings into local symbols and practices. This approach is highly significant considering that the *Wetu telu* community has a syncretic belief system combining Islamic, animistic, and ancestral tradition elements. By not negating local culture, Islamic implementation presents itself as a complement to customary values, not as a replacement or destroyer of community identity.

This approach aligns with cultural accommodation theory, a strategy in which religion enters indigenous communities by adapting its delivery methods to avoid resistance, instead aiming to be accepted gradually and reflectively. The cultural approach ensures that Islamic content is delivered through familiar cultural frameworks, making new religious concepts more accessible and less threatening to traditional worldviews. This strategy demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how cultural change occurs most effectively through organic integration rather than the replacement of existing practices.

4. Framework for Culturally Relevant Islamic Model

a. Multidimensional Accommodation Model

The accommodation model formed within the *Wetu telu* community context results from the integration of the various approaches above: power, emotional, and cultural. Communities previously separated from Islamic streams are now actively involved in religious and non-formal learning activities, such as managing TPQ (Quranic Learning Centers), constructing mosques and *mushallas*, and strengthening *taklim* assemblies. A TPQ coordinator who is also a traditional community member shared, “Before, we thought Islamic education was only for outsiders. Now we run our own TPQ, we teach our children the Quran and our traditions together. The children learn

Arabic prayers and also learn to respect our ancestral wisdom. This integration makes our community stronger.”

This model demonstrates that Islamic implementation based on local wisdom cannot be built solely through sermons or indoctrination but requires participatory space and shared ownership by the community. This accommodation is not merely a form of compromise, but a strategy to create sustainability and the acceptability of Islamic values in environments with distinctive social structures and cosmologies.

The accommodation model represents a sophisticated framework where Islamic principles are adapted to local contexts without compromising religious authenticity. This framework demonstrates that effective Islamic implementation in indigenous communities requires recognition of existing cultural knowledge systems and integration of religious teachings within traditional learning processes. The model provides practical guidance for developing contextual Islamic integration that maintains cultural integrity while facilitating meaningful religious transformation.

b. Institutional Support and Systemic Integration

Beyond individuals, Islamic community organizations such as *Jamaah Tabligh* and *Nahdlatul Wathan* (NW) play significant roles in strengthening the transformation process. *Jamaah Tabligh* expands the da'wah base from house to house, while NW presents institutional strategies through the construction of TPQs, *mushallas*, and the establishment of community-based learning institutions. A *Jamaah Tabligh* coordinator explained: “Our approach is simple: we visit homes, we share stories about Prophet Muhammad's life, we invite people to remember Allah in their daily activities. We don't change their culture—we show how Islamic values can enrich their existing good practices.”

The collaboration of these two entities presents structural and cultural dimensions of da'wah simultaneously. *Jamaah Tabligh* cultivates spiritual awareness from the grassroots, while NW prepares a more organized learning infrastructure. Thus, the strength of Islamic implementation in indigenous communities becomes more systemic and not dependent solely on individual figures.

The role of formal schooling policy through the nine-year compulsory schooling program also contributes to Islamic

transformation among the *Wetu telu* community. The obligation to send children to school has opened new access to Islamic values formally, as general school curricula include Islamic religious instruction. Schools become acculturation venues where formal Islamic values meet local culture, so formal schooling not only conveys knowledge but also internalizes moral and spiritual values. On the other hand, schools also teach the importance of community life, cleanliness, discipline, and tolerance—values that align with the principles of indigenous community life. The role of formal schooling shows that the state presents itself positively in the cultural Islamization process, not as a coercive entity but as a facilitator of change.

c. Sustainable Implementation Framework

The framework emerging from this research provides a replicable model for implementing culturally relevant Islamic integration in other indigenous communities with similar characteristics. The three-pronged approach—elite engagement, emotional connection, and cultural integration—creates a comprehensive strategy that addresses multiple dimensions of community resistance and acceptance. A community elder synthesized the overall experience: “Our community today is both more Islamic and more traditional than before. We pray to Allah five times a day, and we still honor our ancestors in our ceremonies. We teach our children Arabic, and we also teach them our traditional songs. It is not a contradiction—this is harmony. It is how we preserve the best of all worlds for our grandchildren.” This framework emphasizes the importance of internal community actors as primary agents of change, rather than external religious authorities, ensuring that Islamic transformation emerges from within existing social structures.

The sustainable implementation framework demonstrates that successful Islamic integration in indigenous contexts requires long-term commitment to relationship building, cultural sensitivity, and respect for traditional authority systems. This model provides practical guidance for developing Islamic approaches that strengthen rather than threaten indigenous cultural identity, creating conditions for authentic and lasting religious transformation that benefits both religious and cultural preservation goals.

This synergistic relationship between elite power, emotional, and cultural approaches serves as the foundation for inclusive and

contextual Islamic emergence within indigenous communities, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how Islamic values can be successfully integrated into traditional learning systems while maintaining cultural authenticity and community cohesion.

Discussion

Theoretical Framework of Cultural Accommodation in Islamic Integration

The findings of this research affirm that effective Islamic integration in indigenous communities such as the *Wetu telu* in Bayan cannot be constructed through monolithic or purely normative approaches. The process of da'wah and implementing Islamic values must be conducted with an understanding of the social structures, cultural values, and local wisdom that have become deeply rooted in society. The construction of Islam in such communities is not about "Islamizing" in totality, but instead forming accommodation and integration of Islamic values within the social and symbolic spaces of indigenous communities. This finding reinforces Geertz's thesis in "The Religion of Java," which explains that forms of religiosity in Indonesia are heavily influenced by local values, so that the Islam accepted is grounded in Islam, not foreign and transnational Islam.²⁶

The elite power approach employed by *Tuan Guru* Safwan Hakim reflects awareness of the importance of power relations in instilling Islamic values. The use of formal and structural channels, such as the Regent, Sub-district Head, and traditional leaders, becomes an adaptive strategy in a community system that still highly respects social hierarchy and local power. This approach can be seen as a form of cultural hegemonic strategy,²⁷ where Islamic values are disseminated not through ideological pressure, but through gentle penetration into existing social structures. The emotional approach conducted by Ustaz Hambali demonstrates that acceptance of Islamic teachings depends not only on structural legitimacy but also on warm and grounded

²⁶ Bassam Tibi, *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429033513>; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973).

²⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (International Publishers, 1971).

interpersonal relationships. In the *Wetu telu* community that highly values *silaturahmi* and *musyawarah* (consultation), personal approaches such as visiting residents' homes, discussing, and showing exemplary behavior become highly effective ways to build social trust. This approach reflects the principle of *dakwah bil hikmah*, namely da'wah conducted with full wisdom and empathy.²⁸

The cultural approach proves particularly significant in integrating Islamic teachings into indigenous community life. The participation of preachers and teachers in traditional rituals, such as *gundem*, *roah*, and customary consultations, becomes a form of cultural accommodation that does not erase local identity but gently and progressively Islamizes it. This finding supports the face negotiation theory, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue and value adaptation in multicultural contexts, where Islamic implementation presents itself not as an exclusive ideology but as values that can integrate within local traditions.²⁹ Through this cultural approach, Islamic integration does not become an agent of division but rather plays a role as an agent of harmonization between religion and culture.

Multidimensional Model for Sustainable Islamic Implementation

The formation of the Islamic accommodation model in Bayan is a result of multidimensional collaboration among religious leaders, traditional leaders, government structures, and the community. The emergence of citizen participation in TPQ management, *mushalla*, *taklim* assemblies, and construction of worship facilities demonstrates that adaptive da'wah approaches can create collective awareness and community involvement. This model reflects the integration of top-down approaches (power) and bottom-up approaches (cultural and emotional), thereby forming an Islamic system that is inclusive, participatory, and sustainable. This model aligns with Mezirow's transformative learning concept, which emphasizes that social value

²⁸ Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya (Edisi Yang Disempurnakan)* (Departemen Agama RI, 2009).

²⁹ Stella Ting-Toomey, "Facework and Face Negotiation Theory," in *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*, 1st ed., ed. Young Y. Kim (Wiley, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0105>; John G. Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey, "Face Concerns in Interpersonal Conflict: A Cross-Cultural Empirical Test of the Face Negotiation Theory," *Communication Research* 30, no. 6 (2003): 599–624, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650203257841>.

change can occur if individuals and communities are actively and reflectively involved in the learning process.³⁰

The presence of Islamic mass organizations such as *Jamaah Tabligh* and *Nahdlatul Wathan* (NW) in developing Islamic implementation in Bayan strengthens the structure and network of da'wah. *Jamaah Tabligh* plays a role in strengthening spiritual values and *fardiyah* (individual) *da'wah*. In contrast, NW plays a more significant role in institutional aspects, such as establishing learning institutions and developing local ustadz cadres. These two entities function as mediators between normative Islam and cultural Islam, while serving as catalysts in accelerating value transformation and increasing access to community-based learning. This supports Putnam's view that social capital (networks and social trust) can drive more inclusive and independent community development.³¹

Another significant finding is the role of formal schooling in expanding access to Islamic values. The nine-year compulsory schooling program has become an entry point for *Wetu telu* children to engage in the national school system that is laden with Islamic values. Schools not only become places for knowledge transfer but also media for acculturation between Islamic values and local culture. Through religious lessons, extracurricular activities, and Islamic holiday celebrations, Islamic values are conveyed systematically and non-confrontationally. This model aligns with the theory of value institutionalization proposed by Berger & Luckmann, where learning institutions play a role in slowly internalizing new values and norms in the social consciousness of society.³²

The multidimensional model emerging from this research demonstrates that successful Islamic implementation requires recognition of existing cultural knowledge systems and integration of

³⁰ Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 1997, no. 74 (1997): 5–12, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>; Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

³¹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000).

³² P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1967), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=BEEh1Stk5NIC>.

religious teachings within traditional learning processes. This framework provides practical guidance for developing contextual Islamic integration that maintains cultural integrity while facilitating meaningful religious transformation. The model emphasizes the importance of internal community actors as primary agents of change, ensuring that Islamic transformation emerges from within existing social structures rather than being imposed by external authorities. This approach creates conditions for authentic and lasting religious transformation that benefits both religious and cultural preservation goals, providing a comprehensive framework that can be replicated in other indigenous communities with similar characteristics throughout Indonesia.

Conclusion

This research makes a significant theoretical contribution to understanding cultural accommodation processes in religious transformation within indigenous communities by developing a multidimensional framework that integrates elite power engagement, emotional connection, and cultural integration strategies. By synthesizing Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, and Mezirow's transformative learning theory, this study provides a robust analytical framework that demonstrates how religious values can be organically integrated into traditional cultural systems without causing social disruption or cultural displacement. The research challenges conventional top-down approaches to religious transformation by emphasizing the effectiveness of bottom-up, culturally sensitive methodologies that prioritize indigenous agency and cultural preservation. The practical significance extends beyond the *Wetu telu* community context, offering a replicable model for implementing culturally relevant religious integration in other indigenous communities, where internal community actors serve as primary agents of change, ensuring that transformation emerges from within existing social structures and creates conditions for authentic and sustainable religious development.

Future research should explore the application of this multidimensional accommodation framework through comparative studies across different indigenous communities and religious contexts to test theoretical generalizability, while incorporating more participatory action research approaches and indigenous research

epistemologies to ensure theoretical frameworks emerge from indigenous ways of knowing. Methodological innovations should include collaborative research partnerships with indigenous scholars and community researchers as equal partners to enhance cultural authenticity and theoretical validity. From policy and practice perspectives, frameworks should be developed that recognize and support indigenous cultural accommodation processes, creating guidelines for culturally responsive religious instruction that honor indigenous knowledge systems while facilitating meaningful spiritual development. Educational and religious institutions should adopt this multidimensional approach to develop programs that strengthen rather than threaten indigenous cultural identity, ensuring that religious integration serves both spiritual and cultural preservation goals across Indonesia's diverse multicultural landscape.

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