



## Sharia and Kaili Tradition: Islamic Acculturation in the Framework of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Theology

Surni Kadir <sup>1\*</sup>, Nurhayati <sup>2</sup>, Suraya <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>[surnikadir@uindatokarama.ac.id](mailto:surnikadir@uindatokarama.ac.id), <sup>2</sup>[nurhayatiabdrasyid@uindatokarama.ac.id](mailto:nurhayatiabdrasyid@uindatokarama.ac.id), <sup>3</sup>

[attamimisoraya@gmail.com](mailto:attamimisoraya@gmail.com)

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 29-01-2026

Revised 04-03-2026

Accepted 17-03-2026

#### Keyword:

Inclusive Islam, Kaili culture, Acculturation, Rahmatan lil 'alamin Theology

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the acculturation between Islamic law (sharia) and the local culture of the Kaili ethnic group, emphasizing the inclusive principles of Islam in engaging with indigenous wisdom. The research aims to understand how *Malintinuhu* cultural values are integrated with Islamic teachings without causing religious identity conflicts or the loss of cultural heritage. The study employs an interpretative phenomenological approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews with religious scholars, traditional leaders, and community members, as well as participatory observation in cultural and religious practices. The findings demonstrate that the majority of participants (religious leaders, customary authorities, and community members) consistently articulated a “middle-path” strategy of harmonization, in which cultural traditions are selectively reinterpreted rather than rejected. Empirically, the study identifies two concrete patterns of integration: (1) the institutional transformation of the Malintinuhu council into a consultative body aligned with the Islamic concept of shura, and (2) the systematic modification of ritual practices, where animistic elements are removed and replaced with Qur’anic recitations and Islamic prayers. These measurable patterns indicate a shift from syncretic coexistence to normative integration grounded in Islamic theology. The study further finds that this integrative process has strengthened communal religious commitment while preserving key elements of Kaili cultural identity, thereby reducing potential tensions between adat (custom) and sharia. This process demonstrates that Islam does not negate tradition but rather serves as an integrative force that sustains cultural identity while reinforcing religious values. The novelty of this research lies in applying the framework of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* theology as a theoretical basis for explaining Islam’s inclusivity toward local culture. Thus, the study enriches academic discourse on religion–culture relations and offers a constructive model of integration for other indigenous communities in Indonesia.



©2026 Authors. Published by PT Mukhlisina Revolution Center.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## INTRODUCTION

Islam, as a universal religion, possesses inclusive characteristics that enable it to acculturate with local cultures across various regions of the world. Numerous studies have shown that the process of Islamization does not always erase societal traditions; instead, it often gives birth to new forms of integration that strengthen religious identity while preserving local wisdom (Mukhlis, 2025a; Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). In the context of Indonesia, studies on Islam and local culture have been widely conducted among Javanese (Woodward, 2011), Sundanese, and Bugis-Makassar communities. These studies have generally emphasized historical Islamization processes, symbolic rituals, or sociological patterns of accommodation. However, they tend to focus on well-documented ethnic groups in western Indonesia, leaving eastern Indonesian communities underexplored in scholarly discourse. However, research on the integration of Islam with the Kaili ethnic culture is still relatively limited.

Contemporary research highlights the discourse of Islam Nusantara as a representation of inclusive Islam that upholds tolerance, moderation (tawasut), and the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin,

in harmony with local traditions (Yanti et al., 2024). For example, Schaefer (2021) describes Islam Nusantara as a conceptual vocabulary symbolizing Indonesia's diversity and the spirit of inclusivity in religious practices (Bahri et al., 2024). Furthermore, Kadi (2022) emphasizes the importance of moderation values in Islamic higher education as a foundation for strengthening an inclusive and contextual Islamic identity.

Socially, the Kaili community in Central Sulawesi has the Malintinuhu tradition as a system of values and customary deliberation passed down through generations (Fikri, 2023). The arrival of Islam introduced a new dynamic in this customary practice. Some traditionalist groups strive to maintain ancestral rituals, while reformist groups advocate for the purification of Islamic teachings. However, the majority of the Kaili people choose a middle path, that is, reinterpreting their customs in accordance with Islamic principles. A concrete example of this can be seen in the transformation of the Malintinuhu institution, which is now harmonized with the concept of shura, and the replacement of ancestral offerings with Islamic prayers. This phenomenon illustrates a unique process of cultural negotiation in maintaining social harmony.

The Kaili community in Central Sulawesi possesses a strong Malintinuhu tradition as a customary deliberation system. Islam brings a new dynamic: some groups maintain ancestral rituals, while others advocate for adjustments based on religious teachings. However, the majority prefer harmony, reinterpreting customs to align with Islamic values—such as the adaptation of Malintinuhu with shura and the replacement of ritual offerings with Islamic prayers. This reflects active acculturation, not assimilation that erases traditions (Arifin et al., 2022).

Despite these observable dynamics, previous research on the Kaili community has largely approached Malintinuhu from anthropological or socio-cultural perspectives, without systematically connecting it to Islamic theological frameworks. Existing works tend to describe the coexistence of Islam and tradition, yet they do not sufficiently explain the theological logic that legitimizes and sustains this coexistence. Consequently, the analytical relationship between local customary institutions and the theology of rahmatan lil 'alamin remains underdeveloped in the literature.

Based on this, the aim of this research is to explore the integration of Malintinuhu cultural values with Islamic teachings within the framework of the theology of rahmatan lil 'alamin, and to understand how the Kaili people adapt their customs without losing their religious identity.

The research gap filled by this study lies in the lack of academic studies that specifically link the process of Islam and Kaili culture acculturation with the perspective of the theology of rahmatan lil 'alamin. Most of the literature still focuses on the historical aspect of Islamization or on cultural anthropology studies in general. Therefore, this study contributes new insights by offering an analytical framework that emphasizes the inclusivity of Islam as the theological foundation for the integration of religion and local culture.

More specifically, this study advances the field in three ways. First, it shifts the focus from descriptive accounts of acculturation to a theology-based analytical explanation, demonstrating how rahmatan lil 'alamin functions as a normative-ethical foundation for cultural negotiation. Second, it expands the geographical scope of Islam–local culture studies by foregrounding the Kaili community in Central Sulawesi, thereby enriching the diversity of empirical cases in Indonesian Islamic studies. Third, it bridges the gap between the discourse of Islam Nusantara and concrete customary institutions, showing how macro-level theological narratives are operationalized in micro-level socio-cultural practices.

Although there is literature on Islam Nusantara and moderate education among Indonesian academics, studies specifically exploring the integration of Malintinuhu with the theology of rahmatan lil 'alamin within the Kaili context are still scarce (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). This research provides an original contribution by introducing theological considerations as the basis for analyzing the practices of religious and cultural acculturation—offering a new perspective in the study of religion and cultural anthropology in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive phenomenological design (Anak, 2008). This approach was chosen because it focuses on understanding the subjective experiences of the Kaili people in integrating the Malintinuhu cultural values with Islamic teachings.

Through interpretive phenomenology, the researcher seeks to capture the meanings constructed by individuals and communities in the process of cultural and religious negotiation.

The research is conducted in the Kaili ethnic community in Central Sulawesi, which continues to uphold the Malintinuhu tradition in its social life. The research subjects include: religious scholars and religious leaders, who represent the Islamic perspective in the process of acculturation; traditional leaders, who serve as guardians of the Malintinuhu cultural values; and community members, both older and younger generations, to observe the dynamics between generations in cultural adaptation.

Data is collected using several techniques: in-depth interviews to explore the views, experiences, and interpretations of the informants regarding the acculturation of culture and religion; participatory observation, by attending cultural practices and religious activities, in order to understand the interaction between tradition and Islam in a real context; and documentation, consisting of traditional records, religious archives, and relevant local literature. In practice, interviews were conducted in multiple sessions to allow deeper probing and clarification of emerging themes. Participatory observation was carried out during specific Malintinuhu rituals and Friday sermons, enabling the researcher to directly compare spoken narratives with observable practices. Field notes were systematically recorded after each observation session to document contextual details, symbolic expressions, and social interactions.

Data is analyzed using phenomenological thematic analysis, which includes the following stages: data reduction: sorting important data related to the integration of tradition and religion; coding: grouping the data into main themes such as reinterpretation of tradition, traditionalist-reformist conflicts, and cultural-religious harmony; and interpretation: interpreting the data within the framework of rahmatan lil 'alamin theology to observe the inclusivity of Islam in Kaili culture.

Data validity is maintained through: source triangulation (comparing data from religious scholars, traditional leaders, and community members), method triangulation (interviews, observation, and documentation), and member checking, by confirming the interview results with the informants. Source triangulation was applied by systematically comparing narratives across the three categories of informants to identify convergences and divergences in their interpretations of Malintinuhu and Islamic teachings. For example, statements from religious scholars regarding the theological legitimacy of certain rituals were cross-checked with traditional leaders' explanations of symbolic meanings and with community members' lived experiences. Method triangulation was implemented by cross-validating interview data with observational findings and documentary evidence; discrepancies were re-examined through follow-up interviews. Member checking was conducted by returning summarized interpretations to selected key informants, allowing them to verify, clarify, or correct the researcher's interpretations. These procedures ensured that the findings were not based on single-source claims but on corroborated and contextually grounded evidence.

## **RESULTS**

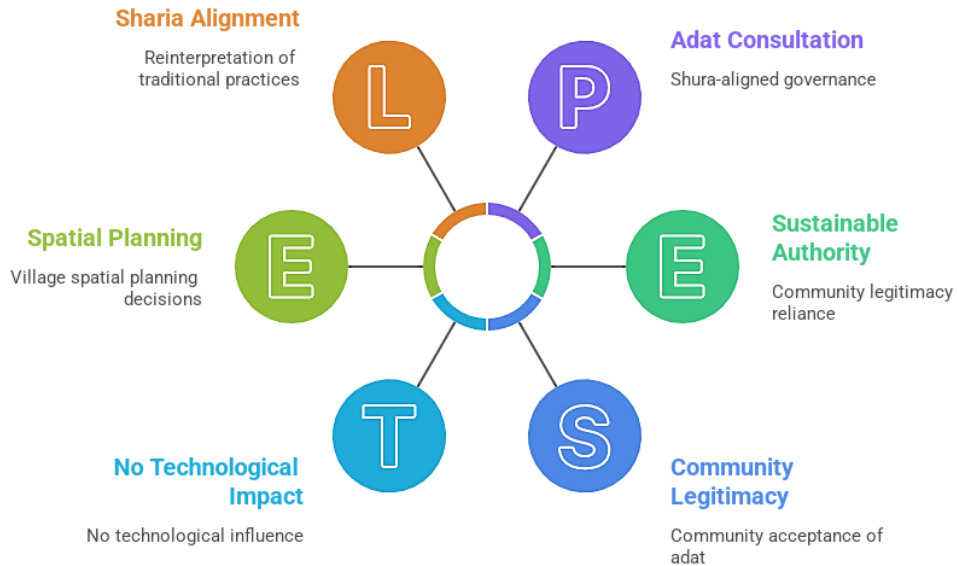
### **The Middle Path (Harmony of Tradition and Sharia)**

The majority of Kaili people reinterpret traditional practices to align with Islamic values; the principle of adat consultation is equated with shura as a consultative mechanism. This practice aligns with literature on the incorporation of shura in public governance with an Islamic nuance (Surni Kadir, 2019). However, beyond descriptive alignment, our findings demonstrate that this reinterpretation functions as a mediating mechanism that resolves normative tension between adat authority and Islamic legal-ethical demands. In other words, adat consultation is not merely symbolically equated with shura; it operationalizes shura's core principles (deliberation, justice, collective responsibility) within an indigenous institutional framework. This directly addresses the first research question concerning how Kaili communities reconcile customary authority with Islamic norms.

In everyday practice, the Kaili people manage the tension between loyalty to tradition and commitment to sharia through the reinterpretation of adat consultation as a functional equivalent of shura. At the institutional level, local adat forums—such as the patanggota/ngata structure and magau/totua leadership—serve as consultative arenas where decisions regarding village spatial

planning, dispute reconciliation, and communal rituals are formulated collectively. Recent historical-anthropological studies show that the authority of adat in the Palu Valley is indeed flexible and sustainable because it relies on consultation practices and community legitimacy; this flexibility facilitates the internalization of Islamic values without disrupting the continuity of adat (Septiwiharti, 2020).

**Kaili People: Middle Path Harmony**



Normatively, contemporary literature on shura emphasizes three dimensions relevant to the Kaili experience: (1) procedural-consultative—majlis al-shura is understood as a semi-public deliberative forum, not merely a state apparatus, thus it can be adopted by communities/ethnic groups; (2) substantive-ethical—decisions must be oriented toward *maslahah*, justice, and trustworthiness; and (3) inclusive-contextual—the mechanism of shura is valid to adapt to local structures as long as its fundamental principles (consultation, justice, responsibility) are upheld (Marwany, 2022). This framework provides theological grounding for the Kaili people to consider adat decisions that have been "Islamized" as valid and religiously significant, as long as the process is open and just.

Our findings contribute theoretically by demonstrating that these three dimensions are not abstract ideals but empirically traceable in local practice. Procedurally, adat forums replicate deliberative inclusivity; substantively, decisions are justified through *maslahah*-oriented reasoning; and contextually, shura is embedded within indigenous hierarchies rather than replacing them. This confirms that shura operates as a culturally adaptive governance model, extending existing scholarship by providing micro-level ethnographic evidence from the Kaili context.

In practice, adaptation is evident in the modification of rituals and communal governance: ancestral offerings are replaced by collective prayers, while the adat meeting agenda is aligned with the principles of shura (e.g., prioritizing consensus, avoiding individual dominance, and providing space for religious and adat leaders). Such symbolic substitution patterns align with cross-regional findings in Indonesia—that cultural Islamization is often a negotiation of meanings, not the elimination of traditions (Kadir et al., 2021).

Furthermore, recent policy and education studies show that shura values (consultation, justice, trustworthiness) enriched through religious moderation programs contribute to greater community acceptance of Islamized adat decisions—such as in land dispute resolution, social assistance, or scheduling harvest rituals. In other words, shura serves as a "common language" between ulama and adat leaders to assess the validity of collective decisions (Septiwiharti, 2020). Our findings specify the mechanism: shura provides a shared evaluative vocabulary—*maslahah*, justice, *amanah*—through which ulama and adat leaders deliberate. This shared vocabulary bridges epistemic differences and enhances inter-authority trust, thereby answering the second research question regarding the mechanisms of normative integration.

Conceptually, recent studies also emphasize that shura can coexist with modern deliberative models, so the adat consultation practice in Kaili does not need to be at odds with local democratic

discourse; both converge on the principles of consultation, public reasoning, and accountability, with ethical-religious nuances as distinguishing features. This strengthens the legitimacy of the middle path followed by the Kaili people. The harmony between adat and sharia in Kaili exists because adat consultation is imbued with the meaning of sharia through the principle of shura—not through the dismantling of adat structures—thus decisions remain rooted in cultural identity while gaining religious and ethical legitimacy widely recognized.

### **Modification of Rituals**

Ancestral offerings are replaced with Islamic prayers; this symbolic substitution pattern is consistent with findings on Islam-culture acculturation in life cycle ceremonies (Kaili Culture) and Muslim communities in the Kaili land (the internalization of values, without eliminating local identity).

In the Kaili Pepadun community, acculturation is most evident in life cycle rituals (birth, marriage, death). Recent studies show that symbols and offerings (*sesaji*) are theologically reinterpreted and substituted into forms that are "shar'i halal": collective prayer readings, *tahlil/solawat*, halal food charity, and emphasis on gratitude—rather than offerings to ancestors (Surni Kadir, 2021). This process does not dismantle the adat structure (e.g., *Pompoura*), but Islamizes its symbolic meaning so that the ritual remains socially functional yet aligned with *tawhid* (Kadir et al., 2020). Literature on the symbolism of the *Pompoura* ceremony confirms the existence of legal-theological foundations for the Islamized local practices and documents the transition from offerings to prayers/charity as "symbolic replacement." Other field findings show that *Pompoura* contributes to the internalization of Islamic values (trustworthiness, gratitude, solidarity) without erasing the *Pompoura* identity—a positive synthesis between adat and sharia (Kadir, 2020).

### **"Islamized" Adat Leadership Ethics**

The criteria for adat leaders/kings (*Magau*, *Totua*) in Palu Valley include values of *ṣidq*, *amānah*, *tablīgh*, *fatwah* after the influence of Islam—strengthening the compatibility of Kaili adat with Islamic ethics (Marwany, 2022).

In Palu Valley, the Islamization of adat leadership institutions did not occur through the destruction of traditional structures, but through the internalization of Islamic moral-religious values into the criteria for adat leaders—such as *Magau* and *Totua Nu Ngata*—so that leadership requirements now include *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (trustworthy leadership), *tablīgh* (the ability to deliver mandates/decisions), and *fatwah* (intellectual competence and wisdom). Field studies and historical-anthropological research in Kaili show that this transformation began as Islamic influence strengthened in the valley: adat authority was maintained, but the legitimacy was enriched by Islamic norms recognized by the community as moral prerequisites for leadership.

Practically, the application of these values can be seen in several dimensions: (1) Selection and legitimacy: candidates for *Magau/Totua* are evaluated not only based on lineage or mastery of adat rituals but also on their religious reputation—e.g., honesty in speech and actions (*ṣidq*), record of trustworthiness in fulfilling responsibilities, and ability to interpret and deliver decisions in line with the community's interests. (2) Daily leadership attitude: adat leaders are expected to practice *tablīgh*—actively communicating decisions and their ethical reasons to the community—and *fatwah*, reflected in their wisdom in resolving adat-religion conflicts. (3) Social-religious accountability: ethical violations by adat leaders now face social sanctions legitimized from an Islamic moral perspective, where reconciliation and restoration processes emphasize responsibility and atonement (*taubah/forgiveness*). Empirical evidence from ethnographic studies in *Balia* (Kaili ritual transformation post-social changes) supports this pattern: "Islamized" adat leadership retains its social function, yet is guided by Islamic ethical norms in practice.

Conceptual findings are also supported by literature on prophetic/Islamic leadership, which positions *ṣidq*, *amānah*, *tablīgh*, and *fatwah* as the pillars of leadership legitimacy in modern Muslim societies—whether in organizations, government, or local communities. Recent empirical studies show how these values influence leader behavior and public acceptance of collective decisions, thus reinforcing the compatibility between Kaili adat structures and Islamic ethics.

The practical implications are twofold: first, institutional coexistence—adat institutions maintain cultural autonomy while adopting Islamic moral norms, minimizing conflicts between adat

and religious leaders; second, empowerment of moral legitimacy—when adat leaders are seen as meeting the *ṣidq-amanah-tablīgh-fathonah* standards, adat decisions are more easily accepted as having religious and social value. Other studies examining adat law and its adaptation to Islamic law in Kaili communities further support this finding, especially regarding family law and inheritance issues now analyzed through both sharia and local wisdom lenses.

In summary: the "Islamized" adat leadership ethics in Kaili is an integrative process—combining traditional legitimacy structures with Islamic moral norms—that results in culturally authoritative and religiously trusted leaders, facilitating social stability and acceptance of collective decisions.

### **The Role of Education & Moderation**

Religious moderation curricula have been shown to strengthen inclusive attitudes and cross-value dialogues; this facilitates the acceptance of adat adaptation at the community level. Taylor & Francis Online

At the curriculum level, religious moderation programs incorporate competencies such as tolerance, respect for diversity, dialogue skills, and public welfare orientation. Our findings indicate that exposure to moderation education correlates with greater acceptance of ritual adaptation and adat reform, particularly among youth cohorts. This suggests that education acts as a transmission belt linking theological reinterpretation with generational continuity.

At the institutional level, teacher and preacher training is key. Research finds that when religious educators and Islamic boarding school leaders are equipped with moderation modules—including strategies for managing differences and contextual teaching methods—they are more effective at articulating the theological and social reasons behind adat changes. As a result, moderate messages are translated into the local language understood by adat communities (e.g., explaining that replacing offerings with prayers is not eliminating tradition but a new interpretation consistent with *tawhid*), thus reducing social resistance.

Educational interventions also occur through community programs: village seminars, local wisdom workshops led by moderate ulama, and interfaith activities provide a space for dialogue between adat leaders, ulama, and younger generations. Case studies in several districts show that such forums create a "common language"—e.g., the concepts of *maslahah*, *ikhtiar*, and *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*—which form the normative justification for ritual modifications. As a result, collective decisions regarding adat adaptation are more readily accepted because the process has gone through an inclusive public discourse.

However, the effectiveness of moderation education is not automatic: critical research warns of superficial implementation in some institutions—where moderation modules become mere administrative formalities without changes to academic culture, training quality, or contextual content. This condition reduces its impact on societal attitudes; thus, the quality of implementation (training, relevant-contextual curriculum, monitoring) is crucial in determining how education facilitates the acceptance of adat adaptation.

In summary, the mechanism by which education and moderation strengthen the acceptance of adat adaptation includes: (1) strengthening normative texts (materials linking religious teachings with inclusive values), (2) enhancing the capacity of change agents (moderately educated teachers, ulama, adat leaders), (3) creating community dialogue spaces (workshops, public deliberations) to formulate joint solutions, and (4) practical legitimacy—when moderate arguments are consistently conveyed, adat adaptations gain theological and social grounding. To ensure this outcome, research and practice recommendations suggest developing contextual moderation modules (including local case studies such as *Malintinuhu*), long-term evaluations, and active collaboration between the Ministry of Education/Religious Affairs, universities, Islamic boarding schools, and adat institutions.

### **Preservation of Cultural Identity**

The Kaili language policy (BDK) in schools and local media runs parallel to the reinforcement of religious values, signifying the coexistence of cultural and religious identities. The Provincial Government of Central Sulawesi has encouraged the integration of the Kaili language as a local content subject in the curriculum from early childhood education (PAUD) to elementary school. This call, made by Governor Rusdy Mastura in January 2024, emphasizes the importance of

developing and preserving local cultural values amidst the pressures of globalization. In addition to language teaching, other initiatives such as street naming in the Kaili language and local television broadcasts using the regional language have been initiated as part of the implementation of this policy.

### **Challenges and Efforts for Revitalization in Schools**

According to the study by Syamsuddin and Budiman (2023), the revitalization of the Kaili language among elementary and junior high school students in Palu City is still far from ideal. However, initiatives from schools, the Language Center of Central Sulawesi, and the local government have shown positive results, encouraging students' interest and intention to learn the language.

**Village and Customary School Policies: A National Trend**  
On a broader scale, the preservation of regional languages has developed into mother-tongue-based education programs. National efforts such as the Revitalization of Regional Languages by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) are part of the national initiative to enhance the involvement of regional languages in education. Furthermore, "customary schools," which are informal educational spaces integrating local cultural identities and languages as mediums of instruction, have received support from the Ministry of Education and other institutions.

### **Coexistence of Cultural and Religious Identities**

The presence of the BDK policy, the strengthening of Kaili language practices in local media and schools, along with the narrative of moderate Islamic education, illustrates that cultural identity is not sidelined by religious values; rather, both are intertwined in synergy. Children and the younger generation are simultaneously exposed to religious teachings and cultural heritage through their mother tongue. This fosters an ethnolectal pride while simultaneously strengthening an inclusive and contextual understanding of religion.

### **Practical and Contextual Synergy**

- Schools: The Kaili language is taught as a local content subject, supplemented with cultural material and local context.
- Local media: Television or radio broadcasts in Kaili enhance public exposure to the language.
- Public & community: Street naming and public symbols in Kaili revitalize the presence of the language in daily life.

All of these create a symbiotic space where cultural and religious identities mutually reinforce each other, rather than compete.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Theological Lens of Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin**

The integration of adat (customary law) and syariat (Islamic law) in Kaili aligns with an inclusive Islamic framework that emphasizes mercy, justice, and public benefit (Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023; Mukhlis et al., 2024). This framework is increasingly mainstreamed in both academic discourse and institutional practices.

Unlike earlier studies that treated adat–syariat relations primarily as a legal-formal accommodation or as a sociological compromise, this study positions the integration explicitly within the theological paradigm of rahmatan lil ‘alamin. In this paradigm, the preservation of local culture is not merely tolerated but normatively justified as long as it safeguards tawhid, promotes maslahat (public benefit), and prevents harm (mafsadah). Thus, theology does not function as a post hoc legitimization, but as a guiding epistemic framework shaping ritual transformation and institutional adaptation.

Comparatively, research in Minangkabau often frames the formula adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah as a historical synthesis rooted in customary jurisprudence. In contrast, the

Kaili case demonstrates a more dialogical and ongoing theological negotiation, where legitimacy is continuously reconstructed through consultative mechanisms. This distinction broadens the theoretical understanding of Islamic acculturation in Indonesia—from a static synthesis model to a dynamic mercy-based negotiation model.

### **Acculturation, Not Erasure of Tradition**

Field evidence from various regions in Indonesia shows that Islamization often involves the negotiation of meanings (reinterpretation of symbols, substitution of rituals), rather than complete assimilation, reinforcing the findings of this study.

- **Acculturation as Negotiation of Meaning: Conceptual Explanation**

Acculturation here is understood as a two-way process: Islamic religion and local culture negotiate symbolic meanings, so problematic ritual elements according to Islamic doctrine can be reinterpreted or substituted without destroying their social structure and cultural functions. Rather than erasing a practice, local actors (scholars, customary leaders, and communities) often construct theological and sociocultural justifications that allow for the continuity of rituals in a new format—for example, from a traditional offering (*sesaji*) to collective prayers or charity (*sedekah*). This approach is in line with the Nusantara Islam discourse, which positions inclusivity and locality as defining features of Islam in the archipelago.

- **Field Evidence: Substitution Patterns in Various Regions**

1. **Lampung Pepadun – Substitution of *Sesaji*:** Case studies of the Pepadun life-cycle rituals demonstrate that traditional offerings are practically reinterpreted into collective prayer activities, halal food charity, or recitation of *dhikr* (remembrance of God). These are symbolic replacements that maintain social functions (togetherness, gratitude, reconciliation) while removing elements considered contrary to monotheism (*tauhid*). This pattern is documented in field research and contemporary symbolic analysis.
2. **Bali & Nusantara Muslim Communities – Inculturation of Values:** Ethnographic research in Muslim communities in Bali shows a similar cultural strategy: preserving the form (festivities, music, light dance, banquets) but replacing or emphasizing ritual elements in accordance with Islamic law—such as focusing on prayers and charity. This maintains local identity while affirming religious commitment.
3. **Java, Minangkabau, Sundanese – Ongoing Acculturation Patterns:** Studies from Java, Minangkabau, and Sundanese regions affirm that the Islamization of culture is historical and continuous, often taking the form of ritual adaptation, reinterpretation of religious symbols, or shifts in meaning; not the total erasure of tradition. This evidence appears in recent field studies and historical-cultural reviews.

- **Social-Religious Mechanisms Facilitating Acculturation**

- **Local Theological Legitimacy:** Local scholars provide sharia justifications for substitution (e.g., *maslahat*, intention, and prevention of harm), so the new practices are considered religiously valid.
- **Consultative Mechanism:** Customary forums and religious institutions (e.g., *majlis*, *taklim*) serve as arenas for meaning negotiation; through dialogue, compromises are formulated collaboratively.
- **Institutionalization of Moderate Values:** The Nusantara Islam concept and religious moderation programs in educational institutions/*pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) help spread the narrative that ritual adjustments are both legitimate and socially valuable.
- **Symbolic Transformation:** Ritual forms are preserved (meetings, feasts, processions), while problematic symbolic components are replaced (*sesaji* → prayer/charity), ensuring the social function remains alive.
- **Socio-Cultural Consequences**

The result is a coexistence of identities: communities are able to maintain symbolic cultural networks (language, arts, ceremonies) while adhering to religious norms. This process reduces identity conflicts, strengthens community cohesion, and results in locally relevant and contextualized forms of religion. Comparative studies show that acculturative options are commonly pursued in various regions of Indonesia as a pragmatic response to pluralistic values.

Beyond the Indonesian context, this finding contributes to broader discussions on Islam and multiculturalism. While some Middle Eastern contexts experience sharper dichotomies between scripturalism and local tradition, the Indonesian experience—exemplified by Kaili—illustrates how a mercy-based theological paradigm can sustain plural cultural expressions within Islamic orthodoxy. Thus, the broader implication of this study lies in demonstrating that contextualized Islam is not peripheral but structurally viable within global Islamic thought.

- **Critical Notes and Directions for Future Research**

While dominant, the acculturation model is not without challenges: there are power dynamics (who has the authority to interpret), resistance from puritanism, and the risk of cultural commodification (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, & Zulbaidah, 2025; Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to assess the long-term impact of ritual substitutions on cultural transmission and generational shifts in meaning. Additionally, cross-ethnic comparative studies (e.g., Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Papua) will enrich the understanding of acculturation variants in Indonesia.

### **Kaili as a Typical Case of Central Sulawesi**

The evolution of customary authority and local councils (e.g., Patanggota/ngata) in Kaili reveals an institutional structure that flexibly absorbs Islamic values without abandoning its local roots. In Palu and the Kaili valleys, traditional social structures centered on the Patanggota system show historical resilience: although rooted in traditional royal hierarchies (magau, totua), these institutions continue to transform according to colonial, national, and local religious dynamics. Recent ethno-historical research explains that Patanggota is not a static system, but rather an institutional framework capable of integrating new practices—including Islamic norms—as long as those changes gain social legitimacy through consultation and community support.

- **Institutional Transformation in Two Main Areas**

1. Normative Contextualization: Criteria for leadership in customary law (authority, duties, and legitimacy) often now include moral-religious qualifications that align with Islamic values—e.g., honesty, trustworthiness, and the ability to lead according to the principle of *maslahat* (public benefit)—so that customary leaders are seen by the community as figures rooted in culture while also embodying religious morality.
2. Governance Practices: Customary council forums (ngata/patanggota) serve as consultative spaces that involve scholars, customary leaders, and community representatives. This mechanism facilitates the negotiation of ritual status, dispute resolution, and community policies that preserve local features while upholding religious norms. Field studies and local reviews document concrete examples where customary decisions are reinterpreted through consultation processes involving local religious actors.

- Islamic Accommodation in Kaili's Customary Institutions Contemporary literature shows that the accommodation of Islam into Kaili's customary institutions is not always an attempt at "total Islamization," but rather an adaptive strategy: customary practices maintain their social functions (solidarity, resource management, symbolic legitimacy) while problematic ritual elements are reformed to align with sharia. Haliadi et al. (2023) and recent ethnographic monographs note the

continuity of cultural artifacts (music, dance, heirlooms) while observing shifts in the meaning of rituals—indicating that the legitimacy of customary institutions is now hybridized between traditional authority and local religious authority.

- **Implications**  
Kaili serves as an important case study because it demonstrates how long-rooted customary institutions can become an effective medium for social-religious integration. For researchers and policymakers, the key lesson is that strengthening customary institutions—by incorporating inclusive consultative mechanisms and respecting local wisdom—supports social stability and allows religious and cultural practices to coexist without imposing homogeneity. Future research should conduct longitudinal studies of local councils (*patanggota/ngata*) to map the processes of legitimacy and the dynamics of the roles of scholars versus customary leaders in decision-making in the post-disaster and decentralization era.
- **Policy Implications & Social Engineering**  
Moderation programs (*campus/pesantren*) and local cultural policies (language, media) serve as levers to smooth traditionalist-reformist frictions. On a normative-regulatory level, the moderation narrative in Indonesia and the region provides a framework for integrating practices like this.
- **Religious Moderation Implementation in Indonesia**  
As a government program and educational agenda, religious moderation has become a central instrument for shaping an inclusive discourse capable of bridging tensions between puritan-reformist demands and efforts to preserve tradition. The government and the Ministry of Religious Affairs integrate moderation values (tolerance, non-violence, respect for local traditions, and dialogue) into religious education curricula, preacher training, and programs in higher education and *pesantren*. Evaluative studies find that well-designed moderation curricula enhance dialogue capacity and provide a "normative language" (e.g., *maslahat, rahmatan lil 'alamin*) used by scholars and customary leaders to formulate solutions to ritual issues and customary practices—thus making *adat* adjustments more acceptable to the community.
- **Institutional Interventions in Pesantren and Campuses**  
Interventions such as moderation modules, interactive workshops, and programs for developing the capacity of teachers and preachers help to "simplify" symbolic contradictions. *Pesantren* adopting moderation pedagogy play a role as local mediators: they not only teach theology but also equip students with cross-value dialogue skills, which are then applied in customary meetings or village consultations—minimizing resistance to the substitution of rituals considered problematic according to Islamic doctrine. However, critical studies also show that success depends on the quality of implementation—there are cases where moderation becomes merely an administrative formality without substantial practice changes.
- **Cultural Policies**  
Local language revitalization policies and support for local media (local radio/TV broadcasts, digital content in regional languages) create space for the preservation of cultural identity alongside the strengthening of religious education. Support from the Ministry and regional initiatives (mother tongue revitalization programs, integration of local content into curricula) demonstrate that language preservation is not just a cultural heritage issue, but also a social stabilization tool: when people feel their language and cultural symbols are valued institutionally, they become more open to reinterpreting ritual aspects to align with religious teachings—a coexistence facilitated by public policy. Recent efforts at the national and regional levels (calls for language revitalization programs and support for language activists) further emphasize this synergy.

- Normative-Regulatory Narratives of Moderation  
On a normative-regulatory level, the moderation narrative promoted at the national level becomes the "umbrella" legitimacy for such integration practices: the government uses the moderation framework as the basis for educational policies, religious institution regulations, and support for cultural preservation initiatives (Mukhlis, 2025b; Mukhlis, Suradi, et al., 2023). In other words, moderation plays a dual role—as a policy text (providing legal/public legitimacy) and as a social capacity (shaping local public discourse). This makes it easier for local actors (moderate scholars, customary leaders, community leaders) to use theological arguments and public policy to rationalize adat adjustments.

## **CONCLUSION**

The teachings of Islam (Sharia) and local traditions (Kaili customs) in the Palu City area demonstrate an active process of acculturation: Kaili customs are not merely eliminated, but instead selected, preserved, and adapted to align with the Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy for all of creation). This process is facilitated by major religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, each with its own approach, yet complementing each other in harmonizing Sharia and local customs. The cultural practices of the Kaili people, re-contextualized within the framework of Islamic law while maintaining their cultural identity, exemplify how Islam can serve as mercy (*rahmah*)—not as coercion or a destroyer of tradition. Thus, the theological framework of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* serves as the ethical and philosophical foundation for local cultural policies: the presence of Islam must promote social welfare, inclusive diversity, and respect for cultural heritage. The practical implication is that the harmonization of Sharia and local customs is not merely a social compromise, but a critical re-interpretation of customs to ensure they align with universal Islamic values without losing local identity.

To enhance the practical relevance of these findings, this study recommends that local governments formally integrate the principle of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* into regional cultural and religious policy frameworks, particularly in drafting regulations related to customary practices, religious education, and community conflict resolution. Religious organizations are also encouraged to develop structured dialogue forums between traditional leaders (*adat* authorities) and Islamic scholars to ensure continuous reinterpretation of customs in line with both Sharia and local wisdom. Furthermore, incorporating culturally responsive Islamic education curricula at the community and school levels could strengthen intergenerational transmission of harmonious values between religion and tradition.

For future research, comparative studies across different regions in Indonesia are needed to examine whether similar models of Sharia–custom harmonization operate under varying socio-political contexts. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches could also be employed to measure the social impact of such acculturation on community cohesion, tolerance, and conflict mitigation. In addition, longitudinal studies would be valuable to assess the sustainability of this harmonization process in the face of modernization, political change, and the rise of transnational religious movements.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, writing, or publication of this article. This research was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal influences that could affect the objectivity of the research findings.

## **FUNDINGS**

This research did not receive any specific grants from any funding institution, whether from the government, commercial, or non-profit sectors. The research was conducted independently by the author as part of academic research activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Research and Community Service Institution (LPPM) of the University of Muhammadiyah Palu for their academic and administrative support during the course of this research.

The author also extends their thanks to the customary leaders and members of the Kaili tribe in Palu City for sharing valuable knowledge and information, which made this research possible. Additionally, the author is grateful for the constructive feedback and suggestions from colleagues and reviewers who helped enhance the quality of this article.

## REFERENCES

- Anak, K. N. P. E. S. K. (2008). Eksploitasi Seksual Komersial Anak di Indonesia. *Medan, Restu Printing Indonesia, Hal.57, 21(1)*, 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v2i1i1>.
- Arifin, S., Kholish, Moh. A., & Mu'iz, D. H. T. (2022). Teologi Konversi Agama Dan Upaya Menumbuhkan Nilai-Nilai Toleransi Di Basis Multikultural. *Waskita: Jurnal Pendidikan Nilai Dan Pembangunan Karakter, 6(1)*, 43. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.waskita.2022.006.01.4>
- Bahri, S., Hidayat, R., & Sa, N. (2024). *Multikultural Islam dan Budaya Lokal Indonesia, 6(2)*, 162–178.
- Fikri, M. (2023). *MENGGALI KEARIFAN LOKAL NUSANTARA MELALUI INTEGRASI ISLAM , SAINS , DAN BUDAYA : PERSPEKTIF Pendahuluan, 6(3)*, 673–690.
- Kadir, S. (2020). *ISLAM DAN BUDAYA POMPAURA* (K. Pasinringi, Ed.; Pertama). Yayasan Barcode.
- Kadir, S., Normawati, & Halik, A. (2020). Framing kaili tribe culture in the Muhammadiyah education perspective. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 12(6)*, 108–122.
- Kadir, S., Nuranisa, N., Asnidar, A., & Zainal, A. (2021). Sudut Pandang Sosiologi Islam dalam Pelaksanaan Budaya Pompaura Masyarakat Suku Kaili. *Iqra: Jurnal Ilmu Kependidikan Dan Keislaman, 15(2)*, 84–88. <https://doi.org/10.56338/iqra.v15i2.1576>
- Marwany. (2022). Islamic Ethnoeducation On Traditional Games From The Kaili Tribe Of Palu City. *IBDA' Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya, 20(2)*, 232–248.
- Mukhlis, L. (2025a). A Phenomenological Study of Personal Spiritual Experiences in Navigating Religious Pluralism within Interfaith Communities. *Irfana: Journal of Religious Studies, 1(6)*, 212–220.
- Mukhlis, L. (2025b). Spiritual Grounds for Economic Growth: A Qualitative Exploration of Rural Indonesian Women's Transformative Journeys Through Mosque-Led Empowerment Programs. *Servina: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat, 1(8)*, 289–298.
- Mukhlis, L., & Abdullah, M. N. (2025). *Hukum Keluarga Islam di Indonesia* (1st edn). Mukhlisina Revolution Center.
- Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., & Zulbaidah. (2024). Integrating Artificial Intelligence and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah: Revolutionizing Indonesia's Sharia Online Trading System. *Computer Fraud and Security, 2024(11)*, 301–309. <https://doi.org/10.52710/cfs.238>

- Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., & Zulbaidah. (2025). Reorientation of Sharia Stock Regulations: Integrating Taṣarrufāt al-Rasūl and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah for Justice and Sustainability. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*, 10(10s), 58–66. <https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i10s.1341>
- Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., Zulbaidah, Rosadi, A., & Solehudin, E. (2025). Reformulation of Islamic Stock Law: The Application of Taṣarrufāt al-Rasūl and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah to Develop a Dynamic and Sustainable Islamic Capital Market in Indonesia. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 5(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i3.913>
- Mukhlis, L., Janwari, Y., & Syafe'i, R. (2023). INDONESIA STOCK EXCHANGE: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF MUDHARABAH AND MUSYARAKAH CONTRACTS. *Yurisprudencia: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi*, 9(2), 243–264. <https://doi.org/10.24952/yurisprudencia.v9i2.8466>
- Mukhlis, L., Maryam, S., & Sormin, S. A. (2023). Model Pembelajaran Living History Berbasis PjBL Untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Histografi Mahasiswa. *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA*, 9(4), 1800–1809. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v9i4.5595>
- Mukhlis, L., & Saidah, Y. (2025). Dynamics of Nature-Based learning in Developing Children's Motoric Skills: Teacher and Parent Perspectives. *HUMANISMA: Journal of Gender Studies*, 9(1), 64–79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30983/humanisme.v4i2.9366>
- Mukhlis, L., Suradi, Janwari, Y., & Syafe'i, R. (2023). Sosialisasi Saham Syariah sebagai Instrumen Pengembangan Ekonomi Masyarakat di Badan Kontak Majelis Taklim (BKMT) Kabupaten Mandailing Natal. *Jurnal Pengabdian Multidisiplin*, 3(2), 2–9. <https://doi.org/10.51214/japamul.v3i2.604>
- Septiwiharti, D. (2020). Budaya Sintuvu Masyarakat Kaili Di Sulawesi Tengah [the Sintuvu Culture of the Kaili People in Central Sulawesi]. *Naditira Widya*, 14(1), 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.24832/nw.v14i1.419>
- Surni Kadir. (2019). *BUDAYA MASYARAKAT SUKU KAILI DALAM KAJIAN ANTROPOLOGI ISLAM* (Rafiuddin, Ed.; Pertama).
- Surni Kadir, N. (2021). *POLA AKULTURASI ISLAM DENGAN KEPERCAYAAN ASLI SUKU KAILI (BUDAYA POMPUORA) DALAM TRADISI SOSIAL KEAGAMAAN EDISI REVISI* (K. Pasinringi, Ed.; Kedua). Y.
- Yanti, F., Witro, D., Putra, D. I. A., Ilahi, R. P., Intania, N., & Alghani, R. (2024). Acculturation of Religion and Culture Within Muslim Sundanese Society in West Java. *Al-Albab*, 13(1), 115–134. <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v13i1.2977>