

ISLAM GARASSIK: DOUBLE MINORITY STRUGGLES AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research aims to delve into the survival strategies of Islam Garassik adherents within the diverse context of Tana Toraja society in South Sulawesi. Islam Garassik is not only a subculture in Torajan culture but also a double minority group. They are not only a minority within the mainstream of Torajan culture but also within the Islamic community itself. This qualitative research employs an interpretative phenomenological approach within Tana Toraja Regency, specifically in Gandangbatu Sillanan Sub-district. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research results show Islam Garassik is an emerging Muslim religiosity in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, particularly in Lembang Garassik and Gandangbatu Sillanan sub-districts. This phenomenon combines Islamic teachings with local values, showing Islamic syncretism that is friendly to local traditions. Islam Garassik was born from interactions with Bugis merchants in Mebali, a traditional market. The long and intense struggle between religious and cultural institutions in South Sulawesi influenced it. As a double minority group, Islam Garassik adherents face social exclusion that pushes them to defend their existential identity and values, including religious understanding and ritual practices. In their defense strategy, they negotiate their identity by integrating religious values and traditions, using Sufistic narratives, and interacting with other Muslim groups. This strategy allows them to maintain their religious identity and cultural diversity, establish harmonious relations with the surrounding community, and provide space for the growth of Islam in the rich cultural context of Tana Toraja.

Keywords: *Double Minority, Islam Garassik, Multicultural Society, Survival Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Religious tolerance in Indonesia is a complex and multifaceted issue. On the one hand, there is a grim situation where the majority group tends to demean and discriminate against minority groups (Adi & Bahri, 2023; Buehler, 2023; Fadhli, 2014; Nakaya, 2018). Minorities are always positioned as inferior and under the shadow of the majority, so there is a deep impression of hegemony and domination by the majority over the minority (Bayani Dahlan, 2022; Eliassi, 2021; Mayo, 2022). Narratives of division between the majority and minority often appear behind various cases of violence in Indonesia (Abbas, 2022; Hitman, 2023; Khoiron, 2018). These conflicts, in turn, create feelings of mutual suspicion and further nourish the seeds of hatred that can potentially damage Indonesian society's social balance and overall order (Khoiron, 2018; M. Zainal Abidin, 2009; Sirait, 2019). On the other hand, some research also shows a portrait of harmonious majority-minority relations (Antameng, 2021; Jubba et al., 2019; Tsang et al., 2021), acceptance of the existence of minority groups, which opens opportunities for the creation of a more inclusive socio-religious life order (Haryanto, 2019; Jubba et al., 2020; Kawangung, 2019), and strengthens cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia (Baidhawiy, 2007; Krismiyananto & Kii, 2023; Mawardi et al., 2023).

In that context, individual behavior is often influenced not only by religious values and symbols but also by the dynamics of the surrounding culture (Lamba, 2021; Lawrence-Hart and Sunday Deezia, 2023). A person's religiosity cannot be viewed as a completely isolated entity but rather as an integral part of the social and cultural context in which the individual lives. From a sociological perspective, the role of locality is crucial in shaping the image and feel of religion in every religious community (Coyne et al., 2022; M. Ridwan Lubis, 2017). The close relationship between religion and culture creates a symbiotic relationship where both influence each other. This causes diversity in religious meanings and practices in society, reflecting the complexity of the interaction between religious and cultural dimensions in shaping individual and group identities.

This research focuses on exploring the survival strategies of Islam *Garassik* adherents

amidst the diversity of Tana Toraja society, a region located in South Sulawesi with diverse traditions and beliefs. The label "Islam *Garassik*" is applied to its followers because their Islamic format combines Islamic teachings with the sociocultural values and practices they inherited from their ancestors (Arif et al., 2022; Halim, 2020; Ilham et al., 2023; Paisal, 2019; Pajarianto et al., 2022).

Some of the questions raised in this research are how the existence of Islam *Garassik* adherents and its struggle with the mainstream of the religious tradition of Tana Toraja society, and how the survival strategy of Islam *Garassik* adherents as a double minority in the culture and religion of Tana Toraja society. This research assumes that Islam *Garassik* is not only a subculture in Torajan culture but also a double minority group. They are not only a minority within the mainstream of Torajan culture but also within the Islamic community itself. Therefore, Islam *Garassik* adherents not only have to adapt to the mainstream of tradition and cross-religion of the community in Gandangbatu Sillanan but also to the internal context of Islam. As a double minority, the pattern and system of relations with other more majority groups will also determine their attitude toward their own identity (Jubba et al., 2020; H Jubba, Long, and Yuniar, 2021; Karim et al., n.d.).

Literature Review

The study of Islam *Garassik* is less touched by previous researchers, especially about the survival strategy developed. Even some of the previous studies on the Toraja Muslim minority have not specifically examined Islam *Garassik*. In general, there have been many studies on the Toraja Muslim minority, but most of them only focus on the context of Muslims' initial encounters with the customs and culture of the Toraja people (Akbar & Rantesalu, 2023; Christian Pelras, 1985; Roxana Waterson, 2009). Waterson, for example, describes how inter-community harmony is strongly established between Muslims and *Aluk Todolo* adherents. In addition, research captures the dynamics of *da'wah* communication in the Toraja Muslim minority area (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Qodir et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2020). Research by Faisal et al. (2021) explores local wisdom in developing communities that are interrelated with religious moderation in Tana Toraja. This

research concludes that the religious moderation-oriented local wisdom contained in the local community is *Aluk Todolo* and the traditional Tongkonan house, which are part of the culture and local wisdom of Tana Toraja. Research (Halim, 2020; Paisal, 2019) also reveals a portrait of inter-religious harmony in Tana Toraja as naturally formed. Faisal, for example, revealed that harmony built in the community is supported by the values of wisdom inherited from their ancestors on the one hand and their love for a peaceful life on the other. Local wisdom is derived from the philosophy of Tongkonan and embodied in oral messages (*pepasan*), among others, in the form of speech, such as *siangkaran* (mutual help) and *siangga'* (mutual respect).

As far as the author can trace, previous researchers have not discussed research that specifically explores Islam *Garassik* as a minority amidst the plurality of Toraja society. The research topics mentioned above are relevant to the title of this research but very different from the main tendency and focus of this research, which examines the survival strategy of Islam *Garassik* as a unique portrait of Islam's struggle with the customs and culture of the Toraja people.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of *double minorities* refers to a situation where a person or group faces inequality or discrimination because they are a minority in two different aspects of identity simultaneously (Sumaktoyo, 2019). It deals with the complexity of individual or group experiences that cannot be explained by only one aspect of identity (Brice, 2010). This concept opens up awareness of how different dimensions of identity interact and influence individuals' experiences in society, helping them better understand their challenges (Sumaktoyo, 2019).

Double minorities often face cross-prejudice, meaning they face stereotypes and prejudices from different groups relating to different aspects of their identity (Haddad & Smith, 2002). This illustrates the extent to which these aspects of identity can overlap and result in more complicated discrimination.

Double minorities often feel the need to fight for recognition and understanding of their complex identities. This can involve articulating their experiences, countering dual stereotypes, and promoting awareness of dual

identity issues (Sleijpen et al., 2020). This process can affect how the group interacts with society and projects themselves in the social environment (Abbas, 2007).

Social exclusion that a religious group may experience certainly encourages them to develop strategies to survive the various exclusions received (Nuruddin, 2021). Survival strategies are practiced by a group to maintain its existential identity and the things that sustain its existence, including religion and tradition. Therefore, the sustainability of a group's existence is highly dependent on the ability to form *cohesiveness* among its group members (Frangky et al., 2016; Marhayati, 2016)

Groups that want to survive will try to do various things to support their existence in various conditions and situations. Various strategies are carried out to support their existence, including efforts to preserve religious teachings that are institutionalized in continuous religious practices (Jubba, 2019). A community's survival strategy can take negotiation or resistance (Hasse Jubba et al., 2021). While maintaining its existential identity, there is room for negotiation and resistance (Yulisa Fringka, 2016).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative method (Gunawan, 2022). Through the interpretative phenomenology approach, this research seeks to investigate how the survival strategy developed by Islam *Garassik* adherents as a minority group in its struggle with the culture and religion of the Gandangbatu Sillanan community, Tana Toraja (Akbar and Rantesalu, 2023; Nuryana, A., Pawito, P., & Utari, 2019; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). The selection of this research location is based on considering the existence of Islam *Garassik* adherents who are concentrated and scattered in this region. They inherit their ancestors' sociocultural practices and values and form an Islamic format that combines Islamic teachings with elements of their ancestral traditions. In addition, this research also extends the context to Tana Toraja. In the midst of the mainstream beliefs of the Tana Toraja people, on the one hand, who adhere to Christianity and adherents of ancestral beliefs (*Aluk Todolo*), they also struggle with the dominant currents of Muslim religiosity in Tana Toraja, which tend to carry the idea of

purification of Islam. Thus, Islam *Garassik* adherents are not only a minority in the mainstream of Torajan culture but also within the Islamic community itself. On that basis, they not only have to adapt to the mainstream tradition and cross-religious community in Gandangbatu Sillanan but also to the internal context of the Muslim religion. As a double minority, the pattern and system of relations with other majority groups will also determine their attitude towards their own identity.

Data sources in this study were obtained directly from the main sources scattered in the community. The key informants of this research, namely Islam *Garassik* in Tana Toraja, were recruited for this research based on their involvement in socio-religious issues and their familiarity with Islam *Garassik* adherents such as religious leaders, community leaders, educators, and religious activists. The researchers also maximized the results of observations of sociocultural activities in the research location. In addition, this research also refers to information presented in the form of documents, such as research reports, books, credible journal articles, and documents relevant to the research topic as data support.

Data analysis in this research is iterative and can develop throughout the research process. The data analysis process in this research started with data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion drawing (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This process is carried out through a cyclical process: reduction, verification, presentation, and conclusion of data (Burhan Bungin, 2017; Sousa, 2014). This research tested the validity of data through four stages: credibility, transferability, definability, and confirmability (Lexy et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012).

DISCUSSION

Existence and Struggle of Islam *Garassik* in Tana Toraja

Islam *Garassik* refers to Muslim religious practices found in Lembang *Garassik* and then spread in Gandangbatu Sillanan District, Tana Toraja. Islam *Garassik* is a religious phenomenon that appears by bringing a portrait of Islamic syncretism with a friendly and appreciative religious flavour towards local traditions. Islam *Garassik* was born from

the struggle between religious and cultural institutions of the people of South Sulawesi, which has a long and intense history.

The presence of Islam in this area used a peaceful route through its contact with the Massenrempulu (Enrekang) region, which had already embraced Islam. This was marked by Islam's acceptance by the Maiwa king in 1608 AD (Morris, 1992; Sewang, 2005). The geographical position of Lembang Kaduaja and Salubarani, bordering the Massenrempulu region, which has almost entirely embraced Islam, makes contact between Islam and the southern Toraja community easier (Paisal, 2019). (Haidir, " Interview", 2023), an educator and youth leader in Gandangbatu Sillanan sub-district said:

"Islam used to come from Enrekang Massenrempulu in the 1600s, apart from the Mebali market where Enrekang people and Bugis people traded".

In its development, the widespread acceptance of Islam in Tana Toraja was fairly late after the entry of Islam in other areas such as Makassar, Gowa, Palopo, Pinrang, Polewali Mandar, and other coastal areas. This is because it is geographically located deep in the interior of South Sulawesi Province (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2021). After the Kingdom of Bone was conquered by the Kingdom of Gowa in 1611 and the King of Bone La Tenripale Tuakkepeang and his people converted to Islam, it can be said that all regions in South Sulawesi Province accepted Islam, except Tana Toraja (Christian Pelras, 1985; Rahmawati et al., 2015). However, long before this period, Islam had actually been recognized in Tana Toraja around 1630 (Christian Pelras, 1985; Dewi, 2014). Later, the existence of Islam in Tana Toraja was further strengthened by the Islamization of two Toraja nobles, namely Puang Sondong in Batualu and Rangga in Madandan (Qaharuddin Tahir et al., 2020).

The widespread presence of Islam as a new item in Torajan culture can be traced through two directions, from Luwu-Palopo in Madandan around 1876 and Teteaji Sidrap in Kampung Baru-Makale around 1897 (Nurdin Baturante, 2019; Paisal, 2019; Tahir et al., 2021). After the arrival of the Teteaji-Sidrap community in Kampung Baru-Makale, the existence and meaning of Islam became more visible. Their arrival was triggered by the Dutch colonization and their rejection of the

Dutch government, which at that time had reached Teteaji-Sidrap. Also, in their beliefs, the Dutch were considered infidels who threatened their religious beliefs. In its development, in addition to trading as a livelihood, they were active in preaching Islam to the Toraja people, who still adhered to the ancestral belief of *Aluk Todolo* at that time (Halim, 2020; Hasyim, 2022; Tahir et al., 2021; Tuken, 2020; Wikandatu et al., n.d.). (Thamrin, "Interview", 2023) said:

"After Islam entered Toraja, brought by people from Teteaji, his name is Siduppa, and Islam Garassik has been passed down there. If Toraja is observed, everything is almost the same, such as offerings made when cutting rice and preparing chicks".

Gilbert Harmonic notes (Waterson, 2009) that the possibility of familiarity between the two cultures is confirmed by the fact that there are several similarities between the two cultures. However, these tend to become blurred with the arrival of Islam, which is largely felt about the shift in emotional attitudes towards pigs, which, in Torajan society, are an important feature of the economic cycle. (Jumadi, "Interview", 2023), One of the Islamic religious instructors also revealed:

"Yes, now it is true that if we read history, the first to enter Toraja was Islam, and that is why it did not develop here because it was probably brought by people from outside who did not understand the customs here; maybe he was "pure Islam" and did not understand how Islam blended with the Toraja people so that Islam did not develop rapidly here. It is not developing because the da'wah is monotonous and does not provide space with tradition".

Tammu and Van der Veen's note (Waterson, 2009) also mentions that historically, attitudes towards pigs tended to be a distinguishing feature between Muslims and non-Muslims in Sulawesi, as indicated by an illustrative phrase "*sisallangraka nene'mu tu bai, mumokara ungkandei tu duku' bai?* (Were your ancestor's enemies of pigs, so you should refuse to eat pork?)".

This information also clarifies why the acceptance of Islam in the early days of its spread experienced obstacles. This is because the teachings of Islam were considered incompatible with the traditional practices of the Toraja people, such as funeral processions,

which in Islam are hastened. In addition, their traditional practices are also accompanied by things that are contrary to Islamic teachings, such as the criteria for forbidden food (pork) and drinks. (Ali, "Interview", 2023) Said:

"Islam in Toraja is slow to develop. In history, Christianity was much earlier because the culture in Toraja conflicted with Islam. First, Torajans have a habit of drinking ballo wherever they gather because there are many ballo producers here. Secondly, Toraja culture is pig-keeping, and every time there is a party, they slaughter a pig. Thirdly, the problem for the Torajans is that when people die, they have to be buried at the same time. They say "taekmia natongkonniki", which means not to be seen by distant family. They want to keep the corpse until all the family come to see it".

Ali Mustafa, a counsellor and preacher, believes that Islamic preachers in the past tended to have a rigid attitude when facing reality in Toraja. The *da'wah* method applied should have been gradual, taking into account the social conditions of the local community. However, those who spread Islam in the community do not tolerate traditional practices that have been widely accepted by the local community, such as the prohibition of banqueting at grief events. In this situation, Christianity was more likely to be accepted by the community (M. Ali, "Interview", 2023):

"People who spread Islam used to be very rigid in responding to the situation in Toraja. First, we absolutely understand that pork is haram, but it should have been processed slowly. Secondly, those who spread Islam used to say that when a family dies, there should be no party in the house and no eating. So, the Islam that Muslims spread did not understand what the method of da'wah was and how da'wah was done slowly. Finally, Christians came to replace and provide guidance".

The existence of Islam *Garassik* cannot be separated from its initial contact with Bugis Muslim merchants from Teteaji, an area in Tellulimpoe Sidrap who came to trade at the Mebali market (Bigalke, 1981, 2005; Fuad, 1985; Halim, 2020). The label "Islam *Garassik*" was given to its followers because of the way it combined Islamic teachings with elements of local tradition (Thamrin, "Interview", 2023) said:

"Islam Garassik was famous in the past, and I almost saw people like that. Only after the people there embraced Islam and stayed in the area did Islam Garassik become famous because of the rituals they performed after carrying out activities such as rice planting".

Islam *Garassik* adherents inherited sociocultural practices and values from their ancestors, such as Mattoon, Italian, and the reading of the *Barazanji* book (Paisal, 2019; Halim, 2020; Arif et al., 2022). Furthermore, (Thamrin, Interview", 2023) revealed:

"This is something that we need to know. Initially, there were Bugis people who came here and brought the teachings of Islam, which eventually developed and became what we see today. So, the one who brought it (Islam Garassik) with its teachings, for example, "mattoana" to Lembang Garassik, was a person who brought the teachings of Islam from Bugis, more precisely from the Sidrap area, Netaji in Sidrap".

This phenomenon also confirms the view of (Rahman, 1982), which states that although Islam at the level of normative ideals is global, it is more local at the level of praxis. Moreover, Wahid (1989) asserts that religion and culture are functionally equivalent. Therefore, the compartmentalization of Islam with locality, as stated by Azizy (2000), is impossible because the actualization of Islam in reality requires cultural tools. Research (Katu, 2014) emphasizes this information that Islamic syncretism in South Sulawesi can actually be from the process of implementing Islamic missions originating from the "palace door" and packaged with Sufistic narratives by preachers, especially in bridging ancestral values believed by the community and religious messages. In the context of Islam *Garassik*, (M. Ali, "Interview", 2023) explains:

"Islam Garassik is similar to the tariqahs and still has many references to Aluk Todolo—an animist understanding. When rice planting is finished, there are rites such as cutting up chickens."

In the past, around the 1950s, the adherents of Islam *Garassik* were victims of violence by Kahar Muzakkar's separatist regime, which sought to suppress all forms of local traditions and beliefs of the people of South Sulawesi (Pelras, 2000; Aragon, 2001; Waterson, 2009;

Noor, 2010; Umar, 2010; A. Rahman, 2020). They were accused of being a cult because they had mixed religion with traditions that had no basis for guidance in sharia (Paisal, 2019; Halim, 2020). (Ali, "Interview", 2023) also describes this *da'wah* tendency:

"In the past, there were indeed many contradictions with Islam. It's just that preachers are built only on enthusiasm; even though preaching is not only enthusiasm, it must also require understanding. Every time we preach, we say, "Haram! Haram!" while our congregation does not understand it, like chicks who are immediately given corn."

This guerrilla activity in the 1950s (Anhar Gonggong, 1990; Nurul Azizah, 2019; Sainal, 2019) eventually obscured a long period of peaceful coexistence between the two. In its development, the relationship between religions tended to be framed negatively, as religious affiliation, especially with Islam, was perceived as a marker of vast social distance and a detrimental factor in interactions with the indigenous population.

Islam *Garassik* as a group are not only a subculture which simply does not follow the mainstream or even tends to deviate (Fahadi, 2020; Hunt, 2008; Xu & Xu, 2023) in Torajan culture, but can also be said to be a "double minority" group. In this case, as a double minority, Islam *Garassik* adherents have the potential to face inequality due to their existence as a minority in two simultaneous aspects (Sumaktoyo, 2019; Swann Report, 1985). On the one hand, they are a minority in the cultural context of Toraja society and on the other hand, they are also a minority in the mainstream of Muslim religious. In this context, Islam *Garassik* face unique challenges in maintaining their identity and diversity. They have to deal with pressure and inequality from two different sides in the midst of efforts to maintain their inherited religious beliefs and practices. The next section will explain the survival strategies developed by Islam *Garassik* adherents as a double minority in the midst of the mainstream of Torajan culture and religion.

Survival Strategy of Islam *Garassik* as a Double Minority Group

As a "small narrative" of religion, the social exclusion that adherents of Islam *Garassik*

may experience certainly encourages them to maintain their existential identity and everything that is considered valuable, both material and non-material, including understanding and practice of religious rituals (Nuruddin, 2021) by forming integration (Frangky et al., 2016) and adapting to various social changes faced (Marhayati, 2016). Therefore, while maintaining their existential identity, there is still room for negotiation (Hasse Jubba et al., 2021; Yulisa Fringka, 2016). As a double minority, the patterns and systems of relations developed in their interactions with other majority groups determine the sustainability of Islam *Garassik* adherents. The survival strategies developed by Islam *Garassik* adherents in the midst of the mainstream of Torajan culture and religion:

1. Negotiating Identity: The Soft Integration of Religious Values and Tradition

Religion and culture are two elements that influence each other because both are full of symbols and values. Religion is closely related to obedience to God, while culture symbolizes human expression. Therefore, the compartmentalization of religion and culture will cause resistance (Azizy, 2000; Wahid 1989).

Faced with the mainstream of Toraja society's religiosity, Islam *Garassik* adherents also carry out soft integration between religious values and traditions substantively and proportionally (Zanfrini, 2020) so that they can still identify themselves as part of Muslims with distinctive religious expressions on the one hand and also the fundamental principles of religion that they still believe in. (Jumadi, "Interview", 2023) said:

"... I do not think it is a problem; it is just that we go back to religion, meaning that we can practice customs, but religion should not be put aside. There are still things in tradition that may not be brought into religion or mixed".

This description places Toraja as a "land of customs", where the people highly value their customs and culture. Therefore, every new entity present in the Toraja community must be able to negotiate in order to exist and ensure its sustainability. This tradition is maintained by integrating local wisdom with religious teachings, strengthening Islamic identity while preserving distinctive cultural heritage. Maintaining and preserving Islamic identity

amid local culture is one of the main aspects that sustain their existence. They strive to maintain their teachings, religious practices, and moral values amidst the mainstream of their culture and the diversity of their society. By preserving their religious values and practices, they can form a unique image and identity in society.

By entering an unfamiliar new culture as a minority, Islam *Garassik* adherents still try to maintain a collective memory built from their past experiences by forming an integration shown by efforts to share the teachings and practices of religious traditions in life continuously, such as *mattoana*, *tahlilan*, and reading *Barazanji* which they inherited from their ancestors. By doing so, they can create collectivity, social memory structures and shared ideologies. Through the maintenance of these traditions, Islam *Garassik* adherents can maintain a close relationship with their ancestral cultural roots while practising the teachings of Islam. *Mattoana*, as a traditional funeral ritual, reflects the values of togetherness and respect for ancestors. At the same time, *tahlilan* and the reading of the *Barazanji* are manifestations of spiritual appreciation in an Islamic context (Azis, 2023).

As described earlier, Islam *Garassik* adherents have experienced pressures and challenges related to how they express and practice Islam in an environment with diverse cultural and religious norms. They face two main pressures: the pressure to adopt a more conservative form of Islam as practiced by the Toraja Muslim community and the pressure to adjust their religious expression in accordance with the norms of the majority around them (Azis, "Interview," 2023).

Jumadi ("Interview", 2023) asserts that in such situations, they choose to practice Islam in a way that allows them to maintain their distinctive cultural identity by integrating Islamic values with their cultural heritage in the context of their lives. He said:

"When it comes to custom issues, I do not think it will ever go away. As I said earlier, most of the land here is customary land. Even if the government tries to intervene with customs, they will probably face great difficulties because customs are very strong and has been rooted for a long time. Custom in Tanah Toraja remains a top priority to this day and will most likely not disappear

except perhaps when the time of the apocalypse comes".

Islam *Garassik* adherents seek a balance between Islamic teachings and cultural values. They do not reject Islam or culture but choose to unite the two. Islam *Garassik* seeks a balance between Islamic teachings and cultural values. They do not reject Islam or their culture but choose to unite the two. This makes it possible to maintain a cultural identity while still practicing Islamic religious beliefs. (Haidir, "Interview", 2023) said that in the process of negotiating identity, they appreciate and respect cultural diversity in the community. They recognize the importance of cultural and religious plurality and try to build tolerance and respect for differences. Azis ("Interview", 2023) also added that through this approach, Islam *Garassik* adherents managed to be still able to express their teachings while adhering to local cultural values, respecting differences, and creating a unique identity that reflects cultural and religious wealth. This is a form of identity negotiation that combines Islam with local wisdom, creating harmony and peace in a diverse society. This strategy allows the adherents of Islam *Garassik* to survive amidst their cultural and Islamic diversity.

2. Use of Sufistic Narrative

Sufistic narratives in the context of the survival strategy of Islam *Garassik* adherents play a central role in maintaining their religious identity and cultural heritage. Awareness of the complexity of the interaction between Islam and local culture makes the use of Sufistic narratives a means to bring the teachings of Islam closer to the local community. Sufistic narratives allow them to link Islamic values with rich local traditions, explain religious principles and relate them to the socio-religious values they have inherited. This is in line with Katu (2014), who claims that the early character of Islam in South Sulawesi tended to have a syncretic character, which was able to bridge the ancestral values believed by the community and religious messages. M. Ali ("Interview", 2023) also explains:

"Islam Garassik has similarities with tasawuf-thariqah and is still heavily influenced by Aluk Todolo, an animist religion. After completing the planting

of rice, they perform certain rites, such as the chicken-cutting ceremony."

Sufistic narratives also carry universal messages of love, compassion, and tolerance, which are profound and can be lived by everyone regardless of cultural background. Thus, using Sufistic narratives forms a smart strategy to maintain the Islamic identity and care for the Tana Toraja community's cultural richness and creates continuity and harmony amidst the plurality of its society (Thamrin, "Interview", 2023).

Integrating religious teachings through Sufistic narratives can bridge the gap between Islam and local culture. This makes it easier for the people of Southern Toraja to understand and internalize religious values, as they are conveyed through a language familiar and contextual to their lives, which are still influenced by the legacy of their ancestral beliefs.

3. Interaction with Other Muslim Groups

This strategy plays an important role in shaping the religious identity of Islam *Garassik*. Cooperation and dialogue with other Muslim communities allow them to develop an openness and acceptance towards "the other". In this interaction, Islam *Garassik* can compare and enrich their knowledge of Islam and understand various religious practices outside their region. In addition, interaction with other Muslim groups also opens up space for accepting religious and cultural diversity from outside. This inspires them to apply the positive aspects of these experiences in their religious practices and daily lives.

Thus, interaction with other Muslim groups not only enriches their religious horizons but also helps build a solid and inclusive Islamic identity amidst the complexity of existing cultures and religions. Interaction with other religions also includes relations with non-Muslim communities. The struggle to build interfaith communication, respect differences and promote tolerance is part of Muslims' existence in a heterogeneous society.

Jumadi ("Interview", 2023) shared that there are indeed situations in the community where conflicts or problems occur, and it is not only the young people who are involved. In these cases, customary institutions and religious leaders from various religions, including Christianity and Islam, are called together in a meeting. They discuss and talk

together about the conflict, including problems involving young people. This meeting is attended by parents from different religious backgrounds, including those who may adhere to *Aluk Todolo*. The aim is to find peaceful solutions and mediation to resolve the conflict. With all elements involved in this process, the possibility of unwanted things happening can be minimized, thus creating peace, which is the main goal for all elements of society.

The struggle to build interfaith communication, respect differences and promote tolerance is part of their efforts to maintain their continued existence as a double minority in a heterogeneous society. This is evident in a statement by Hasan ("Interview", 2021) who said: "Basically, when we talk about this (the spirit of building tolerance), almost everything is similar, and it can almost be said that no one dominates, so people quickly blend in".

By developing a coping strategy that combines the substantive dimensions of Islam *Garassik* values and teachings on the one hand and aspects of cultural locality, the diversity of Torajan society and mainstream Muslim religiosity on the other, adherents have been able to exist in the midst of changing times and evolving challenges, while maintaining their roots in the rich traditions and cultural heritage that define who they are as an integral part of the fabric of Torajan society. With this approach, they can celebrate cultural diversity while nurturing their religious beliefs, creating social harmony, and making a meaningful contribution to society.

CLOSING

Based on the previous discussion, it is concluded: First, Islam *Garassik* is a religious phenomenon that combines Islamic teachings with local traditional values in the Lembang Garassik area, Gandangbatu Sillanan sub-district, Tana Toraja. Islam *Garassik* emerged through initial interaction with Bugis Muslim merchants from Teteaji Sidrap and developed by bringing Islamic teachings that accommodate cultural diversity in the region. Second, adherents of *Islam Garassik* seek to maintain their identity as a dual minority group. They negotiate their identity by integrating Islamic values with local traditions, maintaining cultural diversity, and creating harmonious relationships with the surrounding community. Islam *Garassik* also use Sufistic

narratives to bridge the differences between Islam and local culture, enabling them to live out religious teachings in the context of their lives. With this strategy, Islam *Garassik* adherents manage to maintain their religious identity and cultural diversity, establish harmonious relations with the surrounding community, and create space for Islam to grow in the rich cultural context of Tana Toraja.

The existence of Islam *Garassik* adherents in Toraja, as a double minority, requires adaptation and development of several religious and social aspects that sustain them. Efforts are needed to increase inter-community accommodation and strengthen space and common interests. Social organizations play an important role in overcoming mistrust, inequality, discrimination, and stereotypes often attached to minority groups.

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