



## The Existence of Beliefs in the Circle of Official Religions in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Problem:** The religious teachings of ancestors, commonly referred to as "beliefs" in Indonesia, have existed since ancient times but face a dilemmatic position in the context of officially recognized religions. These local belief systems often encounter discrimination and marginalization, despite their coexistence with recognized religions. The tension between local beliefs and state-recognized religions highlights the ongoing challenges of religious tolerance and inclusivity in Indonesia.

**Research Purposes:** This study aims to examine the existence and recognition of local religions within the framework of Indonesia's official religious policies. It seeks to explore how local beliefs coexist with state-recognized religions and to understand the impact of legal recognition on reducing discrimination against adherents of these belief systems.

**Research Methods:** The research employs qualitative methods to analyze the historical, sociocultural, and legal dynamics affecting local religions in Indonesia. It draws from case studies, legal documentation, and interviews to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue.

**Results and Discussion:** The findings reveal that adherents of local religions often experience discrimination, stemming from their exclusion from official religious recognition. The Constitutional Court's decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 marked a significant turning point, granting legal acknowledgment to local belief systems and addressing some aspects of discrimination. Despite these advances, tensions remain, but official religions generally promote tolerance and foster coexistence among diverse communities.

**Research Implications and Contributions:** This study highlights the importance of fostering tolerance and inclusivity in multicultural societies. It contributes to understanding the challenges faced by local belief systems in Indonesia and underscores the need for policy and societal efforts to strengthen religious harmony. The findings also provide a foundation for further research on the interplay between legal recognition, religious diversity, and social cohesion.

**Keywords:** Local beliefs, religious tolerance, legal recognition, Indonesia, religious coexistence, Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, multicultural society, religious discrimination, social harmony.

### INTRODUCTION

Religion represents an individual's belief in God Almighty, formed through sincerity without coercion. Around the world, religions manifest in various forms, with distinct places and methods of worship. In Indonesia, faith in religion is mandatory for its people, with six recognized religions officially acknowledged by the state. Alongside these, traditional beliefs rooted in regional cultures have existed for centuries. Examples include *Marapu* on Sumba Island, *Permalim* in the Batak tribe, and *Sunda Winitan* in West Java. Before the arrival of the currently recognized religions, these traditional beliefs served as noble values and guidelines (Maiti & Bidinger, 1981). While religion is often seen as a medium of peace, it has also been the

source of conflicts, particularly due to disparities between majority and minority groups (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000).

Notable incidents in Indonesia include the Ahmadiyah tragedy in Cikeusuk, Banten; attacks on Shia residents in Sampang, Madura; and the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Aceh in 2015. These examples illustrate how discrimination and hostility often arise from differences in beliefs (Teguh, 2019). Increasing tolerance is crucial to addressing these challenges and acknowledging the existence of other religions and beliefs (Newman, 2019).

Indonesia is home to at least 187 local belief systems that predate the recognized religions (Kumparan, 2019). Several religious belief organizations are active in various regions, particularly in Java. For example, Central Java has 53 organizations (five inactive), East Java has 50 (seven inactive), and West Java has seven (two inactive) (Kurniawan, 2017). One such organization in West Java is the *Angkatan Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (AKP), founded by Mei Kartawinata in 1897. This teaching emphasizes knowing God deeply (Hamid, 2018).

Despite their rich history, the exact number of adherents to local beliefs remains unclear. The 2010 Population Census recorded 299,617 adherents (approximately 0.13% of the total population), though the Ministry of Education and Culture estimates the figure to be between 10–12 million (Kurniawan, 2017). Blasphemy cases against recognized religions and traditional beliefs are frequent, with 38 such cases reported between January and May 2020, predominantly in Sulawesi. Social media uploads have often been the root of accusations (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, YLBH, 2020).

Traditional beliefs have long existed alongside recognized religions. Efforts to align traditional beliefs with official religious frameworks in Indonesia continue (Maiti & Bidinger, 1981). Viri and Febriany (2020) concluded that adherents of traditional beliefs have faced discrimination across different periods. However, the Constitutional Court's Decision Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016 marked a significant milestone by recognizing traditional beliefs in identity documents (KTP). This decision granted adherents equal rights to practice and worship alongside followers of recognized religions.

Research on traditional beliefs highlights the richness and diversity of these systems. For instance, Miharja (2017) examined Bali's customs, culture, and religion, identifying two manifestations: articulation and disarticulation. These forms reflect efforts to preserve ancestral traditions. Similarly, Ulumudin (2016) studied the religious practices of the *Aboge Kejawen* school in East Java, which emphasize mysticism embedded in Javanese culture. However, existing research often lacks comprehensive comparisons between traditional beliefs and major religions. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the history, spread, and impact of traditional beliefs alongside recognized religions in Indonesia.

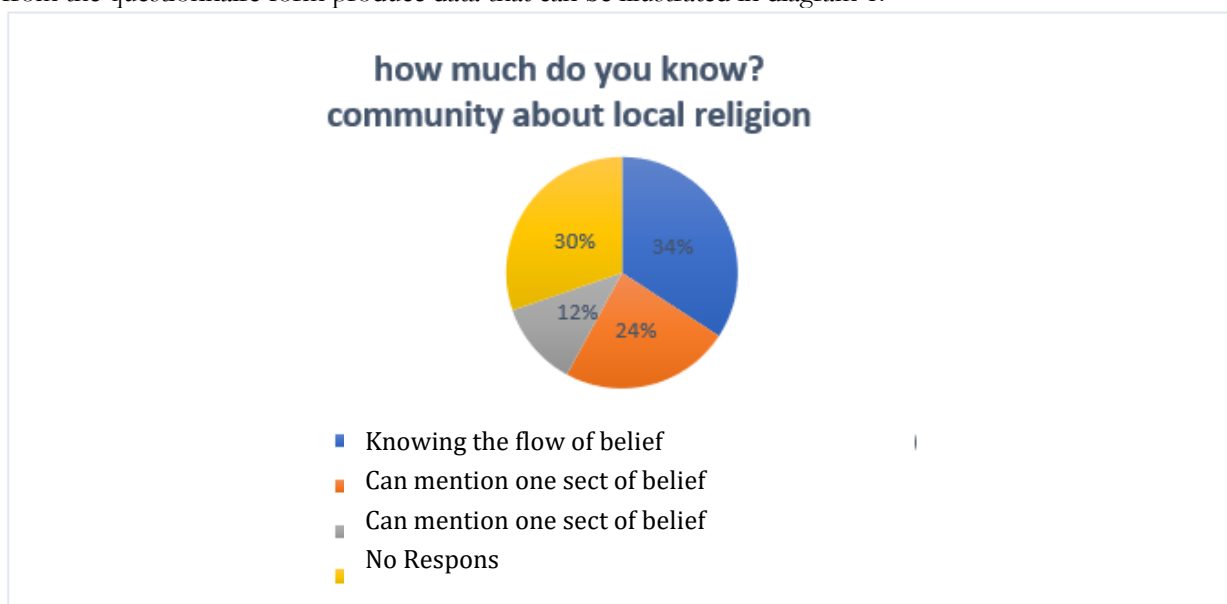
With Indonesia's diversity of tribes, cultures, and beliefs, a comprehensive understanding of these systems is essential. While many religions and beliefs are established to promote good, their differences often result in conflicts, particularly in a nation as culturally and geographically diverse as Indonesia. By fostering tolerance and understanding, the coexistence of diverse beliefs can contribute to greater harmony in Indonesian society.

Based on data from Khaitan (2021), there are two distinct types of religious adherents in Indonesia: first, individuals who practice recognized religious teachings while maintaining ancestral traditions, often influenced by local customs; and second, those who follow a recognized religion without incorporating ancestral teachings. This duality is shaped by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article XI, paragraphs 1 and 2, which guarantee freedom of religion and worship according to personal beliefs. Indonesia officially recognizes six religions, but there are at least 187 local beliefs and organizations, primarily on the island of Java. Examples include *Sunda Wewitan*, practiced by traditional Sundanese communities with

their sacred book *Kitab Sanghyang Siksakandang Karesian* and rituals such as prayers, dances, and hymns conducted in sacred places like *pamunjangan*. Another example is *Kejawen*, observed by Javanese communities, which emphasizes harmony, gratitude, and traditions such as *ruwatan* and *slametan*. On the island of Sumba, the *Marapu* belief focuses on ancestral spirits as intermediaries to God, with rituals such as *wulla poddu*, a holy month with specific prohibitions. This diversity of beliefs reflects the rich cultural fabric of Indonesia and the coexistence of official and traditional practices. This study seeks to analyze the relationship and coexistence between local religions and recognized religions, emphasizing their roles in Indonesian society. The research used a literature study of articles sourced from various official websites, along with a survey distributed via WhatsApp, targeting approximately 50 respondents. Of these, 26 individuals were aware of local religions, while one respondent was unfamiliar with them. Using qualitative methods to examine behavioral aspects of religion and beliefs, the study employed literary techniques and observations (Sugiyono, 2019), with historical data analyzed through the interactive analysis technique of Mile and Huberman (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted by Viri & Febriany (2020) shows how the graphs of the recognition of various parties with the existence of believers in beliefs in various regions and what are the things that make believers of faith experience discrimination? The ups and downs phase of acknowledgment of religious adherents began since the formation of the 1945 Constitution. Religious adherents have the same rights as adherents of other religions in carrying out their worship – experiencing a rapid decline when there is the compulsion to have an official religion. State-recognized official religion—it gradually improves when religious adherents have certainty of belief as stated in Article 28E of the 1945 Constitution and continue to experience ups and downs until the decision of the Constitutional Court. The decision of the Constitutional Court Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016. The survey results obtained from the questionnaire form produce data that can be illustrated in diagram 1.



**Diagram 1. comparison of how much people know about local religions**

From diagram 1 above, it can be said that many people know about the existence of adherents of beliefs in addition to major religions that are recognized. Still, not all of them can correctly name the adherents of these beliefs. Only about 12% know that there is a belief flow in their area of origin. The rest can be said not to respond or do not care about the flow of believers in belief. It can be concluded that the flow of believers still exists in society even though the percentage is small. It has often experienced "discrimination" from various parties in its history.

### **The existence of believers in Indonesia**

Diagram 1 shows that the existence of belief in Indonesia is well known but not with complete identity. Religious belief is an old religion or custom. Even some people have just heard or know about it with the existence of an official religion. Because the population is not so much that not many people know about these religious beliefs from one area to another. As Maiti & Bidinger (1981), in their research journal entitled 'a juridical review of belief related to article 29 paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution', religion and traditional beliefs have existed since ancient times. This flow of belief tries to be equated to religion in Indonesia. For example, a description of the distribution of one sect of belief is said by Rusdi Kurniawan (2018) It is said that religious beliefs in an area only exist in one area. Just a point, which may be not many people know. In addition, some attitudes are reflected by religious adherents, both Muslims and other major religions, and religious beliefs, as stated by warsah (2018), who said they showed several attitudes. Such as respecting each other as a form of tolerance between religious communities and instilling religious teachings to each of their descendants to always provide an attitude of tolerance between fellow religious people.

However, apart from the positive looks, as stated in the paragraph above, it is undeniable that local religions or beliefs often get discriminatory attitudes from the surrounding environment or adherents of other religions. The same thing was also quoted in a previous study by Sukirno (2018). Before the Constitutional Court's decision Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016, the fulfillment of civil rights for adherents of local religions or beliefs had not been fulfilled by the State. However, after issuing the Constitutional Court's decision, adherents of local religions were still discriminated against because the religion column was not accommodated on their resident identity cards or ID cards and their marriage certificates.

From the statements above, it can be said that religious belief has become a tradition that is always carried out from one generation to the next. However, there has been an erosion of the number of adherents as a result of the entry of the existing major religions that are embraced by today's society. The existence of adherents of religious beliefs will always exist and be recognized as the religion of their ancestors and always try to be equated with other major religions. However, it is not considered an official religion recognized by the State. Jackson (2021) that religion is about beliefs that cannot be separated from society and have been attached since the ancestors' time and have been passed down until now. As long as there is society, religion will still exist. Religion is about belief in a teaching that is given and is not easy to leave because it is born from the heart, not from mere desire. The same is said about a belief in the teachings of belief (Ahmed, 2014). Belief and mysticism are pantheism (God is everything); The basis of this concept is that the belief system's main education is the possibility of unification where this union is considered the pinnacle of the perfection of human life. With the diversity of religions and cultures in Indonesia, it is fitting for every citizen to continue cultivating an attitude of tolerance towards fellow religious communities and recognizing everyone who has different forms of belief, both official religions and adherent beliefs. For example, the inclusion of religious identity in identity cards, family cards, birth certificates, and others. Banks (2014) states that it is all the duty of the government, religious leaders, and academics, both individually and in groups, while citizens or society must respect and maintain this diversity.

### **The development of the believer**

Indonesia is a country with diverse cultures, customs, ethnicities, and religions. What is interesting to discuss is the existence of local Religion or ancestral Religion. Statements about the existence, status, and things experienced by local religions and their followers make it necessary to know its development. Although it is not widespread, Indonesian regions have various cultures and beliefs.

As explained above, Indonesia is a country with diversity, including local religion. The definition of local religion itself is original or indigenous religion which means religion that does not come from outside the adherents' ethnic group. This is why Indonesia has many local religions in Indonesia. Because Indonesia has various tribes in each region, differences in culture and beliefs cannot be avoided. The opinion expressed by a character named Sumantri Mertodipuro said that belief is a way to get happiness. The belief here is defined as the relationship between humans and God that is deep or hidden; then, what are the underlying causes for the emergence of these beliefs?. Hakiki (2011) stated that one of the causes of the emergence of the flow of belief is the "shock" caused by globalization. Cultural and

ideological exchanges that no longer have barriers to this condition will cause a shock if the transmitted things do not have cultural and social characteristics. Some individuals and even groups are trying to run away from these activities and return to the teachings or romance of the past. Lewisohn (1998) said the same opinion. According to him, the emergence of Sufism was caused by shock and mental stress.

The ups and downs of the presence of local religions or beliefs are true. Starting from being exiled being recognized until maybe there was a dimming of the belief due to more recognition for religions recognized by the State. Various ways are done to awaken or, in other words, revive these beliefs. Among them, as Wulandari (2020) quoted, there is a movement called the revivalism movement where the movement is one way to bring back the flow of belief, and the spread of belief is usually done through da'wah. With the existence of local beliefs now, the State has recognized the existence of adherents of belief, including religious identity in letters or residence cards. What are the opinions or responses of the community regarding adherents of beliefs? As stated by Budijanto (2016), there was one incident in 2008 in Bandung where there was a case of rejection of the funeral of an adherent. It is estimated that this is caused because the surrounding community does not understand the attitude of tolerance of religious differences, not much different. Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle (1997) says that children who are adherents of beliefs are often forced to follow certain religious lessons at school because, in order to make it easier in the administration of records, there is also social exclusion experienced by adherents of a belief, while the meaning of social exclusion is a process in which an individual or a group, either partially or wholly, is not involved or excluded of full participation in the communities in which they live. The exclusion experienced by religious minorities and adherents of beliefs causes them to lose their rights to participate and express opinions in community forums. Social services such as health services, education, loss of economic assets, sources of livelihood, the right to worship, and exclusion from community activities can occur. Scheopner (2010) stated that there are incidents where teachers who are religious adherents do not get a salary from the school or the State. There are also incidents where religious students still cannot go to class, even though various efforts have been made. With this kind of case, it is not impossible that in other areas, something similar happened, even though the incident was fairly old, but that does not mean that people should ignore it. The government has made steps so that adherents of religious beliefs have equality with the official religion. However, if awareness of religious tolerance is still, It's less like the things that have been tried will be a little in vain.

### **Between religion and custom**

Religion is a system that regulates the relationship between a servant and God Almighty and contains rules from God in the holy book. At the same time, the custom is an idea from culture, in which there are cultural values, habits, and customary laws that regulate humans from one another. Those who enforce the customary law have a sanction, and those that do not have sanctions are called habits. Customs is also considered a high code of conduct; it will be subject to heavy sanctions if anyone violates it. With this understanding, then what is the difference between religion and customs?. Some think that religion and customs are contradictory things in the community (Ma'arif, 2017). If religion is modern, orthodox, and deviant, the custom is considered contradictory. Still, it tends to consider religion as a religion-oriented toward traditional-contextual religion. As something that does not conflict with custom, as long as the customer does not oppose the oneness of God, then custom is considered an element that enriches diversity.

Differences in views regarding local religion and customs have become commonplace, considering that both are similar because they are inherited from their ancestors. Still, after understanding what religion and custom are. Customary law is strictly adhered to and carried out as a habit, and respected by the community (Isra & Tegan, 2021). This happened during the kingdom before the arrival of the VOC. During the kingdom, customary law was recognized and used in addition to government legislation. In addition to enforcing applicable customary law, Indonesia itself upholds the motto 'Bhineka Tunggal Ika.' Various cultures, races, religions, and customs create unity between traditional and religious systems where both embrace each other on differences. Just a small example found in Wekke's research (2013), the thing that shows the unity of the customary and religious system is very visible in Bugis Islam, a way of life for the Bugis people. This also reflects the traditional ethos that gives rise to a diverse identity that does not separate from the traditional expression passed down from generation to generation. Such diverse customs and widespread in various regions have become a distinct

wealth for the region. Although the world is always changing, it does not mean that customs are forgotten. Customs can go hand in hand, especially with religion, as long as there are no deviations. However, it does not eliminate the cultural and customary values of the community. On the contrary, it is used as a medium and tool for da'wah by inserting religious values.

Talking about religion and customs or culture with the official Religion and local Religion is closely related. These two things cannot be separated from one another because people create a culture intended to maintain their lives on this earth—one of the links between culture or customs with one of the official religions, namely Islam. Culture will be able to make humans able to carry out their duties as caliphs on earth (Hillenbrand, 1992). Religion and customs are two things that mutually support each other. One example of the existence of custom is also clear. As explained above, adat helps the spread of official religions in Indonesia according to the area of distribution. It is clear that custom and religion produce each other and have a good impact. Custom supports the spread of religion, and religion will later produce a new custom or culture.

### **The views of official religions regarding believers**

Living in differences has become common in ethnicity, customs, culture, language, ethnicity or race, and even religion. These differences should not be a barrier to living in harmony but instead become a wealth of its own in a certain area, especially in countries. Still, differences in religion often cause conflict because religion is considered a very sensitive thing. After all, it relates to belief in God and his teachings. Much history records conflicts between religions in the world and in Indonesia itself. Religious conflicts include religious conflicts in Poso, Central Sulawesi between Muslims and Christians, the Tanjungbadai conflict between Muslims and Buddhists, and the Sampang Madura conflict between followers of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah and Shia Islam. But as time goes by, people take lessons from some of these incidents so that they don't happen again. Conflict will only harm both parties. They were living in harmony even though differences are certainly a very ideal for achieving in social life. Syaripulloh (2014) states that achieving a good social life is not based on common beliefs but rather on common views and national goals. Perhaps the major religions can easily engage in dialogue about this. However, how do the major religions view the existence of believers who are still very much attached to the teachings of their ancestors and minorities?.

Buddhism is easy to acculturate with local traditions, easy to unite, and does not force but deepens each other's teachings (Ama, 2011). The Buddha's sutta Kalama invites people to think critically by choosing what is right and avoiding evil regardless of where they come from and their beliefs., Christianity, which considers culture to be contrary to the Bible, is something that must be abandoned because Christians believe Jesus Christ highly values the Bible as the word of God. Jesus opposes those who prioritize artificial traditions. There are extreme opinions that think culture comes from Satan, but on the other hand, many Christians think culture That service must be followed and maintained. They assume that culture also comes from God so that culture can be aligned with God's Word. John Chambers said that not all cultures are contrary to God's Word. Many good things are in line and need to be maintained as a character and identity of a particular nation even though they have become Christians. There are at least three attitudes of Christians towards customs or beliefs from this expression (Bukit, 2019). They are namely, Accepting customs that do not conflict with the Bible, Accepting customs with a choice so that they no longer conflict with Bible teachings. And, Reject habits that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Bible. But that doesn't mean you have to avoid having its adherents explore each other's beliefs and foster an attitude of tolerance that can't be bargained for. Therefore, Christianity must also see humans as complete social beings and unite with people who have different beliefs or cultures.

Hindus believe in three balances, including the balance between humans and God (parahyangan) and the balance between humans themselves (pawongan) (Arifin, 2019). And the balance between humans and nature (palemahan) the three are called Tri hita karana, if one of them is damaged, it will have an impact on life that will not go well. With this understanding, Hindus will not make things that can damage beliefs; they also believe that the three cannot stand alone, so harmony is needed in carrying out this understanding. The view of Confucians towards adherents of different beliefs or beliefs is that there is a sense of brotherhood between humans, which is not only limited to a nation. However, in all living things, some teachings are believed by Confucians, namely from the Prophet Kongzi, which

prioritizes harmony as stated by Js. If you want to be upright and progress yourself, then help others stand up and move forward. Here, it is implied that harmony can be used as the key to progress (Teece, 1992).

And finally, there are Muslims as the religion with the largest number of adherents in Indonesia, which is known as a religion tolerant of other beliefs, including believers. However, a portrait of Islam's view of the belief system in ancient times is quite hotly discussed. Hefner (1997) argues and agrees that there is a prohibition on embracing a sect of belief because the PKI party was afraid to run rampant. Then he also forbids marriage using a special method used by adherents of belief, nor do they accept that belief is placed under the Ministry of Religion because there is no recognition that it is included in the category of religion. He also said there was a special view of the scholars for the flow of belief. Namely, the form of belief is not perfect or primitive. It needs guidance and guidance to achieve a mature faith. In 1978, Nahdatul Ulama (NU) requested that adherents of a belief return to their respective religions before entering the sect of belief. The existence of this opinion cannot be separated from the understanding of Muslims that God is one, and for believers who multiply, Allah will get the greatest sin, namely the sin of shirk. But that does not mean that Muslims are intolerant of other beliefs that are written in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which means:

"O humanity, indeed We created you from a male and a female and made you nations. and tribes so that you may know each other"

. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious among you. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." From the verse, it can be said that God has created humans with all their differences. Humans cannot refuse it because it has become God's will. The task of humans is to respect each other because they are both creatures of God's creation. Do it by acknowledging other teachings or beliefs with all forms of teachings and ways of worship. Indeed, all religions teach goodness and how to deal with differences (Syarif, 2021). However, differences are one of God's will created. Suppose individuals or groups have not understood which things are allowed and not allowed to be mixed up in a religion and are still debating about differences in beliefs. In that case, it is most likely there is something wrong with his understanding because it is clear that all religions have attitudes about these differences.

## CONCLUSION

Local religions or beliefs in Indonesia have gone through periods where these people feel discriminated against. At that time, there was no recognition from the State besides establishing the six official religions. However, at this time, this belief system has received recognition from the State, and its adherents have received their religious identity written on their identity cards (KTP). Indonesia has a lot of diversity, including its Religion, Six religions are officially recognized, but it is undeniable that many sects of belief spread throughout Indonesia. There are at least 187 local beliefs where each belief has its way of worship and scriptures. -each to support their worship activities. However, as discussed above, the discrimination experienced by sects of belief began with the 1945 constitution regarding the position that equalizes beliefs with official religions. Still, there was pressure to encourage adherents of these beliefs to adhere to religious beliefs. It is also one of the official religions in existence. Regarding the existence of the belief system itself, it is known, perhaps covertly, but not in-depth (specifically). Nevertheless, belief systems that are spread throughout Indonesia will still exist because they are all inherited from their ancestors. One of the factors in developing this belief system is the diversity of tribes in various regions in Indonesia. This gives us to think about new sects that we must guard and understand to avoid the life of the nation and State.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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