



Negotiating Islamic Moderation: The Interplay of Sharia and Local Culture in Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten

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ABSTRACT

Muslim scholars and local communities have actively negotiated the Islamization process in Indonesia through complex engagements with Islamic law (*sharia*) and local cultural traditions. This study examines how such interactions have shaped distinct constructions of Islamic moderation in three culturally significant regions: Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten. Employing a qualitative, field-based approach, the research utilizes in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to explore the integration of *sharia* and *adat* (customary law). The findings reveal three typological models of Islamic moderation: (1) an integrative model in Gorontalo, where royal diplomacy and political marriage internalized Islamic law within the framework of customary governance; (2) a negotiation model in Minangkabau, emerging from post-conflict reconciliation between *ulama* and customary leaders, institutionalized through the philosophy of *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*; and (3) a hegemonic model in Banten, characterized by the dominance of Islamic law over local traditions, embedded within the centralized religious authority and state power. These findings suggest that Islamic moderation in Indonesia is not a singular concept but the product of historically and contextually embedded legal-cultural dynamics. The study concludes that Islamic moderation is a localized negotiation among legal norms, cultural practices, and power structures. Its academic contribution advances the understanding of legal pluralism in Muslim societies while offering policy-relevant insights for promoting religious tolerance and cultural inclusivity in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The discourse on the dialectical relationship between Islam and local culture in Indonesia has long been a central focus in interdisciplinary scholarship, encompassing legal anthropology, Islamic studies, and the sociology of religion (Al-Abyadh et al., 2023). As the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia presents a complex social landscape. Islamic law is not merely normative but continuously negotiated through diverse configurations of local cultures (Mutawali, 2021). This phenomenon indicates that Islam in Indonesia manifests in a plurality of forms shaped by ongoing historical interactions between religion, culture, and power dynamics.

The contribution of Talal Asad in Siddiqui (2022), particularly his conceptualization of Islam as a *discursive tradition* inherently shaped by power relations, historical trajectories, and local practices, offers an analytically robust framework for understanding this context. Thus, Islam is conceived as an entity constantly being reconstructed within dynamic social spaces, as exemplified by the interactions between *sharia* and *adat* (customary law) across various Indonesian communities. Similarly, Clifford Geertz's comparative study of Islam in Indonesia and Morocco underscores that religious expression is inseparable from the cultural structures in which it is embedded. Geertz distinguishes between *scripturalist Islam* and *cultural Islam*, illustrating how local variations significantly shape the interpretation and internalization of religious values (Tajdin, 2022).

Adopting this perspective, the present study explores how local customary systems accommodate, negotiate, or resist Islamic values within three distinct cultural contexts. The analytical framework of *legal pluralism*, popularized by Bowen (2003), further enriches this inquiry. Yilmaz & Sokolova-Shipoli (2024) observes that Muslim societies often operate within overlapping legal systems, state, Islamic, and customary law. In the Indonesian context, preliminary findings reveal that the three research sites, Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten, offer unique manifestations of these complex interactions.

Taufik Abdullah's in Bakry & Gunawan (2018) said, typology of Islamic dissemination in the archipelago into three major patterns: (1) Pasai, (2) Malacca, Pattani, Gowa-Tallo, and Ternate, and (3) Java-Banten, which serves as a crucial historical backdrop for understanding such variations. This research comparatively analyzes how Islam interacts with local cultures in three regions that represent these typologies: Minangkabau (Sumatra), Gorontalo (Sulawesi), and Banten (Java). Previous studies have demonstrated that Islamic-local cultural interactions in these regions have resulted in distinct religious practices. In Gorontalo, for instance, local Islamic mysticism has evolved through processes of cultural acculturation (Pakuna et al., 2020). In Minangkabau, the interaction between *adat* and *sharia* has produced a unique social system where Islamic values coexist with matrilineal traditions (Sefriyono et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, in Banten, *debuss*, and *Maulid* celebrations reflect the integration of Islamic teachings and local cultural expressions (Hermanto et al., 2021). These cases show that Indonesia constructs its model of Islamic moderation through ongoing interaction with its diverse local cultures. Earlier studies have offered valuable insights into Islamic-local cultural interactions within individual regions. However, there remains a relative lack of comparative research that simultaneously examines such dynamics across Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten. This study aims to fill that gap by conducting an in-depth comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in the negotiation processes between *Sharia* and local cultures across these three regions. By doing so,

the study seeks to contribute a new and more comprehensive perspective on how Islamic moderation is locally constructed within Indonesia's rich cultural diversity. The selection of research sites, based on representations of Van Vollenhoven's 19 customary law territories (Kasra, 2016; Tungkagi, 2017), further reinforces the comparative relevance of this study for understanding Islamic variation across the Indonesian archipelago (Fahmi, 2025; Sumarsam et al., 2022).

By adopting the paradigm of *Islam Nusantara*, Indonesian Muslim thinkers actively shape a version of Islamic moderation rooted in local values and cultural diversity, resulting in a more tolerant and inclusive Islam. (Azra, 2002; Maimun & Kosim, 2019). This study understands *Islamic moderation* in Indonesia as a dynamic construct, emerging from dialectical processes between Islamic teachings and the country's rich cultural diversity due to *local constructions* shaped through ongoing dialectical engagements between Islamic norms and local cultural practices. Indonesian Muslim communities actively negotiate these norms within their diverse socio-historical contexts, producing multiple expressions of moderation. Accordingly, Scholars should approach Islamic moderation not as a monolithic doctrine but as a multivariate phenomenon arising from the rich pluralism embedded within Indonesia's Muslim society.

The central question guides this research: How does the interaction between Islamic law (*sharia*) and local cultural systems contribute to the construction of distinctive models of Islamic moderation across different regions of Indonesia? The fundamental assumption underpinning this inquiry is that Islamic moderation is neither uniform nor universal; it is the outcome of negotiations shaped by legal traditions, socio-political histories, and the cultural agency of each locality. By comparing the cases of Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten, this study proposes a typological framework of Islamic moderation consisting of integrative, negotiating, and hegemonic models.

This research contributes to scholarly discourse by integrating legal-historical analysis with cultural anthropological approaches, offering a deeper understanding of how *sharia* and *adat* dynamically interact in shaping Islamic identity and practices among postcolonial Muslim societies.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach through fieldwork conducted in three regions of Indonesia: Gorontalo, Minangkabau (West Sumatra), and Banten (West Java). This study selected these regions because they represent Van Vollenhoven's classification of customary law areas and exhibit distinctive patterns of Islamization, as outlined in Taufik Abdullah's typology.

Data collection employed a combination of methods: (1) In-depth interviews with key religious figures (such as *ulama* and *kadhi*), customary leaders (*ninik mamak*, *baate*, and *javara*), academics, and local government officials; (2) Participant observation of customary and religious ceremonies including wedding rituals, *maulid* celebrations, and leadership inaugurations; (3) Document analysis, including historical manuscripts, colonial archives, local philosophical texts, and legal documents. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of key informants with deep knowledge of Islamic practices and customary institutions in their respective regions. Seventeen interviews were conducted across the three sites between May and August 2023.

Data analysis followed a thematic coding process to identify patterns of interaction between Islamic legal principles and customary norms. A legal-anthropological framework reinforced this

approach to interpreting how Islamic law is adapted to or resisted within local legal traditions. The study then conducted a comparative analysis to map the similarities and differences among the regions in constructing models of Islamic moderation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal three ideal-typical models of interaction between Islam and local culture: an integrative model in Gorontalo, a negotiation model in Minangkabau, and a hegemonic model in Banten. These three models illustrate that Muslim religiosity in Indonesia is not monolithic; instead, it results from socially and culturally contextualized constructions.

Gorontalo: Integrative Islam through Customary Diplomacy

The Islamization process in Gorontalo represents a distinctive model of religious acculturation, characterized by integrating Islamic principles into local customs through royal diplomacy and strategic marriage alliances (Amin, 2012). Unlike other regions where Islam spread primarily through missionary activities (*dakwah*), in Gorontalo, Islam became embedded within socio-cultural structures through elite-level negotiations. A foundational event in this transformation was the marriage between King Amai and Princess Owutango of the Tomini Kingdom in 1525 (Amin, 2012; Hasanuddin & Amin, 2015; Polontalo, 2003).

Historical accounts reveal that Princess Owutango, a devout Muslim influenced by scholars from the Sultanate of Ternate, stipulated two conditions for the marriage: that the king and his people convert to Islam and that Gorontalo's customary law be aligned with the teachings of the Qur'an (de Archellie et al., 2020). King Amai accepted both conditions, formally establishing Islam as the spiritual and legal foundation of Gorontalo society. This marriage symbolized the unification of royal authority and religious legitimacy and marked a critical moment in the internalization of Islam into Gorontalo's cultural system (Amin, 2012).

Local communities institutionalized this integration through the philosophical maxim:

“adati hula-bulaa to saraa, saraa hula-bulaa to Kur'ani: 'adati hula-bulaa to saraa, saraa hula-bulaa to Kur'ani'”

“Which articulates a hierarchical relationship where the custom is grounded in sharia, and sharia, in turn, is grounded in the Qur'an.” (Interview, Ali Mobiliu, cultural expert, Gorontalo, July 2023)

This philosophy continues to guide various social and ritual practices, including marriage ceremonies, funerals, *maulid* celebrations, the conferral of traditional titles, and customary deliberations. It reflects a deep fusion between religious and cultural values, giving rise to a tradition-based, harmonious, and stable expression of Islamic moderation (de Archellie et al., 2020).

This ethical wisdom has shaped the Gorontalo people's cultural ethos since King Amai's reign (1523–1550). The concept has undergone three major revisions: it initially appeared as *saraa topa-topango to adati* (sharia is based on custom), later evolved into *saraa topa-topango to adati, adati topa-topango saraa* (sharia based on custom, and custom based on sharia), and finally, during the reign of King Eyato (1673–1679), reached its current formulation: *adati hula-bulaa to saraa, saraa hula-bulaa*

to *Kur'ani* (Kau, 2019, 2020). This enduring principle remains distinctive in expressing and implementing Islamic values in Gorontalo.

According to Latif et al. (2023), the standard translation of this philosophical phrase “*Adat bersendi Syara', Syara' bersendi Kitabullah*”, fails to capture its original meaning fully. He argues that *hula-hula'a* does not mean “based upon” (*bersendi*), but instead conveys the sense of “resting upon” or “anchored to something stable,” implying foundational stability and resilience.

These values have become a vital source of moral guidance for the everyday lives of Gorontalo society. Alim Niode, a scholar and cultural observer of Gorontalo, emphasizes that the customary philosophical principle reflects localized values shaped by both internal dynamics and external influences. These interactions have produced a mosaic of cultural forms, necessitating strategic efforts to rediscover and realign the harmony between *adat* and religion through cultural reconstruction (interview, July 2023).

From a legal perspective, the integration of *sharia* and *adat* in Gorontalo can be interpreted through Van den Berg's Receptie theory (Rifqi, 2021). Benda-Beckmann & Turner (2018) further suggests that hybrid legal systems are characteristic of plural societies, where Islamic and customary laws do not conflict but instead reinforce one another. It has created a stable, legally pluralistic space deeply rooted in the social norms of Gorontalo. To this day, this integrative legal heritage persists, albeit not always formalized within state structures. The presence of religious and customary figures in village decision-making processes and the preference for consensus-based dispute resolution exemplify a living form of legal pluralism.

Buatulo Toulongo: The Institutional Manifestation of Gorontalo's Customary Philosophy

A key manifestation of Gorontalo's customary philosophy is the traditional governance structure known as *Buatulo Toulongo*, which consists of three interrelated authorities: (1) *Buatulo Burato/Bobato*, the governmental institution; (2) *Buatulo Syara'*, the religious authority led by a *Mufti* or *Kadhi*; and (3) *Buatulo Bate*, the customary council headed by the chief of *adat*. This tripartite structure reflects the philosophical integration of governance (*adat*), religion (*syara'*), and state, forming a cohesive socio-political order rooted in the local maxim “*Adati hula-hulaa to saraa, saraa hula-hulaa to Kur'ani*” custom grounded upon *sharia*, and *sharia* grounded upon the *Qur'an*.

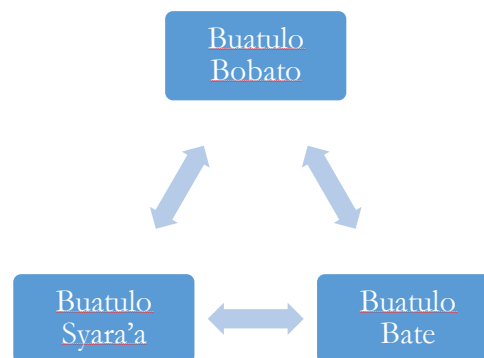


Figure 1. The Leadership Structure in Gorontalo

Source: Analysis (2024)

The three pillars of *Buatulo Toulongo* operate synergistically to safeguard religious orthodoxy and cultural continuity. Although this system is no longer formally embedded within the modern

legal framework, it continues to thrive in ceremonial life and functions informally as a consultative body in local governance. Key informants emphasized that Gorontalo's political decisions still often involve religious and customary authorities, reflecting the enduring influence of the *Buatulo Toulongo* model.

To date, *Buatulo Toulongo* remains a fluid form of customary governance. With the adoption of modern state governance systems as the official basis of administration, *Buatulo Toulongo* is no longer explicitly regulated by formal legal instruments. Nevertheless, Alim Niode critiques its current role as being largely ceremonial. Fieldwork findings, however, indicate that the *Buatulo Toulongo* system is still vibrantly present in the ritual and religious life of Gorontalo society. While its presence is most visible in ceremonial events such as the inaugurations of governors, mayors, regents, subdistrict heads, and other local officials (Interview with municipal official, M.L., May 25, 2023) it is also deeply embedded in religious rituals such as *Tonggeyamo* (the announcement of Ramadan), *Meraji*, *Dikili*, and major Islamic holidays (Interview with *Buatulo Syara'*, R.D., May 2023), as well as traditional rituals including weddings, communal celebrations, and funerary rites (Interview, Ali Mobiliu, cultural expert, Gorontalo, July 2023).

The role of *Buatulo Toulongo* is also evident in important governmental decision-making processes in Gorontalo Province. According to KH A.R. Kamaru, *Kadli* of Gorontalo City,

“A political leader's decision is never made independently. He must consult the *Kadli* as the religious authority and seek counsel from senior customary figures.” (Interview, A.R. Kamaru, *Kadli* of Gorontalo City, Gorontalo, April 2023)

There are notable variations in how *Buatulo Toulongo* is perceived and practiced across districts and cities within Gorontalo Province. Distinct territorial histories shape these differences. For instance, Gorontalo City, as the former seat of the Gorontalo Kingdom, differs in its customary structures from Gorontalo Regency (associated with the Kingdom of Limutu) and Bone Bolango Regency (historically linked to the Suwawa Kingdom). In Gorontalo City, the customary council is called *Dulobupa*, and the *local government appoints the Kadli (religious judge)*, a practice also found in Bone Bolango.

Despite these differences, A.R. Kamaru affirms that the positions of *Kadli* and *Baate* in the Gorontalo context are unique and egalitarian,

“When seated with a president, they are equal; when seated with a village head, they are still equal.” (Interview, A.R. Kamaru, April 2023)

In the Gorontalo Kingdom, the *Kadli* of the state was regarded as *Olongia Bua* (a symbolic “female king”). Interestingly, in the royal mosque, the *Kadli* was not stationed; instead, the *Hatibida'a* (chief Khatib) presided over religious functions. Formally, the king oversaw three governmental branches:

1. *Utas Bantayo* (legislative),
2. *Utas Bubato* (bureaucracy), and
3. *Utas Syara'* (religious affairs).

In contrast, within the Kingdom of Limboto, the *Utas Bantayo* (legislative branch) stood above the king and was not under royal authority. The *Kadli's* advisor was the *Mufti*, and under the *Kadli* served the *Imams*, followed by the *Syaraada'a* (senior religious-customary officers). The *Syaraada'a* held a hybrid role at the intersection of religious and customary domains. Their responsibilities included organizing religious ceremonies, acting as prosecutors in Islamic courts, enforcing religious discipline (such as punishing those who played in the mosque or broke the Ramadan fast), and assisting the *Molowabu* (high-ranking official) in religious adjudications handled by the *Bantayo Poboide* (deliberative council) (Kadir et al., 2024).

Minangkabau: Negotiated Islam and Post-Conflict Synthesis

The Minangkabau region offers a unique model of Islamic moderation rooted in the reconciliation between religious orthodoxy and matrilineal customary traditions. The encounter between Islam and tradition in Minangkabau was not always smooth. Historically, two major groups emerged within society: the *kaum adat* (customary faction), which sought to preserve ancestral traditions, and a reformist group composed of *ulama*, intellectuals, and youth aiming for change (Kemal, 2009). Tensions between these groups often escalated into conflict, most notably the *Padri War*, which began in the 1780s and culminated in the victory of the Padri faction by 1815 (Ricklefs, 1992).

In contrast to the integrative process seen in Gorontalo, the encounter between *sharia* and *adat* in Minangkabau was shaped through ideological confrontation, civil war, and eventual synthesis. A key turning point in this evolution was the *Treaty of Marapalam* (1830), which ended the prolonged Padri War between reformist *ulama* and traditional *adat* leaders (Lukito, 2008). Taufik Abdullah noted that the conflict between religious and customary groups in Minangkabau has been a recurrent phenomenon. He observed that socioreligious movements such as Wahhabism emerged as responses to the disjunction between Islamic ideals and local social realities, although their impact remained limited (Abdullah, 1966). In contrast, Hamka interpreted the Padri War as a form of resistance by *ulama* against Dutch colonialism, highlighting the layered complexity of the conflict (Hamka, 1984).

Before the Marapalam accord, Minangkabau's customary law was based on communal consensus emphasizing moral reasoning about good and evil. The treaty affirmed the importance of harmony between *adat* and *sharia*, which became a foundational consensus within Minangkabau society. Ramayulis said this philosophy resulted from a peace agreement between *adat* leaders and the Padri *ulama* after prolonged conflict (Ramayulis, n.d.). Although the term "treaty" (*traktat*) is conventionally reserved for international agreements, it signifies a pivotal historical consensus in this context.

The socioreligious transformation sparked by the Padri War profoundly reshaped Minangkabau society (Kemal, 2009). Its legacy was the formulation of a renowned legal-philosophical maxim: "*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*" (custom is founded upon *sharia*, and *sharia* is founded upon the Qur'an), hereafter referred to as ABSSBK. This principle serves as the doctrinal foundation of Minangkabau society, reflecting a negotiated synthesis rather than unilateral religious dominance (Putri, 2023). It allows Islamic values to shape local practices while preserving the region's distinctive matrilineal kinship and communal governance structures.

In the contemporary context, the ABSSBK principle is embedded in everyday social life and institutionalized within local governance. Across various *nagari* (traditional villages) in West Sumatra, customary structures are formally integrated into village administration through the *Kerapatan Adat Nagari* (KAN). Public decision-making is conducted through *musyawarah* (deliberative forums) involving religious and customary representatives (Faisal, 2021). Peraturan Nagari (village regulations) have been enacted in several areas to reflect ABSSBK values, particularly in customary marriage practices, natural resource management, and cultural preservation (Tovalini & Hanoselina, 2022).

A concrete example is the *Peraturan Nagari* of Agam and Tanah Datar Regencies, which require that customary marriage ceremonies be jointly officiated by clan leaders (*penghulu suku*) and religious figures. It demonstrates that ABSSBK functions as a normative discourse and a micro-local legal framework regulating everyday social life. Thus, ABSSBK holds both functional and symbolic significance that continues to evolve in response to modern societal dynamics.

One informant, Welhendri Azwar, a scholar and *datu* (clan elder), remarked:

“In Minangkabau, every major decision such as appointing a *penghulu*, dividing ancestral property, or resolving family disputes, requires consultation. Religion and adat must be unified; they cannot be separated. Decisions relying solely on religious law might contradict customary rules, and vice versa.” (Interview, Welhendri Azwar, a scholar and *datu* (clan elder), Minangkabau, May 2023)

The Minangkabau case illustrates a negotiating model of Islamic moderation, where conflict culminates in a consensual and enduring synthesis. Unlike Gorontalo’s top-down integration, Minangkabau’s model emerged from the grassroots, through confrontation, compromise, and the redefinition of both *sharia* and *adat*. Theoretically, the Minangkabau model resonates with Van den Berg’s Receptie in Complex theory, which posits that Islamic law is accepted as an integral part of Muslim legal life but does not wholly replace customary law. In this context, Islam is not simply imposed as a moral doctrine but is absorbed into the existing social fabric, producing a hybrid legal system that is adaptive and context-sensitive. This approach aligns closely with contemporary theories of legal pluralism in legal anthropology (Benda-Beckmann & Turner, 2019).

Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan: Tripartite Leadership in Minangkabau Customary Society

The post-*Padri War* negotiation process in Minangkabau was not merely symbolic; it also involved a structural reorganization of social authority through the institutionalization of the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* (literally, “Three Hearthstones in Harmony”). This tripartite leadership model consists of (1) *Ninik Mamak*, customary leaders responsible for *adat* affairs; (2) *Alim Ulama*, religious scholars who provide spiritual and legal guidance; and (3) *Cerdik Pandai*, intellectuals who mediate deliberation and facilitate socio-cultural adaptation.

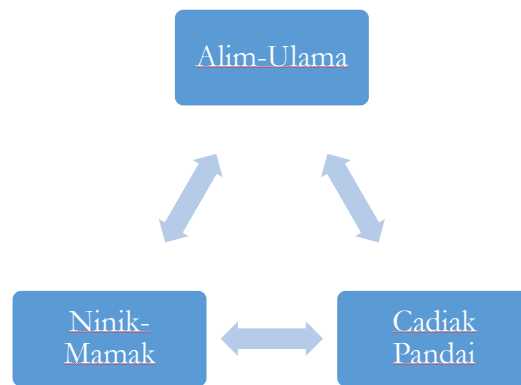


Figure 2. The Three Pillars of Leadership in Minangkabau

Source: Analysis (2024)

This tripartite structure institutionalizes the division and collaboration of power, ensuring a synergistic balance between religious interpretation, customary enforcement, and communal deliberation. Interviews with cultural and religious actors reveal that this leadership model remains actively involved in resolving key issues such as inheritance, marriage, land rights, and dispute settlement.

Field interviews highlight that the *musyawarah* (deliberative process) involving the Tungku Nan Tigo is critical in maintaining equilibrium between Islamic *sharia* and matrilineal kinship principles. Informants emphasized that major decisions such as the division of matrilineal inheritance, disputes over communal land, and the selection of new *penghulu* (clan leaders) are always made through consensus that proportionally incorporates religious and customary elements. It demonstrates that the ABSSBK principle is not merely a historical artifact but a living social contract (Interview, Firdaus, May 2023).

The dynamic interaction among the three elements is well captured in a Minangkabau proverb: “Everything is examined by the intellectuals (*cerdik pandai*), then ruled upon by the religious scholars (*ulama*) according to Islamic law, and finally implemented by the customary leaders (*ninik mamak*) together with their kin.” This aphorism underscores the strength of Minangkabau society as rooted in collaboration and mutual understanding between these three authoritative spheres (Interview, Andri Ashadi & Sefriyono, May 2023).

The principle of ABSSBK encapsulates the harmonization of Islam and *adat* within Minangkabau society (Sefriyono et al., 2024). It affirms that custom must be grounded in Islamic law rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The extended version of this maxim, “Sarak mandaki, adat manurun” (Islam ascends from the coast, custom descends from the highlands), reflects the historical fact that Islam entered Minangkabau through coastal regions and gradually interacted with the established highland *adat* (Keddie, 1987). It illustrates the complex dynamics between two coexisting forces religion and custom each shaping the social identity of the Minangkabau people (Aziz et al., 2020).

The Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan leadership model reflects the integrative collaboration of *ninik mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cerdik pandai*. Through this structure, Minangkabau society has successfully cultivated harmony between tradition and Islamic values, which is the foundation of their social and cultural life.

Given the continued vitality of the ABSSBK principle manifest in *nagari* regulations and the active involvement of customary, religious, and intellectual institutions in governance it may be concluded that the Minangkabau model of Islamic moderation is institutionalized and dialogical. It was forged through conflict, sustained through structural compromise, and renewed through social deliberation.

Banten: Hegemonic Islam and the Marginalization of Tradition

The case of Banten illustrates a hegemonic model of Islamic moderation, in which Islamic legal authority dominates local traditions, resulting in the marginalization of pre-Islamic cultural practices. Unlike the integrative model in Gorontalo or the negotiative model in Minangkabau, Islamization in Banten was shaped by a decisive religio-political agenda led by the Banten Sultanate, particularly under the reigns of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin and Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa in the 17th century.

The hegemonic model developed in Banten featured the dominance of normative Islamic interpretations institutionalized within political and social power structures. From the era of the Banten Sultanate, Islamic law was established as the foundation of governance and was implemented strictly. According to Ricklefs, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa deployed Islamic law as a tool for social control and the consolidation of state authority (Ricklefs, 2006). In the broader historical context of Islam in Indonesia, Azyumardi Azra notes that Banten emerged as one of the earliest centers of Islamization, absorbing Middle Eastern influences while cultivating a robust local *ulama* network that maintained influence into the modern period (Azra, 2004).

Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, son of Sunan Gunung Jati, played a central role in the Islamization of Banten. His coronation by the Sultan of Demak and his marriage to the Sultan's sister marked the formation of a new Islamic dynasty based in Banten. During this period, the Muslim community emerged as a new socio-political elite, displacing the pre-Islamic power structures (Noor, 2014). Under Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (1651–1683), Banten experienced a political and economic resurgence. Its port became a central hub of international trade, while Islamization intensified through figures such as Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar, who significantly advanced religious knowledge and practice in Banten (Kholid, 2017).

The implementation of *sharia* in 17th-century Banten, particularly under Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, reflected efforts to codify Islamic law across public and private life. Dutch East India Company (VOC) records describe the enforcement of *budud* punishments for crimes such as theft, murder, and the consumption of alcohol and opium. However, these records offer little detail regarding enforcing *jinayat* provisions, such as adultery (Saepudin & Irfani, 2022). According to Schrieke, *sharia* significantly influenced Banten's legal culture during this period. Harsh punishments were meted out to opium and tobacco users. A VOC report dated December 1, 1671, noted that Sultan Ageng was determined to eradicate opium addiction by imposing corporal punishment, including hand amputation (Talens, 1999).

The application of Islamic law in Banten followed the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence, particularly in its enforcement of *budud* penalties such as hand amputation. However, enforcement fluctuated between 1682 and 1750 after Sultan Ageng's rule fell. These fluctuations may reflect shifts in royal policy toward replacing physical punishments with monetary fines. Beyond corporal

penalties, Sultan Ageng also employed forced labor as punishment, especially for moral violations involving intoxicants. In 1661, authorities ordered drug offenders to collect stones from islands in the Sunda Strait to support the construction of coastal fortresses. By the late 1660s, they had been conscripted as servants aboard royal warships. In 1671, thousands were deployed to construct the Sultan's Canal system, a network of waterways linking Tirtayasa with Tanara, Bendung, and Pontang (Talens, 1999). This shift from amputation to fines can be interpreted through the lens of political, economic, and military pragmatism. Fines generated state revenue, whereas execution or maiming reduced the available labor force. The canal construction effort also reflected Sultan Ageng's ambitions to intensify agriculture and strengthen the Sultanate's economy.

Historical sources, including VOC archives, document the codification and enforcement of *hudud* in Banten with a degree of rigidity rarely seen elsewhere in the archipelago. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa institutionalized a legal and moral code based on *sharia* as the core of state governance, allowing minimal accommodation of local *adat* norms (Talens, 1999).

The Sultanate's refusal to engage in long-term peace treaties with non-Muslim entities (such as the VOC) also reflected its ideological commitment to Islamic exclusivism in both legal and diplomatic affairs. Local reports suggest that authorities often sentenced moral offenders to forced labor in state projects as an alternative to capital punishment. This practice illustrates how Islamic law is pragmatically applied to serve the Sultanate's political and economic interests.

This hegemonic model is best understood through the lens of the Receptie a Contrario theory, which posits that *adat* is only valid if it does not contradict *sharia*. In the Banten context, the enforcement of Islamic law served as a tool of cultural displacement, sidelining indigenous traditions, such as those practiced by the Baduy people, from mainstream religious and administrative identity. Rather than negotiating with existing customary systems, Islam in Banten functioned as a mechanism of ideological purification and legal standardization.

The Banten case thus reveals how the formalization of *sharia* can serve religious, political, and economic ends while also narrowing the space for local cultural expression. It raises important questions about the inclusivity of Islamic moderation when viewed through the lens of cultural pluralism.

The Tripartite Leadership Structure in Banten: Ulama, Umaro, and Jawara

Unlike *Bnatulo Toulongo* in Gorontalo or *Tungku Nan Tigo* in Minangkabau, Banten's leadership structure evolved into a distinctive tripartite power configuration composed of: (1) Ulama, who are responsible for religious education and jurisprudence (2) Umaro (government elites), who hold political and administrative authority; and (3) Jawara, powerful local actors engaged in cultural control and grassroots mobilization.

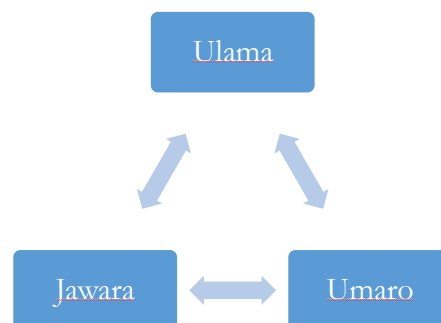


Figure 3. The Three Pillars of Leadership in Banten

Source: (Pribadi, 2013)

This triadic structure has historically functioned as an interdependent system. The *ulama* (e.g., figures such as Fakhri Najamudin) have served as the moral authorities of society. The *umaro*, represented by sultans and governmental officials, held the reins of political decision-making and economic resource management. Historically, *umaro* often collaborated with *ulama* to strengthen the legitimacy of their rule. Meanwhile, the *jawara* figures influential in the domains of local *adat*, art, and cultural traditions often acted as community protectors and wielded significant influence at the grassroots level. In the era of regional autonomy, *jawara* have increasingly gained stronger positions within the local power structure, leveraging this status for political and economic benefit (Interview, Aba Yadi Ahyadi, cultural expert, July 2023).

Today, these three pillars operate within distinct institutional realms: *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), *umaro* in bureaucratic administration, and *jawara* in the informal and economic sectors. The interplay among them often forms what is described as Banten's "cultural-political power triangle", a unique configuration through which political elites capitalize on religious and cultural networks to secure electoral success (Interview, Mufti Ali, July 2023).

Over time, there has been a notable shift in elite dominance in Banten. During the post-Sultanate and New Order periods, political interests began to overtake traditional leadership structures. In the past, *ulama* and *umaro* occupied dominant roles in the region's social stratification, while *jawara* were considered subordinate actors. However, in the contemporary landscape, this dynamic has reversed. *Jawara* has emerged as a powerful elite, exploiting political connections and clientelistic networks to secure material and symbolic capital (Karomani, 2009). It marks a transformation from religious hegemony to populist hegemony, even as the discourse of formal Islamic law remains prevalent.

During the researcher's field visit in July, 2024, the community held a monthly religious gathering (*pengajian*) at a local *pesantren* network in Serang Regency. The event was attended not only by *ulama* but also by *jawara* representatives and subdistrict officials. Alongside religious lectures, the gathering included a public endorsement for a regional head candidate, reflecting the deeply intertwined relationships among *ulama*, *umaro*, and *jawara*.

As one informant, Nandang, a Bantenese historian, remarked:

"In Banten, it is common to collaborate with local figures. The *jawara* are not merely fighters but village protectors and community connectors. They help safeguard *pesantren*, support local families, and often serve as intermediaries between citizens and officials." (Interview, Nandang, a Bantenese historian, Banten, July 2023)

The three pillars of Banten's leadership *ulama*, *umaro*, and *jawara* demonstrate the complexity of the region's social and political structure. While each pillar has distinct functions and spheres of influence, their interactions generate a dynamic that profoundly affects the life of Bantenese society. The shift in elite dominance from religious scholars to *jawara* reflects a broader societal adaptation to evolving political and economic contexts. Understanding these three leadership

elements is essential for analyzing the historical legacy and contemporary transformations in Banten's socio-political development.

Local Constructions of Islamic Moderation: A Comparative Analysis of Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten

This study demonstrates that local constructions of Islamic moderation in Indonesia are not monolithic concepts but outcomes of diverse social, historical, and legal negotiations. The three models explored the integrative model in Gorontalo, the negotiation model in Minangkabau, and the hegemonic model in Banten, representing distinctive forms of interaction between Islamic law and local culture.

Integrative Model of Islam in Gorontalo

The integrative model in Gorontalo offers a unique perspective on the Islamization process, which unfolded harmoniously within local customary structures. Unlike the conflict-laden Islamization processes in other regions, Gorontalo experienced a culturally diplomatic Islamization through strategic alliances, as exemplified by the historical political marriage between King Amai and Princess Owutango. King Amai's decision to adopt Islam and align customary law with Islamic principles characterizes an accommodative, non-hegemonic model of Islamization.

Theoretically, this phenomenon aligns with Clifford Geertz's view on the importance of local meaning-making in adopting Islam as a cultural system (Geertz, 2017). In Gorontalo, the symbiotic relationship between religion and custom is embodied in the local philosophy "*Adati bula-bulaa to saraa, saraa bula-bulaa to Kur'ani*," which, as analyzed by Sofyan Kau, reflects a creative dialectic between social norms and transcendental values (Kau, 2019). These findings support Nader Hashemi's thesis on the cultural preconditions for democratic Islam (Hashemi, 2009).

The traditional institutional structure in Gorontalo, comprising Buatulo Bobato (customary leaders), Buatulo Syara' (religious authorities), and Buatulo Baate (community leaders), forms a synergistic governance framework. It mirrors Lamin Sanneh's observation of Islam's acculturation mechanisms in West Africa through elite social networks (Sanneh, 1993). Azyumardi Azra further reveals how the network of Ternate ulama facilitated adaptive rather than doctrinal Islamization (Azra, 2004), aligning with the concept of the "vernacularization of Islam" (Hefner, 2000).

From a social theory perspective, the Gorontalo model affirms Nurcholish Madjid's view of inclusive Islam, which grows through integrating universal values with local cultural frameworks (Madjid, 1995). It is evident in rituals such as maulid celebrations and weddings that blend Islamic and traditional elements.

In legal terms, the integration of *sharia* and *adat* in Gorontalo can be analyzed through Van den Berg's *Receptie* theory, which posits that Islamic law is received and applied within the framework of local customary norms. Susanti et al. (2025) elaborates that such hybrid legal systems in plural societies derive stability from social legitimacy. While not always institutionalized in modern state structures, the integrative model persists through informal mechanisms, such as the role of customary leaders in dispute resolution and community decision-making. It illustrates the resilience of a historically rooted normative system that sustains social cohesion amid change.

Negotiative Model of Islam in Minangkabau

The negotiation model in Minangkabau represents a unique cultural synthesis between matrilineal traditions and Islamic teachings, institutionalized in the philosophical principle of “*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*” (ABSSBK). This principle emerged not linearly but through intense historical dialectics between the reformist Padri movement and traditional adat leaders, culminating in the Treaty of Marapalam in 1837. Christine Dobbin argues that the Padri conflict catalyzed a negotiation space between Islamic puritanism and Minangkabau cosmology (Dobbin, 1983).

Structurally, ABSSBK is operationalized through the Tungku Nan Tigo system, a tripartite leadership configuration combining *ninik mamak* (customary leaders), *alim ulama* (religious authorities), and *cerdik pandai* (intellectuals). It reflects what John Bowen calls a “public reasoning” model in Indonesian Islam, where legal norms are discursively constructed in public space (Takdir, 2020).

Taufik Abdullah’s findings reveal that the Minangkabau matrilineal system does not conflict with Islamic law but offers dynamic interpretive spaces in family law, particularly in inheritance, gender, and kinship (Saprina & Rahmi, 2024). It supports Talal Asad’s argument about the discursive nature of Islamic tradition, which is constantly negotiated with specific socio-cultural contexts (Tajdin, 2022).

Clifford Geertz’s anthropological insights find tangible expression in Minangkabau, where Islam and adat form complementary rather than oppositional forces, continually reproduced through social practice (Geertz, 2017). Field research indicates the durability of this model in the Nagari governance system, where ABSSBK is institutionalized through adat-religious deliberative mechanisms. It supports Swenson’s proposition about the vitality of legal pluralism at the local level in Indonesia (Swenson, 2018).

From the perspective of contemporary Islamic legal theory, the Minangkabau model provides empirical grounding for Abdullahi An-Na’im’s argument on the importance of contextual approaches to sharia implementation (An-Na’im, 2008). As documented by Hefner, religious education in Minangkabau has developed a model of “civil Islam” through integrating adat knowledge into pesantren curricula, fostering cognitive synthesis between religious and local wisdom (Hefner, 2000).

Conflict resolution mechanisms based on the principle of “*bajanjang naik, batanggo turun*,” as documented by Nasroen, offer an operational example of this negotiative model, where consensus-building transcends binary legal logic (Fauzi & Kumalasari, 2020).

As a theoretical model, the Minangkabau case significantly contributes to global discourses on moderate Islam. As Hashemi notes, democratization in Muslim societies requires a strong cultural foundation where Islamic values are articulated through local cultural frames (Hashemi, 2009).

Thus, the Minangkabau negotiating model offers an alternative perspective for understanding moderate Islam as a product of complex historical interactions between adat structures, religious authority, and civil society dynamics, underscoring the necessity of contextual approaches in Islamic studies.

Hegemonic Model of Islam in Banten

The hegemonic model in Banten presents a distinctive pattern in the map of Indonesian Islamization, where normative Islamic interpretations are institutionalized within political and social power structures. Since the era of the Banten Sultanate, as Ricklefs notes, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's strict implementation of Islamic law functioned as a normative system and a tool for social control and state consolidation (Ricklefs, 2006).

In the broader history of Islam in the archipelago, Azyumardi Azra identifies Banten as a strategic center that absorbed Middle Eastern influences while cultivating a robust local *ulama* network (Azra, 2004). This network formed a religious-political ecosystem that persists into contemporary times. The triadic structure of *ulama* (religious authority), *umaro* (political elite), and *jamara* (social force) forms a complex system of cultural patronage akin to the "Islamic patronage" described by Feener in the Southeast (Feener, 2013).

One of the most evident implications of this hegemonic model is the marginalization of Islamic expressions rooted in local traditions. For instance, the banning of *debus* by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) illustrates how religious purification mechanisms can sideline historical-cultural considerations (Niam, 2009). It aligns with An-Na'im's warning about the dangers of formalizing Islamic law without regard for a society's pluralistic realities (An-Na'im, 2008).

According to Hooker's analysis of the legal pluralism framework (Hooker, 2008), the tension in Banten among Islamic law, adat, and state law shows a trend toward monolithic dominance, contrasting with the dialogical models found in regions like Minangkabau. Geertz's anthropological lens identifies this as a manifestation of "scripturalist Islam" (Geertz, 1968), which tends to exclude culturally embedded religious practices, including those of indigenous communities like the Baduy.

Amelia Fauzia's study on Islamic philanthropy in Banten demonstrates how the *ulama's* control over zakat and *waqf* management reinforces hegemonic structures through religious-economic networks (Fauzia, 2013). These findings affirm Burhani's critique of how the discourse of religious moderation can be co-opted as a tool for suppressing diversity (Burhani, 2013).

The Banten hegemonic model offers a critical lens for rethinking Islamic moderation in Indonesia. As Bowen reminds us, only through inclusive, deliberative spaces that accommodate diverse voices in multicultural societies can a balance between religious authority and cultural pluralism be achieved (Bowen, 2003). Thus, the Banten case is relevant to discussions on religion-state relations in Indonesia and contributes meaningfully to global discourses on Islam, power, and civil society.

Critical Analysis and Typology of Islam–Culture Interactions

The comparative analysis of Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten reveals that the negotiation between Islam and local culture produces divergent models of Islamic moderation. In Gorontalo, a strong integration between Islam and *adat* is evident. In Minangkabau, negotiation led to a cultural-religious synthesis, encapsulated in the philosophical maxim "*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*." In contrast, in Banten, Islam has come to dominate and erode pre-existing local traditions.

These differences reflect the complex interactions between religion and culture, shaped by distinct socio-historical contexts. The typology integrative (Gorontalo), negotiating

(Minangkabau), and hegemonic (Banten) illustrates that Islamic moderation in Indonesia is not a static or universal concept but a dynamic construct influenced by local configurations of power, tradition, and religious authority.

Table 1. Ideal Typology of Interaction between Islam and Local Culture

Models	Nature of Interaction	Forms of Leadership	Views on Customs	Response to Conflict
Integrative	Symbolic-cooperative	<i>Syara–Bobato–Baate</i>	Accommodative	Avoided through diplomacy
Negotiating	Dialectical-consensus	<i>Ulama–Ninik Mamak–Cerdik Pandai</i>	Dialogic and adaptive	Responded through deliberation
Hegemonic	Dominative-hierarchical	<i>Ulama-Umaro–Jawara</i>	Subordinate or exclusive	Responded through legalization and fatwa

Source: Analysis (2024)

These three regional models may be analyzed as ideal types of interaction between Islam and local culture. The integrative model (Gorontalo) operates through symbolic and institutional synthesis, fostering social cohesion without compromising the authenticity of local culture. The negotiation model (Minangkabau) is dialogical, emerging from historical conflict and culminating in compromise, reflecting a plural legal consciousness. In contrast, the hegemonic model (Banten) imposes normative Islamic authority over local traditions, often generating tension and exclusion.

Banten's hegemonic model has led to tangible sociological effects, notably the marginalization of cultural traditions such as *debuss* (albeit unevenly) and the erosion of autonomy among indigenous groups like the Baduy. Through mechanisms of state-sponsored religious standardization, these communities face mounting pressure to conform, thereby shifting the landscape from negotiated pluralism to rigid orthodoxy—an evolution that endangers Indonesia's rich cultural and religious diversity.

At the national level, this model poses a significant challenge to the agenda of *Religious Moderation* (*Moderasi Beragama*) promoted by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs. While the policy normatively fosters tolerance, its localized implementation in Banten reveals how moderation may be co-opted into agendas of religious populism and exclusive legalism. Therefore, it is imperative to promote models of moderation that are participatory, contextual, and sensitive to legal pluralism and cultural diversity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Islamic moderation in Indonesia is neither a singular nor uniform phenomenon, but rather the product of complex and ongoing negotiations between Islamic law

and diverse local cultural systems. By analyzing the cases of Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten, this research identifies three ideal models—integrative, negotiating, and hegemonic—which represent distinct historical trajectories and sociocultural dynamics. The integrative model in Gorontalo demonstrates how Islamic values can be harmoniously incorporated into customary frameworks through cultural diplomacy and elite alliances, fostering both social cohesion and legal pluralism. In Minangkabau, the negotiating model illustrates the power of dialogue, compromise, and structural innovation in accommodating matrilineal traditions alongside Islamic law, resulting in inclusive, adaptive social structures. In contrast, the hegemonic model of Banten highlights the risks associated with the normative dominance of Islamic law, which may marginalize or even suppress indigenous cultural expressions and limit the scope for pluralism.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of acknowledging and empowering local agency and historical experience in shaping strategies for religious moderation in Indonesia. Rather than imposing a top-down, uniform understanding of moderation, policymakers and scholars should appreciate the spectrum of locally rooted expressions shaped by legal traditions, power relations, and cultural negotiation within each community. This pluralistic perspective is essential for sustaining Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance and inclusivity, while also offering valuable insights for global debates on Islam, law, and multicultural societies. Ultimately, the Indonesian experience demonstrates that effective religious moderation emerges not from rigid standardization, but from ongoing, context-sensitive negotiation and creative adaptation between universal religious principles and the lived realities of diverse cultural communities.

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