

NEGOTIATION OF INDONESIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERFAITH COMMUNICATION IN DEPOK

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the experience of negotiating the identity of Indonesian Orthodox Christians in the context of inter-religious communication in Depok. The discussion is intended to find out the identity negotiations carried out by the Orthodox Christian Community during the presence of religious people in Depok so that differences of opinion and understanding between religious communities can be mediated and to find out the obstacles in maintaining communication between Indonesian Orthodox Christians and Protestant, Catholic and Muslim Christians. This research uses qualitative methods which are carried out using a phenomenological approach, while phenomenological research is a type of qualitative research that sees and hears closely and in detail regarding individual understanding of the experiences needed. So, this study aims to find out and confirm the 10 main assumptions in negotiating identity in the context of inter-religious communication in Depok and knowing the obstacles to maintaining inter-religious communication in Depok. Data were collected by interview, observation, and document methods. The validity of the data was obtained by means of triangulation, examination of respondents, and assessments from supervisors. Data were analyzed by (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions.

Keywords: *identity negotiation, cultural communication, orthodox christianity.*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a pluralistic country is known for its high plurality, with its distinctive characteristic that Indonesian people can live in harmony with the presence of differences, while Indonesia's pluralism is clearly visible in the number of ethnic groups based on data obtained from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), namely, there are 1331 ethnic groups in Indonesia, 713 languages based on Indonesian data, and there are 6 major religions in Indonesia that are registered at the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. Pluralism is natural in human beings, and they were created to prepare for it and destined for it (Imārah, 1999).

Seeing the condition of high plurality in Indonesia, communication in a religious moderation relationship needs to be done as an alternative to creating a harmonious relationship. The need to continue to carry out communication activities makes it undeniable the fact that people are always bound by various forms of communication with various educational, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Maintaining communication is considered very important, especially in Indonesia, because it cannot be denied that various types of ethnicities, religions, races, customs, cultures, and classes can live side by side and have normal social interaction and a very high level of negotiation space in everyday life, but unfortunately, Indonesia is a small part of the many examples where religion often still appears as a trigger for conflicts that occur, for example, conflicts between Christians because of the

many Christian denominations in Indonesia, differences in doctrine regarding baptism, procedures for worship, use of holy books, sacraments, religious leaders, and the hierarchical structure of church leadership.

Apart from that, the most common thing that occurs is a conflict between Muslims and Christians, including not a few Christians accused of Christianizing when carrying out social interactions such as association or when carrying out social activities such as distributing groceries to residents around their homes, Not only that, Christians are also known to have the same accusation that Muslims carry out Islamization through education because the majority of them attend public schools, marry, and even politics. Mutual distrust, and sometimes conflicts occur. One example of a city in Indonesia that often experiences conflicts with intolerant people is the city of Depok. Depok is one of the most intolerant cities according to the Setara Institute's assessment, which is ranked fifth as an intolerant city, while this intolerant title has been pinned three times based on an assessment of six aspects for the Depok City social conflict index, including aspects of religious identity, aspects of ethnic or racial identity, aspects of regional identity, economic aspects, political aspects, and aspects of group social relations (Rajaguguk, 2023).

To create tolerance (harmony) between people of different religions, interaction is considered to play an important role in the survival of society to be able to respect each other, appreciate, live side by side peacefully, and accept the differences that exist. The diversity of ethnicities and cultures in Indonesia, especially in areas that are close to each other and interact with each other, requires an identity negotiation. Identity negotiation is needed so that the social life of heterogeneous people can run simultaneously without identity conflict between ethnic and cultural differences. (Erlangga et al., 2021) There are 10 assumptions of identity negotiation which are the theoretical core according to Ting Toomey, including the identity of one's membership in a group, the basic need for motivation to gain identity stability, identity comfort when communicating, identity beliefs when communicating, the tendency to feel part of a group, interpersonal connections through close relationships, identity stability in predictable cultural situations, interpretation and assessment of identity themes and issues, identity negotiation decisions include a sense of being understood, valued and supported, and the last is the importance of intercultural knowledge, motivation, and skills communicate satisfactorily, precisely and effectively.

Based on the findings that the researchers collected during the research, namely that the Indonesian Orthodox Church has a high standard of holiness according to the traditional heritage of the Church Fathers, which seems judgmental in the context of theological teaching and its application in worship, the second is from other entities such as Islam, namely there are terms or the mention of several worship rituals in Orthodox Christianity that are the same as Islam such as ablution, prayer, Qibla, use of headscarves so that with the many similarities between the two entities, Orthodox Christians are considered to imitate Islam with the aim of covertly spreading Christianity for the purpose of evangelism, even though the tradition of the Orthodox Church itself is more was born in the first century and preceded the birth of the majority religion in Indonesia. Therefore, the researcher chose the Indonesian Orthodox Christian Community JS. Basilius Agung Depok as the research subject because Indonesian Orthodox Christians are a minority religion in Depok, Besides that, this entity has a unique sacred tradition with an Eastern church style from the era of the Ancient Church, which is still

preserved by Orthodox Christians, Furthermore, these people are also included as a minority in the midst of religious pluralism in Indonesia. The more minorities a group is, the more identity negotiation is needed. Because of that, the writer will conduct thesis research with the title "Negotiation of Orthodox Christian Identity in the Context of Interfaith Communication in Depok"

METHOD

In this study, the authors used a qualitative research approach. According to some experts such as Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong, qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Tanzeh, 2011), while according to Kirl and Miller, qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science. which is fundamentally dependent on human observation, both in terms of its area and in its terms. (Moleong & Edisi, 2004) (Moleong, n.d.) (Moleong, 2010) (Moleong, 2019) In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the instrument. Therefore, in qualitative research, the instrument is a human or human instrument. To be able to become an instrument, the researcher must have the provision of theory and broad insight, so that she is able to ask questions, analyze, photograph, and construct the object under study to be clearer and more meaningful.

Qualitative research was carried out using a phenomenological approach, a type of qualitative research that sees and hears closely and in detail regarding the individual understanding of the experiences needed. So, this study aims to determine the negotiation of identity in the context of inter-religious communication between Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities and other religious entities such as Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic Christians.

In this study, researchers will use primary data, namely the results of interviews with several members of the Indonesian Orthodox Christian community Js. Basilus Agung includes Archimandrite (Head of the Supreme Monastery) who is also the Founder of the Indonesian Orthodox Church and several members of other religions around Depok. Determination of informants as data sources in interviews uses purposive techniques. The use of this technique is based on the understanding that researchers tend to choose informants who are considered knowledgeable and trustworthy to become solid sources of data and know the problem in depth (Sutopo, 1988). The method of data analysis carried out by the author in this study will use the method from Miles and Huberman where this method consists of several steps, namely: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. (Drawing conclusions or verification).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The city of Depok is a place where natives and immigrants mix. Based on data from the 2000 Indonesian Population Census, most of the population of Depok City are Betawi, Javanese, and Sundanese. A significant number also comes from the Batak and Minangkabau tribes. The diversity of ethnic groups in Depok City influences cultural differences and community customs. The following is the population size of Depok City based on ethnicity. In the context of worship, the City of Depok is quite diverse based on the number of religious

adherents spread across the City of Depok, namely with a population based on BPS (2022) of 2,123,349 people and based on the BNBA Civil Registry Service Office (2022) of 1,920,182 people. From BNBA Civil Registry Service Office data, Muslims in Depok City are 91.176 percent, Christians are 4.766 percent, Catholics are 1.509 percent, while Buddhists are 0.277 percent, Hindus are 0.165 percent, Confucianists are 0.105 percent, and Other 0.002 percent, For houses of worship, Depok has 387 mosques and 83 prayer rooms, 33 Christian churches, 5 Roman Catholic churches, 2 temples, 1 temple, and 1 temple spread across 11 districts. (Pratiwi, 2022) In the city of Depok, there are various types of church sects, one of which is the Indonesian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church, which is an eastern style church, began to enter Indonesia under the name Indonesian Orthodox Church (GOI) and became one of the National Level Ecclesiastical Institutions under the Decree of the Director General of Christian Community Guidance, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. GOI is in the Synod of the Genuine Greek Orthodox Church. GOI was founded and chaired by Archimandrite Romo Daniel Bambang Dwi Byantoro, Ph.D in 1988 and received official government recognition in 1991 in Jakarta. Father Daniel explained that he wanted to introduce an Eastern style of Church but still with an Indonesian identity so that the Indonesian Orthodox Church is indeed different from other Orthodox Churches such as for example the Russian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church which are also found in Indonesia.

The difference is that the Russian Orthodox Christian Church is a Christian institution that is the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarch and began entering Indonesia in 1988 in Solo, example is the St. Thomas Russian Orthodox Church in South Jakarta, while the Syrian Orthodox Christian (Syria) is a Christian institution which was officially introduced by Bambang Noorsena on September 17, 1997, under Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas in Syria who used Syriac during services.

One of the Indonesian Orthodox Christian communities is JS. Basilius Agung who is domiciled in Depok currently the Indonesian Orthodox Church in Depok. The number of Indonesian Orthodox Christians who are members of the JS. Basilius Agung community is 72 people with 30 members and 42 sympathizers. JS Community. Basilius Agung Depok was officially registered at the Depok Ministry of Religion on May 29, 2023.



Image 1. Indonesian Ortodox Church

A. Indonesian Orthodox Christian Identity Negotiations

In accordance with the focus and research objectives, the findings of the research results can be concluded in the presentation of data that discusses the negotiation of Indonesian Orthodox Christian identity amid the existence of religious communities in Depok. In an

effort to create harmonious community relations in the midst of a plural society, it is not easy, this is where identity negotiations need to be present and play an important role so that the harmony of society can be maintained. Based on the context of intercultural communication, identity negotiation means the way or method used by identity in the form of something that is discussed in interactions with other people and then the identity is composed of a person's image or self-image which is formed through individual negotiations by stating, conveying, modifying, or against self-identification or other people's (Ting Toomey) (Ting-Toomey, 1988) (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003) (Fletcher et al., 2014) The following are 10 main assumptions used to confirm the theory with facts that occur in the field according to the context of inter-religious communication regarding how Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities negotiate their identity.

1. Membership Identity Through Symbolic Communication in a Group

So far, the identity of membership through symbolic communication in a group is considered good, that Orthodox Christians can bridge the relationship between Christianity and Islam, then the cultural communication that exists between Orthodox Christian Entities and other Entities creates curiosity from other entities about the uniqueness of a separate Orthodox Christian entity.

2. Basic Need for Motivation to Gain Identity Stability

So far, the Orthodox are involved by other entities in several activities such as casual discussions, seminars to present material on the Orthodox Christian faith, and introduction of the Orthodox Church as the oldest Church and a Church with an eastern style, Orthodox believers also often hold events such as social services which invite other entities as well.

3. Tolerance of Entity Strengths and Weaknesses

The attitude of tolerance that is well established is that people feel comfortable in an environment, for example, if there are activities that involve residents such as joint patrols and neighborhood watch and if there are non-Orthodox people who dig for information about the Orthodox Christian faith then these questions are answered by the Orthodox people, there are also some non-orthodox people who ask to be prayed for healing as a form of inter-religious tolerance in an environment.

4. Identity Confidence When Communicating

There are several parties who appreciate the existence of Indonesian Orthodox Christian identity, including those from the same belief background, namely Christianity, The Orthodox Church is welcomed as the streams that previously existed in Depok, but in fact there is identity shakiness when communicating about themes which are bound by different cultural regulations, which in this context are different regulations of belief (faith).

5. Tendency to Become Part of Member Identity

So far, they have been invited to weddings, while for funerals they have taken the initiative to come as a form of tolerance, but they are not as involved as being a committee because certain denominations have their own congregations from their respective churches, especially those tasked with comforting the families left behind.

6. Consistency And Tolerance

The closeness that exists between Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities and other entities here is considered quite close. There are also opinions that tolerance has not been fully met, this can be seen from several entities which each make general accusations about Christianity such as being considered to worship three Gods, and not understanding the concept of the Trinity.

7. Identity Stability Through Openness

The attitude of Indonesian Orthodox Christians is considered to be open regarding the Orthodox entity itself to other entities. This is stated in how they answer and explain the basis of the Orthodox faith and they don't mind answering all questions from other believers.

8. Assessment of Daily Habits

The evaluations of other entities towards Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities regarding their daily habits are indeed diverse, some are positive, and some are negative. The diversity of Spiritual activities carried out by Orthodox Christians gives rise to judgments from various entities that at first glance they are indeed similar to Islamic entities.

9. Sense of being understood, valued, and supported

Orthodox Christian entities feel understood in the environment of JS. Basilius Agung Depok, although not all entities can understand the situation of Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities because these entities are not yet fully known. Besides that some entities do respect their identity even though there are some entities that adhere to their own Aqidah principles, and the existence of Orthodox Christianity itself is generally supported by other entities.

10. Inter-community Communication in the Unification of Knowledge

Orthodox people explain information related to the teachings of the Orthodox Church and exchange ideas about Orthodox teachings and according to them, this communication is indeed smooth, and satisfying because of the enthusiasm of other religions, It is equipped with valid documents that can be accounted for and effective because the communication is done to clearing up previously raised misunderstandings and discordant thoughts can be answered by the party from the Orthodox entity.

B. Obstacles in Interfaith Communication

1. Differences in the background of belief and Aqidah between religious entities
2. Differences in traditions between Indonesian Orthodox Christian entities and other entities such as Protestant and Catholic Christians, where these differences in traditions include liturgy of worship, the basis of faith between Orthodox and Eastern Church styles with Protestant Denominations and Western Church styles.
3. Perceptions of non-orthodox entities who think that Indonesian Orthodox Christianity is a new sect that seems to imitate Islam so that it has hampered communication between religious communities.
4. The third obstacle is social prejudice which causes interreligious communication to be hampered such as prejudice that arises from within the Orthodox entity itself such as their fear when they think they are being accused of attracting congregations.

5. The distrust of the Orthodox people themselves to introduce their identity as Orthodox people in a pluralistic society.
6. Religious conversions from non-Orthodox entities to Orthodox entities also cause mere prejudice, namely some people who convert to religion assume that other entities suspect them (Orthodox people) of wanting to find congregations even though they (non-Orthodox people) come alone and studied the basic Orthodox faith until finally deciding to be baptized.
7. The concern of Orthodox Christians about their identity is that they are worried about being reported by other entities because many parties say their rituals of worship are similar to those of Muslims.
8. The development of Orthodox Christianity in Indonesia is slow, and Depok residents are not too familiar with Orthodoxy.

CONCLUSION

Referring to the identity of Indonesian Orthodox Christians and the teachings contained in the Indonesian Orthodox Church, some are in line with some beliefs from other entities and some are not in line, so an interaction is needed to neutralize the identity of the entire entity, which emphasizes that religious people do not always have views and teachings. the same to be mutually accepted, but with the differences that exist, so that it is hoped that entities will continue to interact with each other, and this interaction can be carried out by negotiating identities in order to achieve the final result such as a sense of being understood, valued and supported by one another.

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