



The Role of Kei Culture in Preventing Religious Conflict Muslim-Christian in Southeast Moluccas

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ABSTRACT:

The situation of Indonesian society on the threshold of the third millennium, feels so anxious. The level of violence in society is quite high. Various kinds of riots, looting and crime was alarming. Among the various riots that reason, including a number of riots and violence that were pitched inter-religious hostility. There is no more reason to superficially say that there is no problem between the religions with the fact that there, especially the riots in the Moluccas and in particular in the Kei-Southeast Moluccas. What is interesting is nevertheless the enormity of the violence, specifically in Kei, conflict can be resolved quickly than in the areas of inter-religious conflict in Indonesia. This is due to the cultural influence is so strong for the people of Kei. Therefore, this study will examine the importance of inter-religious dialogue with religion and local wisdom culture approach in Kei. This means that the local wisdom of Kei culture as a basic character for preventing social conflict between religions. In analyzing the data, this study uses a qualitative approach and literature study. The results of this study indicate that inter-religious dialogue with the Kei religion and culture approach is a relevant solution for the diverse Kei society.

ABSTRAK:

Keadaan masyarakat Indonesia di ambang milenium ketiga, terasa begitu mencemaskan. Tingkat kekerasan dalam masyarakat cukup tinggi. Berbagai macam kerusuhan, penjarahan dan tindak pidana pun memprihatinkan. Di antara berbagai kerusuhan itu, termasuk sejumlah kerusuhan dan kekerasan yang bernada permusuhan antaragama. Tidak ada lagi alasan untuk secara dangkal mengatakan bahwa tidak ada masalah antaragama dengan kenyataan yang ada di sana, khususnya kerusuhan di Maluku dan khususnya di kepulauan Kei. Yang menarik adalah

meskipun dahsyatnya kekerasan, khususnya di Kei, konflik dapat diselesaikan dengan cepat dibandingkan dengan daerah-daerah konflik antaragama di Indonesia. Hal ini disebabkan oleh pengaruh budaya yang begitu kuat bagi masyarakat Kei. Tulisan ini bertujuan memberikan penjelasan terkait pentingnya dialog *inter-religius* dan relevansinya bagi kehidupan beragama di Kei-Maluku Tenggara. Oleh karena itu penelitian ini akan mengkaji pentingnya dialog antar agama dalam pendekatan agama dan kerifan budaya Kei. Artinya, kearifan lokal budaya Kei sebagai karakter dasar yang dibutuhkan untuk mencegah konflik agama di Kei. Dalam menganalisa data, Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deksriptif dan studi literatur. Hasil dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dialog antar agama dengan pendekatan agama dan budaya Kei merupakan solusi yang relevan bagi masyarakat Kei yang majemuk.

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INTRODUCTION

The period between 1999 and 2005 marked a grim time for religious life in Indonesia. During this time, conflicts erupted between Muslims and Christians in various areas such as Jakarta, Bandung, Medan, Aceh, Kupang, Poso, Sambas, Pontianak, and Kei Island in the Moluccas. As a parish priest during the Kei Island conflict, I witnessed firsthand the violence: people were killed, mosques and churches were burned, and entire villages—both Muslim and Christian—were destroyed. Communities were torn apart, and families were forced to fight or even kill each other in the name of religion. Religious symbols were used as weapons, and each group clung to its own religious identity. These experiences raised a haunting question in my mind: If religions teach peace, love for one's neighbor, and even love for enemies, why did this conflict occur? Why do people fight and kill in the name of religion? Why were religious symbols used in such violent ways? Does this point to something flawed in theology or its teaching?

Despite the intensity of the conflict, the violence in Kei ended relatively quickly due to the combined efforts of various parties. Compared to other regions in the Moluccas, the conflict in the Kei Islands, Southeast Moluccas, was resolved between March 1999 and December 2000. There have been some publications that explored the role of religion and local wisdom in preventing the religious conflict. In this regard, Pajarianto¹, Riandita², Garing³, Sabara⁴, explored the role of local wisdom and religious moderation, while Dasopang⁵ discussed the role of the religious education. In preventing the religious conflict in Papua, Pamungkas⁶ argued that cultural tradition of peacebuilding should be adopted. Novebri and Pratiwi⁷ stressed on the role of religious leader in preventing the religious conflict.

The concept of interreligious dialogue is not new. Various multidisciplinary approaches have shown that such dialogue cannot be separated from the fabric of everyday

¹ Hadi Pajarianto, Imam Pribadi, and Puspa Sari, 'Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78.4 (2022), doi:10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043.

² Ulul Albab and others, 'Qur'anic Values in the Luberan Tradition: Strengthening Religious Moderation Based on Local Wisdom', *Dialogia*, 21.1 (2023), doi:10.21154/dialogia.v21i1.5963.

³ Jusmianti Garing and others, 'Identifying and Resolving Conflicts Using Local Wisdom: A Qualitative Study', *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 23.4 (2023), doi:10.36923/jicc.v23i3.156.

⁴ Sabara Sabara and others, 'Concepts and Practices of Religious Moderation in Kei Local Wisdom', in *Proceedings of the 9th ASBAM International Conference (Archeology, History, & Culture In The Nature of Malay) (ASBAM 2021)*, 2022, DCLX, doi:10.2991/assehr.k.220408.095.

⁵ Muhammad D. Dasopang, Ismail F.A. Nasution, and Azmil H. Lubis, 'The Role of Religious and Cultural Education as a Resolution of Radicalism Conflict in Sibolga Community', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 79.1 (2023), doi:10.4102/hts.v79i1.8469.

⁶ Cahyo Pamungkas and Devi Tri Indriasari, 'Preventing Religious Conflict in Papua Land: Adopting Cultural Traditions of Peacebuilding', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 9.2 (2021), doi:10.18588/202108.00a119.

⁷ Novebri Novebri and Resdilla Pratiwi, 'The Role of Religious Leaders in Indonesia's Multicultural Society in Preventing Conflict', *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education*, 5.2 (2021).

life in society, nation, and state. Tidore⁸ in his research offered a conflict resolution approach using the so-called *BakuBae theology*, which is based on religious values and local wisdom. Sopacuaperu⁹ explores hospitality as a fundamental trait essential for developing interreligious dialogue. This trait is embodied in the understanding that each religion can foster hospitality, which serves as a foundation for meaningful dialogue. Sopacuaperu¹⁰ highlights the philosophy of 'living as brothers' as a form of hospitality in Moluccas society. Catherine Cornille's study, *Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue*, focuses on the teachings and practices of religious traditions that facilitate meaningful dialogue. Cornille identifies several essential conditions for learning from other religions: humility, generosity or hospitality towards the truths of other religions, commitment, interconnection, and empathy. She argues that these conditions are universally applicable across all religious traditions involved in dialogue, although their specific expressions may vary. Inter-religious dialogue assumes that participants are grounded in their own religious identities, which serve as a basis for engaging in dialogue.¹¹

Paul Knitter in *Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action*, explains how socially engaged dialogue can offer a serious way to respond to important postmodern critiques of interreligious dialogue. By starting or drawing from socially engaged interreligious dialogue, participants will be better able to find or create what is common amidst all their religious diversity. Paul Knitter, in his work *Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action*, explores how socially engaged dialogue can address significant critiques of interreligious dialogue in the postmodern context. Knitter argues that such dialogue helps participants identify and foster common ground amidst diverse religious perspectives.¹² The contemporary research of interreligious dialogue

Meanwhile, in his article *A Study of Interreligious Dialogue*, Armada Riyanto cautions against the superficial attitude some Christians have, assuming that all religions are essentially the same. Such a perspective, contrary to the teachings of Vatican II and subsequent documents, can lead to indifference towards one's own faith. Indifference undermines the commitment to religious beliefs, even when it appears to be motivated by a desire to view all religions equally. Riyanto argues that the Church's efforts to combat

⁸ Burhanudin Tidore, 'Resolusi Konflik Berbasis Teologi Baku Bae Ambon (1999-2002)', *Media (Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi)*, 3.2 (2022), doi:10.53396/media.v3i2.111.

⁹ Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu, 'Hospitalitas Menurut Amos Yong Dan Falsafah Hidup Orang Basudara Untuk Dialog Interreligijs', *MELINTAS*, 35.3 (2021), doi:10.26593/mel.v35i3.4662.301-315.

¹⁰ Sopacuaperu, pp. 111–12.

¹¹ Cornille, Catherine. "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (2013): 20-33.

¹² Knitter, Paul F. "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (2013): 133-148.

indifference should not be misconstrued as promoting superiority of one religion over others.¹³

Building on previous research, this study examines the Muslim-Christian conflict in Kei-Moluccas through the lens of dialogue between the Church and local culture. The objective is to explore how this dialogue can address and mitigate religious conflicts in the region. A novel aspect of this research is the discovery of numerous shared values between Kei culture and religion, which can serve as a foundation for dialogue and harmony between Muslims and Christians. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate that Kei culture is a crucial resource for fostering interfaith dialogue in the Kei-Moluccas region.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the potential for continued peace and harmony in Kei, particularly given the uncertainties surrounding religious coexistence. The research underscores that lasting peace in Kei depends on the ability of people from diverse religious backgrounds to live together harmoniously. As Hans Küng noted, "There is no peace among the nations without peace among the religions; there is no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions." This study highlights that interreligious dialogue is essential for addressing the foundational issues of religious conflicts and fostering lasting peace.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, combining literature review with field research. The literature review encompasses relevant sources on the Muslim-Christian conflict in the Kei Islands of Eastern Indonesia, focusing on the dialogue between the Church and local culture. To complement the literature review, the researcher conducted field research involving observations and interviews related to the conflict. The research process involved selecting and analyzing literature to extract relevant information, followed by qualitative analysis of both literature and field data. The findings were synthesized to draw conclusions regarding the role of cultural and religious dialogue in addressing the conflict.

DISCUSSION

Identity and the Cause of Conflict in Kei Island

The inter-religious riots in Kei were unprecedented and devastating. The term "terrible" is used to describe the extensive damage inflicted on Kei society, including physical destruction, social and economic disruptions, and loss of life. The conflict

¹³ Armada Riyanto, *A Study of Interreligious Dialogue* (Sebuah Studi Tentang Dialog Interreligius), *Diskursus*, 9,2 (2010): 249-282.

occurred between Christian and Muslim groups, despite their shared cultural custom of “ni ain ain” (we are all brothers), which traditionally reinforced brotherhood and kinship. This raises several questions: What caused these riots? Why did they specifically involve Muslims and Christians? What were the dynamics and consequences of the conflict? These questions will be explored in the following discussion.

Kei: An Overview

Before discussing the conflict experience in the Kei Islands, Southeast Moluccas, Indonesia, it is important to provide an overview of Kei, including its geography and society. Understanding the geographical identity and location of Kei is crucial for comprehending the community and the nature of the conflict. The Kei Islands are located in the southeastern Moluccas, between 5°00' and 5°06' south latitude and 131°50' and 135°51' east longitude.¹⁴ The archipelago consists of 112 islands that can be divided into two major groups, namely the Big Kei Islands and the Small or Little Kei Islands, as well as three smaller groups (Kur, Tayando and Tanimbar Kei). In the Big Kei Islands, only three are inhabited, while eight remain uninhabited. In the Little Kei Islands, 17 are inhabited and 85 are uninhabited.¹⁵ The islands are bordered on the south by the Arafura Sea and the Tanimbar Islands, east to the Aru Islands and the west with the Banda Sea. According to 1999 statistics, the population of Tual, the capital city of Little Kei, is 37,808 men and 39,880 women, totaling 77,688 inhabitants. In the Big Kei Islands, the population consists of 18,710 men and 20,937 women, totaling 39,647 inhabitants. Thus the total population of 117 335 inhabitants Kei scattered in 210 villages, 11 in Kei the Big and 109 in the Little Kei.¹⁶ The concentration of the population is more in the Little Kei for the Capital District.

The mainland of the Little Kei islands is generally flat, while the mainland of Great Kei is more on mountainous areas. Unlike other parts of Indonesia, Kei archipelago is located in the tropics around the equator. The climate is dominated by monsoons; the wind is blowing a shuttle every half a year with exactly the opposite direction. The ratio of man to the ground throughout the islands is 51 inhabitants/km² (66 per km² for Kei Kei Besar and 45 for Minor), slightly higher than the ratio of the entire province of Maluku (22 inhabitants/km²). Although this ratio is much lower than in Java (755/km²), does not mean that these islands have enough land for agriculture. Agricultural practices in the Kei Islands primarily involve shifting cultivation. In addition to farming, there are small

¹⁴ P. M. Laksono, “The exchange and the Other Side: A Reflection on the Runway along with People Kei” in: *Wealth, Religion and Power*. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1998), 82.

¹⁵ Indonesian Nasional Encyclopedia (Jakarta: PT.Cipta Adi Pusaka, 1990).

¹⁶ Laksono, *Wealth* .82

plantations, primarily for copra. Almost every one of these islands, unless they are public servants and merchants in Tual, their livelihood from cultivation recycling. Cultivation practices like these generally require far more land compared to the paddy farming practices that are intensively worked as in Java. The soil on the islands is generally rocky and not very fertile, resulting in limited arable land despite the low population density. In addition to farming, many Kei residents are fishermen. Marine products, such as fish, shrimp, sea cucumbers, and trochus, are crucial for their livelihoods. Most of the population in the Kei Islands, except those in Elat and Banda Banda Eli,¹⁷ belong to a single ethnic group. Most of them still speak local languages for their everyday affairs. However, there is a growing trend among young people to use Indonesian rather than the Kei language in their daily interactions.

The Root Cause of the Conflict

Public regulatory system

Historically, the traditional governance system of soa-soa and kings has been deeply rooted in the society of the Kei Islands. Kinship is organized into *mata rumah* (large households or extended families) and these households form a territorial settlement known as an ohoi (community). These *mata rumah* collectively form a community called an ohoi. In Kei society, an ohoi consists of several mata rumah and is led by a soa. Soa means or points to social ties based on communal territory. A soa can consist of a single clan (mata rumah) or multiple clans. Above the soa-soa in the social hierarchy is the Orang Kaya (or Orang Kaya Schaap). In general Orang kaya oversees several soa. Above the Orang kaya is king. King for the indigenous Kei, lead some Orang kaya of a territory. Often, in the formation and the shift between the bonds of kinship and territories, bring some consequences on the dynamics of the conflict for power between the existing clans. In addition, conflicts often occur because of the competition for land/soil, the sea boundary, or marriage.

During the time of the colonial government which was in power across the country, the traditional system of government had received the legitimacy of colonial rule. When a lot of fights between the clans which happened between among the soa and the clans, between the king of the one with the other king for various purposes such as mentioned above, the colonial government then intervened to counter these cases. The colonial government, with a strategic approach, reinforced the roles of soa-soa and Orang Kaya to consolidate clan ties. For instance, the Dutch government designated soa-soa as

¹⁷ Banda Eli and Banda Elat are ethnic groups themselves with their own language. They came from the island of Banda in Central of Moluccas, which came to Kei at the end of the 19th century.

‘Wijk’ (neighborhoods), with the head soa appointed by the Assistant Resident, and provided administrative recognition to the kings. Under Dutch rule, the Kei region was divided into 19 *ratschappen* and three *Orang Kaya schappen*, totaling 22 administrative districts for a population of 50,665. This results in an average of approximately 2,500 residents per district. Additionally, the assistant residency, Gezagheber Admiraal, ordered the consolidation of alliances between Ursiuw (under the kingdom of Dullah) and Lorlim (under the royal of Rumaat) to support indigenous administration on the islands.¹⁸ This administrative division remains in place to this day.”

Grouping based on religion and socio-political segmentation¹⁹

Since the late 20th century, the population of Kei has undergone significant religious changes. Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism arrived on the islands at roughly the same time. As a result, religious differences became a defining characteristic of the population. In 1984, the population of the Small Kei Islands consisted of 28,252 Muslims, 20,234 Catholics, 10,918 Protestants, and 754 others. In the Great Kei archipelago, there were 12,923 Muslims, 13,007 Catholics, 14,612 Protestants, and 67 people of other faiths. This means that the population of the entire Kei Islands was divided into 41% Muslim, 33% Catholic, 25% Protestant, and 1% others. This distribution contrasts with the rest of Indonesia, where Muslims form the overwhelming majority. In the Kei archipelago, the population is divided into three main groups: Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants. This unique distribution reflects the religious changes that began in the late 19th century.

Strange distribution is an overview of the changes that had begun since the end of last century. The segmentation of Kei community into different religious communities peaked a decade before World War II. The number of villages increased due to religious reasons. A village split into two parts because the majority of the population shifted another religion, while others also choose a different religion. In the order of the traditional institutions which consist of *Ur siu lim Lor*, religious differences have strengthened the boundary between two of the traditional institutions. *Lor Lim* has 19 Catholic villages, 29 Muslims, and 10 Protestant and 6 villages "Hindu"²⁰ whereas *Ur Siu* consisted of 26 Catholic villages, 32 Islam villages, and 31 Protestant. The culmination of this segmentation was when the Dutch colonial government applied the discriminative discretion against the

¹⁸ According to the cultural history, the Kei archipelago is divided into two customary law areas called Loor. Each of these customary law areas belongs to one of two large customary clusters called Ur Siu which means Clumps nine, as it consists of nine kings scattered in Big Kei four and Small Kei five and Lor Lim which means Clumps five, consisting of five Kings scattered in the Big Kei is three and Small Kei is two.

¹⁹ Laksono, *Wealth*, 92-92

²⁰ "Hinduism" is a term used by the Kei people who are not religious or who do not yet a belief in God, this group is animist.

Islams. Like for example, the Netherlands only made four public schools for the Muslims outside of the city of Tual while subsidizing 17 Catholic schools and 14 schools Protestants.²¹

When the Japanese invaded the Kei Islands on July 30, 1942, they chose Muslims as their allies, as they did in other parts of Indonesia. The Japanese military leaders believed Muslims would make the best allies due to the political discrimination they faced under Dutch colonial rule. The Kei Muslim population, which had been politically marginalized under Dutch administration, welcomed the arrival of the Japanese. Lawalata, for example, wrote that the Japanese used Muslim spies for military operations and recruited more Muslims to work in the Minseibu office (civil administration under the Japanese Navy). Protestants and Catholics not only lost their political privileges but also saw their institutions severely undermined. Almost all the Dutch missionaries, including 13 bishops, were killed by the Japanese on July 30, 1942. Many Protestants were also killed, as they were seen as potential allies of the Netherlands. The Japanese destroyed churches, as well as Catholic and Protestant schools, and used the building materials to construct their military camps. After Japan's surrender, Protestant and Catholic missionaries quickly began rebuilding churches and schools in the Kei Islands. Although all religious groups recovered from the devastation of World War II, tensions between Christians and Muslims in the Kei Islands persisted.

Furthermore, a permanent separation between the religious groups, were further strengthened by the political parties that grew in the first years of the independence of Indonesia.²² Catholics set up a branch of the Catholic party on January 15, 1946. The Muslims initially established together a local Islamic party PIO (*Persatoean Islam Oemoem*), but then in the early 50s they got into Masjumi and the rest joined the PSII. The Protestants set up branches Parkindo (Indonesian Christian Party) in 1950. In the 1955 general election, in Southeast Moluccas regency, religious parties won 81% of the total vote. Parkindo became the largest party in the district since Protestants were the majority in Southeast Maluku islands, beyond the Kei Islands.²³ Parkindo reached 33.684 voices. The majority of Muslims, who were concentrated in the Kei Islands chose to be the member of Masyumi which were 17.731 1358. Catholics in the Kei Islands collected 17.888 voices. While the non-religious parties such as courtyards (*Permai*) and Marxists won 8.292 voters.²⁴

²¹ In 1934, the total Catholic schools in the Kei Islands was 31 and the Protestant schools was 34.

²² In the district of the Southern Moluccas are 18 political parties participating in the 1955 general election.

²³ The Voters of Parkindo is mostly from Dobo and the Protestant majority of the Tanimbar Islands.

²⁴ Alfian, *Election Result at 1955 to House of Representatives (D.P.R.)*. (Jakarta: Lembaga Ekonomi dan Kemasyarakatan Nasional, 1971), 157-160.

Riots and Peace Efforts in Kei

Unrest in the Kei Islands

In this period, there was an attack reciprocally performed by the youth group of Islam and Christian. On March 31, 1999, it was the beginning of the destruction in the Kei Islands.²⁵ Muslim groups used a white headband and white uniforms and shouted "Allahu akbar," while the Christians staged an attack using red headbands. Both sides have mocked and always wanted to attack. The event on March 31, 1999, actually was started by the act of throwing stones at people's houses by some people which were not identifiable. Such a case was actually a common thing, because it had been for long time ago, Kei community had experienced this kind of crime. The definite news about the beginning of the conflict was very confusing. For me, in this writing I do not get into the effort of finding out or determining who is the mastermind in the stoning act and trigger riots. But for us the important thing is that with the event, it started in the history of the people of both Islam and Christianity Kei the real, open and destructive conflict. Because after that conflict, the conflict among the Muslim-Christian villages like a snowball that extended everywhere, and almost scattered throughout the islands of the Little Kei. This is evident because on April 5, 1999, riots in Tual and the surrounding areas began to creep into the surrounding villages in the district of the Little Kei. Muslim villages on the west coast of the Little Kei like: Selayar, Debut Islam, Levuan Islam, Dian Island, Tetoat, Wirin, Ngursit, Madwat, Ohoiren Islam and Islamic Ohoira be destroyed and severely damaged. Meanwhile, on the eastern coast, the village Elaar (the villages of the Protestants and Catholics), burnt and destroyed by the Muslim masses. These action enraged Ohoidertutu villagers who finally joined with some surrounding villages who were Christians, to destroy the village of Danar muslim.

Riots then spread to Big Kei. Unrest in the Great Kei began on April 1, 1999, where there was an attack carried out by some Christian villages (*Kampung Mun, Uwat and Ohoituf*) to the Muslim villages (*Kampung Wearmaf*). This incident then sparked riots in almost all the islands of the Big Kei. The actions of attacking, burning and killing of both groups occur. On April 3 and 4, 1999, there was a massive attack in the village Larat. Muslim village was destroyed by Christian mob from the surrounding villages. Many of the residents were killed and some fled the place safe. Furthermore, the villages of Islam in the North-West coast of the island of Big Kei, namely: Ohoiwait, Elralang, Wer Ohoiham, Ohoiker, Fravav, Uwat Air, Ohoivaa, Ngurwalek, engulfed in flames and being destroyed by Christian mob. Besides the Muslim villages, the village of Protestant in Dangarat was assaulted by Muslims

²⁵ Hengky Belekubun, *Chronology of conflict* (Langgur: Mei, 1999), 1.

mass from Dullah Islam island, and the Christian village, Weduar, was destroyed by Muslim mass from the surrounding villages.²⁶

Of the unrest, it can be drawn some conclusions. *Firstly*, it was interesting that when the riots began, each group, both Muslims and Christians have had the same attributes of the war. Islam wore white headband, white long clothes with a sword forged with the same shape as well as other scientific equipment. The Christian wore red headbands, clothes with red motifs, and various implements of war. It was guessed that it had been prepared long time ago before the riots, because at the time of the conflict, simultaneously people wore these attributes. *Secondly*, at the time when the conflict was taking place, the night of March 31, 1999, the two communities were directly fragmented and separated between Muslims and Christians. That is to say, it was suddenly happened a very sharp separation between the two communities. They were facing each other in that conflict. *Thirdly*, in any attack carried both Muslim and Christian, besides the houses were burned and destroyed, and people were killed, the interesting fact was the main target of the attack, was to burn or damage the church buildings or mosques. The attacker would have been satisfied when the two places of worship had been destroyed. *Fourthly*, the striking thing of the conflict is that, it always happened (started) with Muslim villages attacked, burned and killed and the Christians would do otherwise. So, of the four conclusions above, it can be said that the unrest in the Kei Islands really is a conflict between religion (Muslims and Christians). Because in reality the war was clearly due to the name of religion by wearing religious attributes, regardless of religion had been politicized by certain individuals or groups for specific purposes anyway or not.²⁷

The Impact

The conflict in Kei has led to various kinds of damage. *Firstly*, is the damage of social order. Kinship tied into the fraternity of "*ni Ain Ain*" broke and shattered. Residents lived in ghetto communities which were always suspicious of one another. *Secondly*, is the economic paralysis. Kei become isolated from the outside world. On the one hand, there were many traders stopping to do the trading activity because their shops were looted or burned, on the other hand there was never any supply of goods from outside to Kei. All trading activities were completely paralyzed; there was no buying and selling activity. *Thirdly*, is the physical damage. During the riots, there were so many houses and buildings both public and private destroyed. The material loss resulted cannot be calculated with a precise count. The physical damage could or might reach several trillion rupiahs. *Fourthly*, the unrest

²⁶ C. J. Bohm, *Cross-Event of conflict in Moluccas* (Ambon, 1999), 2.

²⁷ A.A. Yawangoe, *Religion and Harmony* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2002), p.xiv

also resulted in many people died and got injured. There was never a definite and accurate data. *Fifthly*, there were thousands of people were displaced and living in places of refuge which had never been known. The problems of food and water, sanitation, health, clothing and psychological problems arising as a result of that life. In short, as a result of the violence made so many people experiencing agony which can only be recovered within a quite period long.

Peace Efforts in Kei

In contrast to other regions in the province of Moluccas, the conflict in Southeast Moluccas ended quite faster than others. The conflict in Kei only lasted from late March to December 1999. After that, there was a period of recovery from the conflict until today. There are several agencies that are considered important to promote peace in the Kei.

Indigenous Institute

The customary law 'Larvul Ngabal,' which has long been central to Kei society, played a crucial role in regulating society. The community continues to follow these customary laws. Custom roles can be observed in the efforts for peace, for example, the agreement of every king to establish peace in every region. The kings followed a tradition of visiting various regions to establish peace. This activity was spearheaded by the king Faan and welcomed by all the kings in the Little Kei and the Big Kei. As part of the peace efforts, the kings visited one another, pledged to secure peace, and vowed not to engage in the conflict. Those (the kings) who violated this business would be considered as opposing to all the other kings. To solidify this agreement, each king's court displayed a prohibition sign, known locally as *hawear*.²⁸

Traditional leaders also held dialogues with religious and community leaders. Another activity involved carrying a decorated wooden boat in a procession, symbolizing the rebuilding of relationships. This activity, led by the youth of Langgur (a Christian village), involved walking toward Muslim villagers to rebuild the broken kinship.

Role of Religious Leaders

Efforts to bring peace received serious attention from religious groups as well. Every religious group sought peace and agreed that conflicts with ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group nuances (SARA) should be stopped. This was affirmed in a joint statement by religious leaders in Kei. Efforts to achieve peace were supported by various activities such as: a meeting of religious leaders, community leaders and youth from all three classes

²⁸ Hawear is a prohibition sign (in Kei "sasi") by using young coconut leaves, which are made by mutual agreement not to be violated by anyone for the deal. For those who violate, will be punished by custom.

of religions, which was housed in the village hall of Langgur. It was a refreshing moment for all participants, followed by joint prayers ('doa bersama') involving the three religious groups. The first joint prayer was held in Wearhir, a Christian stronghold, and the second in *Lodar El*, Tual, a Muslim area.

The Attention of the Central Government

The interreligious conflict in Kei was a significant concern for both local and national governments. Local authorities generally supported the peace efforts led by indigenous and religious leaders. The central government worked tirelessly to restore harmony and safety in Kei society. Measures included increasing security personnel, particularly in conflict-prone areas, and forming task force teams to assist victims of violence. Improve the phrasing: "In addition, the Vice-President at the time, Mrs. Megawati Sukarnoputri, visited Kei. Her visit was welcomed by all parties and marked an important moment in the reconciliation efforts in the Kei Islands.

The Church and The Empowerment of Local Culture Society Kei

As stated above that the conflict in Kei can be so quickly solved, because indigenous people are still bound by a very strong and thick, besides sufficient adherence of the public to noise religion and government. In this section, about to investigate the concept of kinship Kei who become adhesive whole community without distinction of religion, then put forward the principles of how the Church can promote a culture of Kei as a concrete form of true brotherhood. In this context, the authors further demonstrate how the strategy of the Church maintains a positive attitude while developing a culture of respect for Kei.

Familial Bond and Kinship a la Kei Society

Unlike in other areas in Moluccas, the riots in Kei Islands very quickly were overcome by the power of custom. The essence of the custom is familial tie. In Kei culture, the spirit of brotherhood is the effort and struggle of every person. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that true brotherhood lived and developed through the spirit of kinship (family-centric) was bound by customary law. Kinship in Kei is understood in a broad sense that includes all the dimensions of human life and is not limited to the shape of biological kinship. The spirit of brotherhood and kinship in Kei, upheld by customary law, is most clearly seen in relationships such as *Yanur-Mangohoi*, *Koi-Maduan* and *Teabel*.

Yanur-Mangohoi

Kinship *Yanur-Mangoboi* is a union of people bound by customary marriage. Marriage of two people is the responsibility of two large families (*fam*), even to the attention of the whole society. Unity in the *fam*, is actually a patrilineal kinship group.²⁹

Yanur-Mangoboi is a term used in the context of marriage to explain the relationship between the male, the recipient of women (*Yanur*) of the donor/giver woman (*Mangoboi*). Therefore, the term is never used outside of the context of marriage. This term is given since a woman making a proposal accepted by the agreement on custom meeting (*sidang adat*) of the arrangement of the treasure mating and marriage. *Yanur-Mangoboi* is bound by a valid marriage and continues as long as there has been no death of one of the parties in the marriage. Nevertheless, in practice, the two sides still respect each other and help each other. Although the term is only imposed in the context of marriage, there are also the implications of this custom on the events like birth or death, for example. On this occasion, the *Yanur Mangoboi* asks to reciprocate and give them the respect/honor and present the prizes. *Yanur* must recognize the *advantages and benefits Mangoboi* to pay homage and send gifts at the family events such as birth, marriage and death.³⁰ Moreover, when *Mangoboi* experiences difficulties, *Yanur* helps with money/possessions and vice versa when the *Yanur* experiences it, then *Mangoboi* come bringing food/dishes/treasure.

Yanur-Mangoboi kinship's function at the time of death is clear: when there is a death, then the whole *fam* of the dead person must work together to help food, dig the grave, make a coffin, and other work. When the death of the *Mangoboi*, then the *Yanur* assists with gold/money/Jaunty/gong according to the ability, while the *Mangoboi* prepares the death clothes worn on the dead man. Thus, the model of *Mangoboi-Yanur* kinship has social functions, but also the implications of the economic function.³¹

Koi-Maduan

Literally, *maduan* means *master or owner*. *Maduan* is a person who always provides assistance, while the beneficiaries of so-called *koi*, which means subordinate or slave. In a Kei society, the term *Koi-Maduan* is not always used in the same context.

First, *Koi-Maduan* is used also in the context of marriage. Marriages in the context of Kei custom are basically arranged in relation with *Yanur-Mangoboi*. Everyone is principally a communion of the blood called *fam*. *Fam* head of *Yanur* is usually called *Maduan*. The *Maduans* are people who buy wives for the *fam*. Consequently, all the members of the *fam*

²⁹ Subyakto, "Culture Ambon," in: Koentjaraningrat (ed), *Man and Culture of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1970), 178.

³⁰ See F.A.E.van Wouden, *Klen, Myths and Powers* (Jakarta: Graffiti Press, 1985), 11.

³¹ Johanis Ohoitumur, *Some Attitude to Laje of Kei* (Pineleng: 1988), 109.

which is known as *Koi* are the subordinate. Because the *Maduan* is considered as the owner, then in various situations, *Koi* is obliged to avenge his service and honor the *Maduan*. *Koi* presents prizes at a time of family events such as birth, marriage and death. So it is clear that the relationship *Koi-Maduan* is especially intertwined in one particular fam (fam, Yanur). The head of fam acts as *Maduan* and be responsible for the members of its fam. The life of the members is submitted to *Maduan*. *Maduan* has its power of *Koi*'s life, and obedience to *Maduan* is absolute of *Koi*. Thus, it seems clear that the *Koi-Maduan* in the context of social marriage represents the epitome of internal relations between the head of the fam with the members of their fam.

Second, *Koi-Maduan* is also used in the context of socio-economic agreement. *Koi-Maduan* relations in the socio-economic context are intended more as a social covenant between two groups of people (generally between villages). The contents of the agreement are concerned economic assistance, an agreement which is generally held in special circumstances such as a state of war, the danger of accidents and starvation. *Maduan* is aiding, while *Koi* are those who receive assistance. Kinship *Koi-Maduan* is formed when the bonding carries an agreement to help each other. In that connection, *Maduan* may at any time require the remuneration of the *Koi*, *Koi* while always trying to show the attitude of obedient and respectful towards their *Maduan*. In the *Koi-Maduan* relationship, there is an agreement of mutual respect.

Koi-Maduan relation contains two components, namely superiors and subordinates. The bosses' groups act as the arranger or organizer to organize, and demand rights and is responsible for the interests of his subordinates while the subordinates shall submit and obey, and entrust themselves to his superiors by serving the needs of his superiors.

Teabel

Another form of traditional kinship in Kei is *teabel*. The basis of this kinship is more on a friendship treaty one hometown/village with one or several other villages. Literally, the term *teabel* is derived from the word “*tea*,” which means scraping and “*bell*” means the flowing blood. *Teabel* is treaty bound by the bloodstream. The most important element of this culture is the solidarity among brothers who points to two things simultaneously. *Firstly*, is the attitude to help people/other villages that are involved in the agreement of the association. *Secondly*, the ability to get involved in other people's lives in a customary agreement.

Teabel kinship system actually wills to elevate everyone as brothers and sisters who need to be respected, served and cared for. This culture has its own rules which were quite strict and often brought heavy sanctions for those who break them. For example, in the mating system it is not allowed to allow marriages between young men and women who

have blood relations or enter into a bond *teabel*. Thus, the culture of *teabel* creates a system that as the blood, is not allowed to build the home. Culture *teabel* the basis of brotherhood and kinship, sees others as his own brother who has the same blood with the other fellow. The specialty of this family model is that both sides have the same rights and obligations to give and take items belonging to both parties. The model of the *teabel* relationship refers to kinship of people which feel united by blood relatives, with heritage treasures that belong together anyway. They try to maintain the treasure for others, but with a great willingness can be given to other people as possessions mating of one member of his own clan. On the basis of the agreement, the two villages to be sisters, no bond 'blood' as well. This bond has consequences on the collective ownership of the goods. So *teabel* culture refers to the way people live and work based on a relationship of brotherhood and kinship. These relations could happen between the clans, and between villages. The proper term to describe the relation *teabel* is how to work as brothers and relatives regardless of different religions and villages.

The Basic Ideas of Kinship

The forms of kinship of Kei society as described above have some similarities to the basic ideas, namely, collective living/life attitude, the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood, putting the priority for a brotherhood that which is tied in the family as well as their hierarchical structure of Kei society in families that tend to create obedience to boss or an older person. Collective attitude meant is the unity in Kei kinship relationship with everyone, anytime and anywhere. Kei people tend to attract others to join a blood relation. This is what strengthens the togetherness of Kei people. This collective attitude is basically driven by the spirit of solidarity and kinship tying of kinship in the Kei. Customary agreement conditions everyone to help each other and consider others as their own families. In connection with this, Kei people hold tight hierarchical structure within the family. The elderly or those who are older should be respected in absolute obedience.

Family-centered Togetherness

Interpersonal relationship is always based on the relationship as “brother.” Everyone is seen as brother of one family. This is particularly evident in the family structure *a la* Kei through the term *teen Teen fo, fo yanyanat yanyanat; Yaan Yaan fo, fo warin warin; yanur yanur fo, fo mangoboi mangoboi,*” parents should always be recognized and respected on the one hand, while on the other hand children should obey their parents. Kei has family structure that forced each family member to have their own status.³² The core of this

³² Johanis Ohoitumur, *Customary Law and Attitude to Life of Kei* (Pinleng 1996), 27.

structure is, there are some acting as superior (parent) and there is a subordinate (child). One basic tendency in Kei society in tracing family relationships in the association, for example is through the formulated question: "who your parents." The conclusion which is always taken is "you and me are brother and sister," although in fact there is no blood relationship in the strict sense. By this way, one puts others in the family structure.

Collective Attitudes or Spirit of Kei People: Prioritizing Legal Aspects

The collective attitude of the people of Kei prioritizes the law, sometimes to the point of absolutizing it. In communal life, the common law is held in high esteem above all else. Obedience to the law is closely linked with the ideals of kinship, where adherence to the law fosters strong kinship bonds. However, it is important to note that this kinship-based obedience does not reflect a legalistic attitude, which implies compliance with the law for its own sake. Instead, it is obedience to the law for the sake of preserving kinship among the Kei people. Regulations, treaties, and agreements bound by law must be adhered to for kinship to thrive. Violating these laws can result in the loss of kinship bonds. The absolutization of the law was influenced by the legal practices of farmers in Kei, who, due to their regular work schedules, came to view regularity as essential for successful farming.

The Attitudes of Living of Kei People

First, the spirit of willingness to help is fundamental in Kei culture, embodied in the term "Maren," which means working together. Helping others occurs spontaneously and without formal invitations, such as during events like opening a new garden, building a house, or during weddings and funerals. Those bound by kinship naturally work together. This willingness to help is crucial for maintaining relationships and reflects a sense of obligation rooted in the deontological aspects of Kei people's attitudes. Secondly, the belief that others will reciprocate help is closely related to the willingness to assist. This attitude encourages people to undertake large projects with minimal capital, relying on mutual support. For example, a family building a house with limited resources will trust that other families will help through Maren. Thirdly, the attitude of obedience and respect towards superiors is prevalent in Kei. A boss is seen as a unifying figure within the kinship group, holding power and representing cosmic laws. This respect is rooted in the boss's transcendent yet immanent role. Fourthly, Kei people practice gratitude, repaying kindness with a heartfelt "thank you." In Kei language, "tet ya" signifies deep personal connection and appreciation. This sense of obligation to repay assistance fosters strong familial bonds. The essence of gratitude in Kei culture is to meet the good of others with a collective attitude that strengthens relationships. Overall, these forms of kinship reflect a communal

agreement involving many people, where kinship transcends religious distinctions and is more about familial attachment.

Dialogue Church and Culture of Kei

Fraternal relations in Kei society are kinship bonds rooted in custom. The Kei kinship system transcends the boundaries of religion, group, or class and has endured throughout Kei society over time. Kinship is evident in the behavior, spirit, and way of life of the Kei people. Therefore, the church's approach to society should integrate both Kei's customary practices and church teachings. Catechesis should be based on church teachings and the Bible, while also exploring and incorporating Kei's customary familial principles. Consequently, the church and Kei's traditional practices must work together. The church's appreciation of customary practices is crucial to prevent discrimination or neglect of prevailing values. The current life of Kei society highlights the role of the church in shaping human life and organizing social customs. The church and traditional customs both play foundational roles in fostering a spirit of brotherhood. The central question is how the church's attitude towards the customs practiced in Kei society can be aligned with its teachings.

The Church's Attitude to Custom

The church's attitude towards traditional values in Kei society is highlighted by the events of the 1960s and 1970s, when objects of Kei's tribal religion were destroyed. This destruction was negatively perceived by the local community, as these objects held significant magical and cultural power. Has the church's attitude changed over time? The church's development demonstrates an openness to traditional values, indicating that religion and culture can complement each other in Kei society. The approach of Catholic missionaries significantly contributed to the church's success in Kei, leading to the gradual acceptance of Christianity by the Kei people. Rather than viewing native culture and beliefs as inferior or in need of eradication, the church has earnestly studied and incorporated positive elements of Kei's culture, raising them to a higher level in alignment with Christian values.

Respect for the Indigenous Kinship

The forms of familial relationships in Kei customs, such as *yanur-mangoboi*, *koi-maduan*, and *teabel*, serve as models for binding various levels of society. In these kinship forms, everyone is considered part of a single family and shares in each other's struggles, anxieties, hopes, and joys. This kinship fosters a high regard for others, characterized by mutual aid, solidarity, and a shared sense of belonging. The church positively regards the

values upheld by traditional family structures and has approved various rules and restrictions that govern these relationships. The church is not hostile towards tradition but shows high respect for the values embedded in these customs. It acknowledges that these familial forms encompass all aspects of life, including religion, justice, family relationships, and both life and death. Customary practices offer guidelines for specific situations, such as negotiations, and also outline the general conduct of life events. The Church greatly values traditional practices, especially those that promote treating others as family. It recognizes the sublime value and dignity of others and sees them as brothers who need to be loved and appreciated. For instance, the church supports the prohibition of sibling incest in yanur-mangohoi, respects dignity and assistance in koi-maduan, and appreciates the supportive spirit of the teabel relationship.

Indigenous and Christianity: Two realities that can be aligned

Customary law and family values among the Kei people are effective in maintaining unity within a pluralistic society. Every aspect of life and activity is guided by customary law, which offers individuals the opportunity to adhere to it and view it as sacred and powerful. This demonstrates their high regard for individuals, groups, and the value of human life. Every person is considered noble and unique, with inherent qualities and strengths. They have the strength to live, grow, work, and produce various things to sustain themselves. Tradition and customary law have parallels with Christian values, as reflected in Gospel teachings. Gospel values such as love, brotherhood, peace, joy, solidarity, and mutual respect, which Jesus practiced during his time in Palestine, align with traditional values. The Church emphasizes that brotherhood is stronger than revenge and love is more powerful than hatred. The Church reminds people that they are God's creations and limited beings. Therefore, people should love and respect each other, offer help, live in solidarity, and build unity and brotherhood with God and one another. Thus, we recognize ourselves as part of a global community that embraces all religions.³³

There are two main reasons, based on the Kei people's spirit and worldview, for accepting the Gospel. First, the Gospel has the power to transform Kei community life from a focus on natural fears to an awareness of the Highest God, the creator of the world. The Kei people are also receptive to the Gospel due to the missionaries' positive attitude and example, particularly their contributions in helping and curing diseases.³⁴ Second, there is a strong awareness of ethical norms within the society. This awareness is reflected in their customs, notably in the severe punishments for violations of decency. This awareness

³³ Harold Coward, *Pluralism: Challenges to Religions* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1989), 66.

³⁴ Lothar Schreiner, *Indigenous and Gospel* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung-Mulia, 1996), 59.

influences society to both preserve existing customs and embrace Gospel values that resonate with their community. Thus, the relationship between traditional customs and the Gospel is one of mutual influence. This process of mutual influence suggests that religion should complement indigenous customs rather than override them. Religion and customs are not opposed to each other; rather, they work together to shape each individual in the Kei community into a mature person.³⁵

Indigenous Law and Christianity: Two Complementary Matters

Indigenous law refers to the customs and behaviors regarded as polite and beneficial for the community. These customs are essential for the common welfare and must be adhered to. Indigenous practices represent an ideal cultural code of conduct that evolved from human experiences.³⁶ These customs gradually became ingrained, forming habits that were eventually recognized as customary law. Thus, customary practices became laws that establish the foundation for human life. Customary social conventions guide people in tact, courtesy, and good fellowship. Additionally, customary law acts as a deterrent to criminal behavior. There is no inherent contradiction between Christianity and these views.³⁷ While both indigenous customs and Christianity have their distinct characteristics, there are no customary practices or regulations that cannot be harmonized with Christian teachings and modern times. Both remain complementary aspects of Kei community life. Anton Wessels suggests that culture represents humanity's response to the call of Christ.³⁸ Wessels' statement highlights that customs and the Gospels complement and enhance human life.

CONCLUSION

Issues arisen as a result of various disputes and conflicts are the local culture ignored and is not obtained space, opportunity and freedom to evolve in a more natural and dynamic. Social roles of law leaders are also turned off. Local culture is considered traditional and less developing the construction so slowly eroded. As a result, the existence of local culture was almost extinct. Kei society seems to have an identity crisis, alienated from their cultural roots, causing deep social frustration and painful, because no longer having hold of life. The experience of unrest in Kei really makes people thinking about the importance of local culture. Since it has been proven, it turns out Kei people are able to quickly resolve inter-

³⁵ H. Richard Nieburh, *Christ and Culture* (Jakarta: Petra Jaya), 131.

³⁶ Kuntjaraningrat, *Culture, Mentality and Development* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1974), 27

³⁷ Schreiner, *Indigenous*, 162.

³⁸ Anton Wessels, *Looking at Jesus: Images of Jesus in a variety of Culture* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999),

religious conflict by finding the adhesive ropes in custom, which goes beyond the walls of religion.

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