

MOLOKU KIE RAHA AND THE LEGACY OF CULTURAL ISLAM: THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF TERNATE AND TIDORE

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Article history: Received: January 8, 2025 | Revised: March 28, 2025 | Available online: March 31, 2025

How to cite this article: Rubaidi, Hajar Nurma Wachidah, and Fariza MD Sham. "Moloku Kie Raha and the Legacy of Cultural Islam: The Enduring Influence of Ternate and Tidore." *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (2025): 373-404. DOI: [10.15642/islamica.2025.19.2.373-404](https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2025.19.2.373-404)

Abstract: This study critically examines the role of Moloku Kie Raha, a historical entity encompassing the four sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo, with a particular focus on the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore. By analyzing historical texts, oral traditions, cultural practices, and interviews, this research explores the transmission of cultural Islam within both the sultanate system and the broader community. It argues that these sultanates were not merely political entities adopting Islam for strategic purposes but were active agents in shaping a localized form of Islamic tradition deeply embedded in indigenous customs. The interplay between royal authority, traditional institutions, and Islamic teachings fostered a distinctive socio-religious structure that continues to shape the cultural and spiritual identity of Ternate and Tidore. In the contemporary era, these sultanates remain vital in driving social transformation through an Islamic framework. This study challenges conventional narratives of Islamization by highlighting the nuanced and dynamic role of local sultanates in shaping Islamic identity, both at the institutional and communal levels.

Keywords: Islamization; Moloku Kie Raha; Ternate-Tidore Sultanates; Cultural Islam; Islamic Identity.

Introduction

The Islamisation of the Indonesian archipelago was a dynamic and complex historical process, with North Maluku—particularly Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo—playing a crucial role in integrating Islamic teachings with local traditions. The four sultanates, collectively known as “*Moloku Kie Raha*,” not only facilitated the introduction and spread of Islam within North Maluku but also extended their influence to the Moluccas, Raja Ampat, Sulawesi, and even Mindanao in the Philippines.¹ Positioned at the crossroads of the maritime Silk Road (14th-17th centuries), these sultanates became hubs for cultural exchange, where traders from Java, Aceh, China, Arabia, and Europe introduced linguistic and intellectual influences that blended with indigenous traditions. This confluence fostered a distinctive literary culture, as seen in the production of sagas, treatises, genealogies, and political documents that reflect the evolution of Maluku’s Islamic identity.²

Given their historical significance, this study focuses on the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore as primary representatives in the transmission of cultural Islam. Unlike Bacan and Jailolo, which experienced periods of decline, Ternate and Tidore have maintained their historical continuity and continue to play a vital role in preserving and transmitting Islamic traditions. These sultanates were not merely passive recipients of Islamic teachings but active agents that adapted and reinterpreted Islam in ways that aligned with local traditions. Their governance structures, customary laws, and socio-religious practices illustrate that Islam was not solely embraced as an individual faith but also integrated as a foundational pillar of political and cultural identity. Therefore, a more in-depth investigation is

¹ The history of *Moloku Kie Raha* is also a mosaic of interactions between local communities and various colonising nations such as the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and British. The European exploration drive to discover spice-rich territories and expand their economic empire made Maluku an attractive destination. See Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Kisah Boki Debegila: Antologi Cerita Rakyat Maluku Utara* (Ternate: Badan Bahasa Provinsi Maluku Utara, 2011), 92-94; Interview with *Jogugu* (Prime Minister of the Sultanate of Tidore), Muhammad Amin Faquk, November 6, 2024; Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, *The Discovery and Conquest of The Molucco and Philippine Islands* (London: n.p, 1708).

² Titik Pudjiastuti, “Naskah-naskah Moloku Kie Raha: Suatu Tinjauan Umum,” *Manuscripta* 6, no. 1 (2016): 1-10.

required to examine how Islam was constructed, internalized, and transmitted within the socio-cultural framework of the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore, shedding light on their unique contributions to shaping the distinct Islamic character of the region.

Recent studies on the Islamization of the Maluku Islands have primarily emphasized political dynamics and trade networks as key drivers of Islamic expansion,³ while the role of the Ternate and Tidore Sultanates in the cultural transmission of Islam remains insufficiently explored. These sultanates not only facilitated the spread of Islam through elite patronage but also integrated Islamic teachings with indigenous traditions, shaping a distinctive socio-religious framework.⁴ This fusion of political authority and cultural adaptation challenges the notion of Islamization as a uniform or externally imposed process. Additionally, although previous research has examined Tidore's influence in spreading Islam to Papua and coastal New Guinea,⁵ the internal mechanisms of cultural acculturation within the sultanates themselves remain understudied. Rituals such as the Jere pilgrimage in Ternate illustrate how Islamic principles became embedded within local belief systems, reinforcing communal religious identity through localized expressions.⁶ Therefore, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how Islam was actively shaped and indigenized within the sociopolitical landscape of Moloku Kie Raha.

This study employs a multidisciplinary historical approach, integrating textual analysis, oral traditions, and ethnographic inquiry to examine the transmission of cultural Islam within the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore. Primary sources, including historical manuscripts such as *Hikayat Ternate* and *Hikayat Bacan*, as well as colonial records and official compilations of folklore published by the Gov-

³ Wuri Handoko and Syahruddin Mansyur, "Kesultanan Tidore: Bukti Arkeologi Sebagai Pusat Kekuasaan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Wilayah Periferi," *Berkala Arkeologi* 38, no. 1 (June 29, 2018): 17-38; Rusdiyanto, "Kesultanan Ternate dan Tidore," *Jurnal Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 3, no. 1 (June 30, 2018): 44-53.

⁴ Rakhmat Harun, Fauzan Hanafi, and Muhdi Alhadar, "Komunikasi Ritual Ziarah Jere Ppda Masyarakat Adat Ternate Menurut Islam," *Qadauna: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Hukum Keluarga Islam* 5, no. 2 (May 13, 2024): 361-376.

⁵ Holger Warnk, "The Coming of Islam and Moluccan-Malay Culture to New Guinea c.1500–1920," *Indonesia and The Malay World* 38, no. 110 (June 15, 2010): 109-134.

⁶ Harun, Hanafi, and Alhadar, "Komunikasi Ritual Ziarah Jere pada Masyarakat Adan Ternati Menurut Islam."

ernment, are critically analyzed to trace the institutional and ideological transformations of Islam in the region. Additionally, ethnographic fieldwork, including structured interviews with key informants such as sultanate representatives, religious scholars, and community elders, further substantiates the study's findings by contextualizing historical developments within contemporary socio-religious practices. By employing this triangulated methodological framework, the research not only reconstructs the historical trajectory of Islamization in *Moloku Kie Raha* but also elucidates the dynamic interplay between royal authority, customary institutions, and Islamic discourses in shaping a distinctive cultural-religious identity in the region.

Moloku Kie Raha and the Process of Institutionalising Islam

Literally, the term “*Moloken Kie Raha*” comes from the local Ternate language. In the word *Moloku* means ‘archipelago,’ *Kie* means ‘mountain,’ and *Raha* means ‘four.’ Thus, *Moloku Kie Raha* can be translated as ‘Four Mountains in North Maluku.’ *Moloku Kie Raha* means Four mountains of Maluku. The four mountains refer to four islands that each have active mountains, namely the islands of Ternate, Tidore, Moti and Makian. Later on, this term developed and has a meaning by referring to four kingdoms or sultanates in North Maluku, namely the Sultanate of Ternate, the Sultanate of Tidore, the Sultanate of Bacan, and the Sultanate of Jailolo.⁷ Because the islands are quite close to each other, in the future, the four of them formed an alliance, hence the term *Moloku Kie Raha* was born. The term *Moloku Kie Raha* contains a confederation of four kingdoms in North Maluku in the 14th century.

Etymologically, the term “Maluku” comes from the word *Moloku*, which in Malay Arabic can be interpreted as “Moluccas.”⁸ *Moloku* itself means ‘cloves have a place,’ referring to the cluster of

⁷ M. Adnan Amal, *Kepulauan Rempah-Rempah: Perjalanan Sejarah Maluku Utara 1250-1950* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2010).

⁸ In another version, it is said that etymologically, *ma* in Ternate means to have, while *loko* means place. Since the word *Moloku* is a predicate of the noun *gaumedi*, the clove tree, *Maloku* should be clarified to mean ‘the clove has a place (of origin) or the growth (origin) of the clove.’ See Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Kisah Boki Debegila Antologi Cerita Rakyat Maluku Utara*.

clove-producing islands of Ternate, Tidore, Moti, and Makian. These four islands are known as “*Gaumedi Yo Maloko*,” meaning ‘the place where cloves grow.’⁹ Prosperity from the clove trade gave birth to a power called “*Kije Momole*,” a local leadership structure that later developed into an Islamic kingdom.

Meanwhile, the term *Kie Raha* does not only refer to the four mountains that form the sacred landscape of Ternate, Tidore, Makian and Moti. More than that, it symbolises the four kingdoms that are the pillars of political and cultural stability in Maluku. Since pre-colonial times, Maluku has been known as the centre of the spice trade—especially cloves—which made the region an epicentre of global exchange. These trade routes built economic and cultural networks that connected Maluku to the archipelago and the world.

According to the Qadarsabah legend, Persian sailors arrived at Gapi Island (Ternate) in 802, opening trade routes for Arab and Persian sailors to the Moluccas.¹⁰ Later on, *Momole*’s power structure transformed from a kingdom to an Islamic sultanate. The Moti Kingdom then moved to Jailolo, while the Makian Kingdom moved to Kasiruta Island to become the Bacan Kingdom.¹¹ These four sultanates united in a Moloku confederation called “*Moloku Kiye Raha*.”

Of the four sultanates, Ternate and Tidore expanded their territories: Tidore reached Seram Island and Papua, while Ternate extended its influence to central Indonesia and the southern Philippines. The phrase “*Kije Raha Yo Fato-Fato*” describes four main islands that are aligned: Gapi Island (Ternate), Doku Island (Tidore), Tuanane Island (Moti) and Iron Island (Makian).¹² *Kije* means mountain, which symbolises these kingdoms. In the early centuries of world trade, cloves from the Moloku Islands became a global commodity, attracting traders at the suggestion of Ja‘far Ṣādiq. The four sultanates eventually formed an Islamic confederation known as “*al-Mamlakah al-Malukiyah*,” which was officially established in 1257.

Historically, the development of Moloku Kiye Raha is divided into two periods, namely the *Momole* period and the Islamic era. The

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Het Sultanaat Batjan dalam Encyclopaedisch Bureau Aflevering I* (‘s-Gravenhage: N. V. Electrische Drukkerij, 1911).

¹² Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Kisah Boki Debegila Antologi Cerita Rakyat Maluku Utara*.

Momole period reflects the structure of Ternate's indigenous society which is divided into four groups: (1) Tubo: The people who lived in the highlands of Mount Gamalama (*Gam Lamo* or 'big country'); (2) Tobona, the group who lived in the Foramadiah highlands; (3) Tabanga, the people who lived in the forest area; and (4) Tboleu, the group who lived in the lowlands due to sea sand deposits. Each group is led by a *Momole*. The criteria for a *Momole* is a leader who is authoritative, powerful and has special skills. This group life gave birth to a customary system called "*Galib Se Lakadi*." Entering the Islamic era, the *Momole* system was replaced by the sultanate structure. However, the last *Momole* who ruled in Tobona is still remembered in the concept of *Moli Malafī*.

The dynamics of power in Maluku reached its peak during the era of Sultan Khairun and Sultan Baabullah in Ternate, and Sultan Saifuddin and Sultan Nuku in Tidore. The introduction of Islam enriched Moloku Kie Raha's political identity, as the kings adopted the titles "*sultan*" and "*shah*" and integrated Islamic values into the governance of the kingdom. Ternate and Tidore, as formidable maritime powers, were not only instrumental in trade, but also in building resistance to colonialism, making their history a narrative of struggle rooted in local traditions and global interactions.

Based on the narrative description above, Moloku Kie Raha, with all its complexity of history, myths and cultural interactions, remains a symbol of collective identity that reflects the encounter between locality and globality in the socio-humanities landscape of the archipelago. As a sub-culture, the history of Islam in the Moloku Kie Raha region still holds many discourses that need more in-depth study attention. This is because the data related to this study is still quite limited. Therefore, many studies are still needed to assemble into a more comprehensive study.

Ternate and Tidore are the focal points of this paper, which does not mean abandoning the study of the other two sultanates. This starting point is simply because the North Maluku region in the mainstream of modern Indonesian society is synonymous with Ternate. In addition, among the four sultanates, the Ternate Sultanate from the aspect of the leadership of the sultans has never been interrupted. In contrast, in the other three sultanates, the period of leadership of the sultans had experienced a vacuum period. Thus,

the study starting from the Ternate Sultanate will link the other two sultanates, namely the Sultanates of Bacan and Joelolo.

The discourse on the early acceptance of Islam in the Sultanate of Ternate in North Maluku involves complex questions such as how, why and when the process took place. A single consensus on this is difficult to achieve given the variety of historical sources available. Based on a number of historical premises, it can be identified that the Asian-Arab, Gujarati and Chinese merchant networks, which had already embraced Islam, served as the initial agents for the spread of the religion in Maluku. Not only that, but Javanese and Malay traders who were Muslims also became important bridges in the process. Figures such as Arab Shaykh Mansur, who was present in Tidore during the reign of *Kolano* Caliati, and Javanese Datuk Maula Hussein, who preached in Ternate during the reign of *Kolano* Marhum, represent the synergy of trade and Islamic preaching in the region.

The process of spreading Islam in Ternate did not only take place through economic interaction, but also through deep social interaction between Muslim migrants and local communities. Cultural assimilation through mixed marriages became one of the effective mechanisms that strengthened the footprint of Islam in the land of Moloku Kie Raha. A conducive political atmosphere under the leadership of local rulers also facilitated the Islamisation process.

However, the most controversial aspect of the study of the Islamisation of Moloku Kie Raha, as in other parts of the archipelago, is the exact timing of Islam's arrival. Portuguese sources are often the main reference, which mention 1486 as a crucial moment, marked by the inauguration of Sultan Zainal Abidin in Ternate.¹³ This year is considered a milestone in the Islamisation of Maluku, as Zainal Abidin began to bear the Islamic title of 'sultan', replacing the traditional title of "*kolano*" that had been used for centuries by previous rulers.¹⁴ Historian Francois Valentijn notes that Islam entered Ternate in 1465, coinciding with the arrival of Datuk Maulana Husain, a Malay scholar and preacher who began his preaching in

¹³ Muhammad Sakti Garwan, "Beliefs, Traditions and Culture of the Ternate Sultanate Community after Islamisation," in *Religion and Culture after Islamisation*, eds. Sumanto Al-Qurtuby and Tedi Kholiludin (Semarang: eLSA Press, 2020), 199-200.

¹⁴ Amal, *Kepulauan Rempah-Rempah*, 235-236.

that period.¹⁵ Datuk Maula Husain played an important role in guiding Sultan Zainal Abidin Shah to study Islam. However, Sultan Zainal Abidin's knowledge was finally perfected in Gresik. He eventually studied with Sunan Giri in Gresik, East Java.¹⁶ Dutch and Portuguese writers tend to date 1468 as the formal beginning of Islamisation in Ternate, linked to the appointment of Zainal Abidin Shah as the first sultan to use Islamic titles.

Datuk Maulana Husain, who according to some sources came from Minangkabau, had an interesting preaching journey. Before arriving in Ternate, he had settled in Gresik, an area in Java known as the centre of the spread of Islam. His arrival in Ternate in 1465 was not just as a trader, but also as an accomplished religious propagator.¹⁷ Armed with a deep knowledge of Islam, his expertise in recitation and Arabic calligraphy also became an important instrument in his preaching. On certain nights, the melodious sound of Datuk Maula Husain's recitation of the Qur'an and his calligraphic works mesmerised the local community, fostering interest in Islam among the Ternate population.

The influence of Datuk Maulana Husain's da'wah was not only felt by ordinary people, but also reached the royal elite. News of the Islamisation of the Ternate people through the recitation of the Holy Qur'an and recitations eventually reached the palace. Kaicil Marhum, the ruler of Ternate in 1465- 1486, invited Datuk Maulana Husain for an official audience.¹⁸ In a meeting attended by *bobato* and royal officials, he recited the verses of the Qur'an solemnly and beautifully. Touched by the beauty and spiritual significance of the recitation, Kaicil Marhum, followed by the *bobato* and other attendees, recited the two sentences of the shahada as a symbol of acceptance of Islam.¹⁹

¹⁵ Kasman Hi Ahmad and Herman Oesman (eds.), *Damai yang Terkoyak: Catatan Kelam dari Bumi Halmahera* (Ternate: Manadi Press, 2000), 16.

¹⁶ Hasan Muarif Ambari, *Menemukan Peradaban: Jejak Arkeologis dan Historis Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Logos, 1998), 63.

¹⁷ François Valentijn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiëen*, vol. 1b (Dordrecht-Amsterdam: N.p., 1724), 378.

¹⁸ Usman Nomay, "Orang Melayu di Kota Ternate Abad XV-XIV," *Al-Qalam* 20, no. 2 (2016): 245-254.

¹⁹ Ahmad and Oesman, *Damai yang Terkoyak: Catatan Kelam dari Bumi Halmahera*, 17.

Although there is no exact record of the year of conversion among the Ternate court, it is estimated that the event occurred around 1470. With the conversion of Kaicil Marhum and the *bobato*, the legitimacy of Islam as the official religion of the Sultanate of Ternate was strengthened. This process reflects the socio-cultural transformation influenced by intensive cross-regional trade, scientific and da'wah networks in the 15th century. Thus, Datuk Maulana Husain's role was not only as a religious propagator, but also as a cultural mediator who connected local traditions with Islamic spirituality that developed in the archipelago.

One figure that cannot be ruled out as well as central is Sultan Zainal Abidin himself. Sultan Zainal Abidin occupies a central position in the history of institutional Islamisation in the Sultanate of Ternate. It can be said that Zainal Abidin was the architect of Islamic transformation in the Ternate Sultanate. As the first king to replace the title “*kolano*” with the title “*sultan*,” Zainal Abidin not only represented a symbol of conversion to Islam, but also laid the institutional foundation for Islamic governance in the region. A student of Sunan Ampel and an alumnus of the Islamic educational institution in Gresik run by the renowned Sunan Giri, Zainal Abidin brought deep religious insights and a vision of structural reform to his kingdom.

In his endeavour to embed Islam in the fabric of government, Zainal Abidin established a religious leadership structure under the control of the sultan, making religion a pillar that supported political stability and public morality. One of Zainal Abidin's significant contributions was the creation of the legal institution of the *bobato* - a body that functioned as both judge and magistrate, tasked with enforcing Islamic law and advising the sultan on judicial and administrative matters.

In the day-to-day running of the government, Sultan Zainal Abidin did not work alone. He was assisted by *bobato* who acted as trusted officials and supporters of the sultan's policies. This collaboration between the sultan and the *bobato* created a balance in the power structure, where Islamic values were effectively implemented through a structured institutional network. Through his policies and innovations, Zainal Abidin managed to ‘sublimate’ Islamic principles into Ternate's political, legal and social systems. This transformation not only changed the structure of government, but also es-

established Ternate as a dynamic centre of Islamic civilisation in Maluku and the archipelago.

Beyond the academic text-based sources on the beginning of Islam in Moloku Kie Raha as described above, there is another version of the theory. According to the *Hikayat Ternate* written by one of the poets of the Sultanate of Ternate, Naidah has another version. Islam came to Ternate and other areas in Moloku Kie Raha long before the 14th and 15th centuries. In the 13th century, in the *Hikayat Ternate* as quoted from Rais, a scholar from Arabia, namely Shaykh Ja'far Šādiq, had come. In fact, still in the *Hikayat Ternate*, the date of Ja'far Šādiq arrival is clearly mentioned, namely on Muḥarram 6, 643 coinciding with June 5, 1245.²⁰ From the *Hikayat Ternate*, if true, Islam has come to the Moloku Kie Raha area since the 13th century.

The traces of Ja'far Šādiq are highly believed by the community. According to Baharuddin, Ja'far Šādiq's footsteps are enshrined through a sacred site, in the form of a tomb at the top of Mount Gamalama. The tomb in question, according to Baharuddin, is believed to be the tomb of Ja'far Šādiq which is always visited by the community as well as sacred, both by the sultanate and the people of Ternate in particular.²¹ The grave site at the top of Mount Gamalama is sacred because it is believed to be the first carrier of Islam as well as the forerunner of the sultans in Moloku Kie Raha.

In the tradition of the Moloku Kie Raha people, there is no scholar whose role is narrated more than Ja'far Šādiq. His figure is not only told in the *Hikayat Ternate*, but also in the *Hikayat Bacan*. Although the two versions are somewhat different, they have the same storyline in substance. Ja'far Šādiq is a direct descendant of Sayyidinā Husayn, the son of Fātimah, the Prophet's daughter. At this point it is quite clear, if this story is true, it means that Islam brought to Ternate and its surroundings came directly from the

²⁰ Muhammad Rais, "Wajah Islam di Bandar Jalur Sutera (Kajian Sejarah Sosial Pada Kesultanan Tidore-Maluku Utara)," *Al-Qalam* 16, no. 26 (2010): 195; Leiden University Libraries, *Collective volume of texts in Malay and the Ternate language: Hikayat Ternate; and other texts*, Or. 1938, <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2544412> (accessed November 3, 2024).

²¹ Interview with Baharuddin, one of the Ternate Sultanate family as well as a lecturer at IAIN Ternate, November 7, 2024.

Prophet through his great-grandson, who is a descendant of Husayn.²²

To justify this theory, a story closer to a legend, even a myth, was added. This legend among the people of Ternate is known as the myth of the Seven Princesses.²³ Although it is difficult to trace scientific sources, this story has been a legend among the people for centuries. It is said that Ja'far Šādiq married one of the princesses of heaven named Nur Sifa. The fruit of this marriage gave birth to four descendants who later became kings or sultans in four sultanates, namely the Sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Joelolo. Thus, the mention of Moloku Kie Raha originated because the lineage of Ja'far Šādiq with his four sons eventually became sultans in these four sultanates.

In fact, outside the story of Ja'far Šādiq, there is another community legend that is a reference to the theory of the entry of Islam in the Moloku Kie Raha region. This story begins with the arrival of four scholars from Iraq. Their arrival, empirically associated with the conflict of Islamic understanding between the sunni and shia groups in the era of the caliph in Baghdad. The four Shia scholars fled to the islands of Ternate and its surroundings. The four scholars in question are; (1) Shaykh Mansyur; (2) Shaykh Ya'kup, (3) Shaykh Umar, and (4) Shaykh Amin.²⁴ According to various sources, the arrival of the four scholars was recorded on Rabī' al-Awwal 12, 502 coinciding with April 12, 1108.²⁵

According to oral literature that has been passed down from generation to generation, these four scholars were spread across the islands around Ternate. Shaykh Mansyur (Ternate Island and Halmahera Island), Shaykh Ya'kup (Tidore Island and Makian Island), Shaykh Amin and Shaykh Umar in Halmahera covering the areas of

²² Syarifuddin Gazal, "Joe Se Ngofa Ngare" (Ph.D. Thesis--Universitas Hasanudin, Makassar, 2008), 207. See also: Rustam Hasyim, *Sultan dalam Sejarah Politik Ternate 1945-2002* (Ternate: Lepkha'ir, 2019), 54; Willem Phillipus Coolhaas, "Mededeelingen Betreffende de Onderafdeeling Batjan," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 82 (1926): 403-484; *Het Sultanaat Batjan dalam Encyclopaedisch Bureau Aflevering I*.

²³ Rustam Hasyim, "Dari Mitos Tujuh Putri hingga Legitimasi Agama: Sumber Kekuasaan Sultan-Sultan Ternate," *Sasdaya: Gadjah Mada Journal of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (May 2017).

²⁴ Gazal, "Joe Se Ngofa Ngare," 172.

²⁵ Rais, "Wajah Islam di Bandar Jalur Sutera," 195.

Patani, Weda and Mapa. If the records based on oral literature and sources from the *Hikayat Ternate* and *Hikayat Bacan* are correct, these four shaykhs arrived in the 11th century, meaning that Islam came to the Moloku Kie Raha region long before the establishment of the sultanate government system, which was only established in the 15th century.

Ternate Sultanate Government Structure: Hierarchy, Political Evolution and Social Integration

The government structure of the Sultanate of Ternate and the other three sultanates reflects a hierarchical order similar to that of the kingdoms in Java. The sultan occupies the highest position in the kadaton or Sultanate Palace. Under the sultan, there were nobles and opas (courtiers) who performed administrative and political functions as pillars of sultanate power. The title borne by a ruler is not only a symbol of prestige, but also confirms his highest position in the social structure and his authority over his territory. More than that, a sultan became an extension of God on earth.

The origins of the formation of a structured political community in the Sultanates of Ternate, Tidore and the two other sultanates as stated by Djoko Suryo, are closely related to the geopolitical context of the Moloku Kie Raha region. The geopolitical context in question is the four main kingdoms, namely Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Jailolo.²⁶ The mountains in this region, which were the main source of clove production, played a significant role in shaping international trade networks that triggered the birth of a more complex political structure.

According to Radjiloen, before the establishment of the royal institution, the Ternate people were divided into four groups or clans. Firstly, the Tubo clan who inhabited the Gamalama mountain range (Gam Lamo, meaning “big country”). Second, the Tobona clan who lived in the Foramadiyah highlands. Third, the Tabanga clan who live in the forest area. Finally, the Toboleu clan who inhabit the lowlands and coastal areas.²⁷ The initial formation of po-

²⁶ Djoko Suryo, *Agama dan Perubahan Sosial; Studi tentang Hubungan antara Islam, Masyarakat dan Struktur Sosial-Politik Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKPSM UGM, 2001).

²⁷ L. Radjiloen, *Dataran Tinggi Foramadiyah adalah Ternate Awal ke Dataran Rendah Limau Jore-Jore Sebagai Ternate Akhir* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1982).

itical organisations in Ternate occurred through an important deliberation known as the Fora Madiyah agreement in 1251. According to Abdul Hamid Hasan, this meeting of the *momole* (clan heads) resulted in three fundamental agreements. First, *Fora Madiyah* or ‘seating the right,’ with the determination of the form of royal organisation with the arrangement of positions for the *momole* and *sangaji* in the government structure and representative council. Second, *Koko la nao* or ‘stand up to be strong.’ This term refers to the principle that the sustainability and effectiveness of a political organisation requires a leader, called “*kolano*.” Third, *Tara no ate* or “down you go,” calls for leaders to unite the various tribes and communities in the Moloku Kie Raha region under an integrated political umbrella.²⁸

This transformation not only created an effective government structure, but also formed the foundation for the sultanate as a political entity capable of adapting to the dynamics of the global economy and the socio-cultural realities of local communities. With a solid structure and strong leaders, the sultanate became an important axis in the history of politics and trade in the archipelago. One interesting thing is that the change in government structure from *kolano* to sultanate did not automatically eliminate the political symbols in *kolano*. According to Djoko Suryo, the change in form from *kolano* to sultanate was more due to political reasons. The sultanate form seems to have been deliberately taken because it is the most commonly recognised form in various regions that are within the range of understanding of the political elite.²⁹

In the government structure of the Sultanate of Ternate, although the *kolano* system has been replaced by the sultanate system, the roles and functions between the sultan and the *kolano* remain significantly differentiated. The *kolano* title, rooted in local tradition, continues to play an important role as a symbol of internal political authority and domestic policy control. In contrast, the title of sultan focuses more on foreign policy, reflecting the sultanate’s connection to international diplomacy and trade networks.

According to Baharuddin Sumber, the *kolano* is considered to have the highest authority because only the *kolano* has the authority

²⁸ Abdul Hamid Hasan, *Aroma Sejarah dan Budaya Ternate* (Jakarta: Antara Pustaka Utama, 2001).

²⁹ Suryo, *Agama dan Perubahan Sosial*, 120.

to issue iddin (approval or permission).³⁰ Adnan Amal asserts that this authority relates to governance, including the *kolano*'s veto or jaib over the legislature, known as *Bobato Nyagimo Se Tufkange*.³¹ These rights are still held today, even further expanded through the incorporation of the sultan's role. Thus, a sultan not only acts as a political and diplomatic leader, but also performs religious functions within the framework of sultanate governance.

In the perspective of a modern state, the *bobato* structure can be equated with the executive and legislative institutions. The *bobato* has a strategic role in sustaining, confirming and maintaining the legitimacy and political authority of the sultan before the people. This institution is divided into two main parts. First, as a legislative body, known as *Bobato Nyagimo Se Tufkange* or 'bobato eighteen,' consisting of representatives of the most influential *soa* (clans) in the four major kingdoms: Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Jailolo.³² Secondly, as an executive body, the *bobato* was in charge of managing the government at the *soa* level. This institution is led by the *Soa* Chief who has administrative and operational responsibilities. In carrying out his duties, the *Soa* Chief is assisted by *Kapitan*, who is responsible for security and public order, and *Mahimo*, who plays a role in the administration of justice.³³ The structure of the sultanate government in relation to the role of the *bobato* can be seen below:

³⁰ Interview with Baharuddin, November 7, 2024.

³¹ Amal, *Kepulauan Rempah-Rempah*, 211.

³² Syahril Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate: Sejarah Sosial Ekonomi dan Politik* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2012), 36.

³³ Mudaffar Syah, *Eksistensi Kesultanan Ternate dalam Sistem Tatanegara Republik Indonesia* (Ternate: Goheba, 2009).

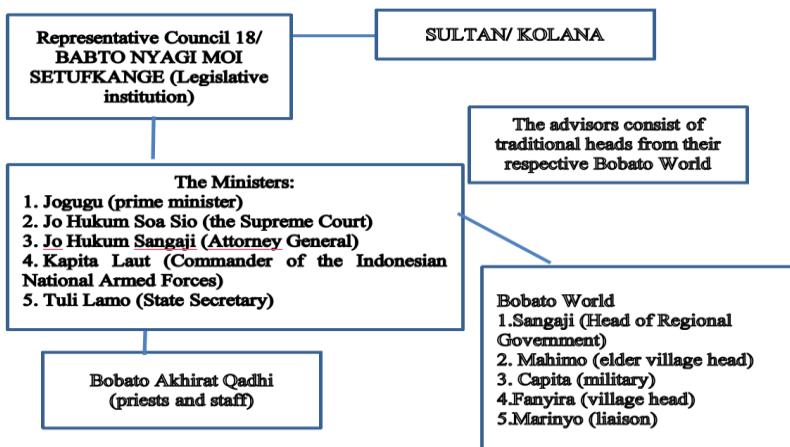


Figure 1. Government Structure of the Ternate Sultanate

The governmental structure of the Sultanate of Ternate is firmly rooted in the traditional community order consisting of *soa* groups led by sangaji, marsaoli and tomagola.³⁴ These leaders had an important role in managing social and political life in their respective areas. This structure formed a network of local power that synergised with the sultanate's central authority, but retained a significant degree of autonomy.

Over a long period of time, however, these groups came under the political auspices of the sultanate. Although the structures were integrated with the sultanate, it did not completely remove their independence. Each region retained its authority and traditional power structure. The relationship between the centre and the regions was symbiotic, with loyalty to the sultan dependent on the sultanate's ability to maintain political stability and meet the needs of the regions.

Indeed, in other respects, this structure has its weaknesses. When the sultan's power is disrupted or weakened, he is no longer able to perform his political functions effectively. Thus, local autonomy came to the fore again. Territories led by sangaji, marsaoli and tomagola easily broke away from the sultanate's ties and became self-governing. This phenomenon reflects the decentralised nature of power entrenched in the traditional political system of the Sultanate of Ternate and the other three sultanates, where the sultan's

³⁴ Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate*, 43.

legitimacy depended on his ability to maintain harmony with local leaders.

Thus, the structure of the Sultanate of Ternate and other Moloku Kie Raha is a dynamic political ecosystem, where the centre of power rests on a network of local autonomy. The sultan's inability to perform political functions effectively not only weakened the legitimacy of the centre, but also opened up space for regions to re-assert their local sovereignty. This structure demonstrates flexibility in the face of political change, but also implies the challenge of establishing a truly centralised and stable authority.

The governance structure of the Moloku Kie Raha Sultanate is underpinned by two main elements within the *bobato* institution: the *bobato* of the world and the *bobato* of the afterlife. Both groups play a strategic role in ensuring the continuity of governance as well as the religious life of the community, reflecting the balance between political and spiritual authority. The *bobato* of the world is responsible for the day-to-day management of government and political affairs. This group consists of the heads of the 18 *soa* and the *sangaji*, collectively referred to as *Bobato Nyagimo Se Tofkange* (18 *bobato*). In addition, there is a lower status group, the heads of the 24 *soas* in the *Heku* and *Cim* regions, known as *Bobato Heku Se Cim*.³⁵ In the hierarchy of government, the *bobato mei se sara*, which includes the rulers of the northern and southern regions, has a vital role in maintaining political and administrative stability under the direct supervision of the sultan. They were appointed and sworn in by the sultan, demonstrating the close relationship between central and regional authorities in the Ternate Sultanate system of government.

While the *bobato* of the world takes care of governance, the *bobato* of the afterlife focuses on religious affairs and sharia. This group consists of *qādīs*, imams, preachers and *modins* who are in charge of maintaining the implementation of Islamic law and religious rites. Unlike the *bobato* of the world, the *bobato* of the afterlife is not directly involved in politics or the management of administrative areas. In his capacity as grand imam, the sultan has an obligation to protect and spread Islam. This is a new element added to the tradi-

³⁵ Mudaffar Syah, "Sejarah Hukum Adat dan Lingkungan Hukum Adat Ternate," in *Moloku Kie Raha dalam Perspektif Budaya dan Sejarah Masuknya Islam*, eds. Sukardi Syamsudin and Basir Awal (Ternate: Himpunan Mahasiswa Ternate, 2005), 22-40; Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate*, 37.

tional role of a *kolano*. As spiritual leader, the sultan is assisted by a supreme cleric known as the *Qādi* or *Jo Kalem*, who is appointed and dismissed by the sultan.³⁶ *Jo Kalem* is assisted by four main imams: *Imam Jiko*, *Imam Sangaji*, *Imam Moti*, and *Imam Jawa*. In addition, there is the Imam of the Nation, who has the special task of handling the religious affairs of the nobles and their families.³⁷

Under these priests, there are *khātibs*, who are divided by region: Khatib Jiko, Jawa, Sangaji, Moti and Bangsa. Each administrative area under the control of a sangaji has a district imam, who is assisted in his duties by *khātib* and *mu'adhdhin*. This structure continues to the local level with the village imam, *modin* and *mu'adhdhin*. To support the smooth running of religious administration, a khatib scribe was appointed to manage the administration of the royal shari'ah institution.³⁸

The bobato's role is not only limited to governmental and religious administration, but also includes the drafting and enforcement of customary law. In other words, bobato were responsible for upholding custom and the legitimacy of the sultan. They have the privilege of electing and appointing the sultan, while ensuring that the sultan's political legitimacy remains strong in the eyes of the people. The combination of *kolano*, sultan and *bobato* created a dynamic balance in the government of the Ternate Sultanate. With the dual function of *bobato dunia* and *bobato akhirat*, the Ternate Sultanate managed to harmonise political and religious demands, creating a government that was not only administratively effective but also spiritually and customarily strong. This dualism of roles demonstrates the flexibility and depth of the Ternate political system, which was able to respond to internal needs while navigating external challenges in the global political and trade landscape.

Regardless of the uniqueness of the government system of Ternate Sultanate and other sultanates, the important point is the democratic values that exist in it. According to Radjim, the government system of the Ternate Sultanate was very democratic. A sultan was democratically elected by a council or *bobato* of 18 who represented

³⁶ Syah, *Eksistensi Kesultanan Ternate dalam Sistem Tatanegara Republik Indonesia*, 19.

³⁷ Herry Iriant Rd. Nachrawy, *Peranan Ternate Tidore dalam Pembebasan Irian Barat* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kie Raha, 2004).

³⁸ Willard Anderson Hanna and Des Alwi, *Ternate dan Tidore: Masa Lalu Penuh Gejolak* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1996).

the many tribes living in Ternate. Part of the 18 *bobatos* were immigrants from Java and Malay, even Chinese, Arabs and so on. More clearly, he said:

Eight hundred years ago, the Javanese were already here and this was accommodated in the structure (of the sultanate) as well as the Malays. The Javanese Fangira is included in the 18th council, the legislative council that has the authority, appoints, elects, and inaugurates, and dismisses the sultan. They are the ones who formulate regulatory policies in Ternate.³⁹

The democratic and egalitarian government system of the Sultanate of Ternate has been running since its establishment until now. In the government system, various tribes have full rights no different from the indigenous people. *Kapitan China* is a representation of ethnic Chinese who once occupied the top position of warlord in the Sultanate of Ternate. Likewise, non-Muslim figures have positions as *pangaji* in the sultanate structure. Baharuddin stated, president Sukarno before drafting the legal system and legislation stopped by Ternate to discuss with the sultan.

Reconstructing Islamic Identity in Contemporary Ternate and Tidore

In the political structure of traditional sultanate governance, the sultan occupies the pinnacle of power organised in a clear hierarchy as well as having great authority, both in worldly and spiritual aspects. As the apex entity, the sultan wields unquestionable power. This justification is reflected through the attributes of kingship, which include heirlooms, titles, and myths and legends.⁴⁰ The concept that *Jou* (Thou) is a gift from God reinforces the sultan's legitimacy as a leader who has absolute rights over his people and territory. All these elements serve to legitimise and affirm the sultan's position as the ruler who has authority over "heaven and earth."⁴¹

³⁹ Interview with Gunawann Yusuf Radjim, an official of the Sultanate of Ternate, November 5, 2024.

⁴⁰ The sultan's position is supported by sacred symbols, genealogical myths, and royal attributes that confirm his position as a divinely recognised ruler.

⁴¹ F.A. Sutjipto, "Beberapa Aspek Kehidupan Priyayi Jawa Masa Dulu," in *Lembaran Sejarah*, no. 11 (Yogyakarta: Jurusan Sejarah Fakultas Sastra dan Kebudayaan Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1982), 2.

According to the Customary Book of the Kings of Ternate, the Sultan of Ternate is equipped with an advantage called “*Jou*,” a gift that is considered a gift from God. This gift not only strengthens the sultan’s authority, but also signifies his sovereignty over the entire region and its people.⁴² In this view, the sultan is not just a political leader, but also a figure chosen by God to lead and govern the fate of his people. Conversely, it is incumbent upon the people to submit and obey his rule.

In addition, in the tradition of the Ternate Sultanate, the replacement of titles for sultans who have died is a natural thing. Sultans who pass away generally no longer use the title they used during their lifetime. A new title, such as arwa accompanied by the name of the burial place, is given to show that although the sultan is physically gone, his spirit and influence are still recognised, even considered to still hold power in the supernatural realm.⁴³ This illustrates the concept of sacredness attached to the sultan. The change in title reflects the continuity of power albeit through a non-physical dimension.

Besides the ritual aspect, Islamic identity also plays an important role in cementing the sultan’s charismatic authority. Although the title Imam Besar was not used officially as in the Mataram sultanate, the Sultan of Ternate was still considered the head of Islam and the protector of the people.⁴⁴ This concept links political power with the religious dimension, emphasising the sultan’s status as both a spiritual and political leader.

The privilege of the sultan is safeguarded by certain symbols, which distinguish his status from that of the common people. This symbolism includes the use of the colour yellow, which is interpreted as a symbol of nobility and maturity. The yellow colour is only worn by the sultan as a symbolic monopoly on the highest position.⁴⁵ The traditional clothing used, with specific colours such as

⁴² The concept of Jou in relation to the above article is sakti, keramat, or blessings that bring safety or happiness. See M. Jusuf Abdulrahman, *Kesultanan Ternate Dalam Jou Ngon Ka Dada Madopo Fangare Ngona Ka Alam Madiki* (Manado: Media Pustaka, 2002), 7.

⁴³ Radjiloen, *Dataran Tinggi Foramadiabi adalah Ternate Awal ke Dataran Rendah Limanau Jore-Jore Sebagai Ternate Akhir*, 17.

⁴⁴ Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ The reign of the yellow colour for the sultan began during the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin. See Radjiloen, *Dataran Tinggi Foramadiabi adalah Ternate Awal ke Da-*

green and yellow, regulates the division of social status within the kingdom. Only the young sultan, crown prince, *bendahara*, *bobato*, *panglima* and *sangaji* were allowed to wear this colour combination. Other officials and nobles were prohibited from wearing yellow, reflecting the strict social hierarchy within the political and cultural structure of the Ternate Sultanate.⁴⁶

In addition, the various privileges possessed by the sultan are clearly reflected in the language and manner of speech used in interactions with the sultan. In this context, there are a number of vocabularies specifically for the sultan, such as *titah*, *murka*, *kurni*, *anugrah*, *sabda mangkat*, and *semayam*. The use of these words not only honours the sultan, but also reinforces his position as the highest authority. In terms of language, every interaction with the sultan begins with the phrase “*suba jor*” (begging for mercy), which signifies respect and acknowledgement of their presence as an intrusion on the sanctity of the sultan’s time.⁴⁷

The relationship between the sultan and the people is also depicted in a meaningful pattern of relationships, with the terms *daulat* and *durhaka*. The sultan, as the ruler, has a sovereignty that covers his entire territory. Meanwhile, the people are expected to maintain and uphold that sovereignty. A popular expression that reflects this relationship is, “the just king is worshipped, the unjust king is disobeyed.”⁴⁸ Refutation here is understood in a different cultural context from rebellion.⁴⁹ It is not a reprehensible form of resistance, but rather a form of protest against the sultan’s policies that are deemed unfair or detrimental to the people. This illustrates that there is a channel for the people to voice their disagreement, even if it does not lead to rebellion.

Dissent can have an impact on the sultan’s legitimacy and power. If the people openly disputed, the sultan’s domain was described as declining, like a colonised country, as the sultan’s sover-

taran Rendah Limau Jore-Jore Sebagai Ternate Akhir, 17; Compare to Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate*, 33.

⁴⁶ Hasan, *Aroma Sejarah dan Budaya Ternate*, 216.

⁴⁷ The word “*suba jor*” is a sign of humbling oneself to the sultan as a noble person.

⁴⁸ Radjiloen, *Dataran Tinggi Foramadiabi adalah Ternate Awal ke Dataran Rendah Limau Jore-Jore Sebagai Ternate Akhir*, 30.

⁴⁹ Rebellion in this context is not a rebellion, but a moral protest against policies that are deemed to violate justice.

eighty declined.⁵⁰ Thus, as long as the sultan rules justly and loves his people, his rule is accepted and respected. Conversely, if the sultan fails to fulfil his function as protector of the people, disobedience from the people will arise as a consequence of the injustice. In this perspective, the sultan is not only seen as a political leader, but also as a manifestation of God's power, which is given immunity cum sacredness with all its prevelage.

However, this view is also controversial, as while these principles of justice and sanctity may seem lofty, in practice they are often used to legitimise the power of the sultan in the absence of any real social control. This reflects the tension between the ideal of legitimate power and the need to maintain control over the people, which is often contradictory in traditional sultanate governance in Indonesia.

On the basis of the sultan's enormous power and authority, this served as social, cultural and symbolic capital for the process of spreading and institutionalising Islam. This phenomenon can be seen in Ternate, Tidore and the surrounding Halmahera region. Cultural Islam in these enclaves refers to a form of Islam that develops by being strongly influenced by local culture, traditions and values that exist in the community, especially those related to the integration of Islamic teachings with local customs and social practices. In this context, Islam is not only understood as a religion with structured doctrines, but also as an entity that lives and develops in the space of culture, art, and social interaction of the community.

Furthermore, the face of cultural Islam is manifested in several forms, such as Islamic art, religious rituals, and the use of language in religious contexts combined with local wisdom. In the context of this process of tradition and culture formation, Sufism as an approach has a very vital role. Sufism practices in the form of *wirid*, *dhikr*, prayers in ritual ceremonies, and many more become the scenery of community traditions and culture. This phenomenon seems to illustrate a syncretic model of Islam. Such Islamic practices are integrated into the traditions and culture of local communities inherited from their ancestors.

In addition, the cultural face of Islam also includes how the religion is received and translated in the local social and political con-

⁵⁰ Ongkokham, *Rakyat dan Negara* (Jakarta: LP3ES and Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1983), 79.

text, which will be explained in the next analysis. For example, the role of religious leaders or ulama who are often also involved in customary and government affairs, creates a more synergistic relationship between Islam and local traditions. This shows that Islam in this region is not only a religion taught in the form of doctrinal texts, but also an inseparable part of the living culture of its people.

In the context of the sultanate, the traditions and culture of the palace form the basis for the social structure of the community. The kinship system prioritises matrilineal lineage, and the marriage system is endogamous, with marriages between royal families.⁵¹ Three customs that are the heritage of Ternate's ancestors and are very important in the social life of the palace are the *joko-kaha* custom, the *kololi-kiye* custom (going around the mountain), and the *fere-kiye* custom (going up the mountain). These three customs are an integral part of the sultanate's customs that have been preserved from generation to generation. These traditions and cultures involve all elements of the palace and the community as part of their cultural identity.⁵²

In the implementation of the *joko-kaha* custom,⁵³ for example, people are required to follow procedures and use equipment and offerings that are identical to those used in the palace. Some of the symbols contained in these offerings are (1) white cloth symbolising the authenticity of the sultanate, (2) soil symbolising the fertility of the earth, (3) grass representing forests and nature, and (4) water representing lakes, rivers and oceans. These various symbolic systems philosophically and spiritually symbolise the supplication to Jou (God) on the one hand and the relationship to nature on the other.⁵⁴

The process of Islamisation in Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Jolo can be stated as comprehensive. The process of Islamisation is through the Sufism approach which is reflected in various local traditions and cultures which have all been adapted to Sufism-based

⁵¹ B. Soelarto, *Sekitar Tradisi Ternate* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 1980), 93.

⁵² Ibid., 44.

⁵³ The custom of *joko kaha* has been specifically studied by Abdullah. Baharuddin Hi M.A. Hi Abdullah, *Joko Kaha and Saro-saro Traditions dalam Membangun Nilai Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kesultanan Moloku Kie Raba* (Tangerang: Media Kalam, 2021).

⁵⁴ Soelarto, *Sekitar Tradisi Ternate*, 94.

Islamic values. The portrait of cultural Islam in this region is not unlike that in Java or other enclaves in various parts of Indonesia. In fact, in some cases, Islam in this region is more complex and rigid in terms of maintaining the traditions and culture inherited from their ancestors.

There is no dimension of traditional heritage and old culture that is not touched with Islamic values. In short, like in Java, Ternate people have had rituals in honouring everyone from birth to death. In the Islamic era, various rituals or ceremonies from birth to death are fully filled with Islamic-breathed prayers. For example, every newborn baby has a tradition of chanting *adhan* in the right ear and *iqamah* in the left ear of the baby, followed by prayers for salvation. After that, the ceremony of planting the placenta follows ancient customs but is filled with Islamic prayers.⁵⁵

Although the Moloku Kie Raha community maintains very strict traditions and culture, it is open to outside traditions and culture. This fact is a sight for maritime cultures in various parts of the world, not least in the Ternate community and its surroundings. This reality can be seen, for example, in the aspect of clothing. Although the sultanate and the people have their own tradition of dressing, outside of traditional ceremonies, the way they dress is more influenced from outside. Malay traditions and culture have influenced their dress. Men generally wear long or short trousers, sarongs and shirts, sometimes with a *kopyah*, while women wear tights and sarongs, as well as accessories such as rings, bracelets, earrings and ranti made of precious stones.⁵⁶ These dress traditions signify a tendency to maintain a lifestyle tied to Malay customs and cultural influences, while also reflecting the dynamic local identity of cross-cultural influences.

In addition to Javanese influences, Malay traditions and culture are strong in this area. As described earlier, Sultan Zainal Abidin greatly admired the figure of Sunan Giri, Gresik. In fact, after returning from studying in Gresik, Sunan Giri sent several students to join the sultan in helping to spread Islam in Ternate. Beyond the Javanese influence, the role of Malay culture in Ternate in the 15th and 16th centuries in the form of religious buildings that are still vis-

⁵⁵ Ibid., 116-117.

⁵⁶ Muhammad, *Kesultanan Ternate*, 45.

ible today is the sultanate mosque or called “*Sigi Lamo*.⁵⁷” The *Sigi Lamo* architectural style is commonly found in mosque architecture in the sultanate of Aceh and other Malays in Sumatra.

As mentioned in the previous description, the people of Ternate and its surroundings are strongly guided by the traditions and culture inherited from the ancestors who have been Islamised. So rigid and many traditions and cultures in the form of rituals are maintained and maintained by the Ternate community and its surroundings. Of the various enclave communities in the archipelago, there has not been found an enclave community that has so much tradition and cultural heritage as the Ternate, Tidore and surrounding communities. Therefore, below will be a description of some of the important traditional and cultural heritage that continues to this modern period. There are at least six important heritages as quoted from Amas Diense and Rinto Thaib,⁵⁸ that are still alive today.

The custom of Se Atorang in the tradition of the Ternate community can be analogous to the concept of akhlakul karimah in Islamic teachings, which prioritises noble morals in everyday life. This custom is reflected in the customs of the community, one of which is in the manner of dress, where the difference in clothing between an imam, khatib, and modem in the mosque indicates the difference in social position that is respected in religious and cultural contexts. This custom confirms that social life in Ternate is strongly influenced by Islamic moral principles, which are translated in the daily actions of the community.⁵⁹

Furthermore, there is a custom or tradition called “*Galep Se Lakudi*.” This custom subtly reflects the closeness of humans to the surrounding nature. This concept teaches the importance of maintaining and caring for the natural environment. This is reflected in the sultanate’s policy of giving land ownership rights to the community to be managed properly, through a land division system known as bubula kaha. This custom is divided into three categories, namely; *bubula Heku*, *bubula Cim*, and *bubula Soa-Sio*. The poetry of *Matubu Kie Raha* reveals the importance of protecting nature as an integral

⁵⁷ Nomay, “Orang Melayu di Kota Ternate Abad XV-XIV.”

⁵⁸ Amas H. Diense and Rinto Thaib, *Ternate (Sejarah Kebudayaan dan Pembangunan Perdamaian Maluku Utara)* (Ternate: Lekra-MKR, 2008), 123.

⁵⁹ Nomay, “Orang Melayu di Kota Ternate Abad XV-XIV.”

part of human life, where the beauty of nature acts as a lamp of life that leads humans to happiness and peace.⁶⁰

There is a custom called “*Cing Se Cingare*.” The moral message of this custom reflects the Ternate indigenous people’s awareness of ethical values, morals, and togetherness that form the basis of social harmony. A concrete example of this tradition is the act of respect performed by a person who is walking in front of a seated person by raising his hand and saying “*suba Jou*,” which means ‘I bow down to you.’ In return, the honoured person will say “*Jou suba Jou*,” indicating mutual respect in social interactions. In folk poetry, the value of togetherness and affection is reflected, which is the foundation of social relations in Ternate society.

In addition, there is a custom called “*Baso Se Hormat*.” This custom is practised in daily interactions. The people of Ternate, Tidore and surrounding areas prioritise greeting language as a tool to create harmony and intimacy, both within the family and community. The folk poem *Dara tolefo mampila* shows how greetings and respect are translated into symbolic actions such as honouring others by using polite language. This tradition reflects the depth of Malay cultural values that teach the importance of respect between individuals in society.

In terms of interactions across religions, cultures, and ethnicities, there is a custom called “*Baso Se Rasai*.” This custom contains a lesson on the principle of spiritual tolerance embodied in mutual support and burden-sharing in social life. This value is contained in the folk poem *Ngoni doka dai lako* which describes a life full of togetherness, like flowers that grow together in one grip. This concept teaches that a harmonious life can only be realised if people care and support each other, regardless of differences. The Baso Se Rasai principle is very relevant to the teachings of Islam, which teaches people to help each other and maintain brotherhood.⁶¹

The last custom among many that is very important in the community is the *Duka Se Cinta* custom. An important point in this custom is the meaning of empathy. People in the Moloku Kie Raha region are taught to feel the suffering of others and to remember the difficulties faced. This value is reflected in the poem *Eli-eli sosen nginga demo madero*, which teaches the importance of empathy for the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

suffering of others. This tradition reminds people of the importance of social solidarity and co-operation in creating peace, which is the foundation for the harmonious life of the religious Ternate community.⁶²

In addition to these six traditions, there are many other customs that are equally important and still strong in community life. These include the *joko kaba*, *kololi kie*, and *fere kie* described above.⁶³ These customs, traditions and cultural heritages not only function as part of the customary law system that governs community life, but also as instruments that connect the community to long-established religious and cultural values. All of this shows how traditions and culture, coloured by Islamic teachings, create a mutually reinforcing social system between the individual, the community and the natural environment, culminating in God.

The Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore, as political and cultural entities that have been established since the 15th century, play a very significant role in maintaining and reconstructing Islamic cultural heritage in the Moloku Kie Raha region. As the centre of the spread of Islam in the region, the Sultanate of Ternate is not only responsible for the spread of religious teachings, but also as the guardian of local cultural traditions inherent in the social life of the community. The role of Ternate Sultanate in preserving Islamic cultural heritage can be seen through various dimensions (political, cultural, moreover religious) that interact with each other and form a distinctive Islamic identity.

Since the arrival of Islam in Ternate in the late 15th century, the Sultanates of Ternate, Tidore and two other sultanates have been the guardians and preservers of Islamic cultural traditions rooted in society. Islam in Ternate is not merely understood as a religion with doctrines and rituals limited to scriptural texts, but as a system of living values in the local social, cultural and political context. This can be seen in the interaction between Islamic teachings and local wisdom, which then gave birth to a distinctive form of Islam rooted in Ternate culture.

More than that, the sultan's authority acted as a bridge between Islamic values and local customs that had existed long before the arrival of Islam. The sultans, apart from being political leaders, also

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Diense and Thaib, *Ternate*, 80-90.

played the role of spiritual figures who maintained harmony between religious teachings and the social life of the community. In this regard, the teachings of Sufism or Sufism, which prioritises spiritual experience and the search for closeness to God, greatly influenced the development of Islam in Ternate. Sufism practices involving prayer, *wirid*, *dhikr*, and so on together became an integral part of the community's religious life, as well as one of the important elements in the formation of their religious identity.

In addition, the sultanate also preserves Islamic cultural arts related to religious expression, such as sound, dance and literature. In Ternate, art is not just a form of entertainment, but as a medium for spreading religious values. For example, musical art forms that combine religious verses with local musical rhythms, which then become part of Islamic religious rites and celebrations. Thus, the sultanate not only maintains the existence of Islam as a religion, but also enriches the cultural dimension of Islam that grows and develops in the community.

In this context, the reconstruction of Islamic identity in Ternate and its surrounding areas cannot be separated from the historical and social context that developed in this region. Since the arrival of Islam through the intermediary of traders and ulama, the Sultanate of Ternate played a very crucial role in determining the navigation of Islamic development in the region. As an entity that combined political and religious authority, the Sultanate integrated Islamic teachings with local values, creating a form of Islam that was not only based on religious texts, but also manifested in existing traditions and culture.

The process of reconstructing Islamic identity in this region involves a dialogue between the Islamic teachings brought by the ulama and the traditional values that have been embedded in people's lives. In this case, Sufism became one of the important channels in building a more spiritual and inclusive Islamic identity. Islam practised in Ternate and its surroundings does not merely emphasise the external ritual aspect, but also the search for deeper meaning, namely the understanding of closeness to God and unity with the universe reflected in the philosophy of "*Jou Se Ngofa Ngare*." This identity leads to the formation of an Islam that focuses on personal and spiritual experiences, combined with local social and cultural values that promote harmony, peace and harmony.

From a socio-humanities perspective, the interaction between politics, culture and religion in Ternate shows how political power can influence the formation of religious identity. The sultanate's authority, with its strong power structure, was able to direct the development of Islam according to local social and political needs. The Islam that develops is not a form of Islam that is separated from everyday life, but Islam that lives and adapts to the social conditions of the community. The sultan, as a political and religious leader, played an important role in maintaining social and political stability by integrating religion and local culture. This can be seen in the management of customary and religious affairs, which often go hand in hand. In this context, the Sultanate acts as the guardian and protector of local cultural values, while still maintaining the integrity of the Islamic teachings that developed in this region.

On the other hand, the influence of globalisation and modernisation that came in the 20th century onwards posed its own challenges to the existence of the sultanate and the community in maintaining the cultural heritage of Islam and the ancestors. In the midst of the changing times, the biggest challenge is how to maintain a balance between preserving local Islamic cultural identity and adopting modern elements that come from outside. This is where the role of the sultanate supported by all levels of society in maintaining the uniqueness and diversity of Islamic traditions that have been intertwined in their long history becomes very important.

Conclusion

The two sultanates, the Sultanate of Ternate and the Sultanate of Tidore as the centre of Islamic civilisation in the Moloku Kie Raha region, have played a central role in maintaining and reconstructing Islamic cultural heritage. In a socio-humanities perspective, these sultanates can be seen as the main actors in creating a form of Islam that is rooted in local culture, while still accommodating the universal values contained in Islamic teachings. Of course, the spirit of unity of Moloku Kie Raha remains an important symbol in the history of North Maluku. Today, the concept of Moloku Kie Raha is often used as inspiration to rebuild the spirit of unity and cooperation among the people of North Maluku, especially in facing social, economic and political challenges. Efforts to revive this spirit of fellowship can be seen in various cultural and

political initiatives aimed at strengthening the identity and solidarity of North Maluku communities. Likewise, the Islamic identity that developed in Ternate was certainly the result of a dialectic between religion, culture and politics that took place over centuries, creating a form of religion that was not only relevant to socio-political conditions, but also became an integral part of the cultural identity of the Ternate people.

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