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Balinese Muslim Women's Cultural Identity in the Context of Ajeg Bali

Nabilatum Masruroh (1)

Dien Vidia Rosa (2)
Hery Prasetyo (3)

Universitas Jember (1)
Universitas Jember (2)
Universitas Jember (3)

Correspondence Author

Nabilatummasruroh21@gmail.com (1)

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Abstract

This research explores the negotiations carried out by Balinese Muslim women in Candikuning and Sinduwati in articulating their religious and cultural identities. The problems that arise in the study are related to stereotypes about being a Balinese Muslim, the origin of the land of birth, and the issue of secularism. Ajeg Bali, as a Balinese regional government regulation, presents a duality of interpretation of religious practices between Islam and Hinduism as social identities; for Balinese Islamic women, religious attributes such as the hijab are limited through the excessive practice of Ajeg Bali. Meanwhile, for those who adhere to Hinduism, religious practices are emphasized as an identity that is demonstrated and integrated into everyday life. Articulating identity through the legitimacy of local authorities strengthens Balinese identity. Yet, it is a challenge that Balinese Muslim women must manage, mainly to minimize cultural conflict. Marvasti's ethnographic method is used with Fatima Mernissi's perspective to elaborate on the identity of Islamic women. The research results show Balinese Islamic women's negotiations are practiced through language and clothing in the Ajeg Bali practice. Then, the authors argue that cultural hybridity is demonstrated through Balinese dance arts and has combined with Islamic and Balinese aesthetics by strengthening the discourse of being Balinese Islamic Women. Hence, Islamic religious practices need to be



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formulated with the adoption of Balinese culture to enhance and maintain Balinese Islamic identity without neglecting the value of being Muslim.

Keywords: ajeg Bali, balinese Islamic women, identity, religious tolerance

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi negosiasi yang dilakukan oleh perempuan Islam Bali di Candikuning dan Sinduwati dalam mengartikulasikan identitas agama dan budayanya. Permasalahan yang muncul dalam penelitian ini terkait dengan stereotipe tentang menjadi seorang Muslim Bali, asal usul tanah kelahiran, dan isu sekularisme. Ajeg Bali sebagai peraturan daerah Bali menghadirkan dualitas penafsiran praktik keagamaan antara Islam dan Hindu sebagai identitas sosial. Bagi wanita Islam Bali, atribut keagamaan seperti hijab dibatasi melalui praktik Ajeg Bali yang acapkali berlebihan. Sedangkan bagi yang menganut agama Hindu, praktik keagamaan ditekankan sebagai identitas yang ditunjukkan dan diintegrasikan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Mengartikulasikan identitas melalui legitimasi otoritas lokal memperkuat identitas Bali. Namun, hal ini menjadi tantangan yang harus dihadapi oleh perempuan Islam Bali, terutama untuk meminimalkan konflik budaya. Metode etnografi Marvasti digunakan dengan perspektif Fatima Mernissi untuk mengelaborasi identitas perempuan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan negosiasi perempuan Islam Bali dipraktikkan melalui bahasa dan busana dalam praktik Ajeg Bali. Kemudian, penulis berpendapat bahwa hibriditas budaya ditunjukkan melalui seni tari Bali dan dipadukan dengan estetika Islam dan Bali dengan memperkuat wacana menjadi Perempuan Islam Bali. Oleh karena itu, praktik keagamaan Islam perlu dirumuskan dengan adopsi budaya Bali untuk meningkatkan dan mempertahankan jati diri Islam Bali tanpa mengabaikan nilai-nilai keislaman.

Kata kunci: Ajeg Bali, Identitas, Perempuan Islam Bali, Toleransi Agama

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Muslim communities in Bali began with immigrant communities and through Islamization in several channels, namely government, trade, kinship, and marriage (Saidi and Anshori 2002). Candikuning and Sinduwati villages became Muslim settlements, now claimed as Balinese Muslim villages. The kinship between these two villages is very close because they have an interconnected historicity. In addition, their existence as representations of Islam in Bali is vital in disseminating and defending Islam. There were Islamic organizations in both villages, which brought Islamic discourse that later became the characteristics of Islam in Bali.

Bali has its perspective on who is Balinese in Bali, especially concerning the identity and recognition issues of Muslim migrants and Balinese Muslims. Referring to this perspective, the title that Balinese people usually use for Muslims, namely *nyama selam* (Muslim brother), has changed to *jelema selam* (Muslim), especially after the Bali Bombings on October 12, 2002, which triggered stereotypes for migrants (Mashad 2014). The relationship between Muslim migrants and Balinese has become increasingly complex, mainly after the Balinese government issued Ajeg Bali as a strategy to maintain ethnicity and Hinduism in Bali. This makes Muslim migrants, Balinese Muslims, and Balinese Hindus have a big wall, whereas, in the past, they were considered brothers regardless of religion or ethnicity.

The Islamization of “migrants (non-Hindu)” is a consequence of the Balinese people’s concern for their culture and religion. This ethnic-religious sentiment-based logic is the foundation of the Ajeg Bali spirit (Mashad 2014). Some of the cases that emerged after Ajeg

Bali were related to the discourse on the development of halal tourist destinations by the Ministry of Tourism in 2013, which was firmly rejected by the Governor of Bali and the Balinese (Marbun 2022; Maulana, n.d.). One of the villages visited for the demonstrations was Candikuning. The rejection of MES was also supported by DPD RI Bali member Arya Wedakarna, who attended some demonstrations.

The development of Islam in Candikuning and Sindu Sidemen has consequences for the position of women as active agents of social transformation. The strategic position of Islamic women in developing Islamic discourse and practice often confronts other religions and cultural values as inherent identities. Islamic women in Candikuning and Sindu Sidemen have central positions in Islamic organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), and Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA); they are known as leaders in these organizations such as Fatayat, Muslimat NWDI, and An-Nisa who involve themselves in social and cultural activities such as disseminating religious learning as well as cultural learning. This phenomenon presents the emergence of multiple spaces for women and new interpretations of women's situations regarding their participation, which gave rise to postfeminism issues (Rosa and Prasetyo 2019).

The situation shows several issues that want to be answered and become the purpose of this research, namely the limitation of Islamic women's freedom to express culture in Bali. Islamic women in Bali have concerns about their cultural articulation. Do they have a specific identity that distinguishes them from the Balinese majority? In the context of Balinese Islamic women's cultural rights expression, the main focus of this research is to examine how Balinese Islamic women negotiate their identity to gain recognition. According to Toomey (Tumbelaka, Lattu, and Samiyono 2020), every human being, consciously or unconsciously, must be in a particular cultural sphere so that then there is a formation of concepts about their self-identity.

Several previous studies underlie this research. The first is Melati Budi Srikandi's thesis (2021) with the title "Identity Negotiation in Intercultural Communication: A Study of Intercultural Communication between Immigrant Residents (Javanese-Muslim) and Native Residents (Balinese-Hindu) in Wanasari Hamlet, Dauh Puri Kaja Village, North Denpasar District, Denpasar City, Bali." The theory used in this thesis is the identity negotiation theory of Stella Ting-Toomey (1993-2005). This theory describes individual transactions and interactions to build a self-image as desired, both in cultural activities, religion, and so on. The two cultural groups studied, migrants and non-migrants, are committed to maintaining harmony and giving each other space to practice religion. The immigrant population (Muslim-Javanese) feels disappointed that their cultural identity has become a negative assumption, while the indigenous population (Balinese-Hindu) straightforwardly and firmly expresses their opinions to be able to maintain their identity.

Second, (Saraswati 2019) titled "Negotiating the Identity of Islamic Women Hijabers Community: Case Study on Brand Ria Miranda." The theoretical study used is a discussion

of identification by Hall & Gay (1996), which discusses the identification process as an attempt to equate idealistic characteristics with other people or groups based on solidarity and existence. The theory of Ellemers et al. (1999) discusses the social identification process's three components: cognitive, evaluative, and emotional. The identity of an individual or group is never stable and will always be in process. The construction of Islamic women's identity in the hijab community is in the contestation of discourse. Also, it reacts to the discursive discourse active in the two camps between modern and traditional Islam. As much as possible to accommodate the two dominant camps, this community continues to make efforts to negotiate. However, the formation of this identity did not lead to steady perfection. The rejection of the community's ideology and the criticism made the negotiations turn out to overhaul the principles that form the basis of the community.

(Rosa and Prasetyo 2019), through Santos' theory, argues that globalization is present through diverse modes of production and is used to analyze coffee cultural practices. Furthermore, the production mode of globalization contributes to four forms of globalization: globalized localism, localized globalism, cosmopolitanism, and the common heritage of humankind. Then, the negotiation space is considered a strategy to create space to fight for cultural practices. Two main elements exist from the data that are emphasized in the practice of coffee culture. First, the contestation of discourse within Wong Using to represent and interpret coffee as a culture. Second, cultural negotiations also exist and continue to take place. Using women has challenges presenting ideas and coffee discovery practices in hegemonic cultural discourse.

To elaborate on research issues, this research is qualitative research, which, according to Marvasti (2004), can use detailed descriptions and analysis of the quality or substance obtained from human experience, mainly a historical narration based on a postcolonial approach. Using ethnographic methods, data collection techniques were conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to formulate the emancipation of marginalized groups of society (Thomas in Creswell 2015). This research relies on informants to explore the field and uses field observations to assess the meaning and relevance of the data. Data analysis of data is done by reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions, as proposed by Huberman and Miles (1994). Triangulation techniques will be used to increase the validity of the findings by collecting data from various perspectives.

This research was conducted in Candikuning village, Baturiti sub-district, Tabanan regency, Sinduwati village, Sidemen sub-district, Karangasem regency, Bali province. Both villages were chosen based on the historical roots of the arrival and development of Islam in Bali, especially related to the absorption and cultural negotiations between Islam and Bali. The informants in this study consisted of eight people with details: male and female Islamic and Hindu religious leaders, traditional leaders, members of women's Islamic organizations, and members of women's communities.

RESEARCH SETTINGS

Historically, Bali's Muslim-Hindu closeness has tremendous power relations. However, various challenges and the continuity of relations between cultures and religions are strongly intertwined with the historical roots of Balinese society, especially in the villages of Candikuning and Sinduwati. The village has a majority Muslim population surrounded by six traditional banjars. The emergence and development of Islam cannot be separated from Sinduwati Village, one of the villages that play a vital role in the population development in Candikuning Village. The eruption of Mount Agung provided space for the Sinduwati community to transmigrate and become the ancestors of the Candikuning village community, an area called *Palungguhan* land (Kusuma, Maryati, and Arta 2022). Based on the data, the population in Candikuning village amounted to 2,370 families, with a total population of approximately 8000 people. The village is divided into two Banjar, which has 845 families, sixty-seven of whom are migrants; this Banjar is a Banjar with a majority Muslim village.

Sinduwati Village, commonly known as Sindu, is located in Karangasem Regency, with several banjars and Muslim residents. Through interviews with informants, it was mentioned that there are more than 300 heads of families who are Muslim. This village is one of the areas that embraces culture and customs and implements interfaith harmony. In the view of the community, pursuing culture and customs is a form of tolerance that reflects harmony in social life (Arimbawa 2021). The concept of *menyama braya* is firmly held by all people on the island of Bali. However, the issue of cultural conflict vulnerability makes identity negotiation an alternative to recognition.

According to Huntington (in Basyir 2013), the fundamental sources of conflict seem to center on two objective elements: religion and culture. In this context, cultural relations full of diversity can lead to conflicts that make religion one of the determinant elements of distinction. Thus, identity negotiation is carried out to reduce the potential for conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contemporary Islamic Identities in Bali

Balinese and migrant Muslims should ideally be able to articulate their rights. Balinese Muslims have their forms of resistance both in their views and actions. In history, Muslims have experienced many religious challenges, both national and international (Apriliani and Rosyad 2021). Ismoyo's research explains the discrimination of Maghribi Islamic women in France. Then, there is Putri's research on Islamophobia that occurs in Germany and America. Meanwhile, Bali, after the Bali Bombing in 2002, gave rise to various people's perspectives on Islam. Even the discourse of Islamophobia from some groups of society is still being intensified to this day.

The wearing of hijab can lead to discrimination against Balinese Muslim women. In 2014, there was an issue of banning hijab in schools. Judging from the Indonesian Child Protection

Commission (KPAI) website, there is evidence that some schools in Bali prohibit students from wearing the hijab. This prohibition is the autonomy of the school but contradicts the regulations governing the freedom of students to practice the religion they believe in. The research findings show that there are still some public schools that prohibit the wearing of hijab. And currently, in particular public schools, there are no Muslim students wearing hijab at school.

Bali has limitations regarding religious articulation. For example, there are assumptions that Balinese Islam has not fully become Balinese and some issues regarding customs or culture. The interrelation of women in terms of culture is a source of conflict in society, which generally provides a view with a textual balance that refers to a reality (Turaeni 2010). The awareness of identity for Balinese Islamic women has consequences on the negotiations to maintain identity, especially the challenges as a multicultural representation dealing with other entities.

Bali Governor I Wayan Koster issued three Governor regulations, namely numbers 24, 25, and 26 of 2020, to realize *Ajeng Bali* related to Balinese Customs, Culture, and Nature. This regulation aims to protect religion from damage, desecration, and misuse of temples, *Pratima*, and even Hindu religious symbols (Dinas Kebudayaan Bali 2020). *Ajeng Bali* is a means of maintaining Balinese identity, which is strengthened by various directives from the Balinese government. Bali once proposed itself as a particular region. However, in February 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs rejected the proposal because Bali did not have problems with constitutional and border issues. (DPR RI 2013) From there, Bali realized the preservation of its customs and culture through regulations that uphold Balinese wisdom to protect its original identity from attacks by other identities. Thus, several established rules indirectly become the basis for limiting various cultural or religious articulations that threaten the continuity of Balinese cultural identity.

The Balinese Muslim community showed its reaction to *Ajeng Bali* by making *awig-awig* or traditional regulations. The aim is to maintain identity and help the village government to maintain order. However, Movement restrictions occur in Muslim communities because of *Ajeng Bali*. For example, the action to defend Palestine, which was held in Renon on November 25, 2023, was attended by Muslims from various areas in Bali. Meanwhile, Balinese Hindus, on the other hand, expressed the statement that Bali does not interfere with the religious conflicts of Muslim immigrants. However, not all Muslims living in Bali are immigrants.

Limitation of religious articulation among Islamic women, including the use of the Hijab. DPD member Arya Wedakarna's statement regarding the ban on airport staff wearing the Hijab could give rise to a discourse of non-inclusion. Arya Wedakarna believes that Balinese staff must be Balinese girls who do not wear the hijab and wear Balinese religious symbols. Not only that but in 2015, there was talk of developing a Sharia tourist village. However, there are elements of Balinese Hindu society who refuse, including Arya Wedakarna, who

signed the Bali Province's official rejection of the discourse on Sharia Villages and Sharia Tourism in Bali as a follow-up to events in Candikuning Village, which is one of Bali's great cultural icons. In Sinduwati Village, there is also an issue regarding the *Palungguhan* land given to Balinese Muslims. The Hindu community returned this land for economic reasons and even personal sentiments.

Fatima Mernissi's thoughts on Islamic feminism try to open the idea of women's involvement in all aspects of life and try to erase traditions that make it difficult for women to move in their own lives. In the actual religious context, Islam gives rights and obligations according to each portion. His book, *Beyond the Veil*, explains that one of the distinctive characteristics of Muslim society in matters of sexuality is a unique division of labor and unequal distribution of power, and this is based on the level of existing authority patterns and tasks (F Mernissi 1975). The identity of Islamic women does not have much strength because they are trapped in society's culture of subordination. However, Mernissi tried to give examples of several historical leadership roles carried out by women, such as Asma and Arwa, who have the title *Al-sayyida Al-hurra*, meaning noble women who are free and independent (Fatima 1994).

The Balinese Islamic women's movements focus on considering successor ideas and developing Islamic discourse in Bali, which is one of the policies and significant steps in strengthening its identity. Understanding the characters and showing women's intelligence is a milestone for Balinese Islamic women in demonstrating their existence. Mernissi explained historical data about Islamic societies, such as when leadership positions were given to women and where the community experienced prosperity. This is in contrast to the hadith and traditional assumptions regarding destruction if women are placed as leaders (Fatima 1994). The aim of strengthening identity will have the impact of spreading and restoring the external space of Balinese Islamic women so they can move more freely in their activities.

According to Larry and Richard (in Mushodiq 2017), identity can be abstract, dynamic, and even very complex in the dimensions of life. In a society with symmetrical power, experimenting with open culture has even created "hybrid" identities, identity formation depending on individual experience with a constant selection of memories (Hefner 2001). Therefore, the identity issues experienced by Balinese Muslim women indirectly cause intrapsychic problems, which can cause cognitive imbalances and put Muslim women in a circle of identity conflict. Prawitasari expressed Goossens' thoughts. Each individual has various identities, some of which are achieved and diffused. This is the basis for Balinese Muslim women needing to negotiate identity to make peace with their psychological conflicts (Putri and Nurchayati 2023).

Visible identities include language, religious attributes such as the hijab for Muslim women, and traditional clothing (Srikandi 2021). In the life of religious communities in Bali, visible identities are sometimes distorted. For example, the hijab attribute has become a discourse of limitations for Muslim women living in Bali. An informant said,

“...Yes, I’m not prohibited from wearing the hijab. That’s how the system doesn’t allow them to ban it, right? But if in the past it was prohibited, there was a school principal who forbade it because he was fanatical about Islam, but now I don’t think so...” (Ms. L, Sindu Women’s Elite, Personal Communication, September 15, 2023)

Apart from that, there is resistance to the development of sharia villages in Bali because the immigrant community is considered not to be psychologically close to the native Balinese community. Informants in Sinduwati village, who have good relationships in organizing various religious activities, both Islamic and Hindu, explain this.

“..This is not a problem with Hinduism; it’s tolerance. What is emphasized is not the problem with Hinduism but its tolerance. Tolerance here is very high; why is it so high? Firstly, because there is an emotional relationship between us in Hinduism, especially in the home here, the same as in the village, that emotional relationship, yes, we used to have what is called Penglingsir or Penglingsir. Our senior elders used to convert to Muslims and have hereditary ancestry, so until now, it’s been a mess.” (Mr. IBA. Sindu Traditional Figure, Personal Communication, 15 September 2023)

Meanwhile, false cultural identity can be seen in how individuals and groups think. Balinese people have the habit of obeying all traditional regulations, so these habits determine order. For instance, *awig-awig* or *pararem* is made to be obeyed by all conventional villages. As a minority community in Bali, this is important because submitting to customary rules means being ready to live side by side peacefully. This shows that the norms for behavior are by the contract (Srikandi 2021).

Balinese society is relevant to ethnic or cultural identity and the situational identity in which individuals view themselves. In both research locations, individuals differentiate between helping habits, such as choosing certain activities, because Muslim society has rules to protect their values. One informant explained their action that caused misunderstandings or violations of religious values.

“Yes, like me, at first it was like this at school; in the past, it was a system of eating; for example, if you often cook, sometimes you cook, but at school, you often eat like that. Then, finally, I told him, I’m sorry, ma’am if there’s packaged rice, I don’t want it. It’s not like that, ma’am; I’m afraid pork will be inside. I can’t eat pork because, in my religion, it is forbidden and not allowed. But how come I see how many Muslims are like that? Oh, don’t compare it, ma’am, that’s what I said. For me, the system in my religion is indeed Muslim, perhaps, but the system does not implement Islamic law. Mothers are the same; some don’t eat beef. They finally understand that when, for example, there are events like that, I am given money to buy my rice. Yes, I was given it; I bought rice. So, this is money to buy your rice. They understand because we give them understanding.” (Mrs I, Women’s Elite, Personal Communication, 23 August 2023)

Transformation of the meaning of becoming a Balinese Islam

Cultural identity has plural positions and forms. Inherently, cultural identity is formed from the choices made by two groups and articulated in actions that form their negotiations. In this case, an interaction between cultures participates in determining, creating, and even maintaining the cultural reality of a cultural community group (Srikandi 2021).

The Balinese Muslim community uses this method to integrate into Balinese identity. For example, by adopting Balinese culture, which is acculturated into Balinese Muslim culture, Balinese Islamic women actively bring together different cultural and religious spaces, as stated by the informant.

“That’s it, Bil. It was the same as now. For the month of Mi’raj, in the mosque, the Mi’raj is like the Hindu reading, Bil. You read the Mi’raj like a Hindu would read it. The Hindu tunes are pure, which was lost long ago, Num. The abandoned culture will be revived. Finally, after several years of inviting Habib Salim as a speaker, one year, he just invited another speaker to fill in because many people used to say that it was like this, that it wasn’t like this. Still, in the end, it was eliminated. “Finally, the young people in Al Hidayah miss the old culture, and it has finally been revived again.” (Mrs. AH, Women’s Elite, January 30, 2023)

Cultural absorption to preserve Hindu culture adopted by Balinese Muslims strengthens Balinese Muslim identity. Balinese Islamic women take this role to show their participation and Islamic identity. However, Islam has also experienced varied developments, such as Islam, which wants to transform cultural meaning through Islamic purification modes. Fatima Mernissi differentiates between Islamic text, recorded in religious guidelines, namely the Koran, and political Islam, which is defined as the practice of power by humans driven by personal interests (Zubaidah 2010). Thus, it can be said that Islam has two elements, one as a religious teaching and the other as a culture and politics that develops in line with developments in the situation and even local cultural conditions.

Negotiating the Identity of Balinese Islamic Women

Negotiation is a process that is often carried out to obtain the expected gains. In history, it is explained that Yazid II, an Islamic leader, negotiated for a peace dialogue. Initially, resistance or war was carried out using traditional methods, namely violence and even death, in treating the opposition (Fatima 1994). Negotiations can be carried out in various ways; for example, leaders use sermons as an accurate barometer for smooth negotiations with the intended parties, such as spiritual parties (Fatima 1994). Another example is when A’isha negotiated through dialogue during Ali’s leadership and used speech methods in various mosques (Fatima Mernissi 1991). This negotiation is one of the strengths in providing the recognition one wants to get as a desire to have a minority group identity among the majority group.

Balinese Muslim women carry out Identity negotiation to articulate and maintain identity. This negotiation functions to reduce potential conflicts that could occur within these religious-cultural groups. This negotiation process involves various elements of cultural identity, which emphasize vision and mission, motivation, integration, participation, and the ability to understand different identities from one another. The occurrence of women's subordination is caused by social construction regarding their very unequal roles, not because of women's physical weakness or existing religious teachings (Fatima Mernissi and Hasan 1995).

The use of language is the primary medium when communicating happens. Besides that, negotiation accessibility can occur with mastery of language and dialect. In interviews, several interviewees were more comfortable using Balinese to introduce themselves because they felt it was easier. This is useful in the cultural negotiation process because it makes it easier for different groups to understand the cultural identity of other groups. Through language application, the encounter with culture becomes a dynamic space for cultural negotiation. Language in Balinese people's meaning becomes a symbol of artistic practice to open up a more flexible space for meaning in communication. Language represents ownership of thoughts, concepts, ideas, and a variety of relationships that must be mastered by speakers and responders (Devianty 2017).

Bali shows a significant development process in the tourism sector, one of which is due to the emergence of globalization. Thus, native Balinese people need to strengthen and adhere to their culture, among other things, through language. Such is the experience of one Muslim informant who works in the education sector. Informants often experience stigma as immigrants because they wear the hijab. However, when using Balinese, the space for identity negotiation becomes an instrument for gaining recognition from the Hindu community, which is the majority population of the island of Bali.

“..well that's one of the things they finally realized (I'm Balinese) when it seemed like I had called my friends at home when they were there. Well, if we're with friends at home, we're speaking Balinese (Balinese accent), and then after that, they realize that, oh yeah. But if you want to prove it or not (if he is a genuine Balinese), it's up to you whether you want to believe it.” (ES informant, resident, personal communication, 03 October 2023)

The interview excerpt shows that using Balinese can reduce the stigma of immigrants and build a psychological unit in which Balinese identity is recognized through Balinese.

Apart from language, clothing is a representation of identity that is created culturally. Several traditional Balinese clothes are used for religious cultural events by the Balinese people, such as weddings, *metatah*, prayers, and so on. Balinese Islamic women, while negotiating their cultural space, participate in implementing Ajeg Bali by obeying the regulations for wearing traditional Balinese clothing. Previously, Islamic women's use of conventional Balinese clothing invited pro and con discourse with the argument that

traditional clothing was holy and sacred. However, as the negotiation process has reached a cultural understanding, Muslim women are allowed to wear these clothes with the caveat that these clothes are only used in limited activities.



**Photo 1. Source: Doc. Informant
Wearing Traditional Balinese Kebaya by Balinese Islamic Women. 2023. Photographer: Informant**

Through this documentation, the informant still wears the hijab in activities with the Hindu community. On the other hand, the informant said that the hijab is the identity and obligation of a Muslim woman. However, sometimes, there are challenges in removing the hijab that comes from the environment. This is one of the negotiation efforts so that Muslim women can quickly unite with their cultural environment. However, there is also the problem that some Hindu communities have different views regarding female Muslim workers who wear the hijab. Their thoughts about the hijab tend to be based on past assumptions, as explained by Mernissi, namely that the hijab is interpreted as an obstacle or active movement in public spaces (Fatima 1994).

Fatima Mernissi developed a pattern of ideas for developing Islam in gender equality. Various women's issues are taken up to enrich the understanding and contextualization of religious teachings and their implementation. The main focus is an explanation of the Hijab and Hadith, especially a Muslim woman's ways of life. Bali is in the industrialization and post-

industrialization phase, where post-COVID-19 economic fluctuations have raised various issues such as gender, culture, and religion. Balinese women, in general, must formulate a search for identity to survive and participate in global development. On the one hand, they can maintain their primordial identity, especially regarding positions that are not considered equal. This is important because women's cultural space becomes increasingly narrow when faced with contemporary issues, globalization, and postcolonial identities.

Mernissi's thinking focuses on taking women's perspectives from all directions, which is used to see the complexity of women's issues in post-colonial Islamic areas. This scheme is vital because Mernissi places religious discourse under a constellation of socio-economic dimensions, meaning that religious discourse related to women arises because of a particular historical condition in the country (Ritawati 2019). The existence of Islamic women's strongholds and social life cannot be linked because the two have different domains, as explained by Al-Thahtawi and emphasized by Qosim Amin, who expressed his opinion that the hijab in women's social distancing is not presented in the Al-Qur'an and Hadith. Therefore, this is not an Islamic teaching but a tradition considered Islamic (Zubaidah 2010).

The decline of women in an Islamic country is due to the attitude of the rulers and the development of hadith misogyny, which is even further strengthened by the ignorance of women due to binding traditions, as told by Mernissi about the time of the caliph Al-Hakim from the Fatimid daulah who faced the problem of a country with failed harvests. This failure was caused by several things that resulted in a severe economic crisis. However, the authorities locked up women who were believed to bring unrest and decline to the country, where women who dared to resist would be killed (Fatima 1994). In connection with the current situation, limitations make it difficult for Balinese Muslim women to develop and less able to articulate their identity freely.

Mernissi said that Muslim women can enter the modern world with a sense of freedom and pride because they can contribute in all areas, both political and other social fields. The aim is to achieve glory, participation, democratic rights, and the fundamental human rights they should have. He believes this does not originate from values adopted from Western nations but is a genuine part of Islamic tradition (Zubaidah 2010). Muslim women not only experience limitations in the field of religion, but they also sometimes experience limitations by the traditions and thoughts of ancient Islamic society.

Mernissi's egalitarian thinking today sounds foreign to Muslim circles. They say that the message of equality is an adoption of Western thinking, even though this thinking originates from the basic teachings of the Islamic religion. In the 15th Islamic century, the handling of people's problems, especially in Muslim countries, was a century that presented complete privilege and monopoly for men. The hadith that they used at that time unknowingly as a form of exclusion of women was "A people who hand over their affairs to a woman will not obtain prosperity," which was taken from the book *Fath al-Bari* by Al-Asqalani (Fatima Mernissi 1991). As time progresses, more transformative thinking in all aspects becomes

essential. A practical transformation does not focus on doctrinal elements or does not focus on the main aspects of transformative Islamic theological thought but focuses on how to solve empirical problems in a social field, awareness of rights, economics, justice orientation, and so on (Ali 2017).

Cultural and Religious Hybridity Practices

The meaning of orthodoxy differs in various times and places; beliefs depend on each culture and interests (Fatima Mernissi 1991). Mernissi has criticized various traditions, especially regarding the dark history of women, such as oppressive traditions that were born from the womb of the patriarchal system (Fatima 1994). Cultural space is essential for individuals and becomes a benchmark for fulfilling their cultural rights, as an example put forward by Abul Kalam Azad (Jameelah, n.d.) regarding the conditions of Indian Muslims and Indian Hindus that intersect with their traditions and customs. Abul Kalam Azad wanted to help a secondary nationalist cause that appealed to India's Muslims and warned that Hindus were offended by the slaughter of cows on holidays and vice versa. He assured his Hindu friends that Muslims were trying to minimize the habit of eating beef. This was done to reduce the number of conflicts, which continued to make them two separate communities even though they were in the same sphere of life.

Symbols of Islam and Balinese Culture

In villages with two religious communities, one religion being more dominant than the other, namely Islam and Hinduism, such as in Candikuning and Sinduwati, it is not uncommon for them to involve several community group activities to integrate their emotional relationships, for example, such as social activities created with Balinese culture at Balinese cultural events or activities. The Hindu-Balinese tradition was created through a Balinese dance performance by Muslim women at the Ketog Semprong Shawwal event for all Muslims in Bali. This performance has attracted a lot of attention from both Muslims and Hindus because this performance displays typical Balinese dances dressed as Islamic women wearing hijabs.



**Photo 2. Source: YouTube Net Denpasar
Balinese Dance Performance by Balinese Islamic Women. 2017. Documentation: Net Denpasar**

Historically, it has a bridge for the articulation of Balinese Islamic women

History is an essential element in knowing one's identity. Balinese Islamic women with a prominent Islamic style (hijab) sometimes use historical reinforcement, which they explain verbally to those with whom they dialogue. They tell the history of their origins related to the land of Bali. This aims to instill understanding in the negotiation process. One of the informants told the story of being faced with pessimism about his Balinese identity by another individual of a different religion. The informant tried to reveal the history of the birth and journey of Islamic life until now. The informant believes that the narrative of her origins and life journey can give other people understand that she is a Balinese Muslim woman with Balinese blood. Sometimes, there is a feeling of fatigue, so some informants choose to be in escapism.

“We were asked something like this yesterday, aren't you Javanese? Understand? As Balinese people, we have said we are digital Balinese, right? Then it just didn't explain that I was from Ubud. My grandfather is from Ubud, and my grandmother is from the Buleleng area; they said, oh, that means you're leaving, right? Yes, grandfather left, but I'm grateful...”. (ES, Active Citizen, Personal Communication, 03 October 2023)

The keyword for effective communication between cultures can be achieved if they understand each other the exact meaning of the verbal or nonverbal messages conveyed (Suryani 2013). One of the sources said that the Balinese people, especially Hindus, believe that Islam itself is a holy religion because it is stated in several signs in the Veda. However, this cannot be confirmed due to limited study space. Muslim women in both villages belong

to various religious communities. Their orientation is to strengthen religious messages or teachings. Apart from that, they also contribute to cultural preservation and tolerance efforts in local religious communities. In this context, cultural absorption emerged, as explained by two informants.

“Njotan, it’s not that easy to change something. So take it first. Hindus have traditions, and that’s why what can be preserved is only the contents of the prayers. That’s according to the parents” (Mrs. QM, Female Elite, January 30, 2023)

“We just have to enjoy taking care of it; it doesn’t conflict with that religion; now many people say it does, even though they don’t know how to stretch it” (Mrs. AH, Female Elite, 30 January 2023)

The two informants explained that several traditions were adopted that could be preserved by Islamic communities. However, this tradition was adopted without violating religious law. In this way, the Balinese Islamic community understands and is aware of the traditions and geography of their homeland. This is important in the exploration and process of negotiating identity within the framework of Balinese culture and the realm of encounters with Islamic culture amidst the doubts of female subjects.

CONCLUSION

Bali and the Ajeg Bali movement still have problems, especially after the Bali Bombing that occurred in 2002, which gave rise to sentiment towards Balinese Islam. Balinese Islam and immigrant Islam have different histories. Balinese Islam is Islam with a history related to forming Balinese culture. Meanwhile, the majority of Muslim immigrants come from outside Bali with the aim of economic access or other personal needs. Furthermore, Islamic women in Candikuning and Sinduwati villages negotiate and articulate their cultural space differently. Those who live in Candikuning village attend invitations to celebrate religious holidays without involving themselves in traditional activities and focus more on economic relations, especially trade and tourism. Meanwhile, those who live in Sinduwati use language, dress, and participate or involve themselves in traditional activities as long as they do not violate religious regulations.

Balinese Muslim women face challenges in expressing their social identity. On the other hand, they try to unify their views to avoid cultural conflicts. Their efforts were unsuccessful, but Islamic women tried to establish more effective communication to realize the right negotiation strategy. Negotiations carried out by Balinese Islamic women lead to strengthening their self-existence and opening up a more expansive space for tolerance, even though they are constrained by religion and even tradition. Several ways have been taken to accept Muslim women in the Ajeg Bali setting. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage more in-depth studies regarding inclusive cultural spaces and the continued practice of religious tolerance.

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