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Sile (Pencak Silat Nias) as a Negotiation of Religion and Culture between Traditional Societies, Islam, and Christianity in Ono Niha

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Abstract

Pencak Silat is no longer limited to martial arts but goes far beyond this. Suppose it is generally understood as a martial art commonly called Sile. In that case, it needs to be seen from the socio-theological praxis of the people of Moro'ö District, West Nias Regency, and the people of Tugala Oyo District, North Nias Regency, where they are Nias people in general who tend to believe traditionally based on customs, as well as Christian church congregations, including Muslims. This article delves into Nias' traditional pencak silat in 2022-2023. The empirical problem in Christianity is that there is a tendency to label synchronicity that pencak silat as a traditional rite for primitive people, has always been associated with an attempt to display the dimension of "evil spirits" as opposed to the "good spirits" in the Christian faith with the modern eyes of urban people. Meanwhile, Muslims tend to be positioned as immigrants. This paper is in the social setting of North and West Nias as a research field, and it is carried out with empirical qualitative research with a socio-theological approach. Data were collected by observation, interview, and documentation. It



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was found that there is an increasing immersion in cultural arts expressed through pencak silat as a social space (medium) for people of different faiths and traditions. It was found that North and West Nias Sile displayed spatial negotiations between culture and religion.

Keywords: religion, culture, nias, community, pencak silat

Abstrak

Pencak Silat tak lagi sebatas martial art tetapi jauh melintasi hal tersebut. Jika umumnya hanya dipahami sebagai seni bela diri biasa disebut Sile, ia perlu dilihat dari praksis sosio-teologis masyarakat Kecamatan Moro'ö, Kabupaten Nias Barat, dan masyarakat Kecamatan Tugala Oyo, Kabupaten Nias Utara, yang mana, mereka ialah orang-orang Nias pada umumnya yang memiliki kecenderungan keyakinan secara tradisional berbasis adat, juga jemaat gereja Kristen, termasuk pula Muslim. Tulisan ini mendalami pencak silat tradisional Nias tahun 2022-2023. Masalah secara empiris dalam ajaran Kristen, ada kecondongan untuk melakukan labeling sinkritisme bahwa pencak silat sebagai ritus tradisional bagi orang primitif yang selalu dikait-kaitkan sebagai upaya untuk menampilkan dimensi "roh jahat" bertentangan dengan "roh baik" dalam iman Kristen dengan mata pandang modern orang kota. Sementara, Muslim condong diposisikan sebagai pendatang. Tulisan ini dalam setting sosial Nias Utara dan Barat sebagai lapangan riset, ini dilakukan dengan penelitian kualitatif empiris dengan pendekatan sosio-teologis. Data dikumpulkan dengan observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Ditemukan, semakin ada immerssi antara seni budaya yang diekspresikan lewat pencak silat sebagai ruang sosial (medium) bagi masyarakat yang berbeda keimanan dan tradisi sekalipun. Ditemukan, bahwa Sile Nias Utara dan Barat menampilkan terjadinya negosiasi ruang antara budaya dan agama di masyarakat.

Kata kunci: agama, budaya, nias, masyarakat, pencak silat

INTRODUCTION

The Nias people are one of the tribes in Indonesia that are still thick with tradition. However, the emergence of the traditional Nias community, which mostly wants to maintain *keniasan* (traditional Nias), has a traditional Nias religion called *Fanomba Adu* (Shaleh, 2020). While some others want to live a modern life, they are generally the majority of Christians, in this case including Islam. Christians felt that they had a more advanced civilization as a result of the preaching of the Protestant Gospel through a German European *Zending*, namely Ernst Ludwig Denninger (1815-1875), for the first time on September 27, 1865, anchored in *Gunungsitoli*. Mostly, He is considered the first missionary to succeed in Nias (Waruwu, 2020, p. 1-4). Meanwhile, the arrival of Nias Islam was introduced by the people of the *Meulaboh Aceh Sultanate* by *Teuku Polem* in 1641 (Khan, 2017, p. 34-36). The Islamic community of Nias (those who are generally surnamed *Polem*) adopted the local and external sides of Islam (usually believed to be so) as one of the ways taken to associate the Islamic footprint of the Nias Islands with the articulation of *Acehnese Islamic identity* (Waslan Haris Tanjung, Nur Aisah Simamora, 2021, p. 129-142).

Then, over time, Nias Islam became more crowded due to the arrival of the *Minang* people (Hasibuan, 2024, p. 178–188). However, their arrival was not very accepted in the Christian and traditional Nias communities by other general people in the lowlands and highlands, so the Muslim community was more likely to inhabit the coast (*Talaumbanua*, 2018, p. v). However, to a certain extent, the traditional cultural rite of *keniasan* possessed by Islamic values is still believed and lived by the people of Nias today. It evident in *Yesri*

Talan's research and Iman Krisdayanti Halawa's research that the church's struggle in Nias is significantly related to culture. However, most of the people of Nias have understood the teachings of the Gospel and explored religious teachings. However, traditions and culture are still powerful and maintained today. What is even worse is that there are social groups that combine these two understandings, namely, the teachings of the Gospel with traditional culture so that they form a complete unity that is later known as syncretism (Yesri Talan, 2020, p. 51) ; (Halawa, 2020).

One of the things in the traditional culture of the Nias people that continues to be preserved to this day is the tradition of the Sile Ono Niha ritual. Sile is a traditional Nias culture often performed openly in West Nias and North Nias public spaces. Not a few see it as a space for preserving community customs and as a praxis of sustainable conservation in general from the side of traditional society (Fanitra Pedi Atmanti, 2024). However, Sile was too quickly labeled as an occult, from a Christian theological point of view, that must be salted by Christian theologians in the local community (Gulo, 2023, pp. 36-52). Meanwhile, (in the binary of the majority and minority over the da'wah scheme), the traditional Nias community created the term Ndrawa as a negative label for immigrant Muslims. Ndrawa means "foreigner" with the intention of affirmation if not for discrimination in efforts to deny the existence of those who are always considered not Ono Niha, meaning human beings as Nias people because they were not born from Tano Niha, meaning the bowels of the Nias motherland (Latief, 2012, p. 221-244).

It seems clear that there are slight differences in social interpretation from fellow Nias people in describing and living various fields of Niasnese culture, which is easy to find in interpreting the people there. These differences also relate to events, diseases, and traditional ideas, whether from fellow traditionalists, the church community, or the Muslim community. It becomes a local social reality that shows how different individuals sociologically describe themselves and negotiate their respective social spaces at different times and contexts against their own cultures amid the blast of modernity (Peake, 2000, p. 2). One of the praxis of Sile Ono Niha is still found in the inland plains of Nias, such as in Moro'ö District, West Nias Regency, and Tugala Oyo District, North Nias Regency. In their eyes, these are significant rituals that connect the power of ancestors as the early pioneers of the pencak silat movement with the students. This praxis is what we want to study in this article.

A profound study of traditional Nias pencak silat rituals in the two sub-districts has not been found. However, indeed, the review of the reportage of pencak silat in traditional Nias can be compared with other pencak silat in the archipelago such as Minangkabau pencak silat, West Sumatra (Silek, n.d.) ; (topikini.com, 2018) ; PSHT (Setia Hati Terate) (Saputra, 2018) ; Kutau Lampung (Sari, 2024, p. 144) once existed. However, they focus on the dimension of ancestry, the application of traditional values, and as an educational function for the community or a commercialization function within certain limits for the benefit of tourists (Wahyono Wahyono, 2019, pp. 643-659). Meanwhile, Yusadar Waruwu's writings and YouTube videos only give a general overview of the slaughter of roosters as a

sign of respect for the ancestors who were the early founders of the Pencak Silat school. In addition to the ritual of slaughtering chickens, there is also a blood covenant ritual, which is interpreted as a bond of brotherhood (Yusadar Waruwu, 2013) ; (NS, 2018) ; (Yusadar Waruwu, 2019) ; (Pencak Silat OPS, 2021). It can be said that the traditional Nias pencak silat ritual mentioned above has given birth to a new meaning in the spirituality of the Nias community because Christianity is no longer seen as the only superior entity above culture but has become a paradox that both have the same authority and position in the public sphere. What happens next is that there is a harmony between Christian products and cultural products; without realizing it, the praxis of the alignment has reduced the values of the Christian faith and has colonized the spirituality and psychology of the community as members of the congregation because their beliefs are captivated and enslaved by traditional magical spirituality. Such captive beliefs are understood as a psychological state when a person considers them empirically premised (Yacob, 2018).

It is not an exaggeration to look at the phenomenon of Niasnese from a different perspective than previous researchers. The rite of Niasnese, seen as a socio-religious reality in the society of West Nias and North Nias, has now been processed as an immersive space negotiation. In the field, we pay attention to the ideas, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs of the people to be researched, and all of them cannot be measured by numbers (Widjaja, 2019) because what we want to articulate here is what means and its social benefits socio-theologically. For ethical reasons, not all data source names are written in full. In this paper, in qualitative research, we interpret what happened at the location (Haryono, 2020, p. 36), which had previously been carried out in the stages of observation, documentation, and interviews by purposive sampling from several important community figures. They appointed other figures who knew according to the studied object (Setiawan, 2018, p. 8).

RESEARCH SETTINGS

We conducted empirical research by focusing on research locations in the community of Moro'ö District, West Nias Regency, and the community of Tugala Oyo District, North Nias Regency, North Sumatra, with a rounded time from January 2022 to April 2023, with a socio-theological approach. The socio-theological approach is a scientific study conducted to investigate the reality of daily life in Christian societies because of the mixing of traditions motivated by ancestral beliefs with the understanding of the Christian faith as well as the Islamic faith (Famati Waruwu, 2023, p. 5). Third, it can be said to be a standard social system. Indeed, for a long time, because it is viewed from an empirical perspective, religion is also a belief system (Durkheim, 2001, p. 310-343). As a system, it becomes a diversity united by practices related to sacred things, that is, permissible and forbidden things, beliefs, and practices that unite a moral community called the church, all linked to each other (Kamirudin, 2006). However, in social reality, although there are differences in many ways, primarily related to the three communities' cultures, social negotiation also occurs.

Theoretically, we use negotiation as an academic framework defined as a concurrency

model with multi-stakeholder bargaining, whether for something primitive or newly introduced (Hoffmann, 2015, pp. 31-42). We bring the framework to dissect culture with all celebrities, including symbols, rites, ornaments, and their praxis as if seen as game models. There are efforts from the community as agents to force a negotiation to be stopped or blocked frontally, which is considered arbitrary negotiations or, on the contrary, lasts forever with good deterministic negotiations. The problem's uniqueness is that a place or space is a joint negotiation because some are pursued and some are guarded.

There is no doubt that the sociological aspect must still be taken into account when understanding Sile as a whole. The sociological aspects of society have never been expressed in a monolithic culture alone because these things in people's imagination and experience are always related to many things socially (Mibtadin, 2016). Thus, Sile should never be seen as merely a set of values, norms, rites, and theological beliefs reflected in social behavior. That is why, from a sociological point of view, it is also appropriate that Nias pencak silat here is positioned as a social medium that wants to display the articulation of their local identity. Theoretically, community groups always need a medium to communicate in various ways to express their life praxis, whether with the intention of preservation, nobility, or even introducing and passing it down to future generations (Hoover, 2014, p. xiii-xv).

Thus, in the sociological context mentioned above, Pencak Silat in the society of West Nias and North Nias, which we will hereinafter name "Keniasan" (Niasnese), is a group of individuals formed based on social order and diversity, but to a certain extent, there are aspects of social negotiation practices in it. By placing Sile Ono Niha in this intention, of course, they have a social order that is equipped with social structures and institutions, social relations, social interaction, and behavior, as well as cultural characteristics such as norms, beliefs, and values (Nicki Lisa, 2019) but among the local community, there will be mutual bargaining. They are the people of Nias, who comprise the majority of Christians in the North by 120,883, in the West by 75,726, while Muslims in the North by 9,317 and in the West by 9,320. For example, judging from statistical data (North, 2023), it is inseparable from religious matters and the social system. Excitement in the context of Sile is like two sides of a sword

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Who are the people of North Nias and West Nias?

The Moro'ö and Tugala Oyo communities coexist in different administrative regions. Moro'ö is the name of a sub-district that was established after the expansion of Mandrehe District, Nias Regency. Moro'ö District is currently in the administrative area of West Nias Regency. Moro'ö sub-district consists of 10 villages, namely the villages of Sitölubania Fadoro, Hilifadölö, Ono Zalukhu Yöu, Hiliwalo'o II, Gunung Baru, Hilisörömi, Sidua Hili, Lasarabahili, Hiliwaele and Sitölu Ewali (Tim Penyusun, 2023a, p. 14). Meanwhile, Tugala Oyo is also the name of a sub-district that was established after the expansion of Alasa

District, Nias Regency. Currently, Tugala Oyo District is located in the administrative area of North Nias Regency. Tugala Oyo District consists of 8 villages, namely the villages of Humene Sihene Asi, Fabaliwa Oyo, Siwawö, Gunung Tua, Ono Nazara, Teolo, Botona'ai and Harefa (Tim Penyusun, 2023b, p. 19).

The communities in these two sub-districts have differences in customary law. Nevertheless, the social interaction of the people produces negotiable social interaction, which, within certain limits, can still coexist in each social activity. Generally, the social reality of the two societies is intertwined in a reasonably long process. Public interaction in a local negotiation has been constructed after marriages between fellow people became more common, regardless of differences in theological beliefs and local cultural perspectives. Social negotiations also strengthened with a traditional market (popularly called pekan), which became the center of buying and selling for both communities. In addition, there are also often church activities in social spaces, Islam seasonally, such as Ramadan bazaars and temporally Islamic boarding schools when there are school holidays. For example, Islamic activities are centered at the Great Mosque of al-Uswah Tetesua West Nias and Babussalam Lotu North Nias. The community has other activities such as social gatherings, pencak silat, hunting, weddings, volleyball, and football. Moreover, even today, the politics of West Nias allow the two societies to meet each other because the Tugala Oyo people have a kinship with the Moro'ö people.

In general, there seems to be a strong reason to state that even though it is done negotiatively, even different social lives can be likened to Omo Hada or Omo Sebu, meaning a big house (Anatona Anatona, Maiza Elvira, Mhd. Nur, 2023, p. 227-231). Omo socially wants to catapult the public message as an inherent part of some local wisdom in building Nias traditional houses with architecture made by various local social groups. In social and cultural activities such as wedding ceremonies and death ceremonies, the two communities still invite and participate in each other, regardless of differences in church background, customary law, and clan. It is because the people strongly uphold the philosophy of Fatalifusöta (brotherhood) and social community relations. Interestingly, there is no social activity in the community that does not begin with Protestant Christian prayer, where the events are always full of Christian symbols, for example, with many public ornaments on display (Pemonius Hulu and Kardatu Boris Hulu, Interview January 10, 2023). This social infrastructure indicates the increase in the growth of evangelistic churches in the Nias archipelago, which is driven more by social leadership than by the pastors of local churches. However, they believe that the church centers its primary goal on evangelism as a necessity rather than an option (Laia, 2019, p. 286-302).

If so, the praxis of living the *keniasan* mentioned above, then it is appropriate to see that the people in these two sub-districts are very religious. It is even more emphatic, with the ease of finding public physical infrastructure there, marked by churches and small prayer rooms for Muslims built in each village. The majority religion in these two sub-districts is Protestant Christianity. The rest are Catholic Christians. Until now, there are no places of

worship for followers of other faiths in these two sub-districts (Tim Penyusun, 2023a, p. 37) ; (Tim Penyusun, 2023b, p. 51).

However, even though the people in these two sub-districts are Christian and have been exposed to a civilization that is perceived to be more advanced, the people still highly appreciate the culture of their ancestral heritage. Their beliefs are not far from their traditional behavior in the values of *keniasan*. The most potent belief is the belief in *Malaika Zatusa* (the spirit of the parents or the nobility of Nias), which also affects the lives of his descendants. In traditional activities such as obedience to carry out *Amakhoita Zatusa* (parental rules) and *Amakhaita Mbanua* (standard rules as a village governed through *Fondrakö*, i.e., customary law), especially in *Bosi* (social stratification), everything is done in the name of the Lord Jesus as if following what is written in the Christian Bible, namely *Colossians 3:17*, and also the name *Malaika Zatusa* which is a meaning for the spirits of parents, let's call them Nias ancestors. No doubt, regardless of the pros and cons that exist, to this day, the Christian community of North and West Nias still carries out social life in an immersive way between culture and religion in their way. These immersive things are expressed in architecture, ornaments, strokes, and sculptures in many Nias Protestant church buildings. There are various synod names in the face of Nias architectural art (*omo niha*), which can indicate the space of daily life (Zalukhu, 2019, p. 1-13).

Nias Traditional Pencak Silat

The people of North Nias and West Nias can be identified as a society that highly values the cultural heritage of their ancestors. It can be seen through the cooperation of community leaders, namely traditional leaders, government leaders, youth leaders, and religious leaders, who play an essential role in establishing martial arts schools. They make Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha the most important objects and subjects simultaneously to be educated in the values of the Niasnese tradition, which is believed to be an ancestral legacy.



Image of the chicken cutting ritual and oath in traditional Nias pencak silat

The requirements that must be met when opening the “Sasara” (the arena area used for pencak silat training) include roosters, shrouds, knives, betel leaves, and Bibles for procuring rituals. In procuring rituals, all students who are members of pencak silat must follow all stages of the ritual from beginning to end because the ritual has an inseparable meaning from the original identity of traditional Nias pencak silat. In the past, cats became teachers for tigers, who had an excellent reputation and were respected. The cat is nicknamed as a master teacher because of his martial arts skills. The cat teaches the tiger thirty-two martial arts movements from six in the morning to six in the evening. However, the cat did not teach the tiger climbing skills, so the tiger betrayed him and tried to kill his teacher. The tiger even vowed to eat cat feces in the forest because his desire to learn the technique was never fulfilled. Not far from where the cat taught the tiger the art of silat thirty-two martial arts movements, a king secretly observed these movements. The King later taught these silat movements to humans (R Lombu, Interview September 15, 2022) ; (Yos Waruwu, Interview February 27, 2023).

The story of the origin of pencak silat has become an oral tradition and has been widely known by the people of Nias. Therefore, in addition to the knowledge of the history of the Nias people, who often fought between villages, they developed martial arts from there. In addition, pencak silat is still perceived as a cultural heritage supported by this oral tradition. Just as the belief in Pencak silat is an ancestral heritage and is preserved in the oral tradition of the story of its origin, so too is the procurement of pencak silat rituals believed to be Rakö Zatura (parent/ancestral law), which is established by “oath and bound with curses.” For those who obey Rakö Zatura, *falukha lakhómi* and *howu-howu* (receive glory and blessings), on the other hand, violators will receive curses and punishments (Yos Waruwu) ; (Fw Waruwu, Ar Waruwu and Jo. Zebua, Interview June 17, 2022).

According to Yos Waruwu, the tiger betrayed his teacher because the teacher did not teach all the martial arts or magic to his students. The slaughter of the student’s chicken is carried out as a medium to see the student’s character in the future, and *Fabadu Do* (blood agreement) is used as a vow that there will be no betrayal between them.

Below is a description of the traditional Nias pencak silat ritual. First, a grandmaster performs the *Fanaba Manu* (cutting chicken) ritual with special procedures and spells. This ritual is carried out twice. The first chicken slaughter is referred to as the slaughter of the pupil chicken, which aims to certify the status of a student and as an expression of gratitude to the ancestors as the early pioneers of the pencak silat movement because only with the permission of their ancestors they learned the pencak silat school and because the spirits of the ancestors are believed to influence the movement of the martial arts. In addition, the slaughter of the disciple’s chicken also aims to observe the characteristics of the disciple in the future. The second chicken slaughter is called the slaughter of the guru chicken, carried out at the time of the determination of *Guru Tuo* (the successor of the silat school). As the successor of the silat school, *Guru Tuo* has advantages over other students, including more knowledge in terms of martial arts, spells and procedures for cutting chickens called *Li*

Fanaba Manu, mantras and procedures for respecting the area of the pencak silat arena called Fangowai Sasara, mantras and methods for placing the spirit of the supernatural teacher in the area of the pencak silat arena called Famaure Lapanga, immunity spells when practicing silat called Fanimbu Sasara and other occult knowledge.

Second, the Famaure Sasara Ritual is a ritual of placing the supernatural teacher in the pencak silat ring area using unique spells and magic procedures. This ritual is based on the belief that the spirits of Nias' ancestors influence all movements of their fighters, as explained in the first part. Evidence of the existence of occult teachers in the Pencak Silat ring area was seen the next day because there were traces of tiger scratches that showed his presence. In connection with the existence of the supernatural teacher in the pencak silat ring area, every student who enters the area must respect all four corners and show seriousness during practice. If a student practices alone outside the pencak silat arena area, he must place a chair or other object that symbolizes the opponent due to the presence of an invisible teacher around who will act as an opponent. Neglecting the warning is believed to impact students, even negatively losing their lives. Third, the Fabadu Do ritual (meaning blood agreement) is a ritual that develops the philosophy of "conceived by one father and one mother and having the same thoughts and views". Fourth, the Fosauni Kumöyö Ritual (i.e., burning incense) is a ritual of uniting the disciples' souls with the supernatural teacher. After undergoing 'Sauni', the disciples were expected to be able to control their emotions for three days due to the influence of the occult teacher who had integrated into their lives. During this time, married couples are prohibited from having marital relations.

The history of the original identity of the traditional Nias pencak silat mentioned above makes the ritual the main prerequisite for a person to become a student, specifically about vows. The oath of the first disciples was taken at the time of the slaughter of the first chicken. Uniquely, in carrying out this oath, the students form a circle, with each holding a shroud that is always associated with Islamic symbols, but on top of it are placed betel leaves and a Bible. They swear in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) that from today, they are brothers who no longer suspect each other. Meanwhile, the second oath was taken when performing the second chicken slaughter ritual: the slaughter of the teacher's chicken and, simultaneously, the election of Guru Tuo. This oath is more binding than the first one because it is a blood covenant. All participants involved in the oath shed their blood to drink together and laid their hands on the Bible to bind the oath in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) that they were brothers conceived by one father and one mother, one heart and one mind. The blood covenant is bound by the promise of blessings for those who obey it and a curse for the transgressor. The threat of a curse for a violator of the blood covenant oath is similar to the legal threat of Fondrakö (meaning customary law), namely:

1. Haniha zanawö hölu nia, yamate ia ba mbawa mbalatu (whoever breaks his oath, dies by the sword)

2. Haniha zanawö holu nia, yamate silösökhi lala (whoever breaks his oath, his death is heinous and inhumane) and
3. Haniha zanawö hölu nia, yalö isöndra harazaki nia sagötö faauri nia (whoever breaks his vow, he does not have good luck for the rest of his life).

In the perspective of the traditional Nias community, for example, according to Fw Waruwu, Ar Waruwu, and Jo Zebua, the uniqueness of the blood covenant is a noble ritual and ratified by God is a socio-theological praxis as a tangible manifestation of their acceptance of the different, not only in terms of gender alone but also socially with the belief that whatever is approved in the world is also approved by God in heaven. They consider it to be a strict Christian doctrinal truth engraved in Matthew 16:19. Those who have made blood covenants have a union of souls that exceeds the relationship of parents, brothers, and sisters, as well as close relatives that even exceeds the relationship of husband and wife in the idea of a household that extends to a typical social home.

Until now, the rituals carried out are based on oral traditions transmitted continuously from the previous generation to the next generation in the Nias community as the original identity, namely Sile as a traditional Nias pencak silat. Parents said that in the past, tigers of different sizes and “animal social classes” taught cats that were weaker or smaller in terms of body size. There seems to be a traditional “martial art ethos” that has been renewed into a modern social life ethos as another unique side in terms of cultural treasures of intention that are no longer limited to carving, sculpture, and artists but have reached social galleries (Alpert, 2021). It can be understood that is also the background for continuing the tradition of pencak silat rituals, especially for the younger generation. However, it is not only limited to cultural rituals related to the respect of ancestors as the early pioneers of the pencak silat movement, which can then be believed to have influenced the movement of the martial arts as seen in the rituals of Fanaba Manu and Famaure Sasara. In the ritual, there was a mite with the placement of the spirit of the supernatural teacher in the pencak silat arena area. The mystical figure appeared in the form of a tiger. However, some believe that the mite does not receive support from the mythology of the Nias people about their ancestors.

In contrast, in the Nias society, the mythology of ancestors is influential in the social system and cultural formation (S. E. Zaluchu, 2021) ; (S. Zaluchu & Widjaja, 2019). Some argue that none of the gods, according to the ancestral mythology of the Nias people, manifest their existence as tigers (Danandjaja, 1976, pp. 110–111) ; (Gustanto et al., 2005, p. 11). Their opinion arose because, like them, the people of Nias did not identify their ancestors as tigers, and for geographical reasons, there is no tiger habitat in the forests of Nias island until today. In this case, the ancient Nias people can't imagine a tiger figure they have never seen. Therefore, they believe that it is difficult to justify the original identity of pencak silat, namely, the tiger that teaches cats that underlies the various pencak silat rituals that arise from the local knowledge of the Nias people. Meanwhile, the Nias rite is only influenced by fairy tales as the original identity of pencak silat only as an old fairy tale of the people of the

archipelago that has been widely known (Fajar Triyanto., 2012).

In the plains of the island of Sumatra, some tribes are related to tigers and have had knowledge of tigers for generations, namely the Malay, Minang, and Rejang tribes (Feby Siahaan, 2017, p. 256) ; (Kiyudi, 2019). Even the book *7 Tiger People* by Motinggo Busye was inspired by the beliefs of the Rejang people about the shape-shifting tiger, which is considered an ancestor (Yuliardi Hardjo Putro, 2017) ; (Ekel Surata Sembiring, 2020). Based on the origin story, tiger silat is a martial art created in Pariangan (Rahayu, 2017) ; (Silek, n.d.). He explained that in addition to Datuak Suri Dirajo, the founders of Minang silat also have names as the names of animals such as goats, tigers, cats, and dogs (Silek, n.d.). In the Minangkabau community, tigers are called Datuak or Inyiak. In general, Inyiak is very closely related to the tiger silat. For the Minangkabau people, inyiak is the tiger's spirit, so the community also calls a tiger inyiak (Ridha Fitria, 2022, p. 6).

However, we have other empirical reasons to support the Niasnese. In the local community, there is a cultural adaptation process for the Muslim community and the local Nias community who live on the island of Nias, one of which is pencak silat. Tuti Rahayu explained this in her research on the Multi-Cultural Nias Society with the location of the community study in Lahewa District, North Nias Regency, located in the coastal area of Nias island. Rahayu uses the historical, sociological method that the social interaction that takes place between Muslim immigrant communities such as the Aceh, Minang, and Bugis tribes and the local people of Nias gives birth to multiculturalism that is expressed in aspects of religion, language, culture, symbols, attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles. One of the cultural expressions inherent in the local people of Nias is 'ale-ale', the performing arts displayed at official events, such as weddings. Ale-ale is the result of a combination of pencak silat with war dance. Silat is a standard martial art among Aceh, Minang, and Bugis immigrant communities. Meanwhile, war dance is the art of defending against enemy attacks using machetes, shields, and spears owned by the local community, namely Nias (Rahayu, 2017).

War dance as a martial art in the local community of Nias has received support from pencak silat writers such as (I Gde Yudhi Argangga Khrisnatara, 2022, p. 13) ; (Pena Indonesia, 2022, pp. 15–16). They explained that the skill of pencak silat, which is also in North Nias and West Nias, is also the skill of various tribes in Indonesia to defend and defend themselves and their groups from the threat of wild animals and other human groups such as the island of Nias which develops martial arts using machetes, shields, and spears. With the adaptation of the pencak silat culture to the Nias community from immigrants, it is not surprising that pencak silat in the Nias community today has an identical resemblance to other pencak silat, such as Pencak silat in the Minangkabau community West Sumatra. The similarity can be seen in the mention of names, and the use of special terms, as well as in the rituals carried out with unique spells and procedures with the meanings contained in them, which are never the same in every region (Silek, n.d.) ; (topikini.com, 2018).

The influence of immigrants who participate in coloring the social interaction of the

intention is also very evident on the coast in Idano Gawo, Sirombu, Gunungsitoli (the largest), Lahewa, and Tuhemberua. Everything is concentrated on the coast. These migrants are often called coastal Nias or coastal Islam (Lubis, 2021) ; (Suwartiningsih, Samiyono, 2017). In particular, the existence of Bugis descendants in Sirombu, West Nias, has a history related to the Hinako Islands, consisting of eight small islands inhabited by Bugis descendants. They had arrived in Nias before the Dutch rule on the island of Nias. Currently, most of the population of Bugis descent has settled on the coast of Sirombu for thirteen generations or around the end of the 17th century. They have assimilated with the Aceh, Minang, and Nias residents who are already in Sirombu. They have held inter-ethnic marriages, so they do not identify as Bugis but as Ono Niha (Suharmiati et al., 2016).

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, another reason that cannot be denied is Pencak silat in the Muslim community attached to religious spirit or religious science by utilizing the verses of the Qur'an as mantras/readings that the Ulama sanction to perform rituals (Beni Ahsan, Eka Putra Wirman, 2024). However, not only in pencak silat, the use of verses of the Qur'an as mantras is also used in various other purposes, such as mantras to lure the opposite sex, mantras to make people yearn, mantras guna-guna (mantras supernatural), mantras to cure diseases such as pain during childbirth, abdominal pain, and menstrual pain. Mantras for facilitating childbirth, mantras for supremacy, mantras for making the body strong and various other mantras for social life (Alfianoor, 2017).

The data mentioned above is complex to reject. Empirically, it was found that the ritual of pencak silat in the Nias people today has a spiritual formulation, traditional customs, and a social theatrical action. In other words, the implementation of rituals is adjusted and/or integrated according to the content of Christianity without eliminating the content of the ritual from other dimensions of *keniasan*. Although the Gospel succeeded in converting the beliefs of the people of Nias to Christianity, it can be said that today is the typical culture of the Muslim immigrant community in the local community of Nias before Christianity landed on the island of Nias.

There are other things. For example, mystical science in the form of spells, Incantation, and amulets has long exposed the people of Nias to Muslim immigrants, such as the Acehnese and Malay tribes who came to the island of Nias. The people of Nias call mysticism *Elemu* (Alokasi Gulo, 2012, p. 47). This fact is supported by the Pastors' observation of the influence of the Muslim community living on the island of Nias who have adapted their culture, namely, *Elemu*, which comes from religion and culture or a combination of both. The culture was mixed with Nias culture, especially in coastal areas, before Christianity landed on the island. Furthermore, this culture exposed the people of Nias who live in the highlands, where the majority of the people at this time adhered to Christianity after the Gospel succeeded in converting the beliefs of the people of Nias to Christianity (S Waruwu, As Waruwu, So Waruwu, H Waruwu and Ok Waruwu, Interview June 27, 2022). This fact is to the historical data of the arrival of a new religion introduced to the people of Nias before Christianity; Islam had already entered the island of Nias brought by immigrants

from Aceh and Minang (Harefa et al., 2021).

According to O Gulo, although the Muslim immigrants did not significantly influence the religion and culture of the Nias people, the influence of the immigrants introduced elements of their culture mixed into traditional culture and Christianity. It can be seen from one of which is the mantras that combines elements of Islam and Christianity (O Gulo, Interview September 20, 2022). Meanwhile, according to B Waruwu and Bz Waruwu, the cultural influence of the immigrants has melted the traditional Nias mantra, where currently there are almost no mantra sounds in the original Nias language (B Waruwu and Bz Waruwu, Interview May 19, 2022).

Just as the negotiations took place between the coastal Nias culture and the Muslim immigrant community on the island of Nias to find compatible positions, social negotiation took place before and after Christianity was introduced to the people of Nias. Many elements of foreign culture, such as Elemu, affect the socio-theological expression of the Nias living in the highlands. It is a mystical science in the form of incantations, Incantation, and amulets practiced in pencak silat rites with special rituals. Furthermore, there is also a negotiation of the religious space of the traditional Nias community with Christianity, such as Elemu, which is synthesized with elements of Christianity and pencak silat with rituals filled with elements of Christianity so that Pencak silat is readily accepted, and is not scolded or reviled by urban society (modern Nias society).

According to R Lombu, the influence of foreign culture entering the island of Nias can also be observed in the Nias people who hunt and associate with Elemu from the past to the present. It does not matter whether they are Christians, Muslims, or Nias in general, who are more traditional believers. They deliberately come to Hajj or Ustad to teach because they believe that mystical knowledge from Hajj or Ustad is more potent than traditional mystical knowledge. Even they go to Aceh to learn mystical knowledge from local religions or those who have settled in Aceh, namely, Banyak island, most of which are Nias people there, have embraced Islam and have gained mystical knowledge from the new religion, influencing the people of Nias when they return to Nias island. In fact, according to R Lombu, one of the cultures of the outside community that has been integrated with the local community of Nias and has become the cultural identity of Nias is pencak silat with rituals brought by Nias people who learnt Elemu in Aceh. R Lombu explanation confirms that pencak silat, carried out with rituals in the Nias community today, is a typical culture of the outside community and/or immigrant society adapted to the local community of Nias.

Concerning the Nias people and Elemu, J. Waruwu sees the reality that it is difficult to deny that, although in terms of religion, the majority of the Nias people do not accept Islam as a religion for them, in particular, the Nias Christian community who hunts and associates with Elemu accepts and believes in the readings (mantras) of the Muslim religion which affirm a Muslim's belief in his Prophet and his Allah (J Waruwu, Interview October 18, 2022). Some understand this intention occurs because of mutual tolerance, solidarity, and

community harmony (Rahayu, 2017). Some view the phenomenon of intention as standard in the people of the archipelago, where foreign cultures are included in the local community's culture local community's culture. It must be recognized that some have changed, and some have not (Utami, 2015).

The data mentioned above explains the process of social negotiation in Niasnese. In this case, the Sile perpetrators are not extinct even though the impact of the presence of Islam and Christianity in the context keniasan can be read in social interactions in North Nias and West Nias until now. So, it is not an exaggeration if Sile continues to take place among fellow Muslim immigrants and the local community of Nias, even those Christians who are active in the church. There continued to be social interaction, which led to the opening of negotiations on the religious space of the Nias community, which can be said to be rural (traditional Nias people) and can also be said to be urban (Nias people who are immigrants). Negotiation in the context keniasan is understood as social communication between three different parties to find positions compatible with each other and create harmonious social relations on the island of Nias. The local people of Nias, in their culture and the culture of the immigrant community, bargained with each other, causing cultural infiltration and even assimilation that increasingly blurred their boundaries.

CONCLUSION

After conducting empirical research and analysis, Sile as pencak silat is one of the expressions of Christianity, Islam, and the local community in North Nias and West Nias. Pencak silat is no longer limited to traditional sports and is not only limited to the efforts made by local communities to preserve their own culture as a rite of passage from the onslaught of global culture. Pencak silat is the expression of society, where traditional rituals are filled with a Christian worldview or integrated into an immersive whole. Although initially, the origin of pencak silat with rituals is a typical culture of the Muslim immigrant community living on the island of Nias, which is negotiated with the culture of the local Nias people who live on the coast, which then the inclination has been very capable of influencing the socio-theological identity of Niasnese who live in the highlands and also in coastal areas.

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