



EXPRESSION OF DIVERSITY IN *TAHLILAN*:
An Interfaith Study of the Death Rites in Muntilan Magelang
and Babadan Sleman Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This paper describes interfaith *tahlilan* that occurred in two areas, namely Ngawen, Muntilan, Magelang and Babadan, Sleman, Yogyakarta. As a death rite, interfaith *tahlilan* is held by Catholics at their homes to pray for their families who have died. By involving various levels of society in Ngawen and Babadan, both Muslim and Catholic, this interfaith *tahlilan* was led by Islamic leaders in the two areas. In the process, interfaith *tahlilan* is accepted as a form of religious accommodation by Muslims, but on the other hand it becomes a separate discourse whether *tahlilan* to pray for Catholics is commonly carried out and can be granted by Allah. To find out the portrait of the dynamics of cross-faith *tahlilan*, there are three basic questions posed in this paper, namely, first, what is meant by interfaith *tahlilan*? Why is interfaith *tahlilan* carried out by Catholics and involves Muslims? How is the discursive space carried out by Muslim actors so that interfaith *tahlilan* can be carried out? To analyze the three questions, the author uses the anthropological theory of death and traditional discourse to describe the facts that occur in the field. Therefore, to find out the facts on the ground, methodologically the author uses interviews with key figures and conducts Focus Group Discussions to obtain broad views from the residents of Ngawen Magelang and Babadan Yogyakarta. From the results of our study, the authors argue that *tahlilan* carried out by the Ngawen and Babadan peoples is motivated by an awareness of inclusiveness in carrying out religious practices in the midst of diversity while at the same time promoting the spirit of citizenship as an anthropological building in society.

Keywords: *Tahlilan*, Interfaith, diversity, harmony

A. INTRODUCTION

So far, the study of *tahlilan* as one of the religious practices or death rites celebrated in the form of slametan tends to be associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition. Various researches conducted by academics, both in the form of theses, dissertations, and other research reports review NU's involvement and consistency in preserving the tradition of *tahlilan*. In fact, the presence of NU, which is at the forefront of caring for *tahlilan*, gives a special impression among the public that *tahlilan* is a cultural identity that experiences acculturation between Islamic teachings and local wisdom.¹

Nevertheless, as a religious practice that has embodied in the rite of death, every community group has the same responsibility to offer the best gift to a loved one who has died. Muhammadiyah is no exception, as a religious organization that has been quite keen to label the narrative of Superstition, Heresy, Churafat (TB) against the rite of death, also involved in *tahlilan* activities. At least, some research conducted by several academics on community involvement under Muhammadiyah illustrates portraits of the implementation of *tahlilan* and diving events that have been considered unusual.

Sangkot Sirait's writing describes the Muhammadiyah group in Kotagede Yogyakarta who participated in *tahlilan* activities. Because, for these communities, *tahlilan* becomes a social expression of "crah agawe bubrah, rukun agawe santosa" which prioritizes harmony between residents. Similarly, the writings of Muhammad Abdul Nasir further emphasize a similar picture regarding the involvement of the Muhammadiyah community in Yogyakarta in *tahlilan* activities. In fact, if you look at the previous study, Sayyidah Aslamah there is an atmosphere of backwardness in the Muhammadiyah community in Yogyakarta in responding to *Tahlilan* activities. Where, in the body of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta there is an internal conflict between people who refuse and carry out *tahlilan*.

In the condition of a society that experiences differences in attitudes in the implementation of *tahlilan*, it gives an indication that *tahlilan* is not necessarily related to its affiliation to a religious organization that is shaded. However, first, *tahlilan* becomes a shared responsibility taught by local leaders who have an influence on the community. Thus, religious practices such as *tahlilan* and other rites labeled heresy by a group of people do not rule out the possibility of being carried out by the community. The writings

¹ Hamim Farhan, "Ritualisasi Budaya-Agama Dan Fenomena Tahlilan-Yasinan Sebagai Upaya Pelestarian Potensi Kearifan Lokal Dan Penguatan Moral Masyarakat," Logos, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Januari 2008) hal. 97-112



of Muhammad Adlin Sila further prove the picture of community cosmopolitanism in carrying out religious practices such as Maulid in Bima.

Second, a mutual agreement to follow the rhythm of society in its environment can be a factor in changing the way a religious group views in carrying out religious practices that are considered contrary to their religious perspectives or movements. Thus, the *tahlilan* that has been directed in various walks of Muslim society, one side cannot be fully claimed as an important part of religious traditions such as NU which are considered appropriate and worthy of preserving it. Similarly, religious groups whose ideological platforms and religious movements have been considered opposite and reject various rites carried out by certain religious groups, also cannot be hypothesized that they also want to participate in the *tahlilan* rites..²

Although in practice, there are various modifications to *tahlilan* events organized by each group such as Muhammadiyah to adjust the audience who want to pray for their deceased relatives. In this connection, the presence of different views and attitudes from within the Muhammadiyah body itself, is one of the proofs that *tahlilan* becomes a dynamic practice of diversity. On the one hand, *tahlilan* can be used as a means to pray or recite good readings, and on the other hand, it can be a means of bonding citizenship and a means of interrelation that can strengthen social relations between citizens.³

Departing from the diversity of community expressions in carrying out *tahlilan*, this paper describes a different portrait where *tahlilan* can also be done by people of different religions. This is as happened to the people of Ngawen Magelang and Babadan Yogyakarta who for many years have merged themselves in *tahlilan* activities. Because, for the people of Ngawen and Babadan, *tahlilan* is a negotiating space to maintain harmony. Moreover, the rite of death becomes the last moment for the family left behind to do the best for the deceased.

In this connection, the typology of the diverse Ngawen and Babadan societies that are inspired by the character of the judiciary who considers the death rite as an ancestral

² Ana Riskasari, Pengaruh Persepsi Tradisi tahlilan di Kalangan Masyarakat Muhammadiyah terhadap Relasi Sosial di Desa Gulurejo Lendah Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, Jurnal Panangkaran Volume 2, Nomor 2, (Juli-Desember 2018) hal. 210-215

³ Badru Jaman dan Yakub Malik, Exploring The Values of Tahlilan Tradition for Development of Social Interaction Topic in Social Studies ducation Learning: Descriptive Study of Analysis in Gintung Ranjeng Village of Cirebon Regency, International Journal Pedagogy of Social Studies, (2017) hal 243-250

tradition that needs to be preserved, it is not surprising that the *tahlilan* activities that are an important part of the death rite are also carried out by adherents of other religions.⁴

Catholics and Protestants who have for decades built togetherness with the Islamic ummah and are involved in various practices of citizenship who have participated in the *tahlilan* to pray for the family members of the deceased. They mingle with each other with the Islamic ummah in one blend of flavors without re-questioning the side of controversy that is commonly raised in various circles of fellow Islamic ummah.

Although theologically, there are doctrinal obstacles experienced by each religious believer in Ngawen and Babadan Yogyakarta do not close the psychological openness of various parties to communicate their various inclusive fiqh reasons so that Catholic and Protestant ummah can perform *tahlilan* in their homes. In addition, although in practice there are sometimes certain parties on the part of the Islamic ummah who experience doctrinal obstacles, the attitude of the Islamic ummah still respects and allows the *tahlilan* event to be carried out. Because, in ngawen and Babadan yogyakarta there is a discursive space mediated and facilitated by community leaders who are Muslims who have inclusive insights.

Therefore, any differences in attitudes shown by some Islamic ummah who mentally disagree with the practice of *tahlilan* carried out by Catholic and Protestant ummah, but outwardly they are still present as passive participants and do not follow the reading of *thayyibah* sentences in *tahlilan*.

The fluid and non-rigid religious attitude shown by the Islamic ummah in Ngawen and Babadan Yogyakarta reflects esoteric Islamic behavior. Where in the spirit of esotericism put forward the socio-moral reconstruction of muslim society rather than normative piety of each individual. In this connection, the Islamic ummah in Ngawen and Babadan Yogyakarta make harmony and inclusive citizenship an attitude of religion that does not prioritize truth claims to the teachings embraced.

Sociologically, borrowing the perspective of Sumanto Al Qurtuby what took place in Ngawen Village and Yogyakarta describes two important things as a religious ummat living in a diverse society. First, the Islamic ummah and the Catholic ummah prioritize harmonious social relations between religious ummah. They fused their religious identities

⁴ Abdul Manan dan Muhammad Arifi, Cultural Traditions in Death Rituals Within The Community of Pidie, Aceh, Indonesia, T Vol. 43 No. 1 (Januari-Juni 2019) hal. 138-140



into interfaith relationships in order to maintain a plurality that has been going on for hundreds of years. Second, the Islamic ummah and the Catholic ummah do not prioritize aspects of religious exoterism that are only stuck in the rigidity, formality, normativeness, and list of symbolism that treats sharia as a field of unilateral justification..

However, the establishment of a fluid and inclusive pattern of social relations between religion in the Ngawen and Yogyakarta communities cannot be separated from the existence of actors who have been the main drivers of interfaith religious practices. Where, some actors from the Islamic ummah were initiated by community leaders from the inclusive Nahdliyin circles. The presence of NU figures who are the liaison between the Islamic ummah and the Catholic and Protestant ummah is the determining factor in how interfaith *tahlilan* is carried out.

In addition, the existence of this NU figure became a node of discursive space when there were differences of views among the Islamic ummah when Catholics wanted to carry out *tahlilan* for the families of the deceased. Through the capacity of deep and open Islamic science, NU figures did not hesitate to convey the dynamics of the thinking of previous scholars who were full of differences. Thus, Islamic ummah who do not agree with the implementation of interfaith *tahlilan* can understand and appreciate the differences in views and opinions expressed by NU figures.

In addition to the capacity of Islamic science, the NU figure also has experience involved in various multicultural community activities. This experience further forged him to respect and appreciate every reality that happened in his village. Thus, when Catholic and Protestant ummah want to hold a religious practice such as *tahlilan*, which nota bene becomes the habitus of islamic ummah religion, the NU figure does not panic and denial. However, with the spirit of wisdom, NU figures seek to embrace other Islamic ummah in order to appreciate the wishes and wishes of the Catholic ummah. Moreover, theologically, the postulates about the implementation of the *tahlilan* are fraught with controversy among the Islamic ummah itself. Therefore, when the NU figure invited Islam to be able to fulfill the request of the Catholic Ummah to carry out *tahlilan*, he gave a sociological view and thought, that *tahlilan* is a religious practice that is valid for anyone to do.

The existence of NU figures who are so fluid and dynamic positioning themselves as part of the inclusive Ngawen and Babadan Yogyakarta communities, so the Catholic

ummah did not hesitate to merge themselves also in various religious activities initiated by the Islamic ummah. Although the presence of the Catholic ummah in the religious events of the Islamic ummah is limited to physical presence without going deeper by negating the belief system that is its creed.

The presence of mandalas of involvement between the Islamic ummah and the Catholic ummah in interfaith *tahlilan* activities further indicates the spirit of diversity in religion. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to assume that from the interfaith *tahlilan* that takes place in ngawen and yogyakarta to a harmony between religious ummats that needs to be exemplified by other religious ummats.

In this connection, the existence of interfaith *tahlilan* which has been going on for decades in ngawen and Yogyakarta and has become a social modality for the growth of the spirit of harmony between religious ummah, triggers the author to know more deeply about, why is cross-*tahlilan* implemented in the ngawen and Yogyakarta communities? what is an interfaith *tahlilan*? Why is the interfaith *tahlilan* carried out by the Catholic ummah and involving the Islamic ummah? How is the discursive space carried out by the actors of the Islamic ummah so that interfaith *tahlilan* can be carried out?

Some of these questions, the author of the analysis uses the anthropological theory of death to describe the process of accommodation and involvement of the Islamic ummah in the *tahlilan* initiated by the Catholic ummah. In addition, the author also uses traditional discourse theory as a space for discussion among the Ummah of the Islamic Ummah who can finally accept the differences in perspectives in applying Islamic teachings.

In addition, to find out more in-depth the portrait of problems that occurred in Ngawen Magelang and Babadan Yogyakarta, the author conducted field research and met various important informants involved in interfaith *tahlilan* activities. As the main support in field research, the author also interviewed key figures from both Islamic ummah and Catholic families who invited Muslims to enthrone in their homes.

B. Research Methods

This study uses a type of field that aims to study and observe interfaith *tahlilan* carried out by interfaith ummat in praying for the bodies of Catholics who died in Muntilan Magelang and Babadan Sleman Yogyakarta.



To obtain data on this interfaith *tahlilan* activity, the author conducted interviews with core informants from Catholic families who invited Muslim residents around the villages of Muntilan Magelang and Babadan Sleman Yogyakarta. From the many data obtained, the author chooses and selects so that the author can draw conclusions.⁵

C. Discussion

1. Dynamics of *Tahlilan* in Ngawen

Tahlilan is a socio-religious practice that combines elements of prayer, zikir which is carried out individually or in groups. Empirically, *tahlilan* is carried out in a variety of diverse forms of expression. The writings of Andi warisno and Tabrani ZA explain *tahlilan* in a variety of varied expressions. Among other things, *tahlilan* is interpreted as dhikr which contains a good reading (kalimah thayyibah) which is assembled in such a way by illuminating the elements of praise such as prayer beads, tahmid, and tahlil to Allah and shalawat to the Messenger of Allah. In addition, *tahlilan* is also interpreted as diving and rites that inscribe elements of locality and customs.⁶

In this connection, as a rite of death or salvation in which it consists of various elements such as joint prayer, the Ngawen people preserve it with the expression of diversity. Where in the *tahlilan* there is the involvement of several actors among the Islamic ummah and the Catholic ummah. Some of the actors consist of community groups affiliated to NU, Muhammadiyah, Protestantism, and Catholicism..⁷

These four elements of society become the driving node in seeding the life of a plural society and promoting tolerance in Ngawen. They always counsel egalitarianly in formulating various community activities and shoulder to shoulder in carrying out togetherness to face various life problems and other mass celebrations. Including when there is a death incident that happened to one of the residents who is a Christian, the owner of a prayer who is Catholic or Protestant, does not hesitate to invite Muslims to attend his home and read prayers intended for the family of the deceased.

In this connection, theo-antrhomorphic awareness, which is used as an inclusive socio-religious approach by Christians and invites islamic ummah to pray for their

⁵ Norman K. Denzin dan Yvonna S. Lincoln (ed.), *Handbooks of Qualitative Research*. (London: Sage Publications, 1994) hal. 240

⁶ Mark R. Woodward, The "Slametan": Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam Vol. 28, No. 1 (Aug., 1988), hal 137-140

⁷Interview with the head of the hamlet Ngawen, 20/April/2019

deceased families, is certainly a unique event. Moreover, the prayer activity lasts for several times such as 1 day to 3 days, 7 days, 40, days, 100 days, up to 1000 days. In addition, the invited prayer attendant, recites prayers that are common but full of values of "Islamic sacralism". Although, in the procession his prayers are not the same as diving or kenduren activities, as is common in *tahlilan* rites among nu which begins his series of prayers with the recitation of al fatihah and ends with the phrase tahlil as the ultimate of his prayer. However, the joint prayer that presents the Islamic ummah in the homes of christians intended for their deceased family members, and lasts in the folds of time up to 1000 days, gives its own moral imperative, that in religion it is necessary to prioritize flexibility and flexibility.

The co-existential consciousness embedded in the religious niches of the Islamic ummah and the Christian ummah in Ngawen Village became the entrance to the growth of socio-cultural resilience that fused doctrinal egoism. The joint prayer offered by the ummah of different faiths and each prayer person treats the mayyit—regardless of religion—as a servant of God who is entitled to the accompaniment of prayer to face His daily life, certainly surrounded by a transcendental consciousness that transcends the egoism of religiousness..⁸

In addition, this co-existential consciousness became a pillar of diversity that preserves interfaith joint prayer as a spiritual foundation for the Ngawen people. Thus, it becomes natural that prayer together as an accompaniment to the deceased is termed as an interfaith prayer. Where in the interfaith *tahlilan*, a group of Islamic ummah will be present in a joint prayer activity at the home of a Christian ummah who is grieving and who has hajat (shahibul hajah) will be welcome to chant prayers as believed. While the family will agree to each strand of prayer even though—in general—there may be different signals of interconnectivity at metaphysical currents..

In this connection, interfaith *tahlilan* becomes one of the social expressions of religion that does not simply place prayer together as a monolithic vertical relationship. However, the interfaith proliferation of muslim religious practices became a death rite to care for harmony. As a rite, which is intended for the deceased citizens, it also shapes the character of social interaction and daily life of a layer of Javanese society. It becomes natural, if in the Ngawen community a joint prayer involving the Islamic ummah and

⁸ Interview with muslim warag in Ngawen (23 April 2019)



known as *tahlilan* is carried out, as the Krsiten ummah holds a prayer event intended for fellow Christian ummah who are present at home who have celebrations.

Thus, Christians who are mourning the passing of their family members always seek to provide a place for all religious ummah to participate in diving or joint prayers—for the Islamic ummah—and prayer events—for the Christian ummah. In fact, when Christian-style prayers are held, some Islamic ummah who happen to be relatives and their homes are close together, attend the event.⁹

The involvement of Islamic ummah in joint prayer activities in the homes of Christians and prayer events intended for Christian ummah and led by a Pastor but also attended by some Islamic ummah is certainly a legacy that prioritizes the spirit of harmony. Moreover, for the people of Ngawen, harmony became the highest social law expressed communally-culturally without re-questioning the contradiction of views on the position of common prayer involving interfaith citizens in the death rites.

Anthropologically, the fusion of religious dogmatism in the rite of death as occurred within Ngawen society, referring to the thoughts of Clifford Geertz in the book "Culture and Religion" became a reasonableness of the process of acculturation prevalent in the plural social system of society. In this context, the Ngawen community whose population does consist of various believers, in addition to the diversity of several religious groups such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Catholicism, and Protestantism, has become a pillar of diversity in Ngawen village, so it becomes natural that *kenduren*, *selametan*, and pray together or in other terms as "interfaith *tahlilan*" took place from the past until now.

In this connection, the repertoire of harmony manifested in the rite of death and expressed through a series of dives, joint prayers, or *tahlilans* involving interfaith citizens suggests a concept of unity. In the concept of unity, the Ngawen people always strive to condition the pattern of coexistence that takes place peacefully and comfortably.

Perbedaan teologis yang melingkupi kehidupan mereka tidak menjadi alasan untuk membangun jarak emosional antara warga. Faktanya, meskipun ada catatan jejak ketidaknyamanan antara kehidupan religius karena telah terjadi di berbagai daerah. Dimana orang-orang Kristen seharusnya tidak membangun rumah ibadah di daerah mereka—seperti yang terjadi di Dharmawangsa, Sumatera Selatan. Ummah Islam tidak dapat membangun mesjid di rumah tinggal mereka—seperti yang terjadi di Minahasa, Sulawesi Selatan. Faktanya, dalam satu lingkaran sesama

⁹ Interview with Catholic residents of Ngawen hamlet 26 April 2019

religious people there is rejection and exclusion as experienced by ahmadis, shia, and other groups. All these non-civilized portraits do not affect the persistence of the Ngawen people in knitting the concept of unity in their lives.

In this connection, the concept of unity in question does not refer to uniformity which is often a mode of coercion by a group of people who encourage the other party to follow the path of their beliefs. However, the concept of unity here, referring to abdurrahman Mas'ud's perspective is a kind of peaceful co-existence concept that embodies various Javanese philosophies that prioritize nervousness, security, and harmony.

Various Javanese philosophies that teach a concept of unity and are contextualized as social teachings of harmony become a guide for the Ngawen people to maintain a peaceful and comfortable village life. Noble values were developed in other dimensions of religious practice such as nyadran activities—as is commonly practiced by Javanese people to clean up cemeteries inhabited by all residents despite different religions. In addition, there are other religious activities such as Mass worship—in Christian worship—which presents a group of Muslims beating hadrah in rhythm with a christian youth choir..

Through social activities of citizenship and cosmopolitan religious practices, it increasingly shows the transformative-egalitarian self-quality of the Ngawen people. Sociologically, the arena of engagement between citizens such as nyadran and interfaith *tahlilan* is a means to maintain harmony and harmony between citizens. For them, multiculturalism is not just an explicit knowledge as is widely discussed easily by academics. However, naturally, multiculturalism becomes a tacit knowledge that they consciously do not understand the theory, but in everyday life shows the practice of diversity that groans differences with the concept of unity.

In this context, what is analyzed by various groups, that the religious practices of the Village community often go beyond the pattern of life of urban people who always experience social segregation just because of differences in religious perspectives and understandings. This is as reviewed by Sumanto Al qurtubi, that the kampung people are often more civilized and polite in practicing religious teachings without questioning the limits of beliefs believed by each of their adherents. Because, for the people of the village or village, religion—referring to Max Weber's perspective—is a sacred canopy that interprets every movement of his life with solidarity and human values. Thus, it is not



surprising that religious practices expressed cross-borders do not only stop at the scope of Sharia—as they are used as dogmatic rules to punish every different event and belief. However, the element of religious sense (*dzauq al dini*) that is not explicit in its religious knowledge becomes a guide to behavior in cultivating mutual respect.

Thus, what the Ngawen people who have been practicing interfaith religious practices with their various manifestations are doing, actually practice the teachings of Ali ibn Talib, that he who is not a brother in the faith, is a brother in humanity. In this connection, what the Ngawen community has shown should be a valuable lesson or role model for the Indonesian people on how to create an environment as a social laboratory of diversity that upholds peace, harmony, and empathy for each other.

2. Dynamics of *tahlilan* in Babadan Yogyakarta

As the cross-sectional *tahlilan* that occurred in Ngawen Magelang, in the babadan area of Yogyakarta, it shows a religious practice in the form of a similar death rite. Where, Catholics in the babadan community also initiated the implementation of *tahlilan* for their families who died.

There have been several cases of *tahlilan* carried out by Catholics involving the Islamic ummah. First, the *tahlilan* is carried out by Catholics who pray for their wives who are Catholic but whose husbands are Muslims. Second, the *tahlilan* was carried out because her husband was Muslim but his wife was Catholic. Third, the *tahlilan* is carried out in the homes of Catholics even though both are Catholic ummah. However, because the Catholics are involved in many Islamic social activities such as the construction of worship facilities and other citizenship activities.¹⁰

Of the three patterns of interfaith *tahlilan* motivated by various social backgrounds, the Islamic ummah babadan Yogyakarta participated in supporting the *tahlilan* activity. Although, the process often begins with deliberations and discussions that are quite complicated between Islamic ummah figures. In the process of deliberation and discussion, each has the right to submit views of Islamic Law based on known Islamic references. For those who are Islamic figures who agree on the implementation of *tahlilan* in the homes of Catholics, of course, those who are willing to take responsibility if faced with the dogmatic problem of whether the prayers recited in the *tahlilan* can be accepted or rejected.

¹⁰ Interview with resident Babadan Sleman, 7 Mei 2019

From the discourse process carried out in the Mosque and involving fellow Islamic figures in Babadan shows the pattern of the reception of diverse Islamic teachings about *tahlilan*. Nevertheless, although there are some Islamic figures who disagree with the deliberative decision of fellow Islamic figures to carry out *tahlilan* in the homes of Catholics, all parties respect and respect each other. Because, for the Islamic ummah, *tahlilan* is a form of religious ritual that essentially also causes controversy among the ummah itself. Thus, the interfaith *tahlilan* that took place in Babadan Yogyakarta was solely expressed as a way of honoring a family who had good intentions to pray for their deceased family.¹¹

The Islamic ummah figures in Babadan who have been proactive with the wishes of Catholics who want to carry out interfaith *tahlilan* for their families who died are more dominated by NU figures who have an inclusive outlook. A group of Islamic figures have various religious reasons to show the public that *tahlilan* as part of *tawassul absah* is carried out by anyone. Moreover, sociologically *tahlilan* becomes a means of tolerance between groups that not only dispute the truth of their own teachings, but *tahlilan* is just a ritual whose function is to pray for the deceased.

This simple reason conveyed by Islamic figures from NU circles is certainly a determinant of public anxiety in responding to the implications of the *tahlilan* prayers that are recited for the deceased. In addition, NU figures also assured other Bababadan residents that those who have the authority to accept and reject the prayers recited to Catholics are only God. Thus, in carrying out the cross-sectional *tahlilan*, NU leaders called on the citizens of babadan not to feel burdened about the implications of their prayers. However, they emphasized that promoting humanity by respecting citizens who ask for prayers is part of the act of religiosity that must be carried out by the Islamic ummah as well as.¹²

In this way, the interfaith *tahlilan* carried out in Babadan became one of the means to make all people aware that the *tahlilan* was actually a religious practice or death rite that was not only entitled to be carried out by the Islamic ummah. Especially if *tahlilan* is only associated with certain Islamic groups that have been preserving *tahlilan* as part of their Islamic identity and expression. Because, *tahlilan* that has been going on for a long

¹¹ Interview with Takmir Masjid in Babadan sleman 10 mei 2019

¹² Wawancara dengan warga NU di Babadan sleman, 19 Mei 2019



time and along with the development of the times and social changes, many communities have also carried out the rite of death with *tahlilan*. In fact, *tahlilan* as a heritage of the archipelago, has grown in the heart of the diversity of Indonesians.

Therefore, when there are non-Muslim citizens like what happened in Babadan Yogyakarta participated in praying for their families who died in a *tahlilan* way, it should be addressed as a form of appreciation of teachings between Indonesian religious ummah. Where, with the spirit of diversity contained in the basic motto of the Indonesian State, it is realized as a way to maintain harmony with state citizenship through religious activities.

In this connection, what the NU leaders in Babadan who so proactively accepted the presence of the Catholic ummah as a unit of citizenship through interfaith *tahlilan* reflected an attitude of scholarship that—one might say—exemplified the local wisdom of the walisongon that acculturated the Hindu tradition into the practice of Islamic religion..

As a religious practice derived from custom (*'adah*) it certainly has a theological footing as cited in a fiqh rule that reads "al '*'adah* muhakkamah". Through this rule, interfaith *tahlilan*, which has been considered unusually carried out by most people whose citizenship buildings are dominated by Islamic ummah, certainly needs to respond to wisdom. At least, with the attitude of *tahlilan* acculturation that not only combines elements of locality but also combines elements of interreligious or interfaith spirits, the Islamic ummah will learn from each other with other religious ummat.

In addition, with this spirit of mutual learning, Islamic ummah can be mature in responding to various realities that occur in people's lives. Although in this fact, there are often religious practices that may be considered inconsistent with the generally accepted provisions of fiqh. For, whether we realize it or not, in living religious teachings, it is really not appropriate to make fiqh the main basis for carrying out divine messages and prophetic treatises. However, other avenues such as morals, Sufism, and *nauseamah* are also links in the chain of Islamic teachings affirmed in the Qur'an and hadith to manifest verses of the Quran¹³

In this context, the interfaith *tahlilan* that took place in Ngawen and Babadan is an expression of diversity in celebrating a death rite as well as a learning tool for anyone to

¹³ Mun'im Sirry 'Compete with One Another in Good Works': Exegesis of Qur'an Verse 5.48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism, *jurnal Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Vol. 20, No. 4, 423–438, (October 2009) hal 160-167

be willing to knit together a fluid and inclusive religious system. As for the simple steps that can be done, borrowing Amin Abdullah's perspective by reaching each other and penetrating (semipermeable) between religious teachings or practices so that each religious community can test each other (intersubjective-testability) every truth possessed. In addition, each religious ummat fosters a spirit of creativity in imagining (creative imagination) various religious practices that can support the spirit of harmonious and inclusive citizenship.

D. Conclusion

Departing from the experience of the people of Ngawen Magelang and Babadan Yogyakarta who make *tahlilan* lintas as a death rite to care for harmony, there are several things that need to be used as a site of historicity in understanding and normativity of religion in society and state.

First, it requires a willingness to fill in and practice each other co-existently between religious ummah believers in manifesting their various teachings that prioritize the principle of harmony. In this case, the *tahlilan* carried out by the Ngawen and Babadan peoples is not just understood as a rigid religious dogma, but as a living law or down-to-earth religious law along with loka wisdom.

Second, the importance of interpreting religious practices with local wisdom or the spirit of community in order to produce every expression of religion in a unified and dotted manner. Although, in religious *masin-masing* there are rules of the game that limit every religious practice, it does not mean that every adherent acts rigidly and freely in contextualizing the teachings of his religion.

Third, to create egalitarian and cosmopolitan social conditions of religion requires a figure or actor who dares to set an example and engage in every inclusive religious practice so that his followers do not experience theological indignity and stuttering. In this



connection, interfaith *tahlilan* is a breakthrough carried out to hack the deadlock and blind fanaticism in carrying out religious teachings.

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