



## **CONSTRUCTING *THIRD SPACE* IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY: INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN KALIMANTAN TENGAH, INDONESIA**

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**Abstract** : *A growing body of literature has given shape and voice to the emerging field of interreligious studies. However, most of related studies have tended to focus on the relations between religious communities in Western countries. The scholars have not given adequately attention to the richness and complexity of the relations among different religious communities in Asian region and possibility of theoretical and practical contributions to interreligious relations. This article seeks to analyzes the interreligious relations among different religious communities in Indonesia based on data generated through interviews with Muslim, Christian and Kaharingan communities in Indonesia. Employing the concept of Third Space, this article focuses on the performance of interreligious relations between Muslims, Christians, and the adherents of local religion of Kaharingan in*

*Kalimantan Tengah province, Indonesia. It explains the the third space issue in the narrative of interfaith relations and the third space in the practice of interreligious relations in the region. This study find that the diverse religious communities in Indonesia practice a peaceful and co-existence life, which is strongly inspired and driven by shared particular social-cultural contexts of rich treasures and precious tradition of cultural heritage in the forms of Indonesian communalism and community spirit. It concludes that the diverse religious communities create "third spaces", as common grounds between them which are shared at individual, institutional and societal levels.*

**Abstrak** : Meskipun studi tentang hubungan antaragama tumbuh pesat, namun kajian yang ada lebih fokus pada hubungan antar agama di negara-negara Barat. Para sarjana belum memberikan perhatian yang memadai terhadap kekayaan dan kompleksitas hubungan antara komunitas agama yang berbeda di wilayah Asia dan kemungkinan kontribusi teoritis dan praktis untuk hubungan antar-agama. Artikel ini berupaya menganalisis hubungan antaragama di antara berbagai komunitas keagamaan di Indonesia berdasarkan data yang dihasilkan melalui wawancara dengan komunitas Muslim, Kristen, dan Kaharingan di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan konsep Third Space, artikel ini fokus pada praktek hubungan antaragama antara Muslim, Kristen, dan penganut agama lokal Kaharingan di provinsi Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. Artikel ini akan menyoroti masalah "ruang ketiga" dalam narasi hubungan antaragama dan ruang ketiga dalam praktik hubungan antaragama di wilayah tersebut. Studi ini menemukan bahwa komunitas agama yang beragam di Indonesia mempraktikkan kehidupan yang damai dan berdampingan, yang terinspirasi dan didorong oleh konteks sosial-budaya tertentu dari kekayaan khazanah dan tradisi warisan budaya yang berharga dalam bentuk komunalisme dan semangat komunitas Indonesia. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa komunitas agama yang beragam menciptakan "ruang ketiga", sebagai landasan bersama di antara mereka yang diterapkan pada tingkat individu, kelembagaan dan masyarakat.

**Keywords** : *Third Space, Interreligious Relations, Multy-Religious Communities, Peacefull Life.*

## **A. Introduction**

A growing number of books and articles have been written to contribute to interreligious studies, an emerging field in academia within the

last few years. Some Western universities also offer courses and have chairs in the field.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, Wijisen's *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa* is one of the first works that initiate interreligious studies as an academic endeavour, which "marked by relational perspectives both on dialogue and other forms of religious activism".<sup>2</sup> Other prevailing studies include introductory works on the subject by Hedges,<sup>3</sup> Patel,<sup>4</sup> Leirvik,<sup>5</sup> and Stanton.<sup>6</sup> The recent important contribution to interreligious studies is a volume edited by Cheetam, Pratt and Thomas.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, the above mentioned studies have given shape and voice to the emerging field of interreligious studies. However, most of these studies have focused on the relations between religious communities in Western countries, with the exception of the work by Wijisen' *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace* that attempts to develop a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective. In fact, Asia --with Indonesia as the largest Muslim country in the world-- significantly represents a region where diverse and multireligious societies live a peaceful coexistence. A number of studies have analysed the ways communities with diverse background develop a harmonious life in this region, including those that reveal how minority communities with different religious-cultural backgrounds in Papua Barat, Indonesia, develop a harmonious social life and how local wisdom within local communities in Lampung, Indonesia plays an

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<sup>1</sup> Oddbjörn Leirvik, cited in Paul Hedges, "Editorial Introduction: Interreligious Studies," *JASR* Vol. 27, no. 2 (2014), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Frans J.S. Wijisen, *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa* (London & New York: Rodopi, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Hedges, "Interreligious Studies," ed. oleh Anne Runehov dan Lluís Oviedo, *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions* (New York: Springer, 2012), p. 1176–80; Paul Hedges, "Interreligious Studies: A New Direction in the Study of Religion?" *Bulletin of the British Association for the Study of Religions*, 2014, November Edition, p. 127-131.

<sup>4</sup> Eboo Patel, "Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies," *Liberal Education*, Vol. 99, no. 4 (t.t.), p. 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Oddbjörn Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); see also Oddbjörn Leirvik, "Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to the Study of Religion," *Journal of Interreligious Studies* Vol. 13 (2014), p. 15–19.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Stanton, "Inter-religious Studies: A Field of its Own?," *Huffington Post*, t.t., [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-stanton/interreligious-studiesco\\_b\\_4827043.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-stanton/interreligious-studiesco_b_4827043.html).

<sup>7</sup> David Cheetam, Douglas Pratt, dan David Thomas, *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

important role as medium of conflict resolution.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the prevailing literature has not incorporated studies on relations between diverse religious communities in this region into the growing field of interreligious studies. It has not adequately addressed the richness and complexity of the relations between Muslim societies and other religious communities in this region and possible theoretical and practical contribution to interreligious relations.

Thus, there is a need to develop studies on the growing field of interreligious studies from an Asian perspective. These studies should examine questions about the richness, complexity and uniqueness of religious communities in Asia. Such studies on Southeast Asia, for example, will bring the way of Muslims in this so-called 'periphery of the Muslim world' live a peaceful life and coexistence with other religious communities to global audience in order to understand better Islam and Muslims within various Muslim societies.

In this regard, this article offers to contribute to the field of interreligious studies from Asian perspective. To this end, it analyses interreligious relations among different religious communities in Indonesia based on data generated through interviews with Muslim, Christian and Kaharingan communities in Indonesia. In doing so, this article focuses its analysis on the performance of interreligious relations between Muslims and other religious communities (Christians, and the adherents of local religion of Kaharingan) in two cities of Palangka Raya and Kotawaringin Timur, Kalimantan Tengah province, Indonesia. This is not only because Indonesia is the country that we live in, but also it is highly pertinent to our topic. Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, has a long tradition of peaceful co-existence of religions. It is a country with multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, containing hundreds of ethnic groups and vernacular languages. Its centuries-old association and encounter between ethnic groups and beliefs has created a nation that is united in diversity.

Kalimantan Tengah province was chosen as the locus of the study because it constitutes distinctive characteristics of Indonesia's diverse religious communities that live a peaceful life and coexistence. This is seen, among other aspects, in the facts that these different religious communities

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<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Idrus Ruslan, "Dimensi Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Lampung sebagai Media Resolusi Konflik," *KALAM*, Volume 12, no. 1 (2018), p. 105–26; and Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Harmoni Sosial dalam Keberagaman dan Keberagaman Masyarakat Minoritas Muslim Papua Barat," *KALAM*, Volume 10, no. 2 (2016), p. 295–312.

observe relations that promote peace, tolerance, non-violence, inclusiveness, acceptance of local culture, and blending with local tradition and wisdom without losing fundamental beliefs of their faiths. In the city of Palangka Raya and Kotawaringin Timur regency, mosques are built exactly next to churches and Kaharingan temples, Muslim cemeteries are located exactly next to those of Christians, households are inhabited by family members with different religious backgrounds (Islam, Christianity, and the local religion of Kaharingan), and community members of diverse religious backgrounds are actively and peacefully engaged in shared social, cultural and religious activities.

This article attempts to develop Indonesian perspective on interreligious relations by asking the following main question: How do Muslims, Christians and Kaharingan adherents conduct interreligious relations among them in their everyday lives in Kalimantan Tengah? Based on empirical findings, this article shows that diverse religious communities in Indonesia develop a peaceful and co-existence life, which is related to their particular social-cultural contexts of rich treasures and precious tradition of cultural heritage in the forms of Indonesian communalism and community spirit. It argues that, instead of emphasizing the divisive differences among themselves, various religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah create third spaces, common grounds between them and are shared by them at individual, institutional and societal levels.

## **B. Third Space: A Theoretical Framework**

In this article, we employ a theoretical framework suited to the task above. A relevant theory developed by some scholars to understand interreligious relations is taken up here. In this regard, we apply the Third Space concept to the analysis of interreligious relations among religious communities in Indonesia.

The concept of “Third Space” is developed from the perception of interpersonal relations which is initiated by Martin Buber with his notion of “the realm of between”<sup>9</sup> and challenged by Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>10</sup> Their

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987); see also in Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. oleh R.G. Smith (London & New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Leirvik, “Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to the Study of Religion”; see also Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God who Comes to Mind*, trans. oleh B. Berge (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

understanding of human relations is further elucidated by Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha by developing their notion of “Third Space”. It refers to “a form of liminal or in-between space where the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” occurs.<sup>11</sup> According to Bhabha, Third Space defines human relations as the production of cultural meaning which goes beyond the issues of the I and the You. He writes: “The meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other” ... “It is the ‘inter’ –the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture ... .. by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves”.<sup>12</sup>

The Third Space offers the development of openness and hybridity, namely “a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference”.<sup>13</sup> It is a movement from “either/or” polarity (“Either I or You”, “Either Us or Them”) to “both/also” common platform (“Both I and You”; “I and also You”). In other words, Third Space creates hybridity of we/us while maintaining difference of each to achieve shared common platforms. It is a new form, not simply an amalgamation, of separate cultures, that transcends, but contains, various identities creating “third space”.<sup>14</sup> For example, hybridity is a new form of separate entities within a society: religion, local wisdom, globality.<sup>15</sup>

The Third Space is an antidote to essentialism “a belief in invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity”.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, identity or culture is not pure and essential, rather fluid and society or community, not state, plays as agent in building and maintaining social identity. It is “a space intrinsically critical of essentialist positions of identity and a conceptualisation of ‘original or originary culture’”:

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<sup>11</sup> Rutherford in Paul Meredith, “Hybridity in the Third Space: Rethinking Bi-cultural Politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand” (The Oru Rangahau Maori Research and Development Conference, Massey University, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004) as cited by; Leirvik, “Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to the Study of Religion,” p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Hoogevelt (1997) as cited in Meredith, “Hybridity in the Third Space: Rethinking Bi-cultural Politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand,” p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. xi.

... the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge.<sup>17</sup>

The third space is a space of new forms of cultural meaning and production which creates blurring of "the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into questioning of established categorization of culture and identity".<sup>18</sup> It is "an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no primordial unity or fixity". It is "a transculturation, the ability to transverse cultures, translate, negotiate and mediate affinity and difference within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion". It involves ongoing revision, negotiation, adaptation and transformation of norms, identities and culture in order to reconcile and overcome antagonistic binarism, and develop inclusive and multifaceted society.

There is criticism of Third Space that this concept is problematic as it neglects "to adequately conceptualise the historical and material conditions that would emerge within a colonial discourse analysis framework".<sup>19</sup> Despite this criticism, we believe that Third Space is a relevant and useful theory to understand human relations, which do not merely contain the polarity of two opposing sides which lead to tensions and conflicts, but rather transcend this binarism which create cooperation and coexistence for public interests. Applying this theory to this study on interreligious relations in Indonesia, we formulate that different religious communities in Indonesia develop relations that transcend the binary of I and You and Us and Them creating the third space based on common grounds of communalism and shared cultural identities where all religious groups coexist and cooperate in fruitful and peaceful ways.

In this research, the corpus for analysis comes from in-depth interviews with 20 persons, which took place between August and October in 2016 in Palangka Raya city and Kotawaringin Timur Regency in Kalimantan Tengah Province, Indonesia. The informants were selected from groups believed to be lay members and elites of Muslim, Christian and Kaharingan community using snowball sampling technique facilitated by local research assistants. These informants are mainly mainstream Muslims, Christians and Kaharingan adherents.

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Rutherford in Meredith, "Hybridity in the Third Space: Rethinking Bicultural Politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand," p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Parry (1996) and Mitchell (1997) in *Ibid.*

The relevant collected data are analysed by following three levels of socio-cognitive discourse analysis. Socio-cognitive discourse analysis focuses on how participants' perspectives relate to their "subject positions in social situations or situational contexts"<sup>20</sup> and "more particularly to their interests in reproducing or transforming the societal order".<sup>21</sup> Therefore, socio-cognitive discourse analysis distinguishes participants' perspectives into three relational dimensions: the individual dimension (micro perspective), the institutional dimension (meso perspective) and the societal dimension (macro perspective).<sup>22</sup> Translating these into this study of interreligious relations, we distinguish when informants speak for themselves as individual believers (micro level), when they speak for their religion as the adherents or followers of religious institutions, and when they speak for their society as members of a community and citizens of a country.

### **C. Third Space in the Narratives of Interreligious Relations**

Kalimantan Tengah is a pluralistic province with various ethnicity, religion, and culture. Nevertheless, diverse communities in Kalimantan Tengah generally do not problematize these differences within and among themselves so that they live for the shared interests. In particular, these communities do not pathologize religious differences which exist among themselves so that they are able to live in peaceful ways while maintain each own particular religious characteristic. In doing so, these religious communities create and maintain narratives which show their ability to develop 'the third space' between opposing sides of religious claims of truth among different religious communities at individual level. Rather than contradicting differences among them, the religious communities emphasize and point out a point where they meet and share each other. This third space among different religious communities can be found two issues: the narratives and practices of interreligious relations.

Each community embraces the other by developing the narrative of 'we' (*kita*), rather than emphasizing the polarity of 'I vs. you' (*saya dan anda*) and 'we vs. they' (*kami dan mereka*), and 'other people' (*orang lain*). This is seen in the narratives of third space that these diverse religious communities

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<sup>20</sup> Fairclough (2001) in Frans J.S. Wijsen, "There are Radical Muslims and Normal Muslims': An Analysis of the Discourse on Islamic Extremism," *Religion*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2013), p. 72., <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2013.742745>.

<sup>21</sup> Fairclough (1992) in *Ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> Fairclough (2001) in *Ibid*.



develop in their daily lives and interreligious interaction. At individual level, these points of third space are seen in the narratives of how the religious communities speak about each other through the use of particular words or phrases.

These include a common narrative that the different religious communities speak each other as 'family members' (*anggota keluarga*). By developing this narrative, they tell that despite they hold different faiths, religious communities are related as relatives due to same blood line and or shared ethnic, social and cultural bound. A Muslim figure in a multi-religious village of Kotawaring Timur regency said: "Personally, for us (Muslims) here, all residents here are relatives, either they are Christians or Kaharingan adherents, either they are native or immigrants'. Christians speak about Muslims and Kaharingan adherents as 'family members' (*anggota keluarga*). A Christian community leader said: "Here we (Christians) live side by side with other religious adherents, namely Muslims, the adherents of native Dayak beliefs, and other religious communities. We consider them relatives who live as family members".

Kaharingan adherents also use the word 'family members' (*anggota keluarga*) when they describe Muslims and Christians. A Kaharingan man said: "Indeed, we are native people here. But, we regard other religious adherents such as Muslims and Christians as our family members. They are also our neighbours."

In addition, diverse religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah also use the narrative of 'brothers and sisters' (*saudara*) when they address each other. A Muslim asserted:

We normally visit each other, especially on great religious days like Ied al-Fitr and Christmas or weekly religious services though we have different faiths. It is common here families have members with different religious beliefs. We are brothers and sisters.

The same pattern of addressing the religious others is found among the adherents of Kaharingan among Dayak people. A Kaharingan adherent said:

Indeed, people here have different religions. We have Muslims and Christians here. It is normal. We do not have any problems with different faiths. For me, they are relatives, brothers and sisters.

Moreover, these religious communities create third space when they view each other as 'neighbours' (*tetangga*). A Muslim *imam* of an urban

housing compound in Palangka Raya described those of other religious communities in his neighbourhood as 'neighbours'. He said: “

In our neighbourhood, there are some religious communities. There are Muslims; there are Christians; there are Kaharingan adherents. However, we regard them as neighbours and relatives who should help and respect each other.

This narrative is shared by a Christian who said:

The residents in this neighbourhood are varied in terms of religion and ethnicity. There are Christians; there are Muslims; there are Kaharingan followers. There are Javenese, Banjarese, Dayaks and Bataks. All are my good neighbours. Surely, we as neighbours help each other and keep this neighbourhood safe.

This construction of third space is seen in the narrative of 'friends' (*teman*) when they describe each other. A young Christian teacher of a middle school speaks about his colleagues as 'friends':

I have many Muslim friends. Though I and they have different religions, they are my friends. I have a Muslim friend whom I have befriended for a long time since we were at college. We get along at work and in everyday life.

Similarly, a young Muslim called Christians 'friends' when he talked about his childhood comrades. He said: “I have known him since my childhood and I get along with his family. He and I have different religions, but for me he is a friend. No problems.”

Finally, the religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah construct the third space through the narrative of 'we all seek for Paradise' (*Kita semua sama-sama mencari surga*). Dayak Muslims considered that people of religion share the same goal of entering Paradise though they adhere to different religions. A Dayak Muslim said:

We all seek for Paradise, but we are not certain whether enter the Paradise or not. Instead, we may enter the Hell and others religious adherents enter the Paradise. So, we don't need to attack and fight each other, do we? Religion is about faith in everyone's heart. What is obvious is blood tie, brotherhood and family bound among different religious adherents. This is what we have to take care of.

Nevertheless, some members of religious communities in Central Kalimantan develop the narratives of 'bad Muslims', 'bad Christians' and 'bad Kaharingan people'.

In this respect, some Muslims speak that some Christians who are engaged in 'christianization' by attempting to convert those who already adhere to a religion using social aid and charity. A Muslim said:

Surely, there are some Christians who attempt to christianize those who already adhered to a religion (Islam), especially new converts to Islam (*muallaf*) who still have a weak faith in Islam, by giving them food and money to start a business. This has caused a bit tension within our society.

Meanwhile, some Christians speak about Muslims as 'terrorists' and 'intolerant'. Referring to the cases of bombing done by certain groups of Muslims, a Christian in Kotawaringin Timur said: "I think that Muslims are involved in recent bombings in Jakarta, Europe and United States of America. They are less tolerant towards other religious communities."

Kaharingan adherents said that Muslims are 'radicals', and 'do not respect *adat* (local and customary norms)'. A Kaharingan young man said: "Basically, we are open to those who come and stay here, no matter their ethnicity and religion. Yes, including Muslims. But, I see some of them are radicals and others are not engaged with local customs and norms."

However, these religious communities perceived that such 'bad people' do not represent the majority of religious communities in Central Kalimantan. In this regard, they point at a small number of people who are outside their communities. Muslims identify the Christians who attempt to convert those who already adhere to religion as minority compared to Christian majority that remain refrain from using aggressive ways of proselytization.

Similarly, when Christians speak about Muslims as 'intolerant' and 'terrorists', and Kaharingan people say about Muslims as to have not followed customary law and local culture, both point at those who are outside the Muslim community in Central Kalimantan, who do not represent the Muslim majority in Indonesia and around the world.

The construction of third space in multi-religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah above is further articulated when they speak about religion and religious organizations at institutional level. In this context, adherents of different religions no longer speak about the superiority of one religion over another or the polarity between one religion and another one

or among religions. The religious communities emphasize no more the polarity between 'our religion is good' and 'your religion is bad'. Instead, they attempt to construct a space between religions where all have a common platform and shared objectives.

In this respect, this third space is constructed in the narrative of 'all religions command good' (*semua agama mengajarkan kebaikan*), which is shared by different religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah. For example, a Dayak Muslim said:

Yes, we (people) here adhere to some faiths. But, all religions in principle teach virtue, no religions command wrong. So, there is no use if we fight each other because of different faiths, let alone we are brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, in their effort to avoid polarity based on religion and ethnicity, the religious community in Kalimantan Tengah develop the narratives of third space at societal level. First of all, this societal third space is seen in the narrative of 'our people' (*orang kita; oloh itah*). Through this narrative, they argue for commonalities among different religious communities and embrace each other as people who are united by blood and culture. Regardless of their religion, someone is considered as to belong to 'our people' due to their shared blood and culture. At communal level, this is seen in the expression of 'we are family' (*kita keluarga*) that despite they adhere to different religions, each community or individual belongs to same blood and culture.

This sense of belonging to one community is further elucidated in a wider context of Kalimantan Tengah province through the narrative of 'we are the people of Kalimantan' (*Kita orang Kalimantan*). Being Kalimantan people means belonging to Kalimantan with adherence to its shared values, philosophy and culture despite diverse religions embraced by its people.

Finally, the third space is asserted through the creation of the narratives of the citizen of a nation: 'we are Indonesians' (*kita orang Indonesia*) and 'we are citizens of Indonesia' (*kita warga negara Indonesia*). These societal third space narratives necessitate the responsibility that 'we are supposed to love each other', breaking the religious lines of Muslim zones, Christian zones and Kaharingan zones, and being united as the citizens of Indonesia.

#### **D. Third Space in the Practice of Interreligious Relations**

The creation of third space among religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah is not only seen in the narratives described above, but also is identified in the practice of interreligious relations in their daily lives. These religious communities not only speak about the narratives of third space, but also put them in practice as they interact with each other. At individual level, the ways these practices of third space are conducted through visits of family members or relatives with different religious backgrounds in daily lives. It is common among people of Kalimantan, particularly among Dayak communities, that a family has members with different religious backgrounds (Kaharingan, Islam and Christianity). Realizing that religion is a personal choice, they do not view religious difference among family members problematic. Instead of pointing out one's religion superiority over another's or degrading one's religion, these religious communities opt to look more at something that binds them, rather than at what divides them as family. In this context, they find family relation as binding their family members with different religious backgrounds. Therefore, in order to maintain this family bound the religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah visit each other in spite of their religious differences.

A Dayak Muslim said: "On Sundays, the parents of my wife visit us on their way to their church. They are Christians. I also visit them. We maintain a good relationship. My wife is a *muallaf* (a convert to Islam)". A Kaharingan adherent told about his visit of relatives with different religious backgrounds: "I come from a family whose members have different religions. Some are Christians, others are Muslims. My brother is a Muslim. I often visit them. We help each other. No problem." This practice is confirmed by a Christian. He said: "It is common among us to visit each other. My uncle is a Muslim and my sister is married to a Muslim. How cannot I visit them?"

Another practice of third space is seen in wedding party conducted by different religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah. It is common among these religious communities to invite each other to a wedding party. When a Christian or Kaharingan man gets married, his family invites its village people to attend the wedding party regardless of their religion and ethnicity, including Muslims. What is important is food, what kind of food and how it is prepared and served for invited guests. To this end, the family conducts a certain way of food preparation and service which can be enjoyed by all guests with different religious backgrounds. Interestingly, realising that Muslims do not eat pork and any pork-derived food, the inviting

Christian or Kaharingan family conducts special food preparation and arrangement that conform to Islamic food regulations. A Christian described:

When we have a wedding party, we invite all residents, including our Muslim relatives and neighbours. We understand that Muslims do not eat pork and drink alcohol. Therefore, we only provide cows and chicken. We ask a Muslim to slaughter them. These are cooked by Muslims and sometime put in a certain room, next to the house of the inviting family so that our Muslim invitees feel comfortable.

When they are invited to a wedding party by a Christian or Kaharingan family, Muslims generally come and understand this special food preparation and service. A Muslim asserted:

I am often invited to the wedding party of Christians and Kaharingan people. I come [to the party] as a neighbour. Yes, normally, the meat was cooked by a Muslim and put in a separate place. When I have come to the wedding place, I know where to sit.

A Muslim imam added that the inviting Christian family normally allocates a special time of invitation for public and Muslims in addition to time for its family members. He said:

Normally, the invitation time is from 9 AM to 2 PM. All guests, especially Muslims, can eat food and drinks served during this allocated time. After that, the inviting family has a special party, which is attended only by its relatives according to their own culture.

A Dayak Muslim described:

We are often invited by our Kaharingan or Christian neighbours to their wedding party. We come. We give them an envelope (of money). We also eat food, which is provided in a separate room and is cooked by a Muslim.

Similarly, Christians and Kaharingan are invited by Muslims to attend a Muslim wedding party. However, different from that of non-Muslim wedding party above, in Muslim' wedding parties food and drinks are prepared and served according to Islamic rules of food and drink for Christian and Kaharingan guests do not have any problems religiously and culturally with the served food and drinks. Unlike Muslims, Christian and

Kaharingan communities relatively have no food and drink restrictions. A Muslim said:

When there is a party, like a wedding party, our Christian and Kaharingan neighbours are also invited to the party [in addition to Muslim neighbours]. They come and give hand [to the inviting family]. But, the food is served in a normal way [according to Islamic law]; it is not prepared in special way because they have no problems with our food.

The individual practice of third space is also seen in the way the religious communities respond to one's death and his funeral process. Religious communities say condolences to the family of the dead with different religious background. But, a religious community is not engaged in ritual process of funeral of the dead. In other words, they show sympathy, but avoid ritual aspects of funeral and mourning taking the third way of engaging in funeral aspects which are considered not to contradict their religious beliefs. This includes giving donation to ease the burden of the family of the dead. A Muslim described:

We visit the Kaharingan or Christian family that has lost its family member [and say condolences] though we do not enter their house and do not get involved in funeral procession. We donate food or money to help easing the burden of the family of the dead.

Moreover, this practice of third space is identified in the visits among religious communities in certain religious days such as Ied al-Fitr and Christmas. In these special days, they do not show disrespect to each other, do not get involved in ritual aspects of the days, but rather express happiness and get engaged in non-ritual aspects of the days. This includes saying 'Happy Ied' (*Selamat Idul Fitri*) and 'Merry Christmas' (*Selamat Natal*), helping setting up a stage of celebration, and maintaining the security of village or housing neighbourhood from possible social disorder. A Christian said:

On Christmas and Ied al-Fitr (*lebaran*), we normally visit each other and help each other by providing what is needed. On *lebaran*, we visit our Muslim brothers and sisters saying 'Selamat lebaran, mohon maaf lahir dan batin' (Happy lebaran, wish you forgive us). Our Muslim brothers and sisters also do the same on Christmas.

A Muslim remarked:

Yes, we visit our Christian brothers and neighbours in their houses on Christmas. I have Christian relatives. Yes, I say 'Merry Christmas' to them. It is normal.

However, some Muslims are reserved to say 'Merry Christmas' (*Selamat Natal*) to their Christian neighbours or friends. As a Muslim in Palangka Raya described, saying 'Merry Christmas' is not recommended due to a *fatwa* (religious edict) issued by religious authorities like MUI (Majlis Ulama Indonesia; Indonesian Council of Religious Authorities). Nevertheless, this stance is not meant to disrupt the good interreligious relations. It does not result in social and religious disharmony among different religious communities.

At social level, religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah conduct third space practice in the form of building different religious places of worship at one location. There are some locations in this province in which different religious communities agreed to have places of worships at one location, where some worship places of different religious traditions are built side by side. In Palangka Raya city, for example, there are at least three places where mosques are located next to churches. In other regencies, three or four different houses of worship are located in one place. In Kotawaringin Timur, at Antang Kalang subdistrict, four different houses of worship were built next to each other (a mosque, a Catholic church, a Protestant church and a Kaharingan shrine), while in Pangkalan Bun, three houses of worship sit next to each other (a mosque, a church and a Buddhist temple). The similar arrangement of houses of worship is found in the regencies of Gunung Mas and Kapuas. Moreover, the religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah set up cemeteries at the same arrangement. As found in Palangka Raya city, a Muslim cemetery is separated from that of Christians, but located at one piece of land. A Kaharingan said:

The establishment of different houses of worship at one location was meant to show harmony among us. Those houses of worship at location look good. There are no problems with this. There are no problems with relations among religions here. This is only found in Antang Kalang. It is rare. It looks peaceful. [People with different religious backgrounds] respect each other. No problems.



A Christian said:

Those places of worship started to be built at the same year. The money comes from the government of Kotawaringin Timur. But, the mosque was the first one to be used though it was initially a small one. After all parties agreed, other places of worship were used, too.

The establishment of various houses of worship at one location was conducted due to unity among religious communities here. There are Muslims, Christians and Kaharingan adherents. At least, we (Christians) participated in digging ground [for the establishment of the mosque], or we did this or that, we helped by providing the water pump machine and so on. In short, we help others. So, all people of different religious backgrounds came. A strong unity and harmony were seen among them.

The ability of creating third space among religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah is further identified in the communal support of religious events. This is best exemplified by the communal support of Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran (MTQ; Quranic Recital Competition) in Antang Kalang subdistrict. Held in 2014, formally the MTQ was an annual Islamic event of Kotawaringin Timur, which was held in Antang Kalang subdistrict, whose participants were Muslims. However, it was organized not only by Muslims, but also Christians and Kaharingan people of the subdistrict. These non-Muslims were actively involved in organizing the MTQ by volunteering to set up stages, help providing food and drinks, and maintain security and order. Regardless of their religious backgrounds, Muslims, Christians and Kaharingan people worked together in order to make the event successful. This is seen in a Christian's remark: "At the event of MTQ, Muslims managed technical jobs. We helped them arrange chairs, tables, security, and so on. Everyone is involved."

Lastly, the practice of third space among religious communities in Kalimantan Tengah can be seen in a long-held tradition of *Huma Betang* (Great House). This is particularly pertinent among Dayak people, the native of Kalimantan. It refers to a large-long communal house with many rooms which are inhabited by a number of extended families from the same clan. Symbolically, it represents togetherness and unbroken family bound. It unites all family members regardless of their faith and beliefs. It can be found, for example, in Palangka Raya city, next to the Provincial Government House and Provincial House of Representatives.

It is common that individual or family members with different religious backgrounds live in the *Huma Betang* as well as in a regular house

of Dayak family. Kaharingan adherents, Muslims and Christians live there peacefully and work together for the shared interests as they are united by a strong family bound. Perhaps Huma Betang is now physically quite rare to find in every clan among Dayak people. But, it is philosophically still strongly adhered and practiced by Dayak people in Kalimantan. A Huma Betang shows a practice of third space among Dayak people as they are able to put aside differences in faith and then turn to points which are shared by all community members in order to keep family members united under the same blood line.

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on discussion above, this article concludes that the religious community in Central Kalimantan is able to create a "third space", common grounds shared by these religious communities at individual, institutional and societal levels. In these third space, Muslim, Christians and Kaharingan adherents have created openness and hybridity among themselves, in which they developed the ability to negotiate differences by straddling two or more. They practiced a movement from "either/or" polarity ("Either I or You", "Either Us or Them") to "both/also" common platform ("Both I and You"; "I and also You") while maintain difference and uniqueness of each to achieve shared common platforms. This has resulted in a new form, not simply an amalgamation, of separate cultures, that transcends, but contains, various identities creating "third spaces".

The way to peaceful and co-existence life lived by religious communities in Indonesia is closely related to its rich treasures and precious tradition of cultural heritage: Indonesian communalism, Indonesian community spirit as seen in terms like '*hidup bersama*' (living together), '*semangat kebersamaan*' (spirit of togetherness), and '*satu keluarga*' (one family). [.]

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