

The Interaction of Islam and Local Beliefs: A Study of Djawa Soenda's Model of Religious Worship in the Review of Islamic Education

Abdul Khobir¹, Nur Khasanah¹, Nanang Hasan Susanto², Mustaqim Pabbajah³, & Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha⁴

¹Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (S2), Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Kabupaten Pekalongan, Indonesia

²Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (S1), Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Kabupaten Pekalongan, Indonesia

³Program Studi Informatika (S1), Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, Kabupaten Sleman, Indonesia

⁴Program Studi Ekonomi Syariah (S2), Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Kabupaten Pekalongan, Indonesia

✉ abdul.khobir@uingusdur.ac.id

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the worship model of Agama Djawa Soenda (ADS) from the perspective of Islamic education. This research focuses on how spiritual and moral values in ADS can contribute to character-building in Islamic education. The research method was qualitative, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of ADS adherents and document studies. The data were analyzed descriptively to explore the similarities and differences between ADS worship practices and Islamic education. The results show that substantively, ADS has many similarities with Islam, especially in terms of divinity, environmental preservation, respect for parents, and nationalism. However, there are differences in the technical aspects of worship, where ADS is more influenced by local Javanese culture, whereas Islam follows standardized worship procedures based on sharia. This study concludes that the noble values of ADS, such as nature conservation and social ethics, have the

potential to be integrated into Islamic education without sacrificing the basic principles of Sharia. This research offers a new contributes to the understanding of the interaction between local religion and Islamic education as well as the importance of an inclusive approach in education that respects religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Agama Djawa Soenda; Interaction; Islamic Education; Model of Worship; Religious Pluralism*

INTRODUCTION

Agama Djawa Soenda (ADS) is one of the local beliefs in Indonesia that has been passed down from generation to generation by the indigenous people of West Java. ADS has a distinctive worship model that reflects the spiritual values, cosmology, and ritual practices derived from Sundanese culture. Although ADS is not as big as major religions such as Islam, Christianity, or Hinduism in Indonesia, its existence has significant meaning for the communities still practicing it. One of the exciting things is how ADS has survived amid modernization and the influence of the globalization of major religions in Indonesia, especially Islam, the majority religion in West Java. ADS combines elements of religion and local culture, full of symbolism, and a philosophy rooted in natural harmony and life balance (Tendi, 2016a).

On the other hand, Islamic education in Indonesia, mainly focusing on the West Java region, has developed rapidly. This education system emphasizes the formation of morals, ethics, and religious knowledge in line with Islamic teachings (L. Hakim, 2023). However, more attention needs to be paid to the way Islam interacts with local beliefs such as ADS. Various models of socio-religious interaction between adherents of Islam and ADS often occur in the field, dialogue, and joint practices internalized daily. This phenomenon raises questions about how ADS, as a local belief system, influences Islamic religious education, and vice versa (Susanto et al., 2024).

ADS, also known as Sunda Wiwitan, is a West Java local belief system with long, traditional roots (Enjang AS et al., 2020; Melina & Azeharie, 2020; Saputra, 2020). Followers of ADS, often called the Cigugur Indigenous community, integrate unique worship practices and beliefs rooted in ancestral teachings but adapt to influences from other religions, such as Islam (Umbara et al., 2021). ADS worship involves rites emphasizing harmonious relationships with nature and fellow humans, such as “Seren Taun,” an annual harvest ritual. “Seren Taun” is an expression of gratitude and prayer of the Sundanese community for the joys and sorrows they experience, especially in the field of agriculture during the year that has passed and the year to come (Handayan et al., 2024; Isana, 2017; Pemerintah Kabupaten Kuningan, 2022; Sutarno, 2023). The existence of ADS is often marginalized amid the dominance of major religions, especially Islam. Discrimination against the ADS community usually occurs for both education and employment. The forms of discrimination experienced by the followers of the ADS range from banning some of the religious activities of the ADS to systematically conditioning the followers to convert to a state-recognized religion, even to physical harassment (Sabandiah & Wijaya, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to further explore how the ADS worship model is studied from the perspective of Islamic education, especially regarding values that can be integrated within the framework of Islamic moral and spiritual education (Dodi, 2017).

Discrimination against indigenous communities, such as ADS, still occurs even though Constitutional Court decision No. 97 of 2016 recognizes its existence in population identity. This discrimination includes access to education, health, and population administration services (Khobir & Khasanah, 2020; Kholis & Hasan, 2022). This research has provided a new perspective on the discourse on multicultural life and inclusive Islamic educational practices. This is important for encouraging a more appreciative view of diversity in

society and education as a strategic step toward creating social harmony.

Previous research has highlighted the historical, cultural, and syncretic aspects of the Sunda Wiwitan (ADS) community, without exploring the deep connections between their worship concepts and practices and the Islamic education system. The main focus was on ADS's heritage and traditional values as separate objects of study from Islamic education. Previous studies (F. N. R. Hakim, 2022; Sarip, 2018) emphasize the general narrative and cultural identity of ADS without discussing the possibility of integrating ADS values in the context of Islamic education. Meanwhile, the research 'The Interaction of Islam and Local Beliefs: A Study of Djawa Soenda's Model of Religious Worship in the Review of Islamic Education' explicitly studies the interaction between local beliefs (ADS) and Islam, especially from the perspective of Islamic education. This research offers a distinctive approach by exploring how the ADS worship model can interact with or be adapted to the Islamic education system as a learning medium and a means of developing spiritual values. As such, this research seeks to build a conceptual bridge between the uniqueness of ADS practices and Islamic principles in the context of education, thus making an innovative contribution to the discourse on integration between religion and local traditions.

Studies on the interaction between Islam and local beliefs, such as the ADS, still need to be conducted, especially from the perspective of Islamic education. Most studies on local beliefs in Indonesia, especially ADS, have focused on sociological, anthropological, and historical aspects. Some studies have discussed how local beliefs struggle to maintain their identity amidst social change (Alam, 2020; Pabbajah, 2020; Ramadhan & Faozi, 2023). Research on Islam and local beliefs has also been conducted (Anshori et al., 2021; Brakel, 2004; Mutawali, 2016; Pabbajah, 2021), but studies examining ADS through

the lens of Islamic education are scarce. This creates a gap in the academic understanding of how these two belief systems interact, especially in the context of education.

The main issue raised in this study is how the ADS worship model can be studied from the perspective of Islamic education. This raises the question of ADS worship's spiritual, moral, and ethical values that may align with Islamic teachings, and how these can be applied in education. ADS prioritizes the values of harmony, cooperation, and closeness to nature, which philosophically are not very different from some Islamic concepts, such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *tawhid* (unity of God) (Ningish et al., 2022).

The main problem raised in this research is how the ADS worship model can be viewed and understood in terms of Islamic education. Islamic education, with its principles based on the Qur'an and Hadith, has a normative framework for understanding and responding to local beliefs, such as the ADS. However, the extent to which Islamic education can constructively adapt or react to ADS remains an issue that requires further study. In this case, the question arises: How can the ADS worship model be studied and analyzed from the perspective of Islamic education? Is there potential for dialogue between the two to enrich religious and educational understanding, or does it lead to more significant ideological conflict?

The theory used in this research is that of Islamic moral education, which is rooted in Quranic and Sunnah values (Begum et al., 2021). The concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes the formation of morals according to Islamic teachings, is a framework for exploring the values contained in ADS worship (Nurani et al., 2022). In addition, the theory of cosmic harmony and balance in Islam, which emphasizes the relationship between humans, God, and nature, can also be used to understand the spiritual practices of ADS (Waluyajati, 2017). The theory of social interaction in education holds that

interactions between groups with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs do not have to be characterized by conflict but can enrich each other's perspectives (Weidlich et al., 2023).

The theory of religious pluralism emphasizes the importance of accepting and recognizing the diversity of beliefs and the view that all spiritual traditions have values that can be studied and respected (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022). Religious pluralism is relevant to this research because the ADS worship model represents a form of local belief that coexists with the majority religion, such as Islam, in the West Java region. The religious pluralism approach in Islamic education allows for a more inclusive understanding where ADS spiritual practices can be studied without prejudice or dogmatic judgment.

Applying this theory to Islamic education aims to teach students the importance of mutual respect between beliefs and enriching moral and spiritual values that can be adopted in teaching (Prasetyo, 2020). Instead of alienating local beliefs, pluralism encourages constructive dialogue, thereby enabling the integration of noble values, such as harmony with nature and fellow humans in ADS, through the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in Islam (Nurdin, 2020). The theory of religious pluralism is used to understand how Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia, can interact with local beliefs, such as ADS, without losing its religious identity (Keaten & Soukup, 2009). This theory of pluralism is critical in building Islamic education that is more adaptive to cultural and religious diversity so that it can produce a more comprehensive understanding of diversity (Nisar et al., 2022).

Several studies have explored the relationship between local religions and Islam in Java. For example, Ricklefs (2008) mentions the existence of a mystical synthesis between Islam and local beliefs in Java. In addition, research on ADS by Suparjo & Hidayah (2023) notes the importance of education in preserving ancestral beliefs in a

modern context by prioritizing spiritual qualities and human integrity. These studies are relevant because they show the potential of integrating ADS spiritual teachings with Islamic educational principles. This research is fundamental because it can provide new insights into the relationship between local belief traditions and Islamic education (Ubaedillah, 2023). With the decreasing number of ADS followers due to assimilation and discrimination, this study offers an education-based solution to maintain the continuity of ADS's noble values. Through an inclusive educational approach, the values of ADS worship can be understood as part of Islam's cultural and spiritual richness, and not as contradictory.

Other previous research relevant to this study discusses Javanese religion and culture and shows how significant religions interact with local beliefs in Indonesia (Geertz, 1956; Hefner, 1987; Irawanto et al., 2011; Peacock, 1986; van der Kroef, 1959). Additionally, other research reveals a complex relationship between Islam and local beliefs in Indonesia (Agung et al., 2024; Ali, 2011; Colbran, 2010; Joakim & White, 2015; Pajarianto et al., 2022). This study provides a basis for understanding how significant religions can adapt to local beliefs. On the other hand, Woodward (2019) highlights the importance of inclusivity in understanding religious plurality in Indonesia and how local religions can contribute to the country's spiritual diversity. These studies provide valuable insights but have not explicitly examined the relationship between ADS and Islamic education. This study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a more in-depth analysis of how the ADS worship model can be analyzed in the context of Islamic education, which is expected to enrich academic discourse in this field.

The urgency of this study was based on several factors. First, as part of the local cultural heritage, ADS has essential historical and artistic value, particularly in the West Java region. Understanding how ADS interacts with Islamic education can help preserve these

local beliefs, without ignoring the dominant role of Islam in Indonesia. Second, amidst the challenges of globalization and religious homogenization, there is an urgent need to develop a more inclusive and dialogical educational approach for dealing with spiritual and cultural diversity. Third, this research is also relevant to enriching the discourse on Islamic education in Indonesia, especially regarding the archipelago's diversity of culture and beliefs. This research examines the Djawa Soenda Religion (ADS) worship model in Islamic education, focusing on how these two belief systems can interact positively. This research assumes that there is room for dialogue and mutual understanding between Islam and ADS in an educational context, which can benefit both parties. Using a social interaction approach in education and the theory of religious pluralism, this research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of Islamic teaching that is more inclusive and adaptive to local beliefs in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study was conducted in the Djawa Soenda Religion (ADS), a local religious community in Cigugur Kuningan, West Java. The community maintains its tradition as a follower of this belief. The researcher chose the ADS community as the research object because it faces various forms of discrimination and marginalization, even though their rights have been recognized through Constitutional Court decision No. 97/2016 on including religion in the ID card column. Such discrimination includes difficulties in accessing education, health services, and other civil rights. In addition, ADS is considered relevant to research because it conducts social movements to fight discrimination, defends beliefs, and fights for recognition of identity. This community also faces challenges from the majority group and pressures from those who often view their local beliefs

negatively. This study allows for a deeper analysis of the interaction between Islam and local beliefs within the framework of Islamic education as well as how marginalized communities such as ADS survive through social movements.

The primary data come from humans (human resources) in the form of verbal information in the form of responses, opinions, and views (perceptions), as well as the actions and behavior of the subject, according to the context. This source was obtained from the social actions of local religious leaders and adherents of the ADS. In addition to the primary data, this research also captured secondary data through documentation studies. The main concern in the documentation study is the form of notes in newspapers, personal notes, photographs, recordings, and others. In addition, literature data regarding the ability to survive ethnic or religious minorities

The informants from this study were leaders and followers of the ADS who were currently studying, and the community of followers of the ADS. A purposive sampling technique was used to select informants. The primary data source in this research is informants or subjects involved, totaling 15 people, consisting of ADS adherents, the community, and the Cigugur government. The data and information explored were verbal, including responses, opinions, and views, obtained through in-depth interviews and participatory observations. This indicates the use of purposive sampling to determine informants relevant to the interaction of Islam, beliefs, and ADS worship models.

The research process and data collection techniques used in this study were in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in a controlled manner using increasingly focused questions. The information obtained is expected to be explorative. This is based on the assumption that the problem under study is related to the informants' feelings, responses, and subjective behavior toward the main issue being studied (Mills & Birks, 2014). This method was used

to obtain accurate information from informants at the research locations to explore their insights, perspectives, and experiences related to forms of discrimination in ADS education.

A documentation search was carried out for document data, including correspondence, photographs, and other documents. Field notes in the form of documents are indispensable in uncovering qualitative data. Records are in the form of what is written, heard, seen, experienced, and thought, and are collected and put down on paper to be read and verified. This method was used to obtain document data relating to the forms of ADS education discrimination. Participatory observations were carried out directly in the study community. The researcher lived with and mingled with the ADS community for one month to feel the psychological conditions of the community being studied directly. In this participant observation, researchers explored the cultural meanings of each object studied, including the subject's role, response, interaction, and speech. This is attempted by associating the interactions with the social context in which they occur. This is because the meaning of a behavior can be obtained from the relation of information to its social context. This method was used to obtain data on the forms of discrimination in ADS education.

Data analysis in this study was conducted inductively through descriptive, discourse, and content analyses. Inductive analysis is expected to identify multiple data points, fully describe the background, and identify mutual influences. Discrimination, marginalization, and persecution data have been analyzed based on the growing discourse on the latest social movement and discrimination theories. Content analysis is conducted by parsing the meaning of documents owned by the ADS community and associating them with related theories. The analysis technique used the following steps: reduction, data display, conclusion, and verification.

RESULTS

History of the Establishment of the Djawa Soenda Religion

The Djawa Soenda Religion, commonly known as ADS, has strong roots in the history of local beliefs in the Cigugur area, Kuningan, and West Java. This religion was founded by a figure named Madrais in 1848. The founding of the ADS was closely related to the geographical and social conditions of the people of Cigugur, a village located at the foot of Mount Ceremai. Most people in this area work as farmers with a low level of education; therefore, their religious understanding is relatively simple (Komarudin, 2017).

Muhammad Ra'is (Madrais), the leading figure behind the founding of ADS, was born into a family connected to the Sultan of Cirebon. His grandfather, an Islamic teacher, raised him in a small village near Cirebon. However, the Islamic teachings that Madrais received were not profound, so he was interested in the teachings of *Ngelmu Sejati* Cirebon, or the mystical and spiritual science of nature.

At the beginning of its development, the teachings brought about by Madrais succeeded in attracting the attention of the Cigugur people, who tended to be more open to local spirituality. Madrais combines the teachings of "Ngelmu Sejati" with elements of the "Sunda Wiwitan" tradition, the traditional religion of the Sundanese people. This resulted in the syncretism of beliefs known as the Djawa Soenda Religion. One of the main reasons for the success of this teaching is its ability to bridge various local beliefs in society.

The Djawa Soenda Religion began spreading to various West Java regions, including Indramayu, Majalengka, Ciamis, Tasikmalaya, and Garut. During its heyday, ADS adherents were estimated to have reached over 100,000 people. However, the officially registered population in the census is only approximately 25,000. This spread shows that Madrais teachings have been successfully accepted outside

Cigugur, even though these teachings are often considered controversial by orthodox Islamic circles ([Wikipedia, 2023](#)).

Over time, the ADS faced resistance from the Islamic community and political and social pressures from the Dutch and Japanese colonial governments. Madrais teachings were banned during the Japanese occupation, and the number of ADS adherents drastically decreased. Despite this, ADS teachings persist among the people of Cigugur, who continue to practice their traditions, including the Seren Taun ceremony, an essential annual ritual on the Sundanese religious calendar.

After Madrais died in 1939, his son, Pangeran Tedjabuana, continued the leadership of the ADS. Tedjabuana played an essential role in maintaining the continuity of ADS teachings during three different eras: the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese occupation, and the early period of Indonesian independence. He adhered to the teachings passed down by his father and succeeded in maintaining the continuity of the ADS spiritual community.

Tedjabuana led ADS until 1964 when teachings were officially disbanded under pressure from the New Order government. The New Order policy, which only recognized a few official religions, forced many ADS adherents to convert, especially to Catholicism, which was considered to have many similarities with ADS teachings. However, many still maintain their local beliefs even though they have officially converted to a state-recognized religion.

ADS teaching is not only a belief system, but also a social movement that opposes the domination of majority religions, especially Islam, which is more fanatical in the area around Cigugur. Madrais often preaches on tolerance and the importance of maintaining harmony between religions. He emphasizes that each religion has a path to achieving the Almighty Godhead.

During the Dutch colonial era, the government considered ADS a threat because it taught teachings in contrast to the dominant Islam. The Dutch attempted to classify ADS as a cult to facilitate political control. However, despite much pressure, Madrais and his followers remained persistent in defending their teachings until the end of their lives.

After Tedjabuana died in 1978, ADS teachings lost their leadership. Despite this, efforts to preserve these teachings have not stopped. Tedjabuana's son, Pangeran Djatikusumah, attempted to revive the teachings of ADS by establishing the Cara Karuhun Urang Traditional Association (PACKU) in 1981. This effort was made to maintain the continuity of Sundanese ancestral traditions inherited by Madrais and Tedjabuana.

ADS teachings continue to survive, albeit on a smaller scale, with followers committed to maintaining Sundanese tradition and culture. Even though ADS is no longer recognized as an official religion, the spirit and values taught by Madrais remain alive in the hearts of the people of Cigugur and its surroundings.

The Djawa Soenda Religion was born from local traditions and Javanese-Sundanese spirituality. This teaching faced internal challenges from Islamic society and external pressure from colonial and post-colonial governments. Although officially disbanded, the spirit and teachings of ADS live through the preservation efforts of Madrais descendants and their followers. The history of the development of ADS shows the strength of the influence of local spirituality in shaping the identity and socio-cultural dynamics of the Sundanese people. Although the Djawa Soenda Religion no longer exists on a large scale, it remains an integral part of religious history in Indonesia, especially in West Java. Its influence on the people of Cigugur and its surroundings reflects the resistance of local culture

and spirituality to the hegemony of major religions ([Rizaldy, 2020](#); [Tendi, 2016b](#)).

Core Teachings of the Djawa Soenda Religion

The Javanese Soenda (ADS) religion, also known as Sunda Wiwitan, has core teachings rooted in Prince Madrais's worldview ([Azzahra, 2023](#)). These teachings include various spiritual principles that combine the concepts of divinity, the relationship between humans and nature, and mysticism towards self-perfection. The following is an in-depth and comprehensive description of the core teachings of ADS ([Mutaqin, 2014](#)).

The concept of God and humans

God in ADS is believed to be the highest entity, above all creations. God is understood to be both transcendent and immanent, close to humans and not separate from their lives. ADS adherents believe there is oneness between God and humans, where humans are seen as the perfect creatures from God's creation. This concept of oneness describes the ideal union of a transcendent God and an immanent God in human life. ADS also recognizes duality in humans, both physical and spiritual. The physical side includes visible and external aspects, while the spiritual side is the inner essence that moves humans. *Jalma*, in Sundanese, means "incarnate being" with nature to carry out his human life. Thus, humans are responsible for achieving self-perfection through physical and spiritual harmonization ([Wikipedia, 2023](#)).

Ngaji Badan (Self-intropection)

Reciting the Koran is a core teaching tool for ADS that focuses on self-introspection. This underscores the importance of humans being aware of and examining their bodies and souls. In this context, the body is not just a physical entity but a holistic representation of

everything in the universe that can be perceived through the five human senses. Reciting the Koran is an activity that encourages self-examination for all forms of damage and shortcomings, and corrects the behavior and actions taken. This concept teaches that humans must always be reflective, understand the influence of the surrounding environment, and align themselves with the original qualities given by God. In addition, the human body in ADS is seen physically and has a symbolic meaning. For instance, blood functions biologically and is considered to have cosmic significance as a fluid that nurtures the human soul towards perfection.

Pikukuh Tilu (Three Strengtheners)

Pikukuh Tilu is a fundamental principle in ADS that consists of the three foundations of life that humans must adhere to to achieve perfection. *Pikukuh Tilu* comes from the words “kuranguh” which means affirmation and “tilu” which means three. This principle refers to three provisions that must be adhered to in everyday life: (a) Reciting the Koran, Self-introspection, and understanding the body as a means to achieve perfection; (b) *Mikukuh Kana Tanah*, Respect and love for the land and its people, which shows the importance of national awareness and responsibility towards nature; and (c) *Madep ka Ratu Raja*: The concept of harmony and balance in life, which refers to self-control through creativity, taste, and human intention (Suhaenah et al., 2017).

Mikukuh Kana Tanah (Respect for the Land)

Mikukuh Kana Tanah emphasizes the importance of respecting and loving one's homeland or nation. Humans must preserve nature in the form of respect for God. In ADS, humans must be deeply aware of the importance of land as part of their lives and of preserving nature for future generations. This principle also teaches that every nation has unique characteristics that must be respected and that ADS

followers must respect the culture and traditions of their country. As a form of gratitude to God, humans must not damage or tarnish what God has given, including the perfectly created human body (Suhaenah et al., 2017).

Madep ka Ratu Raja

Madep ka Ratu Raja teaches about maintaining harmony and balance in human life. This teaching is divided into several levels, each of which has a deep symbolic meaning:

- a. Ratu Raja 1 covers human creativity (sir), taste, and intention (thought). These three aspects must be aligned with God's will.
- b. Ratu Raja 2 refers to the law of balance in life where everything must be balanced.
- c. Ratu Raja 3 symbolizes a pair of hands and feet where humans must be alert and conscious.
- d. Ratu Raja 4 refers to the five senses as a bridge between humans and their natural surroundings.
- e. Ratu Raja 5 shows that even though humans have the same five senses, each nation has different characteristics.
- f. Ratu Raja 6 symbolizes a person who has achieved a perfect balance (Kholiludin, 2022).

The Concept of Death and Life After

ADS also has a unique view of death and its afterlife. Its followers believe that death is the return of humans to the realm of darkness (*Jagat Peteng*), where the fate of the soul is determined by behavior during life on earth. The funeral procession in ADS differs from that in other religions. In ADS, the body is wrapped in black cloth and buried with various symbols such as charcoal and rice, which have cosmic meanings.

The Value of Mutual Cooperation and Deliberation

The values taught in ADS emphasize harmonious social life, such as cooperation and deliberation. This principle is taught to maintain good relationships with fellow humans. ADS believes that life must be lived by helping each other and reaching decisions through consensus, a form of social solidarity and harmony.

Moral and Ethics Teachings

ADS emphasizes the importance of morals and ethics in everyday life. Values such as living in harmony with others, self-introspection, and prioritizing deliberation are essential in ADS. This teaching reminds humans of the importance of maintaining good relationships with others and always paying attention to actions, so that they follow religious and ancestral guidance ([Kushendrawati, 2014](#)).

The core teachings of the Djawa Soenda Religion teach humans to be introspective, maintain good relationships with others and nature, and live in harmony and balance ([Tendi, 2023](#)). These teachings reflect spiritual views and moral values that are applied in everyday life. Through concepts such as Ngaji Badan, Pikukuh Tilu, and Madep ka Ratu Raja, ADS offers a comprehensive view of how humans should live and be fully aware of God, themselves, and the world around them ([Setiawan et al., 2020](#)).

ADS has faced conflict with a new social movement approach based on ideology and collective values. ADS emphasizes solidarity, collective identity, and a common goal of fighting discrimination. ADS communities act defensively and proactively by engaging in collective action, dialogue, and community mobilization through cultural and social activities in the face of conflict. They endeavored to demonstrate the value of inclusivity and multiculturalism as part of their identity. ADS does not necessarily adopt formally organized methods but is

relatively flexible and adaptive to the situation through these social movements. The aim is to create public awareness and mobilize support for their rights at the local and national levels. This approach emphasizes the daily political struggle to demonstrate that their existence is integral to Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity.

Education in Agama Djawa Soenda (ADS) Perceptions

The ADS believes that education is essential to life. According to Kanti, the significance of schooling for ADS is to continue the noble values inherited from ancestors. Considering the importance of this educational aspect, Paseban, as the center of ADS' existence, took the initiative to build a formal education foundation called the Tri Mulya Foundation. This school is in Paseban, which is opposite the Tri Panca Tunggal Building. Formal education provides junior high school-level education. In addition, this foundation provides education in early childhood. Opening this education aims to save the younger generation by equipping them with strengthening character by maintaining traditional legal values in human and national characteristics (D. Kanti, [personal communication, 2024](#)).

According to Kanti, character development in the ADS community focuses more on establishing authentic human qualities rather than quantity. ADS does not care about the number of loyal communities. ADS pays attention to the fact that this community upholds customary law and the law of harmony and instills human values in humans through the spirit of God. By forming these qualities, the noble values inherited from our ancestors can be well maintained and preserved. In ADS terminology, indigenous peoples must be able to uphold the characteristics of the nation and humans. Besides producing harmony, upholding these values can strengthen a nation's identity and personality. This is due to the assumption that, although spiritual truth is universal, humans have different resonances when capturing energy from the source of that truth. This

depends on the climate, natural atmosphere, gravitational forces, and other factors. For example, the culture of fishing communities, which relies more on their fate on the sea, will be very different from the culture of inland communities, which depends on the fertility of the land. According to Kanti, differences should be celebrated to confirm God's greatness. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen a nation's identity since ADS cares about this (D. Kanti, [personal communication, 2024](#)).

ADS recognizes, even believing, that change, including social change, is inevitable. Even so, ADS strives to ensure that social change does not erode the nation's identity. Therefore, ADS continues to strive so that indigenous peoples continue to uphold customary law through the characteristics of the nation and human factors. The ADS also believes that modernity does not need to be limited and should be avoided. There is no need to restrict the diversity and dynamics in this world, including the freedom to practice religion; our treatment of any religion also does not need to be limited. Even though there are no limitations, universal fundamental values must be used as a guide, namely, human values. This human value can be implemented not only by wanting to change other cultures but also by maintaining one's culture since this is what ADS continues to strive for (D. Kanti, [personal communication, 2024](#)).

The naming of ADS educational values is often spread through art, namely through dances that contain the meaning of life, as well as through Pupuh 2 (a kind of song that has the meaning of life for Sundanese people) to educate indigenous people, especially the younger generation, to preserve noble values inherited from ancestors. Educational instillation is also carried out at regular events once a month, every Sunday at the beginning of each month. The people who participated in this activity were traditional Papuhu people, such as Prince Rama Jatikusuma and Prince Rama Anom.

According to AS, one of the ADS community members, who is also a student at Kuningan Vocational School, religious lessons about ADS were not taught at school but at Paseban (the ADS community center). Here, we also encounter many themes, so there is a feeling of confidence when participating in this monthly activity. Religious studies on ADS are divided into two categories. The first is a general category for all ages, including those attended by ADS who live in Bandung, Cianjur, Tasik, Majalengka, and Cirebon Indramayu. For the general category, this is done once a month, every Sunday, at the beginning of the month. The second category was specific to students or teenagers. The second category is carried out once a week, every Sunday evening, and once a semester, every semester break, usually carried out for three consecutive days. This semester's activity is generally called "Surasa" (AS, [personal communication, 2024](#)).

The importance of instilling education to maintain the noble values of traditional communities that their ancestors have instilled, with an emphasis on aspects of quality rather than quantity, as stated by Kanti, is very reasonable. This is because the challenges of belonging to a minority religion, such as ADS, are not accessible. As IP conveyed, if they do not have a strong faith, indigenous people often change their religion to avoid the discrimination they constantly experience. If they are still strong in the world of education, this does not necessarily mean that they are vital to the world of work. Workers are often required to adhere to a particular religion, which comes from the mainstream or the majority religion. According to IP, ADS religious education in the family, which parents carry out, is the key to preserving the existence of ADS in this world (AS, [personal communication, 2024](#)).

According to IP, the educational process to maintain human values and the equality contained in the values of indigenous peoples is quite successful among indigenous peoples. This can be seen in the

maintained culture of cooperation, living as you are, and helping each other in the ADS environment. This can be seen in the once-a-year harvest celebration called *Seren Taun*, where, at that moment, indigenous people compete to donate their harvest to the surrounding community. Apart from that, cooperation can also be seen in efforts to jointly care for *Paseban* (the ADS community center, also called a palace in a royal context). For example, if one of the huts is damaged in the *Paseba* area, the shortage and materials needed for renovation are immediately calculated. Without being asked, Indigenous people flocked to assist according to their abilities. Some brought bamboo, some brought cakes, some provided energy, etc.

ADS makes every effort to preserve its teachings for its descendants by forging quality education for the younger generation. Militancy against ADS continues to be guarded and cared for because it is a message from ancestors that the community has obeyed for generations. Therefore, our parents have always followed customary law and obeyed the customary law developed by traditional elders. In addition, being loyal to ADS is also because it follows the nature of Sundanese people, where ADS continues to strive to maintain the values that have been the identity of Sundanese people for a long time.

Exploration of the Practical Practices of the ADS Worship Model from an Islamic Education Perspective

The research results show that at a substantive level, ADS teachings have many similarities to Islamic teachings. ADS followers, like Muslims, believe in the Almighty God, preserve the environment, practice courtesy towards parents, and prioritize nationalist values, manifested in the concept of "*mikul kana tanah*" (respect for the homeland). However, from the technical side of worship, ADS is influenced more by local Javanese culture, while Islam has more standard worship procedures and originates from Arabic traditions. These technical differences include ways of praying, religious

ceremonies, and other forms of rites, which are greatly influenced by cultural background.

Research on the worship practices of the Djawa Soenda Religion (ADS) shows significant similarities with the values taught in Islamic education, especially regarding religious teaching. Some similarities include: a) Deity: ADS, like Islam, teaches belief in the power of one and only God. ADS emphasizes the importance of a balanced human relationship with God, accompanied by high spiritual awareness; b) Environment: Both have the same views regarding protecting the environment. In ADS teaching, respect for nature and the environment is essential for maintaining a universal harmony. This is in line with Islamic teachings, which teach its followers to be caliphs on earth and maintain the balance of nature; and c) Politeness and Nationalism: The teachings about politeness and respect for parents in ADS are very close to the concept of character in Islamic education. In addition, the ADS teaches the spirit of nationalism, represented in the idea of "*mikul kana tanah*," which reflects the feeling of love for the homeland.

Based on the description of the research findings above, there are several substantive similarities between ADS teachings and Islamic education, which can be seen from the following aspects:

- a. Divine Aspect: These two religions both teach monotheism. ADS teaches belief in "*Gusti Sikang Sawiji-wiki*," which means faith in the One and Only God, similar to the concept of Tawhid in Islam, which emphasizes the oneness of Allah (Al-Qur'an, Al-Ikhlâs: 1-4). In both beliefs, God is the center of all life in this world and the afterlife, and humans have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards Him (Maqsood, 1999). Islam and ADS only show similarities in the teaching of monotheism, where God or Gusti is positioned as the center of life in this world and hereafter. Both teachings emphasize that humans have a moral

and spiritual responsibility to God. This responsibility in Islam is realized through worship and adherence to Sharia. Simultaneously, ADS is reflected in cultural and spiritual values that preserve human relationships with God and the environment. While monotheism has core similarities, the application of this teaching in both belief systems reflects the uniqueness of their respective traditions and practices. These commonalities are also the basis for establishing a harmonious dialogue between the adherents.

- b. **Environmental Sustainability:** Teaching to protect the environment is highly emphasized in ADS. The teaching of “*mikukuh kana tanah*” in ADS emphasizes that humans must protect their land and environment with full responsibility, similar to the concept of a caliph in Islam. In Islam, humans are entrusted with caliph on earth, which means they must protect and care for the planet and its environment (Al-Qur’an, Al-Baqarah: 30). This similarity shows the existence of ecologically solid values in both teachings, which both view the importance of protecting nature as a form of obedience to God (Ma’mun, 2008).
- c. **Manners and Social Ethics:** Regarding social relations, ADS and Islam teach respecting parents and maintaining good manners when interacting with others. In ADS, the teaching “according to harmony with the nation” emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with other people. This is similar to Islamic teachings, which emphasize noble morals and respect for parents and fellow humans (Al-Qur’an, Al-Isra: 23-24). Both teaching systems emphasize the importance of morality in everyday life, which must be reflected in social behavior (Al Faruqi & Al Faruqi, 1986).

- d. Nationalism (*Mikukuh Kana Tanah*): ADS has the teachings of nationalism, which are manifested in the concept of “*mikukuh kana Tanah*,” which means loving and respecting the homeland and protecting ancestral heritage. This value is significant for maintaining cultural identity and national sovereignty (Siga et al., 2022). In Islam, nationalism is also recognized as a form of worship when carried out within the framework of preserving the honor of the nation and state, as long as it does not conflict with religious teachings. Nationalism in Islam is expressed in the form of *hubbul wathan minal iman*; that is, the love of one’s country is part of the faith (Wahyudi, 2018).

Even though there are many similarities at the substantive level, this research found striking differences in the technical aspects of worship between ADS and Islam. Some of the main differences are as follows:

- a. Worship Rites: In ADS, worship is focused more on rites connected to local Sundanese culture, such as the Seren Taun traditional ceremony, which is an annual harvest ritual as a form of gratitude to God. ADS also has ceremonies involving Sundanese cultural symbols such as white cloth, charcoal, and offerings. Meanwhile, in Islam, worship is more formal and ritualistic, with rules established by Sharia, such as the five daily prayers, zakat, fasting, and pilgrimage.
- b. Death and Marriage Ceremonies: In ADS, death ceremonies involve special rites, such as using black cloth and teak wood coffins, which have symbolic meaning. On the other hand, Islam has more straightforward and standard procedures for handling corpses, such as bathing, shrouding, funeral prayers, and funerals, according to Shari’a. In marriage, ADS has different traditional rules, with traditional processions

emphasizing engagement and getting to know a prospective partner. By contrast, in Islam, marriage is more straightforward with the consent process, which is the core of the marriage contract.

- c. Daily Prayers and Worship: ADS has a more spiritual and ritualistic form of daily worship, with many prayers offered in Sundanese and using traditional symbols. In contrast, Islam has more standard prayer rules, taken from the Koran and Hadith, and strictly regulates daily worship, such as the five daily prayers. These differences reflect their respective cultural backgrounds, where Islam is heavily influenced by Middle Eastern culture, whereas ADS is rooted in local Sundanese culture.

Tabel 1

Comparison of Islam and ADS Teachings

Aspects	Islam	ADS	Similarities	Differences
Basic Beliefs	Tawhid, faith in Allah, and teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith	Favouring harmony with nature, ancestral traditions, and local values	Valuing spirituality and morality	Islam derives from divine revelation, while ADS draws on local traditions and ancestral beliefs
Worship Practices	Prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj	Traditional rituals and ceremonies that emphasise cosmic balance	Both teachings have structured rituals	Islam has a Shari'ah-based pillar of worship, while ADS is more flexible according to local culture

Aspects	Islam	ADS	Similarities	Differences
Approach to Education	Sharia-based religious education	Education involving traditional values and local wisdom	Emphasising the importance of value education in life	Islam emphasises religious education with formal methods; ADS emphasises teaching values through tradition
Social Life	Encouraging community solidarity, zakat to help the needy	Maintaining good relations with communities and respecting nature	Both value social harmony	Islam has a sharia-based philanthropy system (zakat and sadaqah), while ADS is more informal and custom-based
Tolerance and Conflict	Teaches tolerance, but conflicts can arise when there are differences in the interpretation of Sharia	Tolerance based on respect for tradition, but often discriminated against by the majority group	Both face challenges in applying the teachings in a multicultural society	Islam as the majority religion is often perceived as dominating, while ADS as a minority is often discriminated against

Source: Primary data. Researcher’s observation (2024)

Based on Table 1, the intersection of Islam and ADS lies in the similarity of spiritual values, which both emphasize human relationships with divine or cosmic harmony and uphold moral values. Diversity in social life, where Islam and ADS value the

importance of tolerance and social relations in society. Both teachings encourage the propagation of noble values through education, although their approaches differ. This research presents a novel aspect of analyzing the interaction between local beliefs and Islam. This research provides new insights into how Islamic values and local traditions (ADS) can interact without losing their respective identities.

DISCUSSION

This study found that ADS worship as a local religion is more influenced by Javanese culture. The rituals and procedures for worship use many symbols and cultures typical of the local area, which is different from Islamic practices that have traditional roots from the Middle East (Ramdhan, 2020). The above findings show that although there are technical differences in worship, the core teachings of ADS have many substantive similarities with Islamic religious education. This confirms that local teachings such as ADS have the potential to be integrated with Islamic education in terms of teaching moral values, ethics, and love of the country.

The similarities between ADS teachings and Islamic education, especially in matters of divinity, social ethics, and environmental sustainability, indicate room for dialogue and integration. Islamic education can adopt some local values from the ADS without having to conflict with Sharia teaching. For example, the concept of Khalifah in Islam, which emphasizes human responsibility for nature, can be strengthened by the teaching of *mikukuh kana* land from ADS, which emphasizes the importance of preserving the environment. Apart from that, the teachings on manners and social ethics contained in ADS are also in line with moral education in Islam. The concept of “according to harmony between nations” in ADS can be integrated into the Islamic education curriculum to strengthen the values of brotherhood and social harmony (Harahap & Hamka, 2023).

The main challenge in integrating ADS teaching into Islamic education lies in technical differences in worship. As a local religion, ADS is strongly influenced by Sundanese culture, which has ritual traditions that differ from Islam. Islam, as a religion originating in the Middle East, has more standard and normative rules of worship (Hernawan et al., 2021). Therefore, the integration of ADS values in Islamic education must be carried out carefully to avoid blurring the boundaries of Sharia. For example, traditional rites that involve offerings or traditional symbols in ADS cannot be adopted in Islamic education because this could conflict with the principle of monotheism in Islam. However, the ethical and moral values that underlie these rites can still be taken as inspiration for teaching children the importance of being thankful and grateful to God. The integration of ADS teachings into Islamic education also opens up opportunities to create education that is more inclusive and responsive to cultural diversity in Indonesia (Scheffold, 1998).

The results of interviews with ADS adherents confirm how this community practices ancestral values that they consider part of their cultural and religious identity. One important figure, Dewi Kanti, said that education for ADS adherents places more emphasis on spiritual qualities and human character than just the number of adherents. This is reminiscent of Islamic education, which emphasizes the importance of moral education for students. Observations of the ADS community also show that efforts to preserve their culture and ancestral teachings are carried out by building educational foundations such as the Tri Mulya Foundation, which provides formal education. This initiative is in line with ADS's view that education is a means of instilling the noble values inherited from their ancestors.

“Discrimination from the State in the form of various regulations that limit and even prohibit both directly and indirectly, against various religious activities carried out by the community.” (D. Kanti, personal communication, 2024).

Interviews with various members of the ADS community also show that they face challenges in carrying out their worship, especially related to recognizing their legality and rights in the state context. This is an important aspect that must be considered in Indonesia's multicultural education.

The theory of religious pluralism emphasizes the importance of the acceptance and recognition of religious diversity in society (Pettalongi, 2013). In the context of ADS and Islamic education, pluralism can be interpreted as the awareness that there are many paths to spiritual truth, and each path must be respected. Multicultural education proposed by figures such as Banks (2012) emphasizes the importance of respecting cultural and religious differences in education. In addition, the theory of social interaction in education is relevant for understanding the dynamics between ADS and Islamic education. Social interactions that occur in the educational environment can play a role in building attitudes toward tolerance and appreciation for differences. Multicultural education implemented in schools, such as that carried out by the ADS community at the Tri Mulya Foundation (Wulandari et al., 2019), is a concrete example of how education can strengthen harmonious social interactions between various religious and cultural groups.

Previous studies have discussed the importance of multicultural education in the context of religious diversity in Indonesia. For example, previous studies (Muslimah, 2010; Nakaya, 2018; Wahyono et al., 2022) show that integrating multicultural education values into religious lessons is very important to prevent conflict and increase tolerance. This research also supports the idea that education inclusive of local religions, such as ADS, can be a solution to the problem of discrimination. Previous studies (Årsheim, 2018; Flere, 2010; Jereza, 2016; Markoviti, 2017) highlight local religious communities' struggles to gain legal recognition and protection for their beliefs. ADS has also

experienced these types of struggles, which included a landmark decision by the Constitutional Court in 2017 that strengthened the argument that religious pluralism and inclusive education are necessary to create a more just and harmonious society.

Research on the struggle of the ADS community in Cigugur, Kuningan, to gain recognition through the Constitutional Court's (MK) Decision No. 97/2016 provides an important foundation for understanding the issues of religious pluralism and educational inclusiveness in Indonesia. The findings reflect the reality that discrimination against local religious minorities persists despite legal legitimization. Discrimination in the education sector, public services, and civil identity shows how the hegemonic values of the majority still influence social policies and practices, as expressed in Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Bates, 1975; Femia, 1975; Urbinati, 1998; Williams, 1960; Woolcock, 1985).

When linked to the literature on social movements, the ADS struggle is in line with the New Social Movement (NSM) theory, which emphasizes identity, values, and social justice as core elements of resistance (Aldemir, 2018). This research also resonates with Banks's (2012) study on multicultural education, which encourages the implementation of learning strategies to reduce stereotypes and prejudices between groups. Other studies on the importance of non-hierarchical structures in social movements (Fuchs, 2006; Herbst, 1976; Kioupiolis, 2018; Saeed, 2023; Sitrin, 2023) show how communities like ADS are able to mobilize solidarity through informal networks. These findings underline the importance of education that supports pluralism as a tool for social transformation, as well as the need for the reconstruction of majority discourse to create a more just and harmonious society. Adopting multicultural education and strengthening anti-discrimination regulations are relevant strategic

steps to address the challenges of discrimination faced by communities, such as ADS.

The practice of ADS worship from the perspective of Islamic education shows that although there are differences at the technical level, at the substantive level, there are many similarities that can be used as a basis for building dialogue and understanding between religions. Multicultural education is an important solution to these differences, especially in efforts to reduce discrimination against local religions, such as ADS. Through education that respects pluralism, harmonious and mutually respectful social interactions can continue to exist, thereby creating a peaceful and inclusive society.

CONCLUSION

This research concluded that although there are technical differences in worship between the Djawa Soenda Religion (ADS) and Islam, both have many fundamental values. ADS and Islam emphasize the oneness of God, respect for parents, environmental conservation, and nationalist values. Islam and ADS both emphasize the oneness of God, but their teachings differ greatly. Islamic monotheism is rooted in the beliefs of the Qur'an and Sharia, while the belief in "Gusti Sikang Sawiji-wiji" in ADS reflects local cultural traditions. This difference reflects each belief's uniqueness. Technical differences in worship procedures are influenced more by local culture in ADS, while Islam has more universal and standardized rituals rooted in sharia. These similarities provide opportunities for dialogue and integration of moral and spiritual values in education. The noble values contained in ADS can interact with and harmonize with Islamic teachings, such as environmental sustainability and social ethics, to enrich character education without sacrificing Sharia principles. This research provides a new contribution to the study of the interaction between local religions and Islamic education,

especially in the context of character and moral education. One of the novelties of this research is the understanding that although ADS, as a local religion, has technical elements different from Islam, the universal values contained in ADS can be integrated into Islamic education. These findings emphasize the importance of an inclusive education approach that considers local cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. In addition, this research also offers a new perspective on how Islamic education can be more adaptive to the diversity of beliefs while still adhering to Sharia principles. This approach can help prevent discrimination against local religions such as ADS, and create a more harmonious and tolerant educational environment.

The limitation of this research is that it only examines the social actions of the ADS community in Paseban, Cigugur, Kuningan, and West Java, based on the New Social Movement theory. These results cannot be generalized to other marginalized communities because of their unique social, cultural, and geographical contexts. In addition, the data obtained rely on in-depth interviews, documentation, and participatory observation, which may be affected by the subjective interpretation bias of the researcher or informants. As such, this study is more descriptive than addressing broader causality in the discrimination of marginalized communities.

This study highlights several important aspects for further development: 1). Development of Multicultural Education: Serious efforts are needed to develop multicultural education in Indonesia, especially in the Islamic education curriculum. Values from local teachings such as ADS can be integrated into character education to enrich students' knowledge of religious and cultural diversity. 2). Local Education Empowerment: The ADS community needs to be supported in efforts to preserve its traditional and spiritual values, especially through educational institutions such as the Tri Mulya

Foundation. The government must also provide stronger legal recognition and support to ensure that the educational rights of local religious communities are protected. 3). Interreligious Dialogue: It is important to encourage more intensive interreligious dialogue between Islam and local religions, such as the ADS. This dialogue can create a better understanding of religious communities and encourage a stronger tolerance in society. 4). Further Research: Further research is needed to explore more deeply how local religious values can be integrated with formal education curricula, especially in Islamic education. This research can also further explore the impact of multicultural education on increasing attitudes towards tolerance and social harmony in Indonesia.

Author Contributions

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from the respondents before the interviews.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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