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## Quo Vadis Interfaith Relations After 2016 Constitutional Court Decision



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### Abstract

*The 1965 Presidential Decree on the blasphemy and abuse of religion law is bad news for tribal religions. Therefore they try to maintain their existence by taking refuge in Hinduism. Some things to consider include, the similarity of elements of local beliefs and the freedom to exercise trust. Nevertheless, they still feel the government treats them discriminatively because there is no freedom to display their identity. The problem is further complicated because other religious communities tend to regard them as infidels who need to be "converted" into believing in Allah and embracing one of the official religions. The desire of adherents of tribal religions to be treated fairly gets a fresh breeze through a 2016 constitutional court ruling that allows them to empty the religious column on their electronic identity card (KTP) or other identity cards, or allow them to write their identity as "believers"; But this decision raises the question: How the relationship between adherents of universal religion and adherents of tribal religion in the midst of changes in the constitution? I use the observational methodology and theory Cosmotheandric Trinity by Raimundo Panikkar. The Constitutional Court (MK) decision is correct. The tribal religion (aluk todolo/ alukta) is pluralis. Therefore Christianity needs to redefine its mission to aluk and build respectful relationships based on the principle of difference is valued without reducing religious values to a universal value.*

**Keywords:** *Constitutional Court, Christianity, Alukta, Pannikar, Cosmotheandric Trinity.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, No. 1 / PNPS of 1965 concerning Prevention of Abuse and / or Blasphemy of Religion is like a death knell for tribal religions.

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Since then their space is limited because what is recognized as the official religion by the government is only universal religions namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The situation is further complicated because all identity cards in Indonesia require citizens to fill in the religious column. This condition blocked the way for the followers of tribal religions to obtain their rights as citizens, the same as those accepted by universal religious adherents.

To maintain its existence, tribal adherents are forced to open communication with universal religions that are willing to accommodate their existence without negating the religious elements that are adhered to. Other strategies carried out by tribal adherents can be seen in Hindu Kaharingan adherents, they take steps of rationalization, mimesis, mimicry, appropriation and abrogation, refuse to be seen as primitive and traditional, and try to establish dialogue [1, pp. 132-135] .

Communication with Hindus received a positive response. Hindus are willing to accommodate them, one of the tribal religions in question is Aluk Todolo in Kab. Toraja and Mamasa. Ratification contained in the Decree of the Director General of Hindu and Buddhist Guidance No. Dd./H/200-VII/69 dated November 15, 1959.

Diverse responses can be seen in followers of Aluk Todolo (Alukta). Some choose to use Hindu identity. Some survive with alukta identities without thinking about the impact of the law being violated. There are also those who choose to include Christianity or Islam on their identity cards as a way to trick the legislation. It is said so because at the practical level they continue to practice their traditional religiosity. The basic consideration for choosing Christianity and Islam is that the people of the two religions they meet most often.

Observing the steps taken by the followers of Aluk, it appears that the choice to take refuge in Hinduism is only compulsion because its religious elements cannot be compared to Hinduism or Christianity and Islam. So it is not surprising that there is still a longing for the followers of tribal religions to gain recognition in Indonesia.

The lack of recognition from the aspect of the constitution has an impact on relations with other religious communities in the public sphere. In meetings, adherents of official religions still often receive negative evaluations of tribal religions. The religious system is seen as primitive, does not know God, occult users believe in amulets. Negative judgments are even greater when among Christians live negative views that see tribal religion as part of paganism. This reason is also what makes the Christian mission (Christianize) more directed to them.

Important changes occurred when the highest judicial institution in Indonesia, namely the Constitutional Court (MK) through the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 97 / PUU-XIV / 2016 grants the request that adherents of tribal religions can leave the religion column blank on the identity card and or fill it with faith followers. The decision of the Constitutional Court should have an impact on the evaluation and acceptance of tribal religion in the public sphere. Marko Mahin assessed that decisions could have an impact on access to resources and power in the country [1, p. 131] . From the aspect of relations between religious communities, the decision of the Constitutional Court opened space to rethink the mission pattern of the church.

On that basis, this paper would like to evaluate the pattern of relations between religious communities after the Constitutional Court's decision, by describing the conditions in the Toraja context based on observations and interviews. Furthermore, in order to develop

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Christian relations with Alukta after the Constitutional Court Ruling, the writer will use the cosmotheandric Trinity theory from Raimundo Pannikar.

## II. CHRISTIAN RELATIONS WITH ALUKTA POST CONSTITUTIONAL COURT RULING

The Constitutional Court's decision was motivated by the attitude of the tribal religious adherers to leave the column on religious identity on the electronic identity card (KTP). In terms of legislation, it is considered to have been a violation of the Population Administration Law No.23 of 2006 Article 61 paragraphs 1 and 2 and Article 64 paragraphs 1 and 5. As a result of the decision, they were forced to experience discriminatory treatment, both in terms of service of the state apparatus and in social interaction (Constitutional Court, 2017, 6-10). The Constitutional Court's decision finally sided with the followers of tribal religions, where the word religion on the KTP was contrary to the 1945 Constitution and had no permanent legal force [2, pp. 154-155].

After the Constitutional Court's Decision, the information was not well socialized to alukta adherents and therefore they still hid their true identity. They still fill the religion column with Christian and Islamic identity on the KTP. All is done to outsmart the government system and reduce discrimination.

However, discrimination in public spaces is difficult to avoid. Some cases show it, such as: aluk spontan people present and sincerely help Christians when there is an event. Meanwhile, Christians choose a different step. Limiting attendance at events conducted by the aluk people. The classic reason used is fear if given food that has been prayed for by way of aluk. Another example: The impression of a theology student returning from an evangelistic activity. According to him aluk is closed to other religious communities because they do not want to be present in the evangelism that they do in the church. The student does not realize that the way and assessment is wrong.

Another interesting thing is that some alukta parents encourage their children to be educated by the church like Sunday School. They don't mind if their children are baptized. Their point of view does not depart from the doctrinal realm, where Christianity is superior to aluk. The influencing factor is that Christianity is considered more open to cultural change. In other words Christianity is considered as a way to experience an increase in civilization such as ways of thinking and lifestyle.

In relations with the government, acceptance of Alukta is still limited to the interests of tourism. The alukta rites were transformed from exclusive religious ceremonies to commercial religious ceremonies. The government uses it as a superior commodity to bring tourists. The benefit that is received from the willingness to follow this change is that they can show that this belief still exists.

## III. RAIMUNDO PANNIKAR'S COSMOTHEANDRIC TRINITY

Raimundo Pannikar is seen as a radical pluralist. When talking about reality in religion, he offers a view of relativity. Relativity means opposing absolute truth and

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universality. The only absolute is God, but who is known by a different name. For example the title Father used by Christians to refer to the Divine, is only Christianity. Other religions use other titles for the Divine. Thus, truth does not only belong to one religion, truth is found in other religions. Panikkar believes that the attitude of relativity comes from God [3, p.17] . Actually, all humans do is totum per partem, which means seeing the whole from a certain point of view [3, p. 18] .

Panikkar then uses the notion of relativity in developing the cosmotheandric trinity theory of “the divine, human and the world” All three are different realities but are connected to each other to form a unity. The unification process is possible because each of them needs each other. In addition, all three realities are connected by a kind of perichoresis. Me, you and him [4, p.195] . Harrison as quoted by David E. Bjork explains that the term perichoresis is the existence of a good timbale relationship between two different substances which each still maintains its identity and character [5, p.235] . Panikkar saying “There is no God without humans and the world. There is no human without God and the world. There is no world without God and humans” [3, p. 22] .

Cosmoteandric theory was used to understand the teachings of the Trinity in Christianity and to draw it far to understand relations with other religions. His vision of the Trinity is the relationship between God and Jesus united by the Holy Spirit. Panikkar does not embrace the doctrinal formulations as other pluralist theologians, he tends to pay attention to the existentialist realm. Someone who does this must be able to distinguish between his faith and his beliefs. Faith is transcendent, unpredictable and open. Trust means an intellectual and emotional understanding of what is believed according to the special tradition in which one devotes himself, but without injuring the lives of other people [6, p. 49] . In encounters between religions, differences must be allowed and respected, there is no need to force them to find universal values. What is needed in the encounter is parallelism, so there is no need to reduce the teachings of religions to one single understanding.

Departing from understanding the cosmotheandric trinity, Panikkar offers a radical understanding when he bypasses the teachings of the church by equating God with Christ, but separating Christ from Jesus. The finality of the incarnation of God does not only occur in historical Jesus. Christ is the same as the Father, who has never been fully recognized, humans can only see from certain aspects [4, p. 201] . As a comparison in Hinduism, Krishna which is dialogue with other religious communities is not a historical or mythological Krishna but a Krishna of faith [6, p.51] .

Furthermore, Panikkar suggested religious people develop the cave of the heart as a point of encounter between religions. A life free from conflict is only possible if there is a meeting of hearts with hearts [4, p. 205] . So Panikkar further emphasizes the quality aspects of encounters, interactions that listen to each other and recognize feelings for one another become a way for religious tolerance. In this framework, in interfaith encounters, adherents must be free from the desire to accentuate the uniqueness of their religious teachings, but must also be free from public apologies that make the belief in the religious fame diminished. Every encounter must also be prepared to face repentance in the sense of renewing thoughts and actions. Recognizing the position of an important historical dimension but it is not sufficient. The encounter is not a philosophy congress and a theological symposium. Not only the desire of religious leaders but the desire of all people to meet faith, hope and love [6, 64-75] .

#### IV. REARRANGEMENT OF ENCOUNTERS WITH ALUKTA (TRIBAL RELIGION)

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The Constitutional Court's decision was correct because the reality of a religion cannot be reduced. Any religious identity cannot be eliminated and replaced with another religious identity. In fact, efforts to eliminate diversity limit our point of view to know God. As Pannikar's view that God revealed himself in different ways, going beyond the aspect of historicity in each religion.

The task of the state is to socialize the Constitutional Court's decision so that people become aware of and give recognition to tribal religions. Moreover, the state must repent and realize its past failures in guaranteeing the basic rights of adherents. The state must reduce the legal products that are considered to give the impression that bad, evil tribal religions instead provide legal guarantees in the form of security for them to build dignified social relations with other members of the community [7, p. 5] . This effort needs to be accompanied by the role of religious leaders to sensitize religious groups in order to maintain human values as the responsibility of every citizen [8, p. 162] .

What about the role of religions? There needs to be a fundamental change from official religions, specifically Christianity, in the encounter with alukta. For quite a long time, Christianity has been drenched in discriminatory attitudes towards alukta adherents, seeing them as traditional and closing themselves off to other religious communities, even though it is at the practical level of Christianity that it closes itself to alukta followers through limiting themselves to their activities. Words and judgments that are negative, condescending, infidel, "dark people" must be removed. These steps can be taken by Christians by opening a meeting based on a deep feeling of seeing alukta as a neighbor. Try to recognize and find the presence of God through religious values practiced by adherents

Alukta requires sincere acceptance from Christians in the realm of state life. Therefore, the paradigm in looking at the aluk influenced by religious laws in 1965 must begin to be removed, realizing that the constitution has given space for adherents aluk to exist with their local identity. Furthermore, there needs to be a change in the paradigm of the church's mission, which has so far only made aluk a sasara for Christianity, becoming a mission to build a life together with fellow God's people and citizens at the same time.

## V. Conclusion

After the Constitutional Court's decision to cancel the article to fill the religion column on the KTP, the state and official religions need to change their way of thinking towards tribal religions. Specifically in Toraja, giving access to adherents of tribal religions to get their rights as citizens. In relations with Christians, encounters with them must depart from negative and discriminatory judgments, to encounters that recognize the uniqueness of each religion. Like the idea developed by Panikkar let alone differences while trying to see the presence of God in differences.

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