

## THE STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL WISDOM-BASED PREACHING IN GUNUNG SITOLI, NIAS

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### ABSTRACT

The Nias community is generally known for being predominantly Christian, a religion they have embraced for a very long time. However, not many are aware that Islam has been present on the island of Nias for a longer time, introduced by immigrants from Aceh and Minang, although not fully accepted by the Nias community. Local wisdom encompasses the unique knowledge, values, norms, and traditions of the local population. In this research, two primary strategies for comprehensive preaching delivery are the use of the local language and empowering Nias youth and local leaders. The use of the local language is deemed effective because the majority of the local population primarily uses it in their daily activities, including sermons, Friday khutbah, and various other religious events. Furthermore, translating major religious texts such as the Quran and Hadith into the local language facilitates better understanding of the preaching. The use of the local language is also conveyed in written form in the Nias language. The research methodology employed is qualitative, involving data collection through observation, interviews, participation, surveys, document analysis, and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, with source triangulation used in this research. The research results indicate that the strategy for global preaching through Nias local wisdom involves in-depth research on Nias culture, participation in Nias community activities and local traditions, as well as providing training and support to local figures to become preaching leaders.

**Keywords:** *Local Wisdom, Global Preaching Strategies*

### INTRODUCTION

This research explores the strategy of global preaching through Nias local wisdom. Nias Island is situated at the westernmost part of North Sumatra and is administratively part of North Sumatra province. The island has become a significant destination for various tourism activities, including surfing, diving, and stone jumping (Fahombo). Nias Island covers an area of approximately 5,625 km<sup>2</sup>, and according to the 2010 population census, it had a population of around 1,041,925 individuals, distributed among North Nias (127,530), Nias (135,778), West Nias (81,431), Gunungsitoli (61,819), and South Nias (289,708). The island has been inhabited by various ethnic groups, as noted by Edrisi in 1154. Edrisi, born in 1099 in Ceuta, wrote about the island of Niyan (Nias), stating that it was densely populated, had a significant city, and was inhabited by various ethnic groups (Museum Pusaka Nias, 2023).

The Nias community is generally known as predominantly adherents of Christianity, a faith that has been firmly held for several generations. However, many are unaware that Islam has long been present on the island of Nias, brought by immigrants from Aceh and Minangkabau, although with limited acceptance by the Nias community (Albertoras Telaumbanua, 2020).

The arrival of Islam in Nias did not immediately take root because mostly, Muslim migrants leaving their homeland did not realize that they carried a message from Prophet Muhammad, emphasizing the importance of conveying the content of the Quran, even if it was just one verse. The first example is trade, where they brought goods to be sold abroad and then returned to their home country after completing their trade. The same applies to Muslim travelers who visited other areas for research or simply stopped for a break and then continued their journey. For instance, the area may have been part of another government's jurisdiction led by Islam.

The second form of the spread of Islam in Nias is with the arrival of Muslim communities in Nias, who settled there permanently with the purpose of introducing Islam to the local population (Abbas Pulungan, 2016). The entry of Islam into Nias, in its various forms, represents a form of preaching (Islamic proselytizing). The propagation of Islam on the island of Nias began long ago. Gradually, the Muslim settlers introduced Islam to the Nias community. One of the approaches used was through local wisdom.

Local wisdom encompasses unique knowledge, values, norms, and traditions specific to the local community. Understanding and respecting local wisdom are essential in achieving more effective engagement with diverse cultures. Therefore, this article aims to explore how local wisdom can be integrated into global preaching management. We will delve into methods, strategies, and case studies that reflect how the use of local wisdom can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of preaching in a global context.

Through a profound understanding of the role of local wisdom in global preaching strategies, we can achieve a more powerful, contextual, and inclusive form of preaching, capable of winning the hearts and minds of people across the world. This article invites readers to explore the crucial balance between universal and local elements in the effort to spread the message of Islam in this era of globalization. With a global preaching strategy that leverages local wisdom, we can prepare ourselves wisely and effectively to fulfill the sacred mission of preaching in the future.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, a qualitative methodology was employed. To gather the required data, the researcher conducted observations, interviews, participatory activities, surveys, document analysis, and documentation. The data analysis techniques encompassed data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, while source triangulation was utilized in this study.

It is important to emphasize that the chosen approach and tools should be tailored to the cultural and community context under investigation. Furthermore, it is essential to always consider ethics and show respect for the local community when engaging in these efforts. Identifying and mapping local wisdom is a vital step in comprehending and honoring local culture and values, especially in the context of global preaching.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **A. Challenges and Barriers**

Integrating Nias local wisdom into global preaching may face several potential challenges, including:

- a. Differences in values and beliefs may allow operations within a different framework of values and beliefs compared to the local Nias culture. This can lead to conflicts of values and challenging cultural conflicts.
- b. Difficulty in language or understanding of the local culture can be a serious obstacle to integrating local wisdom into global preaching management.
- c. Limited understanding of Nias culture and traditions may hinder their efforts to effectively integrate local wisdom into preaching.
- d. Nias culture can be very complex and multi layers. Understanding and integrating these aspects correctly into global preaching management can be a complicated task.
- e. Resource limitations, including time and budget, available for training and integrating local wisdom into global preaching management.
- f. Not all members of the Nias community may agree with this approach. There is a diversity of opinions in society, and some people may oppose the integration of local wisdom into global preaching.
- g. Integrating local cultural aspects into global preaching strategies may require changes in preaching materials, methods, and communication strategies. This can be a technical challenge that requires adjustment and adaptation.

To address these barriers, global preaching organizations need to take an approach centered on local community engagement, facilitating inclusive dialogue and collaboration, and involving individuals with a deep understanding of Nias culture in the decision-making process. Additionally, investing in training, education, and cultural awareness will help global preaching efforts better overcome these challenges.

### **B. Preaching Strategies**

Preaching strategies can be understood as the process of determining methods and efforts to address preaching targets in specific conditions and situations, with the aim of achieving preaching objectives optimally. Preaching strategies refer to systematic efforts carried out to maintain the most effective ways

to achieve preaching goals. The choice of methods is made by considering their effectiveness and potential risks to be encountered. Preaching strategies involve various conscious communication methods to bring about change among the audience easily and quickly. Preaching strategies consist of a series of activities designed to achieve specific preaching goals (Sukron Mazid and Wahyu Prabowo, 2020).

To establish preaching strategies as an applied preaching concept, attention must be paid to the principles of preaching, namely:

- a. Philosophical principles, which primarily address issues closely related to the goals to be achieved in the preaching process or preaching activities.
- b. Principles of the capabilities and expertise of da'is (achievements and professionalism).
- c. Sociological principles that address issues related to the situation and conditions of preaching targets. For example, the local government's politics, the majority religion of the local area, the philosophical objectives of preaching, the socio-cultural targets of preaching, and so on.
- d. Psychological principles that address issues closely related to human psychology. A da'i is a human being, and the preaching targets also have unique characteristics (psychology) that vary from one another.
- e. Principles of effectiveness and efficiency emphasize the need to achieve results as effectively as possible in preaching activities. In other words, economizing costs, energy, and time to achieve the best possible results or, at the very least, a balance between the two. Among these five principles, the philosophical principles are primarily related to the goals to be achieved in the preaching process or preaching activities, and the principles of the capabilities and expertise of da'is address issues in preaching activities, both in terms of knowledge and the skills possessed by da'is in relation to mastering preaching methods (Asmuni Syukir, 2020).

The relationship between culture and preaching also involves discussing humans with their various cultures. Humans are social beings, and preaching's objective is also human beings, both as individuals and as part of a group. Therefore, Islamic preaching has a symbiotic relationship with culture, where Islamic values can be harmonized with culture. However, this requires a strategic preaching concept, managed professionally to accommodate all social issues. On one hand, many cultures can serve as media for preaching, and on the other hand, they can also be the targets of preaching (Wiliam Ilahi and Hanafi, 2017).

As a medium, culture plays a crucial role in advancing the awareness of Islamic religious quality, ultimately shaping Islamic attitudes and behaviors that contribute to social development without causing social disturbances. On the other hand, as the target of Islamic propagation, culture is directed toward the incorporation of

integrative Islamic meanings and values into various forms of developed cultures (Mahfud, S. 2003).

The practice of Islamic propagation through culture finds its roots in the early efforts of Islamic preachers who spread Islam on the island of Java. These pioneers meticulously planned their mission, combining rational and strategic considerations, which included adjusting to geostrategic factors relevant to the audience (mad'u) they were about to face (Wiliam Ilahi and Hanafi, 2017).

In this context, the earliest strategy for Islamic propagation through local wisdom primarily involved using the local language. The local population generally employs the local language in their daily lives. Another strategy involves the integration of Islamic values and teachings into the culture and customs of the local community. Empowering local community members, particularly the younger generation, plays a crucial role in ensuring that Islamic propagation is effectively conveyed as expected and is well-received by the community, while still preserving the local wisdom and long-standing cultural heritage.

## **1. Aligning Religion and Local Wisdom**

The Nias ethnic community is generally known for being predominantly Christian, a faith deeply rooted in their traditions for an extended period. However, it is not widely known that Islam has also existed on the island of Nias for quite some time, introduced by Acehnese and Minangkabau immigrants, although not readily embraced by the Nias community (Albertoras Telaumbanua, 2020).

The Islam present in Indonesia has emerged through a process of cultural propagation. As a result, Islam has been able to grow and spread in Indonesia and is embraced by the majority of the Indonesian population in a relatively short period. This was possible because, during that time, the local culture in Indonesia was already prevalent among the people. Islam's non-coercive entrance was due to the teachings of Islam, which highly value the diversity of communities (Sumpena, 2020).

The introduction of Islam to Nias, in various forms, constitutes a form of propagation. In this context, the spread of Islam, known to have arrived on the island of Nias earlier, was initiated by Muslim immigrants who lived and settled on the island. One of the approaches used was through local wisdom. Local wisdom is closely related to the cultural identity of the Nias community, which is shaped by a collection of unique values, traditions, knowledge, and practices reflecting the community's extensive history and experiences. The following are various ways in which local wisdom and the cultural identity of the Nias community are interconnected:

- a. Influence in Traditions and Rituals Nias local wisdom is reflected in traditional practices, customary ceremonies, and rituals that are integral components of Nias culture. For instance, customary ceremonies like the "Fataele" (buffalo

slaughter ritual) and "War Dances" are significant examples of practices that define the cultural identity of the Nias community.

- b. **Language and Communication** Language is a key aspect of cultural identity. Local wisdom encompasses an understanding of the local language, dialects, phrases, and expressions used by the Nias community in their everyday communication. Language serves as a crucial tool for conveying cultural values and traditions.
- c. **Architecture and Art** Nias local wisdom is evident in the unique and intricate architecture of traditional Nias houses, such as the "Omo Hada." Additionally, Nias is renowned for its beautiful wood carvings. Visual arts and architecture serve as expressions of the cultural identity of the Nias community.
- d. **Religious Beliefs** Local wisdom is also linked to the unique religious belief systems of the Nias community, which include beliefs in nature spirits, ancestors, and spiritual influences in daily life. These religious practices significantly influence how the Nias community perceives themselves and the world around them.
- e. **Social Norms and Ethics** Local wisdom encompasses social norms, ethics, and cultural values held by the Nias community. These values form the foundation of moral and ethical conduct in daily interactions and decision-making.

Overall, Nias local wisdom not only reflects the cultural identity of the community but also serves as the foundation for their daily lives. Understanding and respecting local wisdom are key to preserving the cultural identity of the Nias community in the face of changing times and the challenges of modernization.

## **2. Empowering Youth**

Empowering youth and local leaders in Nias is a crucial step in strengthening the community, promoting local development, and supporting global Islamic propagation strategies through local wisdom in Mudik Village and its surrounding areas. This involves providing in-depth religious education that includes a strong understanding of Islam and a profound understanding of Nias's local wisdom. This can help youth and local leaders become well-versed in religion and understand how to align religious values with local culture.

Additionally, providing training in effective communication skills, including public speaking, active listening, and communication with the community, can help youth and local leaders effectively engage in propagation activities. Providing youth and local leaders with access to more experienced and wise religious leaders can offer spiritual guidance and advice in propagation strategies.

Encouraging youth and local leaders to actively engage in propagation activities, such as preaching, teaching, and social initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of the community, is also essential. Supporting economic empowerment programs, such as entrepreneurship training, business capital assistance, or social

enterprise development, can help youth and local leaders become more economically self-reliant.

In addition to focusing on local values, it is also important to understand and respect global values. This can help youth and local leaders actively participate in interfaith dialogues and contribute to peace and tolerance. Empowering youth and local leaders in Nias is a long-term investment in sustainable community development and the effective spread of Islamic teachings.

### **3. Using the Local Language**

The use of the Nias local language is a vital component of the global propagation strategy through local wisdom in Mudik Village and its vicinity. The use of the local language can facilitate a better and deeper understanding of Islamic teachings among the local population. This is crucial as the Nias local language is still widely used in the daily life and activities of the community.

Translating major religious texts, such as the Quran and Hadith, into the Nias local language enables the local population to have better access to religious sources and a deeper comprehension of them in Friday sermons, lectures, or religious teachings, use the Nias local language. This makes religious messages more accessible to the congregation and closer to their hearts.

Organizing community activities such as group discussions or religious learning groups in the local language can also help strengthening religious understanding and building a stronger community. If the Nias local language has a written form, provide literacy education in the local language to the community. This can help them read and write in the local language, including religious texts. Community activities, such as regular studies and mosque youth activities, use the local Nias language in their delivery. Religious leaders delivering sermons or religious teachings, as well as congregation members participating in these discussions, use the Nias local language.

Regular studies are conducted by the local community every Friday after the Dhuhr prayer, attended by local residents. Different presenters are invited each month. However, if a particular topic has not been fully discussed within a month, the same presenter continues until the topic is completed, and then they are replaced by another presenter. In these sessions, the language used is the local Nias language in presenting each topic, although occasionally interspersed with the Indonesian language. The same applies to other religious activities, such as celebrating significant Islamic holidays, where the Nias local language is used.

This research has found that the use of the Nias local language in conveying information and propagation is more readily accepted and understood by the community, who generally use the Nias local language in their daily lives. For instance, in discussions about religious learning, the use of the local language is more comprehensible to community members compared to using the Indonesian

language. The use of the Nias local language in propagation strategies is the key to bridging the understanding between Islam and local culture. This makes it easier for the local community to accept and respond to religious teachings in the most relevant way.

#### **4. Educational Institutions (Establishing Islamic Boarding Schools)**

Educational institutions play a crucial role in the effort to disseminate religious teachings, particularly in the context of Islam. The establishment of Islamic boarding schools in Gunungsitoli is one of the strategies for propagating Islamic teachings within the community. One such institution is the Umami Kalsum Girls' Islamic Boarding School, located in Gunungsitoli. The boarding school has been in operation since 2003 and is the only one of its kind in the Nias Islands. This institution is dedicated to providing religious education specifically for women, with the aim of nurturing resilient Muslimah generations. The boarding school was founded by Buya Haji Muhammad Daniel Tanjung.

This educational institution is closely tied to the local wisdom of Nias. While operating the Islamic boarding school, efforts are made to preserve Nias' local culture. This includes activities such as Muhadharah, which is conducted in the Nias local language. The local language is also incorporated into local content studies. Nias arts, such as local Nias dances, are introduced to the students, including the famous Famee afo dance.

#### **Discussion**

Based on the research conducted, the strategy of preaching through the use of the Nias local language becomes crucial because the local population primarily uses the local language or dialect in their daily activities. This includes lectures, Friday sermons, and various religious events. Additionally, the translation of key religious texts such as the Quran and Hadith into the local Nias language allows the community to better comprehend the message of preaching. Furthermore, the use of the local Nias language is not limited to oral communication but is also utilized in written form.

In this effort of preaching, empowering local youth and leaders in Nias is of utmost importance because they can effectively convey the intended message of preaching to the local community through the use of the Nias local language. This involves providing training in effective communication skills, such as public speaking, active listening, and proficient interaction with the community.

Local youth and leaders in Nias are encouraged to actively engage in social activities that facilitate interaction with the community and the effective delivery of religious messages. Approaches are made through Nias local wisdom, which includes organizing events with the local community and fostering strong cooperation. Local youth and leaders in Nias are expected to be exemplary role models for the community



without abandoning their existing culture and local wisdom to ensure that the preaching is well-received by the community.

Empowering local youth and leaders in Nias within this preaching strategy is the most critical aspect. In this regard, local youth can approach the culture without forsaking it, even if it may seem contrary to Islamic teachings. The approach involves Islamicizing or incorporating Islamic teachings into cultural practices. For instance, traditional ceremonies like "Fataele" (the ritual slaughter of a buffalo) and "War Dances" are essential examples of practices that define the cultural identity of the Nias community. These rituals are adapted to align with Islamic teachings, including invoking the name of Allah SWT before slaughtering the animal.

The local wisdom of Nias is reflected in the unique and intricate architecture of traditional "Omo Hada" houses, and the renowned Nias woodcarvings. Visual arts and architecture are expressions of the cultural identity of the Nias community. Despite having adopted Islam, the community continues to uphold their cultural identity. Similar research has been conducted concerning preaching strategies, such as the study titled "Preaching to the Minority Muslim Ethnic Balinese in Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi." This research was carried out by Mansur from IAIN Sultan Qaimuddin Kendari. This study shares similarities with the current research, as it also involves preaching efforts directed at the minority Muslim ethnic Balinese community in Konawe Regency.

The preaching strategy utilized by Mansur involved direct interactions with the community through a lecture format. This lecture format served as a means for religious teachers (muballigh) to convey religious messages to the target audience. This method was perceived as the easiest means for muballigh to raise religious awareness in the community. Additionally, dialogues were employed as an alternative strategy because lectures were deemed less effective. Dialogues were used as a collective approach to dealing with the community, as individual dialogues faced certain obstacles. This alternative approach aimed to empower existing social groups or study groups that had been established for a long time. The muballigh viewed this as an opportune and positive moment to nurture the community's religious knowledge and understanding, as well as the practice of religious rituals. Dialogue topics encompassed religious and social issues, religious knowledge and practice, as well as social issues related to meeting the community's needs for livelihood.

What sets this research apart from the previous study is the use of the local language and the empowerment of local youth and leaders to directly convey preaching to the community. In the previous study, direct engagement with the local community was conducted by muballigh. Another study that delves into the preaching strategy through local wisdom, as conducted in this research, is a study titled "Local Culture Approach: Matteo Ricci's Mission Strategy and Its Relevance to the Spread of Islam in Indonesia," written by Danil Folandra from UIN Imam Bonjol Padang.

In his paper, he explains that the cultural approach is the primary method for propagating religion. This is because, through this method, missionaries integrate into the community itself, making what is conveyed more likely to be easily accepted. The first step is to master the language of the surrounding community. The pattern involves translating religious doctrines into the language spoken by the community being addressed. Next, it is essential to not only mingle with the common people but also to establish a presence within the authoritative figures of that community. This becomes a strategic path to garner respect from the community. Additionally, it involves being accommodative towards the local culture. The pattern involves using traditions and culture as an entry point to transmit religious values to the common people.

This study aligns with the research conducted here, where preaching is carried out using the Nias local language, empowering the local population and youth. The Nias local language is used in religious studies, translation of verses, and hadiths into the Nias local language for easy comprehension. Besides, it involves mingling with the community and empowering community leaders.

Language is crucial in preaching strategy to ensure that the message is truly comprehensible and accepted by the community. In this regard, what sets this research apart from the aforementioned study is that this research provides a direct explanation of the implementation of the preaching strategy through local wisdom to the Nias community.

In this context, it corresponds to the theory of the Preaching Field, which is a theory that describes the theological, cultural, and structural situation of the mad'u (community) at the inception of Islamic preaching. This theory closely relates to this research, where, before the advent of Islam, the local community had their own beliefs. Christianity is the majority religion of the Nias community, even though the historical record indicates that Islam had entered the island of Nias earlier. However, it did not thrive extensively. The Nias community is deeply attached to its culture; hence, the preaching strategy adopted focuses on the cultural or local wisdom, such as language and the arts. Additionally, Islamic preaching considers the structural aspects of the Nias community to ensure that the message of Islam is delivered maximally and accepted well by the community, such as empowering local youth and leaders in Nias.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Nias community is a tribe that highly values its culture and local wisdom; therefore, this research employs local wisdom in the preaching strategy. It begins with an in-depth study of Nias culture, encompassing an understanding of unique values, beliefs, traditions, language, and cultural practices. The evolution of Nias culture, like many other cultures, has been influenced by various historical events.

Furthermore, empowering local youth and leaders in Nias is an integral part of the strategy because they have the capability to convey the desired message of preaching to the local community through the use of the Nias local language. In this

regard, providing training in effective communication skills to local youth and leaders, such as public speaking, active listening, and effective interaction with the community, is crucial.

The local youths can engage with culture without erasing it, even if it may appear contradictory to Islamic teachings. The approach taken is to Islamize or infuse Islamic teachings into cultural practices. For instance, traditional ceremonies like "Fataele" (the ritual slaughter of cattle) and "War Dances" are essential examples of practices that define the cultural identity of the Nias community. These ceremonies are conducted in accordance with Islamic teachings, including the invocation of the name of Allah SWT before the slaughter.

A deep understanding of cultural values, beliefs, and traditions will aid in tailoring preaching messages to align with Nias culture. This will enable the effective delivery of messages while respecting the local culture.

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