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REFLECTING MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY OF TEGALREJO, BABADAN-NGANCAR-KEDIRI, 2019: CONFRONTING POST-TRUTH

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Abstract

Hamlet of Tegalrejo, Kediri, Indonesia has successfully constructed an interreligious Christians and Muslim community based on some factors derived from their living traditions. This research is intended to conceal that factors in a form of 'Field Research' by utilizing methods of observations, interviewing, and document analysis. As such, this research will possibly confront intolerance issues derived in the Indonesian Community resulted by Post-Truth Era. This research concluded that the Tegalrejo community has accomplished both internal and external factors of interreligious harmony in their society. *Al-Ta'āyush* concept, moreover, is also possibly confirmed as a further basis of interreligious relations based on the Worldview of Islam.

Keywords: *al-Ta'āyush*, Harmony, Interreligious Relations, Islam, *Post-Truth*, Tegalrejo.

INTRODUCTION

Tolerance, in the context of interreligious relationships, is an act of "living with, abiding -or in the medieval usage, suffering the presence of that which we find objectionable." (Seligman et al., 2016: 39). It refers to a presence of cooperation between religious adherents and an absence of sectarian conflict altogether. Interreligious harmony, furthermore, displayed a reciprocal relationship in ways such as mutual acceptance, trust, respect, and forbearance (Lubis, 2005). In Indonesia, it is observable that every religious affiliation delivers similar messages of peace and

harmony; confirming that religious-based human interrelationship is possible to be carried out (Kahmad, 2006; Syaefullah, 2007). The existence of religions, indeed, should help and enhance communities to express both worldly and hereafter benefits (Sarbasyi, 2001) as it is believed that only through religion, a person's life will run in an orderly manner (Nasrullah, 2015).

By consequence, interreligious harmony will not be achieved only without a proper understanding of religious teachings. Such an understanding seems to be applied well in the Village of Babadan, Sub-District of Ngancar, Kediri Regency, Province of East Java, Indonesia. As already indicated, this hamlet is occupied by interreligious communities consists of Muslims and Christian and the community is able to live in harmony for years. Such a condition serves as a good example of interreligious harmony and potentially motivates other communities to implement a comparable situation in their regions. This paper will analyze an understanding and factors of interreligious harmony of the community of Tegalrejo Hamlet, Village of Babadan, Sub-District of Ngancar, Kediri Regency and also aim to confront misguided information regarding disharmony relationships between religions in Indonesia as it is commonly exhibited in the Post-Truth Era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted as 'participant observation' or 'field research'. As such, this research will observe religious societies or activities for a period (Harvey, 2011, p. 217). During the extent of time, the researcher will investigate sacred phenomena in a particular community (or communities) by participating as fully as possible while observing and reflecting on what this society does (Harvey, 2011, p. 217). Through this method, an inquiry will not merely describe religious activities, but involving a rich and radical implication of the religious-scholarly engagement process as well (Harvey, 2011, pp. 217–218).

Accordingly, field research firmly signifies an obligation for scholars to focus remarkably on perceptible religious activities including certain events or rituals, rather than what is available on the text or asserted by the preacher to be done. Field research, furthermore, will examine religious scripture and the tradition constructing the model of the 'true' religion. The main purpose is this analysis is to realize an attempt to enhance discern people's experiences and interpretations of religion (Harvey, 2011, p. 218). In other words, field research persuades researchers to comprehend religion with attention to its fully encompassed, demonstrated, local and shifting habit; describing a 'vernacular' or 'lived reality' of religion (Harvey, 2011, p. 218).

In the context of field research, the researcher may carry a number of approaches in order to achieve an understanding of three associated but not similar complexes. These

approaches are: *'what people do'*, *'what religious participant understands, say, intend, and or value their own religious activities'*, and *'what researcher experience as a participant and as people informed by prior research that they uncover to be compatible in an effort of understanding'* (Harvey, 2011, p. 218). Consequently, the researcher will be required to interpret and reflect on what occurs between religious communities into an analyzed data of value before transfer it to another colleague who needs to understand them but cannot be present (Harvey, 2011, p. 218). To sum up, this research utilizes three steps of *observation*, *interview*, and *documentary*.

1. *Observations*

Field research in the research of religion is defined as an act of religious group observation for a duration. Sometimes, observations need an order of briefer visits to find out what the communities (as object research) do, when, where, and why they possibly do it as much as possible (Harvey, 2011, p. 218). Practically, the Researcher will present in-person to observe the community's situation and activity then take the data and information from them right away (Moleong, 2002).

2. *Interviewing*

Interviewing is the second approach to be executed in the field research in a way of creating data by asking questions to people orally. There are two kinds of interviews: *First*, a 'Narrative or Ethnographic Interviews'. It is a hugely or less unstructured interview involving interviewees willingly delivering their stories. *Second*, it is a 'Focus Group Interviews'. This kind of interview is commonly composed of 4 to 8 persons with a 'moderator', and the Interviewees are able to reply to the question more or less freely. Focus Groups Interviews potentially stimulate each of the answers as they will feel challenged to the story delivered by their companions. Although Each method is confidential to a specific intention of the Researcher, both forms are suitable for qualitative research. (Bromberg, 2011, p. 312; Cholid & Abu, 2007).

3. *Documentation*

Field research emphasizes the significance of the documentation step. Accordingly, it is crucial for appealing evidence from the object of research (Arikunto&Suharsimi, 1998). Documentation analysis is an organized procedure for evaluating documents-both printed and online- available including literature such as books, encyclopedias, academic journals, etc(Bowen, 2009). This step serves several capacities as part of research engaged; *First*, documents contribute data on the context within which research member works. It may encourage the researcher to learn the historical roots of the issue and indicate prerequisite trespassing upon the phenomena which are currently under analysis. *Second*, data accommodated in documents motivate

3 questions that need to be asked, and conditions that should be observed as part of the research. *Third*, documents supply additional research data. *Forth*, it sustains messages of tracking change and development. *Fifth*, documents can be comprehended as a manner to verify discoveries or authenticate data from other sources (Bowen, 2009).

WESTERN AND ISLAMIC NOTION OF INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS: THE CASE OF TOLERANCE AND HARMONY

Tolerance in the Western world was primarily derived since the early 15 Century from the Latin word *tolerantia*. It encompasses the meanings of ‘bearing, supporting, and endurance’. *Tolerantia* later evolved to *tolerate*; sharing the similar meanings of the previous word (*Tolerance (n.)*, n.d.). Tolerance realizes an ‘allowance’ or ‘permission’ about something that humans should put up with it or rightfully accepted it dismissing coercion and aggression within their relationships. Tolerance, moreover, also possibly improve cooperation between people and individuals (Neusner & Bruce, 2008: 17) and accentuates a ‘peaceful coexistence’ asserting the notion of mutual life between different mankind communities (Hayden et al., 2016: 7).

In the context of interrelationships between religions, tolerance is inevitably associated closely with the doctrine of salvation (Schwartz, 2008). Recently, ‘tolerance’ and ‘pluralism’ is also used interchangeably considering that tolerance merely “*puts up with other religions but does not necessarily respect and engage with them*”, while pluralism is understood as “*an environment in which diverse religions live side by side with mutual respect and open engagement*” (Hayward, 2010). Related to this issue, the Researcher has discussed the notion of Religious Pluralism beforehand from different perspectives; as a part of Transcendent Unity of Religions (Maulana, 2014; Maulana et al., 2020), or either as a movement of Global Theology (Maulana, 2021).

In Islam, an act of Interreligious Tolerance was understood commonly as ‘*Tasāmuh*’, while harmony as ‘*Ta’āyush*’. *Al-‘Ta’āyush* (التعايش) or ‘harmony’ and *al-Tasāmuh* (التسامح) or ‘tolerance’ are seems used interchangeably in common interreligious life. Both terms, however, possess different conceptual meanings. Tolerance indicates an act of ‘*forbearing*’, ‘*leniency*’, ‘*indulgence*’, and even ‘*mercifulness*’ (Merriam-Webster et al., 1984: 826). *Tasāmuh* (تسامح), in another hand, is juxtaposed as a synonym with *Tasāhul* (تساهل) which means ‘*to simplify*’ or ‘*to ease*’. Its noun, *Samāhah*, (سامحة) is understood as a term containing ‘*the goodness and generosity*’- الجود و الكرم (*al-juud wa al-karam*) (Alkhuli, 1989: 53; *Al-Mu’jam al-Wajīz*, 1994: 428; Wehr, 1979: 320). Conceptually, *Tasāmuh* is utilized as a term deriving

affection, tolerance, openness, and beneficence in interreligious life (Al-Ghasyimiy & Sa'id, 2013; Al-Shafii et al., 2018; Daud, 2015; Sofiyuddin, 2009). In Indonesia, research discussing *Tasāmuh* can also be found easily. In some Islamic State Universities, they even used *Tasāmuh* as the 'title' of academic journals they published (2021).

Harmony or *al-Ta'āyush* on the other hand is utilized to confirm 'a life of harmony and love' (Ānīs, 1972: 639-640). Originally, *al-Ta'ayush* owns a comparable root word with *īshah* (عيشة) means 'life' or *Hayāh* (حياة) (Manzhuur, 1119: 3190). As such, this word is also related semantically with *ma'āsh* defining 'livestock sustaining life'. In *Mu'jam al-Wasīf*, *Ta'āyush* is understood in a more complex way as '(they) live with intimacy and affection' (Ānīs, 1972: 640). Both words *Tasāmuh* and *Ta'āyush*, analogously distribute equal meanings; -mercifulness, forbearing, affection, etc.- A fundamental difference, exists, however. It is that *al-ta'āyush* retains dimension of life as it is not available in *tasāmuh*. *Ta'āyush*, in summary, does not solely support people to engage differences but also demonstrate how communities should live in harmony. Practically, Muhammad Musa Sharīf added that *Ta'āyush* symbolizes peace and safe life between Muslim and non-Muslim communities (Sharīf, 2003). Tsauqi Abu Khalil also emphasized *al-'Ta'āyush* has harmony and love of living communities crated from understanding and affection followed by trustworthiness. *Al-Ta'āyush*, therefore, simply conducted safety for interreligious communities. In addition, *al-Ta'āyush* has an obligation to implement a positive contribution to society in accordance with the Islamic Theological principle (Khalil, 2004).

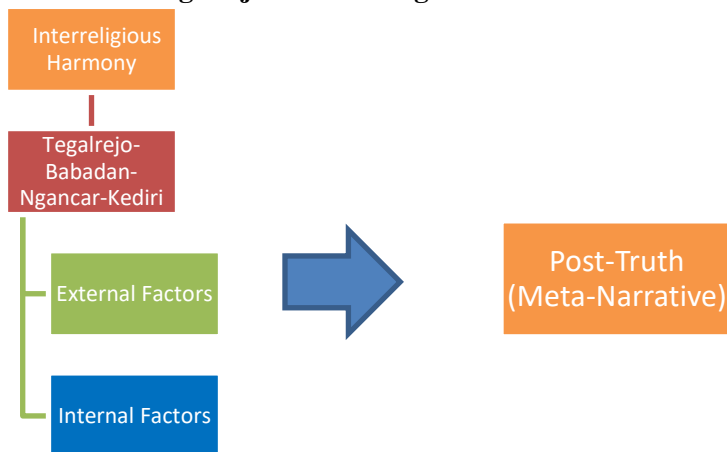
POST-TRUTH AND ITS IMPACT ON INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY

'Post-Truth' is a term denoting conditions in which objective truths are secondary influential in constructing public ideas than attracting emotion and personal belief (Mcduffie, 2017). Accordingly, Post-Truth is a concept that has been existed since a long time ago, even the discussion about the notions is yet recently ongoing. As it was explained by Blackburn, the history of humanity proves that humans always aim to look for information they need and precisely, deny what they do not: "...people basically read what they want to hear and gloss over things they don't want to hear..." (Lilling, 2018). Considering that mankind will receive only pieces of information they consider it preferrable, Post-Truth is evidently detected as a part of epistemological evolution constructed since the earliest age of human history encompassing the fact that every statement -meta narrative- can be considered as 'true' if society believes in it (Blackburn, 2018) supported by the existence of social media spreading fabricated information widely in a short time (Haack, 2019; Strong, 2017; Utami, 2018; Yahya et al., 2019).

In its philosophical context, Post-Truth is closely related to postmodernism (Harsin, 2018), as both ideologies share comparable responsibilities regarding knowledge, truth, and reality (McIntyre, 2018) based on relativism (Heit, 2018). In addition to that Post-Truth is historically traceable to the ancient account of mankind, Plato himself has predicted this phenomenon when he worried that political matters will befall the community’s madness. The political concern expected by Plato conforms a continual shift of human’s truth preference simply to their compulsion; and nowadays, Plato’s misgiving vindicates frequently for everybody to own official concerns about the image of the current meta-narrative; as it is exposed in massive instances of Brexit (Colino et al., 2016; Wilsdon, 2018), or political election in the USA (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), Italy (Barrera et al., 2019), and Indonesia (Utami, 2018). The most recent issue that should be reflected indeed is about misinformation as regards to COVID-19 Pandemic; as it has affected by Post-Truth, the massive number of hoaxes about COVID-19 is widely observable (Maulana, 2020).

The real challenge culminated from Post-Truth does not primarily exist in the essence of ‘truth’ itself but rather interrelated to another issue such as social, political, and religious affairs. When it is agreeable that the meta-narrative is going to be justified as true from a public opinion regarding the object (Blackburn, 2018), the authority of knowledge itself has been already demolished; as it means that there is no higher knowledge sanction besides public opinion. The society’s Meta-Narrative’, following Blackburn’s conceptual schema, is so much powerful constructing ‘realities’ to be believed in as an ultimate source of truth including issues of gender (Maulana, 2013), social (Lyotard, 1984, Chapters 8–9), and ultimately interreligious relations (Yahya & Mahmudah, 2019).

Figure 1: A Diagram explaining Factors of Interreligious Harmony in Hamlet of Tegalrejo Confronting Post-Truth



In the specific context of interreligious relations, Post-Truth will possibly display disharmony, tension, intolerance, and even conflict although what is presently taking place in harmony, tolerance, and peace. Post-Truth, on another hand, discloses only the bad facts that occurred without examining another source through media (Alimi, 2019; Corner, 2017). Let see how Post-Truth impact this issue in the global scale: The conflict between Palestinians and Israelites are somehow confused; considering the number of international crime that has been committed by Israel (Cavanaugh, 2002; Maurer, 2012; Poissonnier & David, 2020), but there is always a community who support Israel's action in the term of the two-state dispute. Post-Truth inevitably worsened the situation as some cases are not quite clear to be interpreted but massively portrayed in the media. A recent case about leaked footage of an Israeli police officer who shot unarmed Palestinians in the back (Trew, 2019), for instance, not only was able to muddy the atmosphere of tension but also can exaggerate another atrocity occurs in Palestine. When Palestinians attempts hardly to avoid conflict as much as possible, Post-Truth will conceivably confuse audiences with obscure information. As such, the Palestine-Israel conflict will reach no end rather accomplishing everlasting peace intended by international communities (Maulana, 2019).

POST-TRUTH AND INTERRELIGIOUS ISSUE IN INDONESIA: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

An analogous situation is also applied in a less conflict condition country such as Indonesia. The Meta-Narratives published in the media, many times, do not suit by facts that happened. Despite the news is considered true, for instance, the disinformation process will ignite further tension between the member of society; affecting further political concerns related to religious affairs as it will particularly be associated with the election process (Utami, 2018).

Post-Truth possibly affect the whole citizens to earn falsities. As it was confirmed by Ibnu Nadzir, et al.; there is no guarantee for anyone to be safe from disinformation. Even a group possessing a higher level of degree in education, or even own better access to information provided, they are still liable to receive hoaxes (Nadzir et al., 2019, p. 1). In another word, the range of impact resulted from Post-Truth is global and far-reaching.

Rustan once has analyzed how hoaxes are propagated. The comment sections in social media, according to him, seem to potentially accelerate the promulgation process of fake news to the reader. It was affirmed that there is a higher propensity to disseminate hoaxes accompanied by comments rather than fake news criticized by the readers (Rustan, 2020). Wien Hesthi Rahayu, et.al, in another hand, asserted similar ideas concerning the central spot of social media in the dissemination of hoaxes. In her

research, however, the ‘Groups’ -Facebook Groups- have been a cynosure of hoax messages including the interreligious affairs of Indonesian Citizens (Rahayu et al., 2019).

Further attention related to Post-Truth and Media influences is given in the issue of ‘Echo Chamber’. As a situation describing a selective vulnerability to ideological interest (Barberá et al., 2015), Echo Chamber manipulates an advancement of hoaxes promulgation. Echo Chamber displays Citizens isolate themselves from ‘Other’ sources of information, as they will pay attention only to the messages they favor and refute another source of news distributed by ‘opposite’ groups (Hampton et al., 2017; Mutz, 2006). As the result, Echo Chamber has been culminating the concrete polarization of identity between the religious communities in online sites, which precisely initiate a further exclusivism within the community in the cyberspace (Yahya et al., 2019; Yahya & Mahmudah, 2019). Related to this issue, there was a quiet debate between Indonesian Citizens with regards to the term of *Kafir*, considering it is a concept derived from Islamic Theological System, *Kafir* has been misused and misinterpreted; ensuing a dispersion between Interreligious Communities in Indonesia. The contest was escalated to a national scale of discussion and the Echo Chamber has assumed to imply a factor behind the tension (Hudaya et al., 2020).

In general, there are a number of interreligious issues related to the dissemination of misinformation resulted from Post-Truth in Indonesia. *First*, it is commonly related to the political matters in the context of election; *Second*, the effect of the dissemination reach a global scale of propagation without looking at the academic qualification or information facilities, *Third*, Internet has built a network of hoaxes dissemination supported by comments from the netizens, and *Fourth*, Post-Truth isolates individual in social media emerging diffraction between ‘Us’ and ‘Other’ groups.

A practice of interreligious relations conducted in the Muslim-Christian community of Tegalorejo as it becomes our main object in this research will demonstrate the existence of interreligious harmony in Indonesia is a real phenomenon. Through the ‘Field Research’ Method, the interreligious phenomenon taking place in the Hamlet of Tegalorejo will be described carefully with full attention to give a concrete image of Interreligious Relations between the Indonesian Community. Readers are likely to reflect upon this case contrasting a narrative of disharmony and intolerance provided by resources as the instances have been mentioned earlier. As such, this research is expected to be able to confront Interreligious Issues ensued by Post-Truth which potentially damaging an interreligious harmony of Indonesian that has been last for centuries (Maulana, 2017; Saiful Mujab, 2019; Yahya, 2018).

AN INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY IN COMMUNITY OF TEGALREJO, BABADAN-NGANCAR-KEDIRI

i. Geographic Condition of Community of Tegalrejo, Village of Babadan, District of Ngancar, Regency of Kediri

Hamlet Tegalrejo is located in the Village of Babadan, District of Ngancar, Regency of Kediri. The occupants of this community are Muslims as majority people while Christians are minorities. The number of Muslims is 1216 occupants, while Christians are only 95. The area of this hamlet is around 153.395 Hectares become a place for 1311 members of society in total to stay. Muslims have 4 Musholla (*langgar*) while Christians own 1 Church to pray.

ii. The Practice of Interreligious Harmony in Community of Tegalrejo, Babadan-Ngancar-Kediri

An emergence of interreligious harmony in the community of Tegalrejo, village of Babadan, district of Ngancar, Kediri regency has been established for around 40 years. It was observed that this preserved condition of interreligious relations is a legacy from the community itself. It should be noted, however, that emergence of Christian people was caused by the arrival of Pastor to this region in 1982, evangelize its people, then some of them converted to Christian (Yusuf, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

Such a conversion is indeed considered a huge sin according to Islamic teachings. Regarding that, Tegalrejo society seems to have already forgotten about the past event of evangelization. As it is noted, even the majority of communities are Muslim, the existence of Christians is guaranteed safe. Christians are free to carry out their life, including religious affairs such as Sunday prayer, Easter, Mass, etc. (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019). Here are some instances of the practice of interreligious harmony of the occupants of Tegalrejo:

1. Cooperation between Religions

The community of Tegalrejo works as an entrepreneur, cattleman, farmer, government employee, and driver. The relationship and transaction conducted between them involve the whole element of communities without discrimination. They carry out their business activities regardless of their religious background, Islam, or Christianity (Arif, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

2. Condolences when someone dies.

If a member of the community passed away, every single member of the region will pay a visit to the grieving family to deliver their condolences. This expression of

sadness, again, is done without looking at different religious affiliations. Some Christian occupants even accompany the late Muslim neighbor to the graveyard altogether with other family members. Furthermore, according to tradition, Christian people will hold *Selamatan* and *Tahlilan* for Muslims. This interreligious neighborhood also hands in hand preparing the event (Nyono, personal communication, May 5, 2019).

3. Wedding

The community of Tegalrejo always helps their neighbors at every wedding ceremony. It includes preparation, security, and celebration. Most of the couples were formerly affiliated to diverse religions- one is Christian, while another is Muslim, take for example-, even commonly, the Christian bride convert to Islam earlier before they get married with his/her future husband/wife. In some cases, however, the converted spouse then converts themselves again before finally, there are multiple beliefs in one family (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

4. Sharing gifts

Tegalrejo society believes that their income is fortunated by God. Therefore, they accustom a tradition where each people give a gift to their plural neighbors on every celebration day. Muslims, to illustrate , distribute *Berkat* in ‘Ied al-Fiṭr while Christians share gifts in the Christmas (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

iii. Factors Behind an Interreligious Harmony of Community of Tegalrejo, Village of Babadan, District of Ngancar, Kediri Regency

By consequence, there are several factors fostering interreligious harmony between Muslim and Christian in the community of Tegalrejo, village of Babadan, district of Ngancar, Kediri regency:

External Factors. External factors encompassing both society and family environment with an interrelationship between the occupant of Tegalrejo. Each member of the community appreciates their neighborhood despite their religious backgrounds. They come hand in hand to support and sustain every activity conducted in the region including social-economic affairs, weddings, and even condolences. As it is informed by Arif, Tegalrejo communities encourage themselves to conduct employment matters without looking at their religious identities. It means that business relationship has been running between multi-faith occupants, became one of the factors externally embedded within this society. (Arif, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

Emotionally speaking, the Community of Tegalrejo has also harmonized their interreligious relations in both cheerful and somber situations. At the time of the wedding, for instance. When one of the members of Hamlet was going to wed their children or family member, the neighbors will come to the host and help them to organize the Party. In other words, in the context of the wedding, interreligious cooperation was also conducted from the early arrangement until the celebration ended. (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019). The community is also acquainted with exchange prizes at every Feast. Muslims have distributed *Berkat* as a gift to their Christian next-doors. The Christian members will return such a gift later in the day of Christmas. (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019)

Internal Factors. Internal Factors comprise a previous interconnection with collective respect and understanding between the community. This interreligious society may not agree in the theological aspect, yet they engage their daily lives with the full realization of the different identities they have. Concrete cooperation between its member is not going to be implemented properly except by mutual respect and understanding about religious life. This step then introduces communities to strive to maintain harmony between themselves.

We have to note that the earliest engagement between Muslims and Christians was done in 1982, at the time a Pastor arrived in the region and evangelized a number of the occupants. (Yusuf, personal communication, May 6, 2019). Even such a conversation to Christian (*murtad*) is regarded as a vast Evil by remained Muslims, both communities have finally reconciled themselves and initiated a brighter future. They have condoned the ‘conflict’ that occurred in the former times and carried out a better relationship until now by comprehending essential teachings derived from both religions in order to respect and value their honor mutually. The harmony was conducted with a proper realization that they are able to live side by side, while Muslims as a majority protected and tolerate Christian Feasts -Sunday Prayer, Easter, and so on-. An internal factor of an interreligious harmony of the community of Tegalrejo was inferred from a decent awareness from each member of the community that they managed to achieve mutual coexistence by living next to each other without interfering with each religious principle. Social cooperation is executed properly considering religious affiliation no more. (Warison, personal communication, May 6, 2019).

CONCLUSION

An implementation of Interreligious Harmony in the community of Tegalrejo consists of both external and internal factors. External factors include the environment of family and society with an interrelationship between the people of Tegalrejo. Internal

Factors, on the other hand, comprise such an interconnection with mutual respect and understanding between the community. Researchers have considered that the phenomenon has revealed a good example of Interreligious Relations confronting Post-Truth which sometimes displayed misguided facts about religious plurality.

In order to enhance Muslim-Other Relations, Researchers see that it is crucial for Muslims to assess *al-Ta'āyush* as the fundamental concept of interreligious relations founded on the Worldview of Islam. Further advancement of *al-Ta'āyush* is demanded to look closer at the phenomenon of Interreligious Relations in the community of Tegalrejo based on *al-Ta'āyush* as an approach to assure that the practice of Interreligious Relations in that region is properly constructed based on The Worldview of Islam. The conversion between religions in the community, furthermore, is also an imperative issue yet to be discussed in focus.

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