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## Javanese Muslims in the Metropolitan Bangkok: *Fiqh At-Ta'ayusy* Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*The article describes the success of the minority life of the Javanese-Indonesian Muslim community in Sathorn Bangkok, Thailand. The main problem that is the focus of the discussion in this paper is how are the dynamics, challenges, struggles, and lives of the Javanese Muslim community in the fields of religion, politics, culture, and economy still survive today. This study of the life of the Muslim community of Javanese descent is using qualitative field research methods with the interview, observation, and documentation data collection techniques. The framework and approach used in this paper are to integrate and combine the sociology of knowledge, Islam, and Javanese culture. While the analysis used in this study is *fiqh at-ta'ayusy* (coexistence) an analytical method using the perspective of respecting equality, mutual respect, living in peace, and living side by side as fellow Thai citizens. This coexistence and equality cover the fields of religious life, education, culture, economy, politics, and culture. The results of the study in this paper indicate that the success of the Javanese Muslim minority diaspora community in religious, political, cultural, and economic aspects in Kampung Jawa in Bangkok Thailand is due to their ability to adapt, live peacefully, in harmony with the Thai community, especially in Sathorn. The success of the struggle and the life of the Muslim community is inspired by Islamic values such as inclusiveness, and respect for others, and Javanese cultural values as their heritage values, such as being polite, tolerant, and adaptive.*

**Keywords:** Bangkok, *fiqh al-ta'ayusy*, Javanese Muslim, Muhammadiyah

The article describes the successful life of a Muslim minority community of Javanese (Indonesian) descent in Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand. It portrays the life of the Kampung Jawa Muslim Community in Bangkok and illustrates the community's dynamics and struggles amid the metropolis of Bangkok. Therefore, the results are expected to fill the gaps in information

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related to samples on successful Indonesian Muslim minority diaspora and serve as role models for Muslims in other parts of the world.

In addition, the article also aims to point out the existence Kampung Jawa Muslim Community with its characteristics in social, political, cultural, and economic life. More importantly, it explains the dynamics of the community up to its third generation to survive in the metropolis of Bangkok.

The Javanese Muslim community in Kampung Jawa represents a diaspora model (Missbach 2012). These Muslims portray their three identities as devout Muslims and descendants of Java residents-located in the southern part of Indonesia. As per citizenship, they are good Thai citizens.

### **Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology**

The theoretical framework used in the article is a combination of Fiqh at-Ta'ayusy, sociology of knowledge, Javanese Islam, and regional Islamic studies. The term al-Ta'ayusy (coexistence) equals people who live together with other people in a harmonious and peaceful situation. Thus, their lives are based on a peace agreement with a sense of brotherhood and mutual respect (M, n.d.).

Fiqh at-Ta'ayusy has three interrelated principles in people's lives: knowing one another, understanding one another, and living in harmony. These are three main principles to live in a pluralistic society from the fiqh at-ta'ayusy perspective (Mohamad et al., 2016). Additionally, living together in a multicultural society can also be based on justice, wisdom, and agreement (Syari'ati 2009). It shows that al-ta'ayusy's principle and application can be applied by respecting similarities and differences to achieve mutual prosperity (Hambali & Haled 2008) (Yusdani, Arfaizar, et al. 2021).

The study starts from a perspective that mentions Javanese Islam is a variant of Islam that balances and unites both Islam and Javanese tradition. Later, this framework will be used to understand the life of the Javanese Muslim community in Bangkok. Also, it tries to explain and understand the complexities and challenges encountered by Muslims in Kampung Jawa. Here, a sociological framework of knowledge is utilized to explain the dialectic between the Muslim community in Kampung Jawa and the context of dynamics, challenges, and changes the community encountered in Bangkok (Fanani 2010). The dialectic occurs in three-stage processes: internalization, objectification, and externalization (Kuntowijoyo 2018).

Additionally, the study on the Javanese Muslim Community in Bangkok can be based on the basic perspectives of regional Islamic studies, namely ethnolinguistic-historical and geopolitical (Thohir 2009). In this study, the researcher integrates the three approaches. Thus, the life of Muslims in Kampung Jawa can be described comprehensively in terms of social, economic, and cultural life.

The data collection technique in this study was via direct observation and interviews with the Muslim community in Kampung Jawa. It is also assisted by data and information from various written sources or documents. The collected data was analyzed with *Fiqh at-Ta'ayusy*, Javanese Islam, sociology of knowledge, and regional studies.

### **Life in Javanese Muslim Village**

In 2024, Thailand's population reached 71.8 million people. The current population of Thailand has an annual growth rate of 0.103%. Thailand accounts for 0.889% of the world's population (*Populasi Thailand Today 2024*). The population consists of various ethnicities and religions, with Buddhists being the majority in Thailand. The second largest religious group is Muslims, comprising approximately 6-8%. The rest are Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and others (Aree 2014).

There are several Indonesian-descent Muslim communities in Bangkok, for instance, a Javanese Muslim community in South Sathorn Canal, a Muslim community in Trok Chan, a Muslim community in Yannawa, a Muslim community in Bangkok, and a Muslim community in

Sanam Kli (Aree 2014). However, the community studied is the Javanese Muslim community in Kampung Jawa, Sathorn District, Bangkok, Thailand (Hamid et al., 2017).

Kampung Jawa is easy to reach since it is in downtown Bangkok. It is located on Rangnamkeang 707 (Soi), Yan Nawa, Sathorn District. The location of Kampung Jawa can be seen on the following map. "A" is the location of the Surasak BTS where tourists stop if they take the BTS, and "B" is the location of Kampung Jawa.



Next to Rama III street, there is an alley to Kampung Jawa. You can also ask residents about the location of the Java Mosque by saying "surau" or "hong lamat Muslim". The residents will provide directions to Kampung Jawa. Another easy way to reach the Java Mosque is to find a tuk-tuk (traditional Thai transportation) or a motorcycle taxi and ask for Java Mosque. These transportation options are ready to take you to Kampung Jawa. The fare is around 20 Bath (1 bath = Rp. 380,-) per person for a motorcycle taxi or 40 Bath for a tuk-tuk ride for 3-4 people.

According to a Kampung Jawa resident, five Javanese lived in the village initially. One of the oldest Javanese descendants in the village is Mr. Ahmad Aska. Mr. Aska has 11 children. His father is Aska Bin Roso, a worker from Kendal, Central Java, employed by the Japanese during World War II and famous for the Allies' train bombing incident in Kanchanaburi. Around 100,000 people died in the railway construction linking Thailand and Myanmar. Followingly, many Javanese came to Bangkok to do trade with Thai people. These traders often settled in and married Thai natives (Hamid et al. 2017).

The Thai citizen who now lives in Kampung Jawa is mostly Muslim. Additionally, in several other provinces in Thailand, Kampung Jawa is one of the areas where Muslims live. The number of Muslim residents living in Kampung Jawa is around 3,000 people (Hamid et al., 2017), consisting of Javanese-descent Muslims, Malaysian-descent residents, and Thai natives.

In the Kampung Jawa area, houses around the Java Mosque resemble residences in Kauman, Yogyakarta. It has a narrow alley with only 1-2 meters in width. Along the alley, there are houses with high fences. Some houses around Kampung Jawa still have beautifully planted yards around 10-20 square meters. The Kampung Jawa is not only inhabited by Javanese and Muslim descendants, but also inhabited by Malaysian, Pakistani, and Thai natives, Muslims, and non-Muslims (Nakapan et al. 2021). From the house's style in Kampung Jawa, it can be easily distinguished between Javanese-descent and non-Javanese-descent residents. In addition, the residents' houses, which are Javanese-descent, usually have two-story wooden houses without stilts. Also, both the first and second floors have wooden walls. Most of the residents living in the Javanese community are Muslims; thus, Islamic symbols are visible in their houses. There is at least one Arabic calligraphy in their house. Thai citizens, in general, love religiosity symbols; furthermore, Thai Muslims display various Islamic symbols as well (Pratiwi et al. 2022).



Side View of Javanese Mosque (Faozan, n.d.)

Java Mosque, the Kampung Jawa Muslims community mosque, is located in Jalan Rome Nam Khaeng 5. The mosque was built in 1908 and was around 3,500 m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of a 370 m<sup>2</sup> mosque, a 150 m<sup>2</sup> madrasa or school, a courtyard, and ablution space. From the outside, the shape of the mosque is similar to the mosque in Java or Demak mosque with a terraced roof and pyramid-shaped ornaments (Hamid et al., 2017).



Beduk of Javanese Mosque One Century Age

Inside the mosque, there are four main pillars with flower-shaped decorations. The idea for the decoration came from Erfan Dahlan (W. Dahlan 2014) -the son of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan-the founder of Muhammadiyah. There are three wooden doors on each side with 1.5-meter width and 2.5-meter height with ornaments carved on each door. All the doors are only opened on Fridays or at a big event at the mosque. In front of the Mosque, there is a two-story madrasa building for Muslim children and youth to study Islam (Hamid et al., 2017).



Javanese Moslems in Mosque, Dress Like Indonesia

The Muslim minority is guaranteed and protected on freedom of worship in religious life (Yusdani, Arfaizar, et al., 2021). Therefore, the existence and role of the Javanese mosque continue to stand to this day. It also confirms that the Kampung Jawa Muslims are guaranteed to practice Islam. The Java Mosque is not only a worship place but also used as a center for collecting and distributing zakat (Hefner 1987).

Furthermore, Kampung Jawa Muslims have the same opportunity to meet their day-to-day needs in the economic aspect. The community is similar to Thai natives, working in various economic sectors (Abdullah et al., 2020). One of them is being an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurial activity can be seen along the alley leading to Kampung Jawa. In addition to entrepreneurship, they also work in the service sector, such as banking, private companies, government officials (e.i. teacher and lecturers). There are also community members who work at the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok (Setyaningrum et al., 2023).

The Kampung Jawa Muslims community may be small in number compared to the major Buddhist community. However, the community simultaneously maintains the existence of Islamic practices, for instance, provisioning halal labels or producing stickers mentioning "Allah," "Muhammad," or "Bismilahirrahmanirrahim" (Hamid et al., 2017).

In politics, Muslims in Kampung Jawa has the same right and freedom to choose a leader, like other Thai citizens. Many Muslim figures act as the policymakers in the government.

Therefore, in terms of socio-religious, socio-economic, and political aspects, the Muslims in Kampung Jawa does not significantly find any difficulties in carrying out activities and routines in their daily life. In addition, the major Thai Buddhist communities treat Muslim communities well so that the Muslim communities have no difficulty practicing Islamic teachings in Bangkok (Marom & Kusuma 2019). The major Thai Buddhists and non-Muslim Thais have minimal knowledge of Islam. Their knowledge is limited to a religion that forbids consuming pork (Thippayana & Thinnam 2023).

The existence and dynamics of the Javanese Muslims in Bangkok, in terms of political, economic, socio-cultural, and religion, can be observed as a social transformation process. The process includes practicing Islamic teachings, building survival strategies, and adapting to challenges and demands at the local, national and global levels.

However, the social transformation process impacts political and economic dimensions and the construction aspect of Bangkok society's worldview. Muslims in Kampung Jawa have originally assumed the position of immigrants who become citizens. Currently, they are Thailand's assets.

### **The Role of Descendants of Muhammadiyah's Founder**

One of the important findings from the research is the role of Irfan Dahlan's sons and daughters, who play a significant role in advancing Muslim life in Kampung Jawa. Irfan Dahlan or Djumhan Dahlan is one of Ahmad Dahlan's children (Yusdani 2016). Kyai Dahlan is a reformer and founder of Muhammadiyah, a modern Muslim organization in Indonesia. The researcher had a chance to meet Irfan Dahlan's sons and daughters in Kampung Jawa. They shared their family's journey and struggled to advance Islam and Muslims' life in Thailand .

The researcher talked to Winai Dahlan, one of the grandchildren of Kyai Ahmad Dahlan and the 5th child of Irfan Dahlan and Zahrah. Winai Dahlan is a renowned and leading Muslim figure in Thailand and the Muslim world. He is also known as a Muslim intellectual and preacher. Additionally, Winai Dahlan is a professor at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. He is the Director of the Halal Science Center (HSC), an institution focusing on Thailand's halal food research.

Kyai Ahmad Dahlan's grandchildren have inherited the teachings from their grandfather. In the view of Irfan Dahlan's children, the teachings of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan that later Irfan's father and Zahrah's father conveyed to their children (Khalim 2022). Kyai Ahmad Dahlan's piece of advice is that good education is the best legacy for his children and grandchildren. Next, Kyai Ahmad Dahlan's descendants should never be ashamed of being poor, but they should be ashamed when doing something wrong. Also, be diligent at work and be sincere when helping others. Never insult the little ones because they will lead the generation one day. Finally, never ask for mercy and keep the faith (Saputra et al., 2021).

After Ahmad Dahlan's grandchildren and great-grandchildren visited Yogyakarta in April 2013, they felt proud to be the descendants of KH. Ahmad Dahlan. Irfan Dahlan's descendants (the third generation of KH Ahmad Dahlan) live in Thailand and the United States. Additionally, they made " Dahlan " the official name of family lineage. All Irfan Dahlan's descendants in Thailand have become Thai citizens (Yusdani 2016).

### **Discussion**

The portrayal of life in the Kampung Jawa Muslim community contrasts with the daily life of the Muslim minority in non-Muslim majority countries in the world. It is often described that the lives of Muslim minorities are challenged with various difficulties and problems. Hence, their lives and existence are in crisis. In terms of religious practices, they sometimes have to deal with values and traditions in the host countries. Ironically, the conservative interpretation of Islam and its tendency as a legal-formalistic approach becomes a reference to portray the lives of Muslim minorities in many parts of the world. Therefore, it cannot answer the life problems that global Muslims face. As a result, minorities cannot fully integrate into life in the host country (A'la 2010).

The portraits of Muslim minorities in Western sides of the globe, for instance, the United States and some Europe countries, are increasingly causing complex problems due to the strengthening of Islamophobia in these countries. Thus, references on the life of Muslim minorities by adhering to the traditional legal-formalistic interpretation of Islam have serious implications. For example, stereotypes and preconceptions potentially put Muslims in the corner. The Muslim communities are marginalized and have issues integrating into the new country. Muslim minority groups, as citizens, have the right to live a decent and normal life. The circumstances and difficulties experienced by these groups require a tolerant and friendly interpretation of Islam. In this case, their need for responsive and accommodating assistance has become necessary (Srimulyani 2021).

Some studies portray the life of Muslim minority communities worldwide (Qardawi 2001). Additionally, the studies were carried out by both Muslim and non-Muslim researchers. The results indicate contradiction and dilemma, especially in religion, social politics, culture, and economy (Brata 2018). On the one hand, they must obey the religious teachings that are perfect and have suited human needs (Siagian & Tike 2019). On the other hand, there are

conflicts on provisions, understandings, and conservative interpretations of the sociocultural reality in these communities live. The reality explains that the practice they refer to by far has alienated them from their surroundings. In contrast, leaving the religion they profess is unimaginable. Therefore, it raises issues related to the assumption and understanding of the universality of Islam as *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (the concept of Islam as a blessing in various life aspects) (Mawardi 2010).

A basic problem related to the lives and experiences of Muslim minorities occurs when Islam that they understand is no longer adaptable and responsive to the difficulties they experience in life. In this context, difficulty in applying legal-formalistic and normative comprehension of Islam can force them to choose between two options to survive as good Muslims (Attum et al., 2023). First, the community members leave the country or return to their homeland, where Islamic practices can be applied easily. Secondly, the community boldly reinterprets Islam because Islam teaches that context is bound to space and time (*Islam and Its Challenges in the Modern World*, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the Kampung Jawa Muslim Community study indicates an illustration where the community successfully struggles, interprets, and applies Islam as a belief and culture in facing life's challenges. Kampung Jawa Muslim community lives in a country that does not apply Islamic principles. However, they can survive and succeed. Additionally, the Thai government respected their position and role and considered their valuable assets (Alang 2020).

The success of this Muslim community is inseparable from their commitment to Islamic teachings and cultural traditions and their wisdom and intelligence in interpreting signs of times (Wakhid et al., 2021). In this case, the success stories of the community in various life aspects can become valuable lessons for Muslim communities around the world, especially on the path in fighting for and creatively translating (or objectifying) Islam as prophetic teaching. Also, the Muslims in this community exemplify being dynamic-adaptive-accommodative without losing their identity as devout Muslims amid globalization and local dynamics in Thailand.

As mentioned earlier, the community's success is determined and influenced by two main factors, Islam and culture (Wider et al., 2023). Javanese family values a view that religion (Islam, in this case) is an important element in guiding family life (Hakim 2023). Therefore, the young generation in Javanese tradition has been well-taught about religious worship. Thus, religious provision is an essential element that should be instilled in Javanese society from an early age. Although it is necessary to point out that spirituality is a dynamic and long process, most Javanese strongly believe that religion is an inseparable element and teaching that needs to be introduced early. In this type of awareness, the Javanese needs to provide guidance and instill religious teachings in the best possible way (Idrus 2007).

In addition to religious life, Javanese sees the importance of preserving noble cultural or traditional values (Sumardjoko & Subowo, 2021). Regarding respecting and preserving Javanese traditions, the society's members have been taught and introduced early to various traditions, especially noble values and cultures used as guidelines. Some of the traditions referred to are being patient, honest, virtuous, self-controlled, concerned, tolerant, respectful, obedient, generous, conflict avoidance, empathic, polite, willing, devoted, and aware (Jannah et al., 2023). These values are influential and reference Javanese in navigating their lives and interacting with others (Idrus 2007). As observed from *fiqh at-Ta'ayusy* (co-existence), the Javanese values cross paths with *fiqh* values at-Ta'ayusy. Hence, the Kampung Jawa Muslims community can interact and live side-by-side peacefully with other communities because it tries to maintain and respect the surrounding harmony.

The explanation indicates that factors that greatly affect the life of the Javanese family or community are religious traditions and cultural values. Additionally, both factors have been introduced and taught early to family members in the Javanese family or community, especially on religious worship. These habits or routines are the references in interacting with people both inside and outside the family circle (Yusdani, Nudin, et al., 2021). These values can also be used as guidelines in determining one's future life. The discussion of beliefs for Javanese is entwined with cultural values as their guidelines. A well-known term of a crisscross between

culture and religiosity is called *kejawen*. Culture and religion are highly influential and shape the Javanese's lives. *Kejawen* can be in the form of acculturation, syncretic, or syncretic-acculturative teachings. Javanese families or communities mainly rely on religious and cultural teachings to be the guidance of their lives (Hidayana 2022). It illustrates the importance of moral teachings, which are early instilled in the Javanese family and have constructed values, peaceful behavior, adaptability, tolerance, and others.

The abovementioned explanation shows strong internalization, inheritance, and continuous efforts to instill traditional values from generation to generation. These values can later be used as references for the later generation in facing life challenges. The values also seem to influence the way of thinking, behaving, and acting of the Javanese-descendant Muslim community in Sathorn, Bangkok (Idrus 2007).

The process of internalization, inheritance and continuous efforts to instill traditional values within Javanese family or society indicates that the value system inherited will influence and become a reference in Javanese's daily lives. The value system includes life essences, actions, human existence within a particular space and time, human relations with their environment, and human beings' relation (Raeff 2014).

In some cases, Javanese are not particularly aware of the influence of their culture. Javanese culture affects how its people live and has integrated into people's understanding of the world around them. It depicts the strong influence Javanese culture and traditions has in every aspect of the Javanese people's daily life. It goes both to the way of thinking and how people interact with one another. An example is how Javanese people deal with transmigration and the area they were located. Javanese culture or traditional values are involved in how the people conduct their activities, for example, naming villages in the transmigration area with the names in the Java island. It shows the characteristics of the Javanese people, especially on awareness of their culture. Appreciation to the culture is a matter of pride and can shape cultural identity among Javanese people (Hartati 2023).

It illustrates the importance of religion and culture to the Javanese community, as it is also evident in the life of the Kampung Jawa Muslim community. In this village, you can feel the Islamic atmosphere. Muslim women in Kampung Jawa usually wear hijab (Muslim clothing). The sellers and buyers of halal food will generally say *Jazaakallah* by the end of transactions. There is a middle-aged barber who prefers to read the Qur'an when he has no customer. Typically, young boys who pray in Java Mosque wear praying caps and sarongs. When they meet one another, they will say *Assalamu'alaikum* and *Alhamdulillah* (Hamid et al., 2017).

Responding to inter-religious relations in Kampung Jawa, Mr. Mansur (2014) explained that the Muslim community in Javanese village is accustomed to cooperation and harmonious relations with non-Muslims especially those who are Buddhists (Yusdani 2019). Buddhist priests attend and donate to Islamic children even during national and Islamic holidays. For example, a Buddhist priest was invited when Kampung Jawa residents celebrated Children's Day on Sunday, 12 January 2014. The priest not only attended the celebration but also gave and distributed gifts to Muslim children in the village (Missbach 2012).

The phenomenon illustrates the adaptation process carried out by Muslims in Kampung Jawa. They realize that Kampung Jawa has not only Muslim residents but also Buddhist neighbors. It also portrays the harmonious relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in the village. Thus, it explains that the Kampung Jawa Muslim community neither isolates nor excludes themselves. They continue to mingle or interact with Buddhists and non-Javanese/Muslim communities. Therefore, people's lives in the community are in peace and harmony.

The results indicate that the life of the Javanese Muslim community in Sathorn, Bangkok has three identities at once. They are devout Muslims who can still maintain their religious identity and freely carry out religious worship in their village. On the other hand, they are Thai citizens who can still preserve culture and traditions inherited from their Javanese ancestors, for instance, *kenduren*, *slametan*, and *tahlilan*. Likewise, concerning their identity as Thai citizens, the community consists of citizens who obey rules and regulations in Thailand and fulfill their rights and obligations as Thai citizens.



The community's struggle in maintaining their identity is bound to Islam as the basis of teaching and Javanese culture as primary references. The community leaders transform these two points to suit the dynamics in society. They are accompanied by wisdom in responding to realities, challenges, and demands in various aspects of political, economic, socio-religious, and cultural life.

The successful life of the Javanese Muslim minority diaspora community in Kampung Jawa from the perspective of *fiqh at-ta'ayusy* is their ability to adapt and live in peace and harmony with other communities inspired by Islamic and Javanese cultural values. The findings can become good examples and role models for Muslim minorities worldwide.

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