

## The Decline of Islamic Local Authority and the Dilemma of Islamic Aboge Community in Central Java

Dani Muhtada

Semarang State University  
dmuhtada@mail.unnes.ac.id

### Abstract

The Aboge Islamic community in Onje Purbalingga has been one of the most prominent Aboge communities in Central Java. Every year, this community is the subject of media attention due to its different method for determining the beginning of the months of Ramadan and Shawwal. In Onje, the Aboge used to be the majority. Everyone in the village started their fasting for Ramadan and celebrated their *Eid* based on the Islamic Aboge calendar. The Aboge imam previously had significant influence on religious and socio-cultural life in the community. However, this influence is waning. The Aboge are no longer the majority in the village. This paper provides an analysis on why Aboge Imams started to lose their religious authority in the community. Why did some members of the community adhere to Aboge Islamic traditions while others did not? Using an ethnographic method, this paper argues that the decline of Aboge leaders' influence is shaped not only by the challenges of modernity, but also a process of bureaucratizing *sharī'ah* as well as the weak institution of the local Aboge community.

**Keywords:** Aboge community, modernity, Islamic bureaucratization, Islamic calendar

## Introduction

It is common in a Muslim country like Indonesia to see different opinions and practices regarding when Muslims should start or end their fasting in the month of Ramadan. In Indonesia, Muslims usually adhere to the official decision made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, or the announcements made by the country's two largest Islamic organizations: Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. NU bases its decision regarding the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal mostly on *ru'yatul hilal* (conventional sighting of the moon), although this does not necessarily mean that this organization ignores the use of *hisab* (astronomical calculations), Muhammadiyah bases its decision mostly on *hisab*, particularly the method of *hisab wujud al-hilal* (Hosen, 2012; Maskufa, 2016). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religious Affairs combines between the two approach (*hisab* and *ru'yatul hilal*) and organizes an official meeting called Sidang Itsbat, between the Ministry officials and the representatives of Islamic organizations, to officially determine the beginning and the end of Ramadan (Nufus, 2018).

It is important to note that not all Muslims in the country agree and follow the decisions made by either the government, NU and Muhammadiyah. Several smaller Islamic groups have their own methods for determining the beginning of the months of Ramadan and Shawwal. One of these minority groups is the Islamic Aboge community, which can be found in several regions of Java such as Cilacap, Banyumas, Purbalingga, Mojokerto, and Blitar (Diniyanto, 2021a; Ramlan & Nurapipah, 2019; Sakirman, 2016; Sodli, 2017; Ulumuddin, 2016). Unlike the government and major Indonesian Islamic organizations, the Aboge community does not adhere to the conventional Islamic calendar system in determining the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal. They employ their own Aboge Calendar system, which appears to be a combination of the Islamic and Javanese calendar system. Izuddin (2015) classifies the calculations made in the Aboge calendar system as being within the *hisab* model of Islam kejawen (Javanese Islam).

Since they use the Javanese-Islamic mixed model of calendar system, which differs substantially from the conventional Islamic model, the Aboge people start and end the fasting month of Ramadan on different dates from those used by most Indonesian Muslims. In 2022, for instance, the Aboge community began fasting on Monday, 4 April and ended the fasting on Wednesday, 4 May (Kompas.com, 2022b; Tribunnews.com, 2022). Meanwhile, many Muslims in Indonesia, adhering to the official announcement made by the government, started their fasting on Sunday, 3

April and ended it on Monday, 2 May (Kompas.com, 2022a; Republika, 2022). Due to their unique method for calculating the dates of Ramadan and Eid el-Fitr, this community always attracts media attention every time Muslims in Indonesia are about to start or end the Ramadan. The Eid celebration in the Aboge villages also attracts extra attention from local governments and police officers, as they want to make sure that the Aboge people and surrounding communities can celebrate the Eid in peace and harmony (Antaraneews.com, 2022; El-shinta.com, 2022).

Although the Aboge tradition and religious practices still exist in several areas of Java, particularly Central and East Java, the existence of this unique community is not without problems. A study by Diniyanto (2021b) on the Aboge community in the Onje Village, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java, indicated that this community has been experiencing a decline in the number of its followers. He indicates three factors that might explain this decline: cultural assimilation, globalization and modernization, and better education among Aboge children. This explanation raises questions regarding the authority of the Aboge leaders. Does the decline imply that the Aboge leaders have also started to lose their power and authority among their followers? If so, what would be the factors shaping the weakening power or authority of the Aboge leaders? Why did some Aboge members stay in the community, adhere to tradition, and keep trusting their leaders, while the others decided to leave the group?

Several scholars have studied the Aboge community. However, very few scholars, if any, have focused on the authority of the Aboge leaders. Sakirman (2016), for example, studied the Aboge tradition in Alastua, focusing on its Javanese-Islamic mixed-model calendar system. Izuddin (2015) also studied this group from the perspective of Islamic astronomy (*ilm al-falaq*), indicating that the Aboge calendar system is a reflection of mixed Javanese-Islamic culture. Other writers, such as Ardiansyah (2020), Ramlan and Nurapipah (2019), and Sulaiman (2013) took more sociological and cultural approaches in studying the group. Diniyanto (2021) focused on the legal protection of the Aboge community as a minority Islamic group in Indonesia. He underlined the shrinking size of the Aboge community and offered an explanation for the factors leading to this decline. Unfortunately, Diniyanto did not pay attention to internal factors, which might contribute to this decline, such as Aboge institutions and the authority of the Aboge leaders.

This article fills this gap by studying the authority of the Aboge leaders and the institutions of the Aboge community in relation to modernity. It seeks to answer

these questions: to what extent do the Aboge leaders have influence in the society? What has caused the authority of the Aboge leaders to remain strong or weaken in the community? Why do some members of the Aboge community stay in the group, while others decide to leave?

To answer these questions, the author conducted an ethnographic study in the Onje Village, Purbalingga, Central Java. The Aboge community in Onje was selected because it is believed to be one of the oldest Aboge communities in Java. The tomb of a great Aboge preacher, Raden Sayyid Kuning, is located in the village (Benyamin & Koswara, 2016; Maulidah, 2016). The article starts by outlining the Aboge community's place in Indonesia, followed by a more detailed description of the community in Onje, including the declining numbers of its followers in the village. Then, it provides an analysis on the authority of the Aboge leaders in Onje and how they maintain authority in society amidst the challenge of modernity. Factors affecting the current authority of the Aboge leaders are analyzed in the discussion.

### **Islamic Aboge in Indonesia**

The word “Aboge” is an abbreviation of the Javanese words *Alip*, *Rebo*, *Wage* (Sodli, 2017; Sulaiman, 2013). It refers to the calendar system used by the Aboge community for their cultural and traditional purposes, including religious activities (e.g., starting or ending the Ramadan fast). This abbreviation means that the first date of the *Alip* year (the Aboge first year in the Aboge calendar system) falls on *Rebo* (Wednesday) of *Wage*<sup>1</sup>.

The Aboge calendar system introduces eight different years, starting with the year of *Alip*, followed by the years of *Ehe*, *Jim Awal*, *Ze*, *Dal*, *Be*, *Wawu*, and *Jim Akhir*. After the eighth year (*Jim Akhir*), the calendar goes back to the first year (*Alip*). The formula of the Aboge calendar system looks like the Table 1 below.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wage is one of the five Javanese traditional days (dina pasaran): Wage, Kliwon, Legi, Pahing, and Pon (Setiadi & Imswatama, 2017).

**Table 1 – The Aboge Calendar System**

No	Month	Formula	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			Alip	Ehe	Jim Awal	Ze	Dal	Be	Wawu	Jim Akhir
			Aboge	Hada Pon	Jangan Pon	Za Saing	Dal Tugi	Be Misgi	Wa Nen Wari	Jang Ah Gea
1	Muharam	Romjiji	Rabu Wage	Ahad Pon	Jumat Pon	Selasa Paing	Sabtu Legi	Kamis Legi	Senin Kliwon	Jumat Wage
2	Safar	Pakluji	Jumat Wage	Selasa Pon	Ahad Pon	Kamis Paing	Senin Legi	Sabtu Legi	Rabu Kliwon	Ahad Wage
3	Robiul Awal	Nguwal-Patma	Sabtu Pon	Rabu Paing	Senin Paing	Jumat Legi	Selasa Kliwon	Ahad Kliwon	Kamis Wage	Senin Pon
4	Robiul Akhir	Nguhir-nema	Senin Pon	Jumat Paing	Rabu Paing	Ahad Legi	Kamis Kliwon	Selasa Kliwon	Sabtu Wage	Rabu Pon
5	Jumadil Awal	Diwal-tupat	Selasa Paing	Sabtu Legi	Kamis Legi	Senin Kliwon	Jumat Wage	Rabu Wage	Ahad Pon	Kamis Paing
6	Jumadil Akhir	Dihir-ropat	Kamis paing	Senin Legi	Sabtu Legi	Rabu Kliwon	Ahad Wage	Jumat Wage	Selasa Pon	Sabtu Paing
7	Rojab	Jablulu	Jumat Legi	Selasa Kliwon	Ahad Kliwon	Kamis Wage	Senin Pon	Sabtu Pon	Rabu Paing	Ahad Legi
8	Sangban	Banma-lu	Ahad Legi	Kamis Kliwon	Selasa Kliwon	Sabtu Wage	Rabu Pon	Senin Pon	Jumat Paing	Selasa Legi
9	Romadon	Donem-ro	Senin Kliwon	Jumat Wage	Rabu Wage	Ahad Pon	Kamis Paing	Selasa Paing	Sabtu Legi	Rabu Kliwon
10	Syawal	Waljiro	Rabu Kliwon	Ahad Wage	Jumat Wage	Selasa Pon	Sabtu Paing	Kamis Paing	Senin Legi	Jumat Kliwon
11	Dulkongidah	Dahroji	Kamis Wage	Senin Pon	Sabtu Pon	Rabu Paing	Ahad Legi	Jumat Legi	Selasa Kliwon	Sabtu Wage
12	Dulhijjah	Jahptji	Sabtu Wage	Rabu Pon	Senin Pon	Jumat Paing	Selasa Legi	Ahad Legi	Kamis Kliwon	Senin Wage

Source: Sodli (2017)

As can be seen from Table 1, the formula indicates that the first date of the first month (Muharram) in the *Alip* year falls on Rabu Wage (Wednesday of Wage). Meanwhile, the first date of the ninth month (Romadon) in the *Alip* year falls on *Senin Kliwon* (Monday of Kliwon). In 2022, the month of Ramadan falls in the *Alip* year. This means that the first date of Ramadan falls on Monday of *Kliwon*, which is 4 April 2022 (Suaramerdeka.com, 2022). From this formula, the Aboge people will easily know when they have to start fasting for Ramadan next year or in the next few years. By using this formula, it is no surprise as to why the starting dates of Ramadan and Shawwal for the Aboge community have been always different from the starting dates of Ramadan announced by the government or mainstream Islamic organizations in Indonesia.

Other than this unique calendar system, the Aboge Muslim community does not show any significant differences in Islamic teachings and practices compared to the other Islamic communities in Indonesia except for some cultural traditions, which reflect the acculturation between Javanese culture and Islamic values.

As far as Islamic worship (*ibadah*) is concerned, the Aboge people perform daily prayers (*salat*) just like the other Muslim communities. They do all of the mandatory daily prayers (i.e., *fajr, duhr, asr, maghrib, isha'*) with exactly the same number of *raka'ats* (sets) and similar *salat* movements as other Indonesian Muslims. The only difference is that they perform the *du'a qunut* (a special additional prayer during *fajr*) for every *salat*, not just for *fajr* (morning) prayer like the *Nahdliyyin* (members of NU). The Aboges also perform some voluntary prayers (*salat sunnah*) such as *tahajud, duha, and tarawih*. Yet, they also perform several other *salat sunnahs* that are not recognized by common Indonesian Muslims. These unique voluntary *salats* include the second Eid prayer, which is performed after the six-days of voluntary Shawwal fasting, and *Rebo Wekasan* prayer, which is the voluntary prayer performed during the last Wednesday of the second Islamic month, safar. The second Eid prayer is called *salat ngitqi*, from Arabic word '*itqun* (free from sins). Thus, the Aboge people performed *salat ngitqi* as they are now free from sins (Sodli, 2017).

The Aboge community also adheres to some religious traditions that are commonly practiced by many Muslim communities in Indonesia such as *mauludan, rajaban, and tahlilan*. *Mauludan* is a religious event to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, which is held every year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of *Rabi'ul Awal*, the third month of the Islamic Aboge calendar. *Rajaban* is a religious festival to commemorate the event of *Isra' Mi'raj*, which was the spiritual journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Masjid al-Haram in Mecca to Masjid al-Aqsa in Palestine, then his ascent to heaven to meet and have a conversation with God. *Tahlilan* is a weekly religious gathering held every Thursday night to pray for ancestors and relatives who have passed away. The Aboge community also organizes *tahlilan* whenever a family member or a neighbor has just passed away. In the *tahlilan*, the Aboge congregation recites similar prayers as are commonly recited by the *Nahdliyyin*, except that they add the *Wakhtim lana* prayer (a prayer asking for a happy ending in life), which is usually not included in the *Nahdliyyin's* recitation of the *tahlilan* (Sodli, 2017).

The similarity of the Aboges' religious practices with the practices of *Nahdliyyin* has been partly shaped by the similarity of their traditional Islamic references. In their

public sermons (*pengajian*), especially during the month of Ramadan, the Aboge preachers also read kitabs (texts) that are usually used by the *Nahdliyyin* kyais (religious leaders) such as *Safinah*, *Sullam al-Taufiq*, *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, and *Usfuriyah* (Sodli, 2017). *Safinah* or *safinatun najah*, which literally means “safety boat”, is a very concise text-book on the basics of Islamic law according to the Shafi’i school of law (Wajdi, 2022). *Sullam al-Taufiq*, which literally means “the ladder of help”, is a concise textbook on the basic principles of Islamic faith and the simple guidance for being a good Muslim (Hasan, 2018). It also consists of some discussion on the practices of daily ibadah for Muslims. *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, which literally means “the beginning of divine direction”, is a reference book written by Imam al-Ghazali, which consists of teachings on Islamic ethics (adab) (Muttaqin, 2020). It provides guidance on how a good Muslim should interact with God, human beings, and their living environment. *Usfuriyah*, from the Arabic word *usfur* that means “sparrow”, is a simple textbook containing some hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, mostly on motivation to be a good Muslim (Ainunni, 2018).

Like the other traditionalist Muslim groups, the Aboge community maintain some cultural traditions that reflect acculturation between Javanese culture and Islamic values. *Slametan* is one of the mixed Javanese-Islamic traditions maintained by the Aboge community. *Slametan* refers to “a broad communal prayer, feast, and food-offering” undertaken by Javanese-Muslim communities to celebrate or commemorate important life cycles or events “such as birth, marriage, and death” (Nasir, 2019, p. 329). The Aboge community performs the *slametan* not only to commemorate or celebrate the life cycles, but also to celebrate or start an important life activity such as planting rice crops, building a new house, and occupying a new house (Sodli, 2017). In the *slametan* ceremony, an Aboge family will invite relatives and neighbors. They recite *tahlilan* and pray for their ancestors and for the success of their life activities. The other mixed Islamic-Javanese tradition performed by the Aboge community is *sedekah bumi* (earth alms), which is a cultural festival to express the community’s gratitude for God’s blessing and fortune granted to them. The Aboge community in Banyumas, for example, organize the *sedekah bumi* festival with local community leaders (*pengurus RT/RW*) as the festival takes place in the community hall (*Balai RT/RW*). The festival is attended not only by the Aboge community, but also the general population. The *sedekah bumi* attendees will recite the *tahlilan* and pray for their ancestors, before they enjoy various traditional foods and dishes made special for the festival (Sodli, 2017).

Today, Aboge communities still exist in several areas of Java, mostly in the Southwest parts of Central Java, including the Banyumas, Purbalingga, and Cilacap regencies (Diniyanto, 2021a; Maulidah, 2016; Putra, 2016; Sakirman, 2016; Sodli, 2017; Sulaiman, 2013; Suprpto et al., 2020). However, they also exist in several places in East Java such as in Mojokerto, Blitar, Sumenep, and Probolinggo (Ardiansyah, 2020; Ramlan & Nurapipah, 2019; Taufik, 2020; Ulumuddin, 2016). One of the most important Aboge sites in Central Java is the Aboge community in the Onje Village, Purbalingga. The village was one of the centers of Aboge Islam in the region, in which the Aboge founder, Raden Sayyid Kuning, lived and taught the Aboge calendar system to the local community (Mutia & Ginanjar, 2022). The tomb of Raden Sayyid Kuning is also located in the village. The following section discusses the Aboge community in Onje and provides analysis on how modernity as well as globalization have influenced the community.

### **Aboge Muslims in Onje: The Decline of Authority?**

The Village of Onje is located in Mrebet sub-district, the Purbalingga regency, Central Java. The local government's 2020 statistical data shows that the total population of the village is 4606 people, consisting of 2309 males and 2297 females. Almost all Onje residents are Muslims. The total number of Muslims in the village is 4603, which is 99.9% of the total population. Only three people are non-Muslims (Christians) (BPS Kab. Purbalingga, 2020). This government's statistical data reflects the government's recognition that the Aboge community in Onje is a part of the village's Islamic community.

As matter of fact, Aboge Islamic practices used to dominate the Islamic practices in Onje. Kyai Mukhlis (pseudonym), who is the Aboge leader in the village, stated that all Onje residents used to be Aboges. They all practiced the Aboge model of Islam. This statement is supported by the fact that the first imam of the first mosque in Onje was Raden Sayyid Kuning, who was a legendary Aboge preacher in 1800s (Maulidah, 2016). The local people believe that the mosque could be older than the Demak Grand Mosque (Radar Banyumas, 2016). Unfortunately, this claim cannot be verified. There is no convincing historical evidence on the date of the establishment of the Onje mosque. However, the government has designated the mosque, which is currently known as the Sayyid Kuning Mosque, as a cultural heritage site protected by the state (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2022).

Kyai Mukhlis (63 years old) is currently the grand imam (*imam besar*) of the Sayyid Kuning Mosque. He claimed that he is a descendant of Raden Sayyid Kuning. Kyai Mukhlis has been the Aboge imam in Onje since 2008 after his father, who was also the grand imam of the mosque, passed away. According to Kyai Mukhlis, the Aboge leadership is transferred from one person to another through *hidayah* (divine guidance). His father, Kyai Surya Munadi, has four children including Kyai Mukhlis. However, Kyai Mukhlis is the only child in the family who received *hidayah* so he could have a good understanding of Islamic knowledge and master the Aboge tradition, including its unique calendar system. He mentioned that, when he was young, he studied in several *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in Java, including *Pesantren Buntet* in Cirebon, *Pesantren Tebuireng* in Jombang, *Pesantren Futuhiyah* in Mranggen, and *Pesantren Ali Maksum Krapyak* in Yogyakarta (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022). All of these *pesantren* are among the top Javanese *pesantren* affiliated with NU, which teach Islamic sciences under the Shafi'i school of law. Accordingly, Kyai Mukhlis did not learn anything about the Aboge Islamic tradition and knowledge from these *pesantren*. In fact, he learnt all about the Aboge tradition and knowledge directly from his father.

As a successor to his father, Kyai Mukhlis leads the daily prayers at the Mosque and all religious activities involving the Aboge community. He also manages a *Madrasah Diniyah* (religious school), which is located in the Mosque complex and has been officially registered at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In leading religious activities and managing the school, Kyai Mukhlis is assisted by one of his sons, who are not *pesantren* alumni but received a tertiary education from a state Islamic university (UIN). Kyai Mukhlis did not state explicitly that his son would be his successor in the future since he believed that the succession is solely based on *hidayah* from God. However, he did not deny that his son could be a strong candidate for the next Aboge leader. The reason is simple: his son has been assisting him in undertaking daily managerial and leadership duties. For example, if Kyai Mukhlis is not able to lead the prayers for any reason, such as conducting other duties, his son takes on this responsibility and leads prayers (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022).

At this *madrasah diniyah*, students study several Islamic subjects including Arabic, *fiqh* (Islamic law), *tajwid* (reading Quran), *aqidah* (doctrine), and *akhlaq* (Islamic ethics). They use textbooks that are commonly used in traditional *pesantren* and *madrasah* such as kitab *safinah* and kitab *jurumiyah*. The students also regularly recite *barzanji* every Thursday nights. They also hold *istighatsah*, a special prayer, every Friday of Kliwon (*Jumat Kliwon*). These religious routines are also common in

*madrasah* or *pesantren* managed by NU kyais. The fact that the students of the Aboge *madrasah* learn from textbooks similar to those used by NU students, and practice religious rituals that are common in other traditional *pesantren* or *madrasah*, attest to Kyai Mukhlis' claim that there is no significant difference between the Islamic model of Aboge and the Islamic model of NU, except their differences in their calendar systems. He said, “*Orang Aboge pasti NU. Tapi orang NU belum tentu Aboge*”. (Aboge people are always NU. But NU people are not necessarily Aboge) (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022).

Considering these similarities, it is no wonder that this community has no conflict with other Islamic organizations, particularly NU, which is now the majority group in the village. The Aboges have been quite successful in maintaining harmony with other religious communities in Onje. To maintain this harmony, once the non-Aboges in the village end their Ramadan fast, they wait for the Aboges to finish their Ramadan fasting before celebrating the Eid al-Fitr together. In 2022, for instance, the Aboges ended fasting on 3 May while the rest of the Onje residents ended their fasting on 1 May. Instead of celebrating Eid on 2 May, the majority group of Muslims in Onje waited until 4 May so that they could celebrate Eid together with the Aboge community. These people did not perform the Eid prayers on 4 May as they did it two days earlier. But they came to Sayyid Kuning Mosque and waited for the Aboges to finish their prayers before they celebrated the Eid together (Personal Interview with Pak Ahmad [pseudonym], non-Aboge Onje Resident, 30 June 2022).

Although the Aboge do not have any conflict with other Islamic groups, this does not mean that the community faces no challenges. One of the current challenges the community faces is the declining numbers of Aboge members in Onje. As mentioned earlier, Aboge used to be the “religion” of this village. People throughout Onje used to practice Aboge Islamic traditions. Today, only one *dusun* (sub-village) in Onje constitutes an “Aboge” neighborhood as the majority residents at the *dusun* are Aboges. There are four *dusun* in Onje Village: *Dusun* I, II, III, and IV. *Dusun* I are dominated by the Aboges, whereas *Dusun* II, III, and IV are dominated by non-Aboges. Each of these *dusun* has a mosque, but only one mosque is affiliated with the Aboge – that is, the Sayyid Kuning Mosque, the oldest mosque in the village. This mosque is located in *Dusun* I (Personal Interview with Pak Ahmad, 30 June 2022).

It is not easy to obtain exact figures on the Aboge population in Onje, as the official data issued by the Government’s Statistics Bureau (BPS) does not differentiate

between Islamic Aboges and non-Islamic Aboges. All are included under “Islam” category. Kyai Mukhlis himself, as the Grand Imam of the Aboge, could not confirm the exact number of the Aboge followers in his village. He only provided an estimate by indicating to the total *zakat fitrah* (alms) collected by the Sayyid Kuning Mosque in the last Ramadan 2022 (Personal Interview with Kyai Mukhlis, 15 May 2022). The Aboges usually collect their alms on the last day of Ramadan. Since the non-Aboges had ended their fasting two days earlier before the Aboges ended their fasting, he could confirm that the *zakat fitrah* paid through the Sayyid Kuning Mosque must be from the Aboges. This method of estimating the Aboge population is supported by data collected from Bu Aminah (pseudonym), who is a dedicated follower of Aboge and lives in *Dusun* II. According to Bu Aminah, the Aboges always collect their *zakat fitrah* in the Sayyid Kuning Mosque. Her family members also paid *zakat fitrah* through the Zakat committee in the Sayyid Kuning Mosque (Personal Interview, 16 May 2022).

The total amount of *zakat fitrah* collected by the Sayyid Kuning Mosque is 3.5 tons of rice. If the *zakat fitrah* per Muslim is 2.5 kg, thus 3.5 tons would be from 1400 people. This means that the Aboge population in the Onje village in 2022 is approximately 1400 people, which constitutes 30.4% of the total Muslim population in the village. Compared to the total amount *zakat fitrah* collected by Baiturrahim Mosque in *Dusun* III during the same Ramadan, the amount of *zakat fitrah* collected by the Sayyid Kuning mosque is relatively low. The Baiturrahim Mosque, which is not an Aboge mosque, was able to collect up to 7 tons of rice in *zakat fitrah* (Personal Interview with Pak Ahmad, 30 June 2022). Accordingly, it can be predicted that this amount of rice was from 2800 people, which is about 60.8% of the total Muslims in the village.

The fact that Aboge used to dominate the village and now are only a third of the population raises questions regarding the authority of the Aboge leaders in Onje. How strong is their influence on society? What types of authority do they have? What is the source of their authority? What factors have shaped their authority?

Authority is closely related to legitimacy and belief in a system. A follower surrenders him/herself to the “domination” of a master because s/he believes that the master has legitimacy or power to help subordinates. In this context, Max Weber classifies the sources of authority and legitimacy into three categories: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational. Traditional authority refers to the authority, in which legitimacy of the “master” is based on traditional rules. The master is obeyed

because of his/her traditional status. The subordinates obey the master (person), not the enacted rules. Charismatic authority refers to the authority, in which legitimacy of the master comes from the master's individual personality. The subordinates accept the "domination" of the master because they believe that the master has extraordinary character. The obedience of the subordinates to the master is not based on the enacted rules, but on the charisma of the master. Legal-rational authority obtains its legitimacy from law. The obedience of subordinates to the superordinate is based on the enacted rules. A person in authority him/herself is subject to the law (Rust, 2018; Szelenyi, 2016).

In the case of the Aboge community in Onje, the authority of the leader is not based on the legal-rational sources. Kyai Mukhlis and his predecessors do not have any legal documents entitling them to their superior standing in the Aboge community. Their legitimacy does not come from charismatic authority either since the Aboges and non-Aboges treat Kyai Mukhlis as an ordinary fellow resident, who does not have any extraordinary political or social influence in society. Kyai Mukhlis said that some politicians visited him, particularly during political campaigns. However, his political preferences does not influence voters' behaviors in the village of Onje. Kyai Mukhlis himself admitted that he never tried to shape the political preferences of the Onje residents (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022). Besides, people do not usually consult with Kyai Mukhlis on social-cultural affairs. They just treat him as an ordinary person because "they knew who he is and what he did". People just consult him on matters related to the beginning and end of Ramadan, and this is also limited to the Aboge community in the village (Personal Interview with Pak Ahmad, 16 May 2022). On this duty, Kyai Mukhlis himself said that he never demands people follow his direction on the beginning and end of Ramadan. All he does is provide information about the beginning and end dates of Ramadan and leave decisions to the people. He does not really care whether or not people will follow his direction (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022).

Thus, the authority attached to Kyai Mukhlis is of a traditional type. He receives legitimacy to lead the Aboge community because of his traditional status. His father was an Aboge leader, and he is knowledgeable on Aboge traditions, including its calendar system. The Aboge people follow him because of a commitment to the Aboge tradition. Bu Aminah, for example, stated that she and her husband still followed Kyai Mukhlis's decisions regarding the beginning and end of Ramadan because they are committed to their tradition (Personal Interview, 16 May 2022). However, she did not impose this commitment on their children. In fact, she and her

children chose to start and end the Ramadan fast on different dates and she did not have any problem with her children's choice.

### **Factors Influencing the Decline of Authority**

With this cultural authority, the Aboge leadership's legitimacy in the community is quite vulnerable as it deals with the inevitable challenges of modernization. Several scholars have studied the impacts of modernization on culture and religious institutions with varying conclusions (Andreeva et al., 2017; Douglas, 1982; Jovel et al., 2009; Logu, 2019). Logu (2019), for example, studied the impact of modernization and secularization on religious values in modern Nordic countries, including Finland, Norway, and Sweden, finding that religious values are declining in these countries. People in these countries had experienced a process of rationalization so that they started questioning dogma and seeking reasons for many aspects of their faith.

The Aboge community in Onje is facing similar challenges. Increased access to education and information among the Aboge community has altered people's attachment to their cultural traditions. The family of Pak Oyo (pseudonym) in Onje, for example, has two children. The family used to be strong followers of the Aboge tradition. The children then went to school. The first son had a good education and has now become a university lecturer. The son's encounter with external environments changed his views and attachment to the Aboge tradition. His views also affected the family's attachment to the tradition. Although Pak Oyo himself still sometimes takes part in Aboge traditional gatherings, the family no longer starts and ends the Ramadan fast on the dates announced by the Aboge leader. Pak Oyo's family is not the only one with a story like this. A previous study by Diniyanto (2021b) discovered that some Aboge families left the Aboge tradition after their family members received tertiary education. Diniyanto argues that the higher education one has, the more likely they are to leave the Aboge tradition.

Diniyanto (2021b) also suggests the state is a factor in the declining numbers in the Aboge community. He particularly mentions that government decisions through the *Sidang Isbat* (determination meeting), and the announcement on the start of Ramadan and Shawwal have affected the Onje people's choice regarding the beginning and end of fasting during Ramadan. Diniyanto wrote that before the government held regular *sidang isbat*, the Onje community used to start and end fasting using the Aboge calendar method. After the government began making

official announcements on the commencement of Ramadan, people started to follow the government's position.

In my opinion, the *Sidang Isbat* is just a reflection of the bureaucratization of *sharī'ah* in modern Indonesia. As has been discussed by several scholars (Alfitri, 2018; Jahar, 2019; Nisa, 2018; Ropi, 2017), modern Indonesia has been experiencing a continuous process of Islamization in the state and society. One of the important players in this process is the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) (Alfitri, 2018; Jahar, 2019; Ropi, 2017). The state, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has deeply penetrated Muslims' public lives, including marriage, zakat, hajj (major pilgrimage), and fasting. The ministry also makes great efforts to educate Islamic society in Indonesia to have a proper understanding of *sharī'ah* through formal and informal education channels. Formal education channels include Islamic schools and universities managed under MORA, from *madrasah ibtidaiyah* (elementary school) through to state Islamic university levels. Informal education channels include informal education institutions such as *pesantren* and *madrasah diniyah* as well as public education activities such as public sermons (*pengajian umum*), religious technical guidance (*bimbingan teknis keagamaan*), and religious public lectures (*ceramah-ceramah keagamaan*) by MORA officials.

This public Islamic education led by state actors creates a dilemma of modernity. On the one hand, the state is obliged to educate people as it is a part of its constitutional mandate. MORA, as the state organ responsible for religious affairs, receives a mandate to educate people on religious matters. This is why it has a directorate general for the guidance of the Islamic community (Ditjen Bimas Islam) and a directorate general for Islamic education (Ditjen Pendis). MORA is also responsible for providing public services for religious communities. This is why they strive to provide public services on *hajj*, *umrah* (minor pilgrimages), *zakat*, *waqf* (inheritance), and fasting. On the other hand, these public education and religious services might affect the existence of minority religious groups, such as the Aboge. The Islamic education provided by the Ministry Affairs may not align with the Aboge tradition. Once this education reaches Aboge Muslim youth, they will have the same knowledge and practice the same religious tradition as the youth of mainstream Islamic groups. When it comes about deciding the first dates of Ramadan and Shawwal, the government will use methods and standards approved by mainstream groups. The official decision made by MORA in *Sidang Isbat* accommodates the views of the Islamic mainstream and ignores the interests of the Islamic minority

groups, including the Aboge. This makes their minority position even more marginal and impacts on the authority of its leaders.

Besides the impacts of modernization and bureaucratizing *sharī'ah* in modern Indonesia, another significant factor contributing to the decline of authority of Aboge leaders is the weak institutions of the Aboge community. In Onje, this can be seen from four indicators. First, this community does not have any formal organization. Kyai Mukhlis said there is no chair, secretary, or treasurer in the Aboge community – it just has an imam or kyai, namely himself (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022).

Second, this community does not have a good system for regeneration. When asked about his community's leadership regeneration, Kyai Mukhlis replied by saying "*Wallahu A'lam*" (Only God knows). He said that Aboge is the science of Javanese Islam (*Ilmu Islam Jawa*), such that it is dependent on *hidayah* from God. This answer indicates that, as a leader, he has not established any open regeneration system. However, he admitted that he readied his son to be the next leader of the Aboge community in Onje, just like his father prepared him. When asked who will be the next Aboge leader in Onje, he said, "Maybe, my son" (Personal Interview, 15 May 2022).

Third, Aboge children receive no formal lessons on Aboge traditions, particularly the Aboge calendar system. As mentioned earlier, the Aboge community in Onje has its own Islamic school or *madrasah diniyah*, called *Madin Sayyid Kuning*. The students of *madrasah* learn Arabic, basic fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tajwid (classical Arabic grammar), etc. But they do not receive specific lessons on the Aboge calendar system, probably because the students are at an elementary education level – teaching the Aboge calendar system would be too advanced for them. Another possible reason is because there are no textual references for teaching this subject. Kyai Mukhlis said that when he studied this subject from his father, he did not use any books. He did not even use a pen or pencil to write down anything from the lessons. All he could do was listen to his father and try to memorize everything he could from the father. Whatever the reason, not providing these lessons to Aboge children is a great loss for the community. The Aboge calendar system is at the heart of this community's existence. The Aboge, without its unique calendar system, is no longer Aboge. When the knowledge of this calendar system is not transferred to younger generations, this community faces great peril.

Fourth, the Aboge community in Onje does not network with other Aboge communities in the other locations. Kyai Mukhlis has no contact with other Aboge leaders, even with those living in southwestern parts of Central Java. As matter of fact, Aboge communities exist in Cilacap, Purwokerto, Banyumas, Wonosobo, Purbalingga and many other parts of East Java. This poses an ironic situation: although they are facing challenges from modernity, the community is not taking advantage of modernity. They use cellular phones and internet, and understand the benefits of these devices, but they do not use it to expand their network and strengthen cooperation among Aboge communities.

## Conclusion

From the discussion presented above, this article comes to the following conclusions. First, the Aboge leader in Onje has cultural authority over the Aboge community but this authority is limited to aspects related to Aboge traditions, including determining the start dates of Ramadan and Shawwal. This authority, however, voluntary in nature: the leader does not have any power to impose his decisions on his followers. Other than this cultural authority, the leader does not have any political, economic, or any other social influence on his followers. From the perspective of the followers, their obedience to the leader is also cultural in nature and voluntary. They stay in the group because of their commitment to tradition. However, even if they are committed to tradition, they cannot impose this commitment on other family members, especially the younger generation.

Second, using Weber's framework of authority, the authority of the Aboge leader falls under category of traditional authority, not legal-formal or charismatic. This traditional authority is quite vulnerable to the challenges posed by modernity. The above discussion shows that the Aboge leader has been unable to keep up with the challenges of modernity. As a result, he has become a victim of modernity. On the one hand, advances in technology and education have raised questions over the fate of the Aboge community. On the other hand, the Aboge leader has failed to take advantage of the benefits of modernity to expand networking and strengthen the community.

Third, the declining authority of Aboge leadership has been shaped not only by the challenges of modernity, but also by the bureaucratizing of *sharī'ah* in modern Indonesia and the weakness of the Aboge institutions. This institutional weakness is reflected in the absence of a formal organization for Aboge, the absence leadership regeneration, the absence of formal teaching of the Aboge traditions for

younger generations, and the absence of networking and communication with the other Aboge communities in other locations. These three factors have contributed to the declining authority of the Aboge leader as well as the declining number of Aboge members in Onje.

## References

- Ainunni, I. S. (2018). *Ini 5 Fakta Menarik Kitab Usfuriyah Yang Mungkin Tidak Disadari Para Santri*. <https://www.ipnu.or.id/ini-5-fakta-menarik-kitab-usfuriyah-yang-mungkin-tidak-disadari-para-santri/>
- Alfitri. (2018). Religion and constitutional practices in Indonesia: How far should the state intervene in the administration of Islam? *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 13(2), 389–413. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2018.20>
- Andreeva, E., Myslyakova, Y., Glukhikh, P., & Ratner, A. (2017). Economic and social impact of modernization on cultural values. *Journal of International Studies*, 10(1), 193–208. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2017/10-1/14>
- Antaraneews.com. (2022, May 4). *Polisi jaga pelaksanaan Shalat Id penganut Islam Aboge Banyumas*. <https://jateng.antaraneews.com/berita/446925/polisi-jaga-pelaksanaan-shalat-id-penganut-islam-aboge-banyumas>
- Ardiansyah, M. Z. (2020). Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 8(2), 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2020.8.2.97-114>
- Benyamin, P., & Koswara, I. (2016). Komunikasi dan Kearifan Lokal: Studi Fenomenologi tentang Konstruksi Realitas Warga Penganut Aliran Islam Aboge (Alif Rebo Wage) di Desa Sidareja Banjarnegara Jawa Tengah. In A. F. Ashaf & A. C. Wardhani (Eds.), *Komunikasi Publik dan Dinamika Masyarakat Lokal* (pp. 166–178). Magister Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Lampung.
- BPS Kab. Purbalingga. (2020). *Kecamatan Mrebet dalam Angka*. Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Purbalingga.
- Diniyanto, A. (2021a). Legal Protection Policy for Minority Groups (Evidence from Aboge Group in Purbalingga Indonesia). *JILS (Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies)*, 6(2), 353–388.
- Diniyanto, A. (2021b). *Perlindungan dan Penguatan Komunitas Minoritas: Kajian terhadap Eksistensi Islam Aboge*. Scientist Publishing.
- Douglas, M. (1982). *The Effects of Modernization on Religious Change*. Daedalus, 111(1), 1–19.
- El-shinta.com. (2022, May 4). *Polisi Banyumas jaga pelaksanaan Shalat Id*

- penganut Islam Aboge*. <https://elshinta.com/news/267099/2022/05/04/polisi-banyumas-jaga-pelaksanaan-shalat-id-penganut-islam-aboge>
- Hasan, N. (2018). *Sullam At-Taufiq, Kitab Trilogi Keilmuan Islam*. <https://islami.co/sullam-taufiq-kitab-trilogi-keilmuan-islam/>
- Hosen, N. (2012). Hilal and Halal: How to Manage Islamic Pluralism in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 7, 1–18.
- Izzuddin, A. (2015). Hisab Rukyah Islam kejawen (Studi Atas Metode Hisab Rukyah Sistem Abonge). In *Al-Manahij*: Vol. IX (Issue 1, pp. 123–140).
- Jahar, A. S. (2019). Bureaucratizing sharia in modern Indonesia: The case of zakat, waqf and family law. *Studia Islamika*, 26(2), 207–245. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v26i2.7797>
- Jovel, K. V. R., Undurraga, E., Magvanjav, O., Gravlee, C., Tanner, S., Godoy, R., & TAPS Bolivia Study Team. (2009). Modernization and culture loss: A natural experiment among native Amazonians in Bolivia. In *Tsimane' Amazonian Panel Study Working Paper* (No. 52).
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2022). *Masjid R. Sayyid Kuning*. <http://cagarbudaya.kemdikbud.go.id/cagarbudaya/detail/PO2015052700001/masjid-r-sayyid-kuning>
- Kompas.com. (2022a, April 1). *Pemerintah Tetapkan 1 Ramadhan 1443 H Jatuh pada Minggu, 3 April 2022*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/04/01/19244001/pemerintah-tetapkan-1-ramadhan-1443-h-jatuh-pada-minggu-3-april-2022?page=all>
- Kompas.com. (2022b, May 1). *Umat Islam Pengikut Aboge di Banyumas Rayakan Idul Fitri Rabu 4 Mei*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2022/05/01/125339078/umat-islam-pengikut-aboge-di-banyumas-rayakan-idul-fitri-rabu-4-mei>
- Logu, V. J. (2019). *The Impact of Modernization and Secularization on Religious*. University of Stavanger.
- Maskufa, M. (2016). Hisab Wujud al-Hilal sebagai Politik Identitas Muhammadiyah dalam Diskursus Hisab Ruyat di Indonesia. *Jurnal Indo-Islamika*, 6(2), 183–202. <https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v6i2.14802>
- Maulidah, N. (2016). *Perhitungan Waktu Pernikahan menurut Aboge di Desa Onje Mrebet Purbalingga Jawa Tengah* [Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah]. <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12620012/index.pdf>
- Mutia, A. G., & Ginanjar, A. (2022). Eksistensi Islam Aboge Di Tengah Perubahan Sosial Di Desa Kracak Kecamatan Ajibarang Kabupaten Banyumas. *Sosiolum: Jurnal Pembelajaran IPS*, 4(1), 56–62. <https://doi.org/10.15294/sosiolum.v4i1.53030>

- Muttaqin, D. F. (2020). *Mengenal Kitab Pesantren (30): Bidayatul Hidayah: Kitab Panduan Hidup Segala Zaman*. <https://alif.id/read/dfm/mengenal-kitab-pesantren-30-bidayatul-hidayah-kitab-panduan-hidup-segala-zaman-b232382p/>
- Nasir, M. A. (2019). Revisiting the Javanese Muslim Slametan: Islam, Local Tradition, Honor and Symbolic Communication. *Al-Jami'ah*, 57(2), 329–358. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajjs.2019.572.329-358>
- Nisa, E. F. (2018). The Bureaucratization of Muslim Marriage in Indonesia. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 33(2), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2018.28>
- Nufus, K. (2018). Sidang Isbat Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah Prespektif Hukum Islam. *Inklusif*, 3(1), 1–20.
- Putra, A. D. (2016). *Kearifan Masyarakat Lokal Aboge dalam Mempertahankan Ajaran Warisan Sayyid Kuning di Desa Onje Kecamatan Mrebet Kabupaten Purbalingga*. Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.
- Radar Banyumas. (2016, October 6). *Masjid R Sayyid Kuning Desa Onje, Kecamatan Mrebet, Diyakni Lebih Tua Dibandingkan Masjid Demak*. <https://radarbanyumas.co.id/masjid-r-sayyid-kuning-desa-onje-kecamatan-mrebet-diyakni-lebih-tua-dibandingkan-masjid-demak/>
- Ramlan, R., & Nurapipah, L. (2019). Peran Perempuan dalam Komunitas Aboge di Kedungbanteng Blitar. *Martabat: Jurnal Perempuan Dan Anak*, 3(1), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.21274/martabat.2019.3.1.47-68>
- Republika. (2022, May 1). *Menag Umumkan Idul Fitri Jatuh pada 2 Mei 2022*. <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/rb7e95366/menag-umumkan-idul-fitri-jatuh-pada-2-mei-2022>
- Ropi, I. (2017). Religion and regulation in Indonesia. In Religion and Regulation in Indonesia. *The Palgrave Macmillan*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2827-4>
- Rust, J. (2018). Traditional Action and Traditional Authority. *Max Weber Studies*, 18(2), 159–185.
- Sakirman, S. (2016). Islam Aboge Dalam Tradisi Jawa Alastua. *IBDA` : Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya*, 14(2), 172–187. <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v14i2.702>
- Setiadi, D., & Imswatama, A. (2017). Pola Bilangan Matematis Perhitungan Weton dalam Tradisi Jawa dan Sunda. *Jurnal ADHUM*, VII(2), 75–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addr.2018.07.012%0Ahttp://www.capsulae.com/media/Microencapsulation-Capsulae.pdf%0Ahttps://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaerosci.2019.05.001>
- Sodli, A. (2017). Dinamika Hubungan Antara Penganut Islam Aboge Dengan Umat Islam Lainnya Di Kabupaten Banyumas. *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-*

- Din*, 18(2), 235–252. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.17.2.1738>
- Suaramerdeka.com. (2022, April 1). *Awal Ramadan Pengikut Aboge tahun 2022 Jatuh Senin Kliwon*. <https://banyumas.suaramerdeka.com/banyumas/pr-093108876/awal-ramadan-pengikut-aboge-tahun-2022-jatuh-senin-kliwon>
- Sulaiman, S. (2013). Islam Aboge Pelestarian Nilai-Nilai Lama Di Tengah Perubahan Sosial. *Analisa*, 20(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v20i1.1>
- Suprpto, Y., Nur, D. M. M., Retno, D., & Luqman, M. (2020). Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Islam Komunitas Aboge Kepada Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar Di Desa Cikakak Kecamatan Wangon Kabupaten Banyumas. *IJTIMAIYA: Journal of Social Science Teaching*, 4(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.21043/ji.v4i1.7218>
- Szelenyi, I. (2016). Weber's Theory of Domination and Post-Communist Capitalisms. *Theory and Society*, 45(1), 1–24.
- Taufik, H. (2020). Konsep Keyakinan dan Ajaran Islam Komunitas Aboge di Desa Gelaman, Kecamatan Arjasa, Kepulauan Kangean Kabupaten Semene, Jawa Timur. *Tarbiyah Islamiah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 10(2), 1–5. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18592/jt.ipai.v10i2.4528>
- Tribunnews.com. (2022, April 4). *Umat Islam Aboge di Banyumas Jateng Memulai Puasa Ramadan Hari Ini*. <https://www.tribunnews.com/ramadan/2022/04/04/umat-islam-aboge-di-banyumas-jateng-memulai-puasa-ramadan-hari-ini>
- Ulumuddin, M. I. (2016). Praktik Keagamaan Aliran Kejawen Aboge di antara Agama Resmi dan Negara. *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 6(1), 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v6i1.611>
- Wajdi, M. F. (2022). *Mengenal Kitab Fikih “Safinatun Najah.”* [https://immimpangkep.ponpes.id/blogguru/blog/mengenal-kitab-fikih-safinatun-najah/#:~:text=BLOGGURU – Kitab Safinatun Najah atau,Kewajiban Seorang Hamba kepada Tuhannya’](https://immimpangkep.ponpes.id/blogguru/blog/mengenal-kitab-fikih-safinatun-najah/#:~:text=BLOGGURU%20%2D%20Kitab%20Safinatun%20Najah%20atau,Kewajiban%20Seorang%20Hamba%20kepada%20Tuhannya%27)