



ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH IN ISLAMIC STUDIES IN THE POST-MODERN ERA

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Abstract

This study examines Islamic anthropology as a field that explores the relationship between Islamic teachings and the social and cultural lives of Muslims in diverse contexts. In the era of globalization, Islamic beliefs and practices vary across regions due to local social, political, and cultural influences. This diversity highlights the need to understand how Islamic teachings are adapted in everyday life and how they shape Muslim social and cultural identities. Using a descriptive-analytical method with content analysis, this study draws on relevant journals, articles, and books to analyze how Islamic teachings are practiced and interpreted in society. The findings show that Islam functions not only as a normative belief system but also as a socio-cultural framework that shapes Muslim lifestyles. Religious practices such as prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj play an important role in strengthening social solidarity and community life. Overall, Islamic anthropology contributes to understanding Islam as a “lived religion,” shaped by the interaction between religious texts, culture, and social experience, resulting in dynamic and adaptive expressions of faith.

Keywords: *Islamic anthropology; Social Identity; Islamic culture*

A. Introduction

Islamic anthropology as a branch of cultural anthropology focuses on the relationship between Islamic teachings and the social, cultural, and social life of Muslims in various parts of the world. As a universal religion, Islam plays a role not only in the spiritual aspect but also in shaping social and cultural norms in society. Therefore, Islamic anthropology tries to examine more deeply how these religious teachings are applied in daily life, and how the interaction between these teachings and local culture shapes the lifestyle of Muslims in various social, political, and cultural contexts (Faidi, 2021).

In this study, it is important to note that although Islam has similar basic principles around the world, the religious practices of Muslims are not always uniform. This happens due to factors such as local culture, history, and different social and political conditions. This diversity of practices makes the study of Islamic anthropology very relevant to understand the dynamics of Muslim life which cannot be viewed from just one perspective, but must consider the diversity of existing contexts (Iqbal, 2025).

In many Muslim-majority countries, Islam is seen not only as a religion, but also as a social and cultural system that governs almost all aspects of life. This includes the influence of Islam in social structures, the formation of group identities, to daily practices such as diet, how to dress, and relationships between individuals. However, challenges arise when Islamic teachings are faced with modernity, globalization, and rapid social change (Sa'adati, 2025).

One of the problems in Islamic anthropology is how to understand the plurality of interpretations of Islamic teachings. Muslim communities are spread across different parts of the world with very diverse traditions and cultures. In some contexts, Islam is practiced in a very traditional way, while in others, there are more flexible adaptations to modern values. These differences create interesting dynamics to study, especially in the context of how Islamic teachings are accepted and translated in

everyday life. In addition, Islamic anthropology also focuses on the relationship between religion and politics in the life of Muslim people. In many countries, religion and state cannot be separated just like that. Islamic law or sharia is often applied in the national legal system, which raises debates about the boundaries between religious teachings and state law. On the other hand, more secular Muslim countries also face challenges in integrating Islamic teachings into a more modern and pluralistic political system (Sumanto, 2018).

Furthermore, the study of Islamic anthropology also pays attention to gender dynamics in Muslim societies, which is often a controversial topic. In many Muslim communities, women have an important role in family and social life, but are often constrained by conservative religious norms. Islamic anthropological research highlights how Muslim women navigate between traditional roles and the demands of modernity. In some contexts, women have a more open and active role in various sectors of life, including education, work, and politics (Wibowo, 2023).

In addition, Islamic anthropology seeks to understand the social changes that occurred in Muslim societies due to the influence of globalization, migration, and urbanization. Globalization has had a great influence on the lifestyle and mindset of Muslim people in many countries, especially in cultural and economic aspects. Muslim communities living in Western countries often face challenges in maintaining their religious identity, while also having to adapt to the dominant local culture. In this context, the emergence of various Muslim groups with different religious understandings is also an important issue in Islamic anthropology. These groups often focus on differing interpretations of Islamic teachings, which affect the way they live, interact with society, and participate in politics. This diversity creates challenges in understanding the concept of "Islam" itself, as Islam is practiced in a variety of ways that are heavily influenced by local and historical contexts (Bari et al., 2024).

In principle, Islamic anthropology provides insight into the role of ritual and worship in the social life of Muslims. Rituals such as prayer, zakat, and hajj have a deep social meaning, not only as a religious obligation, but also as a means to strengthen social relations between Muslims (H. Ismail, 2025). In addition, this religious activity also serves as a means to create social solidarity and strengthen the Muslim community in the midst of the challenges of modernity. Thus, the importance of the study of Islamic anthropology lies in its ability to explore and understand the diversity of religious and social practices among Muslim societies. Through careful and holistic research, Islamic anthropology can provide a broader insight into how religious teachings interact with local cultures, as well as how Muslims around the world respond to the challenges and changes of the times.

B. Method

This research is a library *research* or literature review (Haryono et al., 2024). Therefore, throughout the research process, the author uses various relevant literature references to help answer the problems raised comprehensively (Srimaya & Amalia, 2023). Literature review itself is a presentation of scientific arguments that describe the results of literature review and researcher analysis related to the topic or problem being studied, by containing a number of ideas or propositions supported by data from credible and reliable literature sources (Arfa & Marpaung, 2018). The method applied in this study is the descriptive analytical method through content analysis, which allows researchers to describe phenomena in depth and evaluate and interpret the content of the data systematically (Darmalaksana, 2022). To facilitate and strengthen the analysis, the first step is to collect data from various journals, scientific articles, and books that are relevant and in accordance with the scope of the discussion. The process of selection and data processing is carried out critically so that the results of the study can provide a valid and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

a. Modern Anthropology in the Western World

The term anthropology comes from a combination of two words, namely *anthropos* which means human, and *logos* which means science or knowledge. Thus, anthropology can be interpreted as a branch of science that studies humans. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, anthropology is defined as the science that studies humans, especially about the origins, various physical forms, customs, and beliefs that existed in the past. James L. Peacock explains that the notion of anthropology emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of humanity in various forms of diversity (Wiranata & Sh, 2011).

Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat stated that at first the term anthropology meant the science that studied the physical characteristics of humans. As it developed, the term began to be used mainly in Britain and America with a meaning similar to ethnology in its early days. In England, the term anthropology has even begun to replace the term ethnology, while in America, anthropology has a broader meaning as it includes the physical and social aspects of the science of human beings. However, in Western and Central Europe, anthropology is still understood as a science that only studies humans in terms of their physical characteristics (Diandra, 2021).

Ideally, the writings of missionaries and explorers in the 18th and 19th centuries would be an important reference documenting various regions such as Africa, North America, the Pacific region, and other regions around the world. This written information then became the initial foundation for the development of the first writings in the field of anthropology in the Western world in the latter half of the 19th century. Previously, Western scientists had studied the human life system and the factors that influenced it. However, most of these studies are still speculative and based more on hypotheses than empirical data. This was

evident in the first half of the 18th century, when figures such as Hume, Adam Smith, Ferguson, Montesquieu, Condorcet, and other thinkers wrote about primitive societies. Although their works have a high intellectual value, the approach used has not been based on scientific experiments with variables that can be measured systematically. On the contrary, their thinking is more influenced by their respective philosophical views. Towards the end of the 19th century, a large amount of information about the different types of human societies around the world was collected. One of the most famous collections comes from Sir James Frazer, who compiled various religious beliefs and ritual practices. The collection was later published in several series under the title *The Golden Bough*. This information was further enriched through follow-up studies conducted by missionaries and colonial administrative officials in the colonies (Miftakhuddin, 2020).

In addition, in the early 20th century, anthropologists began to focus more on conducting direct field research on various groups of people. This trend intensified after A.C. Haddon conducted a study in the Melanesian region, followed by Radcliffe-Brown who researched the Andaman people, and Bronislaw Malinowski who studied the life of the people in the Trobriand Islands. In the development of anthropology, there are at least two main streams that have had a great influence on modern anthropology. The first school originated in England, which emphasized the study of empirical facts, experiments, and very detailed descriptions of the object of research. This school is widely adopted by scientists in Germany and the United States. Meanwhile, the second school comes from France, which puts forward a *holistic analytic intellectualism* approach in its analysis. However, according to Akbar S. Ahmad, social anthropologists tend to focus only on the social aspects of human life, especially relationships between others in a certain community environment. Other dimensions of social life and civilization that are very complex are often ignored in their studies (ADIJAYA, 2024).

As mentioned earlier, the emergence of modern anthropology cannot be separated from the context of the interests of colonialism. When

Napoleon invaded Egypt, he brought with him about 150 scientists from various disciplines, including sociologists and anthropologists. The influence of orientalist thought on the study of anthropology, especially in the view of the Eastern world, is very significant. This often causes the results of studies of Eastern societies to be biased or seem vague. In his work *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said reveals that the orientalist view of the Orientals portrays them as an irrational, backward, childish, and essentially different society from the West. On the contrary, the European nation is positioned as a stable, highly moral, mature, and free society from shortcomings. Many orientalists, when discussing Islam, prefer to use the term *Muhammadanism* rather than Islam. This is reflected, for example, in the titles of the book *Muhammadanism* by H.A.R. Gibb and *Muhammadan Festivals* by Gustave E. von Grunebaum. Even prestigious dictionaries such as *the Oxford Dictionary* continue to use the term, despite the rejection of Muslims (Boelaars, 1984).

Until now, the influence of orientalist thought on anthropology is still quite strong. Several orientalist figures such as A.J. Arberry, H.A.R. Gibb, Bernard Lewis, von Grunebaum, and Montgomery Watt even helped shape methodological concepts in various anthropological studies. This influence is evident in the work of a number of anthropologists, such as M.E. Meeker in his book *Literature and Violence in North Arabia*, where he states that the Bedouin community in the northern region of the Arabian Peninsula has the view that violence is at the core of political life. Furthermore, Meeker describes that Bedouin people's perceptions of family, property, and social relationships are framed in a mindset that is limited by violence. This kind of view is not surprising, given that Meeker draws heavily on Charles Doughty, a writer known for his strong anti-Islam stance. Another example can be found in the work of Patricia Jeffrey who examines the lives of Muslim women in Delhi. She titled her research *Frogs in a Well*, which metaphorically reflects a reductive view of the world of Muslim women in the society (Zandro, 2024).

Thus, modern anthropology in the Western world has undergone a significant transformation from an early evolutionist and colonial

approach to a more reflective, critical, and contextual paradigm. This development is marked by a shift from the study of "foreign" societies to an emphasis on methodological reflection, power relations, as well as the importance of participatory and eme perspectives in cultural research. Figures such as Bronisław Malinowski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, and postmodern thinkers encouraged Western anthropology to be more aware of the biases of researchers and political positions in cultural representations (Amin & Murtaufiq, 2017).

Meanwhile, local wisdom is a set of cultural values that are formed through the interaction of people with their environment, both physical, social, and spiritual. These values grow organically, are passed down from generation to generation, and serve as a guideline for life in facing and solving various social problems. In the Southern Tapanuli region, local wisdom is reflected in various forms, such as customs, customary legal systems, and social practices that have been firmly rooted in people's lives, including kinship systems, dispute resolution mechanisms, and the implementation of customary ceremonies.

b. Rediscovering Islamic Anthropology: Perspectives, Methods, and Challenges

Ideally, modern anthropology developed in the hands of Western scientists, especially missionaries and colonial administrative officials, but this does not mean that anthropology was entirely the work of them. The history of science actually records that Islamic scientists have an important role in building and formulating the foundations of anthropology and other social sciences. Some important figures such as Ibn Khaldun, al-Biruni, Ibn Battuta, al-Mas'udi, al-Idrisi, Ibn Zubair, and Raghīb al-Ashfahani, the author of *the book Tafshil 'n Nasyatain wa Tahshil 's Sa'adatain*, are examples of thinkers who contributed greatly. In the modern era, a number of Muslim scientists such as Dr. Bintu Syathi, 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Dr. Aminah Nushair, Abdul Mun'im Allam, Muhammad Khadar, Dr. Zaki Isma'il, Dr. Akbar S. Ahmad, Kurshid Ahmad, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Quthb, Muhammad Quthb, Abul Wafa

at-Taftazani, Al 'Ajami, and others have continued important anthropological studies in the context of Islam (Fajarini, 2014).

Ibn Khaldun's work, along with his theories and scientific material, has preceded and even surpassed the works of Western scientists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, Ernest Gellner, and other Western scientists. Gellner's early theories, the leadership typology developed by Weber, and the Pareto concept of elite circulation in Islamic societies were actually modifications of the ideas formulated by Ibn Khaldun. Unfortunately, Ibn Khaldun's intellectual legacy was not developed much further by scholars after his time. According to Akbar S. Ahmad, among the Islamic scientists who made great contributions to the field of anthropology, al-Biruni deserves to be called the Father of Anthropology. The reason for al-Biruni's selection is explained in detail in Akbar S. Ahmad's article entitled *Al-Biruni: The First Anthropologist*. According to Akbar, al-Biruni was a true anthropological scientist with very high characteristic qualities. One of al-Biruni's important works is *the Kitab Al-Hind*, which remains one of the main references on South Asia to this day. Therefore, it can be concluded that anthropology and other social sciences were actually born from the hands of Muslim scientists, some a thousand years before they were systematically studied by Western scientists. Thus, when Muslims re-study these sciences, they are actually "rediscovering" the scientific heritage that they have had for a long time (bin Khaldun & Abdurrahman, 2001).

Classical Muslim scientists such as Ibn Khaldun and Al-Biruni were not just historical figures, but pioneers who laid the foundations of scientific thought in the fields of social sciences and anthropology long before modern anthropological terms and disciplines were known in the Western world. Ibn Khaldun, with his monumental work *Muqaddimah*, introduced the concept of sociology and the theory of the cycle of civilization which is an important reference to this day. Al-Biruni through his comprehensive research on culture, religion, and community life in South Asia shows a deep and systematic multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, rediscovering Islamic anthropology is not just a remembrance

of the past, but an intellectual imperative to appreciate, excavate, and redevelop this rich intellectual heritage in order to be relevant and contribute to contemporary social studies. By reviving these classical ideas, Muslims can build an authentic social science foundation rooted in their own cultural and religious values, while opening a constructive dialogue with global science (State & Latua, 2025).

Meanwhile, the perspective of Islamic anthropology has a peculiarity that fundamentally distinguishes it from the approach of Western anthropology. In Islamic anthropology, religion is not seen as an additional variable or just one of the factors in social analysis, but rather as the core and main foundation in understanding the social and cultural structure of Muslim society. Islamic religious values form a framework of thought that directs the norms, ethics, and behavior of individuals and groups in daily life. In other words, religion is the main source that influences all aspects of social life, from the patterns of social interaction, the legal system, to the cultural traditions that develop in society. This approach allows the study of Islamic anthropology to capture the complexity of social dynamics that are not only material, but also spiritual, thus providing a more holistic and authentic picture of the lives of Muslim communities in different parts of the world (Syafaatunnisa et al., 2024).

The development of methods in Islamic anthropology must be able to integrate a harmonious balance between objective empirical approaches and ethical and moral principles derived from Islamic teachings. This research method not only focuses on systematic data collection and field observation, but also places respect for religious values as the main ethical foundation in each stage of research. Thus, this method seeks to avoid the cultural biases that often arise in conventional anthropological studies, especially those that ignore the religious and cultural context of the society being studied. In addition, this approach ensures that the results of the research are not only scientifically valid, but also do not contradict or damage the moral and social norms embraced by the Muslim community,

so that the resulting studies are able to reflect social realities with accuracy while still upholding Islamic values (A. Harahap & Kahpi, 2021).

Rediscovering Islamic anthropology opens the door to a constructive dialogue between modern science and the classical Islamic scientific tradition that is rich in philosophical and methodological thought. The synergy between these two domains is essential to create a more comprehensive and in-depth social understanding, which is not only based on empirical data, but also pays attention to the spiritual and cultural values that are the foundation of Muslim life. Through this approach, Islamic anthropology not only enriches the treasures of global social sciences, but also plays an active role in maintaining and preserving the integrity of cultural and religious heritage, as well as bridging the gap between old traditions and contemporary challenges faced by Muslim societies in the modern era (Gutari, 2022).

Islamic anthropology, developed with its distinctive perspective, is able to make a significant contribution to enriching the treasures of global social sciences. An approach that places human values, social justice, and spiritual balance at the center of the analysis, offers a highly relevant methodological and theoretical alternative to understanding the complexity of the dynamics of modern society. By integrating Islamic ethical values, Islamic anthropology not only focuses on structural and cultural aspects, but also pays special attention to the dimensions of social justice and welfare, so as to be able to present more holistic and sustainable solutions to various social problems facing humanity today (Assingkily, 2021).

Revitalisasi antropologi Islam tidak hanya sekadar menghidupkan. It is a contemporary and strategic attempt to understand the social dynamics of Muslims in a holistic and holistic way. This approach integrates the various dimensions of social, cultural, spiritual, and political life into a whole, thus capturing the complexity of the realities of modern Muslim society more accurately. Thus, Islamic anthropology not only serves as a discipline that analyzes social phenomena, but also as an important instrument in the development of social science in general as

well as in the formation of a more just, inclusive, and harmonious society, based on the values of universal justice and balance (Makky et al., 2022).

c. Objects of Islamic Anthropological Studies and Their Relevance in the Era of Digitalization

In the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization that hits almost all aspects of human life today, the object of Islamic anthropology studies has undergone very significant changes and transformations. These changes are not only about the physical location of social interaction, but also touch on the way of view, communication, and cultural and religious practices that are now taking place in the virtual realm or virtual space. This phenomenon opens up a new dimension in the study of Islamic anthropology, which must be able to capture the new nuances that emerge due to digitalization, such as the formation of virtual communities, the practice of digital rituals, and the challenges and opportunities that arise in the social life of modern Muslims. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of how the digital age affects the religious mindset, interaction, and practice of Muslims is crucial. Islamic anthropology as a discipline must be able to adapt and innovate in its methods and perspectives to remain relevant and able to answer the complexity of social realities that continue to develop in this digital age (Sari et al., 2024).

Classically, the object of Islamic anthropology studies covers various aspects of Muslim social life that are closely interrelated, ranging from religious rituals that are a means of strengthening faith and identity, norms and values that govern individual and collective behavior, to the structure of the family as the smallest social unit that plays an important role in the inheritance of Islamic culture and teachings. In addition, the Islamic legal system (sharia) is also the main focus of the study, as it not only regulates ritual and moral aspects, but also controls various social, economic, and political relations within Muslim communities. Thus, Islamic anthropology does not view Islam solely as a belief system or spiritual doctrine, but as the foundation that underlies the formation of culture, social identity, and patterns of interaction and social structure in society. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of

how religion and culture interact with each other and shape the social realities of Muslims in different contexts and regions (Maulana, 2022).

Digitalization has brought about a very fundamental change in the way Muslims carry out their social and religious activities. Various religious activities that previously only took place face-to-face such as recitations, lectures, book studies, and even the implementation of certain religious rituals, can now be accessed and carried out online through various digital platforms. This phenomenon not only facilitates access and expands the reach of da'wah, but also creates a new space for virtual social interaction of Muslims. These changes have caused the object of Islamic anthropological studies to become increasingly broad and complex, transcending traditional physical and geographical boundaries. The study also includes how digital social interactions, social media use, and the evolving digital culture among Muslims are shaping new religious identities, norms, and practices. In addition, digitalization poses new challenges, such as how to maintain the authenticity and purity of Islamic teachings in cyberspace and to deal with rapidly changing social dynamics in the digital realm (Karim et al., n.d.).

The digital age opens up a limitless space for Muslims around the world, allowing them to communicate and network through various platforms such as social media, online forums, and instant communication apps. This creates a new social dynamic where the Muslim community can exchange ideas, strengthen solidarity, and build a flexible and multidimensional religious identity. Digitalization has revolutionized the consumption patterns of religious culture and information among Muslims. Now, religious content ranging from lectures, interpretation of the Qur'an, to religious discussions can be accessed easily and quickly through various digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, and social media. This accessibility significantly affects the way Muslims understand and interpret the teachings of Islam, allowing for the emergence of new understandings and approaches that sometimes differ from classical traditions. In this context, the study of Islamic anthropology needs to explore how digital culture, with all its dynamics and characteristics,

contributes to the reinterpretation of Islamic traditions and values. This approach is important in order to capture the complexity of the interaction between technology, culture, and religion, as well as its impact on the religious identity and social practices of Muslims in the modern era (Huda et al., 2025).

Digital media has now become a strategic and very important tool in Islamic education and modern da'wah. Through platforms such as social media, instant messaging apps, and specialized websites, religious knowledge can be disseminated quickly and reach a much wider audience than conventional methods. The study of Islamic anthropology needs to examine in depth how this digital media is used as a means of da'wah and education, including how to build a solid and mutually supportive virtual community in cyberspace. In addition, it is important to understand the impact of the use of digital media on the religious understanding and daily religious practices of Muslims, especially in the context of changing social dynamics. This approach will help identify opportunities and challenges that arise in the process of modernizing Islamic da'wah through digital technology (Indonesia, n.d.).

The development of digital technology also has a significant impact on the legal aspects of Islamic family. Phenomena such as the increasing prevalence of online marriage, the spread of fatwas through digital media, and the implementation of mediation and family dispute resolution through digital platforms, mark a change in the way Muslims practice Islamic law in their daily lives. This change opens up a new field of study that is very important for Islamic anthropology, because it presents both challenges and opportunities in understanding how the dynamics of Islamic family law adapt and develop in the midst of technological modernization. This study examines not only the formal legal aspects, but also how religious and cultural values interact with technology, as well as their implications for social structures and family relationships in today's Muslim society (Zahra et al., 2025).

The existence of Islamic anthropology that is able to critically examine digital phenomena is very important in the context of the

development of Muslim society today. With a sensitive approach to Islamic values and cultural contexts, the study of Islamic anthropology can provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of digitalization on social interaction patterns, religious practices, and the formation of Muslim identities in the modern era. Through comprehensive and reflective research, Islamic anthropology helps Muslims to adapt to changes in technology and digital culture without having to lose the Islamic identity, principles, and values on which their lives are based. Thus, this discipline plays a strategic role in bridging tradition and modernity, while maintaining the sustainability of religious values in facing the challenges of globalization and digitalization (Anggraini, 2024).

The object of Islamic anthropology studies continues to evolve and is increasingly relevant in the era of digitalization, where various aspects of the social and religious life of Muslims are undergoing complex and multidimensional transformations. With an adaptive, critical, and Islamic values-based approach, Islamic anthropology has a strategic role in understanding and analyzing new phenomena that emerge in the digital space. This study not only opens up insights into changes in patterns of interaction, identity, and religious practices, but also provides guidance for Muslims in facing challenges and utilizing digital technology opportunities wisely, ethically, and in accordance with the principles of Islamic teachings. Thus, Islamic anthropology contributes to maintaining a balance between technological progress and the preservation of spiritual and social values in modern Muslim society (Soehadha, 2016).

2. Discussion

Religion as a cultural phenomenon shows that its existence is greatly influenced by the social and cultural realities that surround it. Religious practices in a community develop from religious doctrines that are then adapted according to local cultural conditions. This blend of religious teachings and cultural contexts is evident in the various different religious rituals between communities. For example, the celebration of Eid al-Fitr which is carried out differently in various regions; The Javanese

people recognize the sungkeman tradition as a form of respect and friendship to parents, while the Madurese people have the most important tradition, namely sharing food with family and neighbors (Adibah, 2017).

This phenomenon shows that the development of religion in society cannot be separated from the role of humans as cultural actors. However, this does not mean that religion is solely the product of human creation. Religion is a combination of the normative dimension, namely the teachings of religion itself, and the historical dimension, which is in the form of the interpretation of religious values embodied in ritual practices. Human interpretation of religious teachings is greatly influenced by the culture inherent in their community, so the form and meaning of these teachings can differ from one society to another.

In this context, the anthropological approach is very important because this discipline studies people and their cultures thoroughly. Anthropology seeks to understand human behavior and cultural diversity in order to explain religious phenomena more comprehensively. With a holistic approach and a deep commitment to human understanding, anthropology has become an essential discipline for studying religion and its social interaction with various cultures in the world (Mastiyah, 2024).

Anthropology is a branch of the social sciences that specifically studies human beings in various dimensions of their lives. The history of the development of this discipline can be traced back to the colonial period, when Western nations colonized Asia, Africa, Latin America, and indigenous tribal communities such as the Indians. In addition to carrying out colonial missions, they also carried out missions to spread Christianity. Missionaries and colonial employees stationed in the colonies not only carried out administrative or religious duties, but also recorded and reported on various aspects of local community life, such as language, race, customs, kinship systems, and various forms of ceremonies and rituals. This information is then used to support the interests of colonialism (M. R. Harahap, 2019).

A more serious interest in anthropology as a scientific discipline began to develop in the 19th century. Currently, anthropology is used as a

research approach focused on tracing the origins of humans. Anthropological research includes the collection and analysis of early human fossils, the study of the animal species that are most biologically close to humans (primates), and the study of human communities that are considered the most ancient and still surviving. The entire study is framed in an evolutionary paradigm. At that time, anthropologists believed that human society developed in a linear order, like a rung in the history of social evolution. Westerners are considered to have reached the highest stage in the hierarchy, while Asian societies are positioned at the intermediate level, and so-called "primitive" communities are at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder. This view was heavily influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution. However, over time, especially in the United States, the theory of social evolution began to gain rejection, especially from fundamentalists who ideologically rejected Darwin's thought.

Research in religious anthropology shows that there is a correlation between religious beliefs and socio-economic and political conditions of society. The findings show that poor or marginalized groups tend to be attracted to religious movements that are messianic in nature, i.e. those that promise social change or liberation. In contrast, economically established groups of people generally support forms of religion that maintain the existing social order because it is considered to benefit their position. The anthropological approach also reveals that religious doctrines and phenomena do not stand alone, but are closely tied to the social institutions that sustain their existence. This means that a person's religiosity is not only a personal expression, but is also influenced by social and symbolic interactions that occur in the community environment in which the individual lives (T. Ismail et al., 2023).

The anthropological approach in Islamic studies refers to the use of cultural and social anthropological perspectives as a method to understand various religious phenomena in the lives of Muslims. This approach allows religion to be studied from various social perspectives, not only from a theological-normative point of view, but also from the

way it is lived, practiced, and integrated into the daily life of Muslim society. As explained by Abuddin Nata, through an anthropological approach, religion as an empirical phenomenon can be analyzed in depth until it appears the common thread and historical-sociological background behind the birth of certain teachings. Anthropology seeks to see the relationship between religion and other social institutions, such as economics, politics, family structure, education, and customs. This approach affirms that religious doctrine and religious practice cannot be separated from the social context in which it grows and develops. Religion does not stand alone as an isolated system, but is always bound by the network of institutions and social structures of society that sustain and shape it. In this context, the anthropological approach not only maps religious phenomena, but also relates them to broader social dynamics. Thus, the anthropological approach can be understood as an analytical method for uncovering how religious phenomena arise and develop in society, as well as how these phenomena are closely related to existing social and institutional systems (Rejeki et al., 2023).

The anthropological approach, as explained by M. Dawan Rahardjo in the work of Taufik Abdullah and M. Rusli Karim, emphasizes the importance of direct observation in the field, often even participatory. This is different from the sociological approach which tends to be deductive and relies on abstract theoretical models. The anthropological approach departs from empirical data obtained through direct involvement in people's lives, resulting in inductive and contextual conclusions. This approach has become very relevant to understand the phenomenon of religion, especially since religion has never been present in a cultural vacuum, but has always been closely attached to the social, symbolic, and historical dynamics of the society that embraces it. Anthropological research on religion requires foresight in capturing social practices in the field, not just normatively analyzing teachings. Therefore, this approach is descriptive, not normative; The goal is not to judge the truth or one of the religious practices, but to understand how the practice is carried out, interpreted, and maintained by the community of its

adherents. The research was carried out through intensive and continuous fieldwork with thick description techniques, namely in-depth and systematic observations. In some cases, researchers even have to live with the community (living in) to understand their rhythm and lifestyle directly (Subakat, 2022).

Thus, the relationship between religion and society becomes highly relevant, especially when it is associated with contemporary discourses such as postmodernism. In the postmodern framework, there is no single narrative that can represent the truth absolutely, including in terms of religion. This approach opens up space to appreciate the diversity of religious expressions that emerge in a variety of local contexts. Anthropology, with its descriptive and interpretive approaches, is very much in line with the spirit of postmodernism which recognizes the plurality of meaning and the importance of context in understanding social reality. Therefore, the anthropological study of the religious practices of Muslims is not only important to understand Islam as a religion, but also as a cultural phenomenon that continues to move and transform in history and social space. This approach is becoming increasingly relevant in the era of globalization and digitalization, where religious practices are increasingly diverse, open, and influenced by various cross-cultural and ideological interactions.

D. Conclusion

The study of Islamic anthropology in this study confirms that Islamic teachings are not only understood as a set of textual norms, but also as a social practice that lives and develops in diverse cultural contexts. The anthropological approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the dynamic relationship between religion and culture, by showing that Islamic expression is influenced by the social, political, economic, and historical factors that surround it.

Through descriptive, participatory, and comparative methods, Islamic anthropology plays a role in bridging the gap between normative doctrine and everyday religious practice, as well as opening up a space for

dialogue between religious texts and the social reality of Muslims. These findings show that Islam is practiced contextually and adaptively, especially in the face of social changes triggered by globalization and digitalization.

Thus, the study of Islamic anthropology has strong academic significance in enriching Islamic studies, as well as making a practical contribution to understanding the dynamics of Muslim life in a more humanistic, contextual, and inclusive manner.

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