

Preventing Religious Conflict in Papua Land: Adopting Cultural Traditions of Peacebuilding

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This article aims to explain why recent tensions between religious groups in Papua, Indonesia, did not develop into ethnoreligious conflicts such as those which broke out in Ambon and Poso. Such tensions are likely to occur because of the migration of Muslim ethnicities from elsewhere in Indonesia that leads to political, racial, religious, and economic divisions. Migrant populations are generally Malay, Muslim, and prosperous, while native Papuans are Melanesian, Christian, and impoverished. The Christian indigenous Papuans feel threatened by the influx of Muslim migrants. Based on Lederach's concept of peace agents, we argue that the adoption of cultural mechanisms driving peace agencies is central to preventing ethnoreligious conflict. The curricula of local schools should include such local wisdom in order to reach all ethnoreligious groups.

Keywords Papua, migration, religious tensions, peace agents, cultural traditions

Introduction

Papua and West Papua, the easternmost provinces of Indonesia, have been experiencing prolonged, violent secessionist conflicts since 1965. The Indonesian government claims that the integration of Papua¹ was already finalized via the 1969 Act of Free Choice in which almost all 1,024 Papuan representatives, selected by the central government, voted to join Indonesia. However, most Papuan intellectuals argue that this plebiscite was manipulated and against the principle of the 1962 New York Agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands, namely that the plebiscite should implement the one-man one-vote principle (Chauvel 2005; Saltford 2003; Drooglever 2009). Before 1998, various groups of the Free Papua Movement fought for independence by using guerrilla strategy against the Indonesian armed forces. After the 1998 Indonesian political reform that guaranteed freedom of expression, resistance groups transformed their violent methods into a political movement using democratic means such as

peaceful demonstrations and establishment of mass organizations (Macleod 2015). Responding to the demand of the Papuan people for independence, the central government put into effect the particular autonomy of Papua in 2001. Nevertheless, many provisions in that law have not been implemented, such as those on recognizing the fundamental rights of indigenous Papuans (McGibbon 2004; Katharina 2019). After 2001, the conflict not only developed secessionist movements, but also caused communal violence among indigenous ethnic groups in local politics, as well as religious tensions between Muslim migrants and native Christian Papuans.

The significant increase in the population of Muslim migrant groups in Papua Land resulted from national government policies, under the authoritarian Suharto regime, which promoted economic development and demographical changes in this region. The national government, in the 1970s, initiated the transmigration policy, particularly from Javanese and Balinese ethnicities, into Papua Land because this region, measuring 431,918 square kilometers, still had a small population of only 923,440 (Gault-Williams 1987; Aditjondro 1986). Along with spontaneous migration, mainly from Bugis, Buton, and Makassarase ethnicities, this policy transformed the ethnic and demographic composition of the province and set the stage for ethnic, religious, class, and regional conflicts. Ironically, the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the democratization of Indonesia, characterized by electoral mobilization along ethnic and religious lines, further politicized and polarized the relations of ethnoreligious groups in Papua.

This article investigates the impacts of migration and ethnoreligious and class cleavages in Papua, and how seemingly innocuous practices, such as the Muslim call to prayer and construction of mosque towers, are likely to irritate and trigger backlashes among the indigenous Papua Christians against Muslim migrants. The authors argue that religious tensions in Papua Land are likely to accelerate the marginalization and depopulation of Papuan natives. The authors advocate the indispensable role of “peaceful mechanisms” at grassroots level based on traditional norms to act as bridges between Christians and Muslims in Papua. This research is based on literature studies as well as observations in Jayapura City of Papua in 2017 and 2018.

Literature Review

During the Dutch occupation of Papua Land, from 1898 until 1962, there were very few cases of religious tension and conflict. Oral history among the indigenous people only mentions one case, in 1953, in which heads of Christian villages in Kaimana of Western coastal Papua Land demanded the colonial government dismiss a Muslim ruler due to his support for Indonesian integration (Pamungkas 2015). Many Muslim migrants married local people, who had inhabited this area

since the 18th century, and lived peacefully with Papuan natives who converted to Christianity in the 20th century (Widjojo 2010). During the New Order regime era, as elsewhere in Indonesia, such ethnoreligious tensions and conflicts were suppressed by the regime by all means in order to ensure social order and political stability.

When voices of Papuan independence were publicly raised in 1998, most Papuan narratives held that the Indonesian image represented colonial rulers, Muslims, and the Malay race, while the Papuan identity represented colonized subjects, Christian, and the Melanesian race. Political divisions and turmoil in this land did not lead to religious conflict because of the vital role played by Papuan Muslim Solidarity whose membership included indigenous Papuans supporting Papuan concerns on human rights abuses and the right of self-determination (Pamungkas 2008; Slama and Munro 2015). However, when religious conflicts broke out in 2000 in Mollucas Province, the neighbor of Papua, a group of *Laskar Jihad*, who defended Muslim groups in the conflict, tried to come into Sorong, an industrial city on the western coast of Papua. Their pretext was to protect Muslim communities and Indonesian integration from the supporters of the Free Papua Movement who were conducting peaceful rallies in the city. During that time, Muslim communities living in the city rejected the coming of *Laskar Jihad* in order to prevent religious conflicts from spreading all over Papua Land. They believed that the Indonesian administration could handle such a secessionist conflict without the involvement of Jihadist groups.

Furthermore, the Papuan Council Presidium (*Presidium Dewan Papua* or PDP), established in 2000, which led a peaceful independence struggle, did not support ethnoreligious cleavages and conflicts aimed at freeing all ethnic and religious groups in this Land. Although the membership of the Presidium was predominantly drawn from Free Papua Movement elements, who were early on mobilizing support from the Christian native Papuan population, these separatist groups had no hostile relations with Muslim communities since their only enemies were the Indonesian armed forces and police. These political attitudes have continued to prevail until the present day in Papua. All political resistance groups established after the PDP folded in 2002, such as the National Committee of West Papua and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, have not supported ethnoreligious conflicts and tribal wars. In 2002, to respond to the news and prevent communal conflict in Papua Land, some religious leaders declared “Papua the Land of Peace” (Ernas 2014).

However, anti-Muslim sentiment, which was in line with anti-Indonesian state feelings, continued to flourish among native Papuans living in the central mainland of Papua, mainly in the Baliem Valley, where Indonesian military operations took place in 1978. Some Muslim groups there included migrant traders and government officials from outside of Papua in addition to a group of Papuan natives who converted to Islam after the military operation ended. In

1998, when free Papua sentiments strengthened, political tensions in this area developed into religious tension between Muslims and Christians, but still did not lead to violent outbreaks (Farhadian 2005). Since the Central Mountain area, dominated by native Christian Papuan populations, is the stronghold of the Free Papua Movement, there is a misleading opinion that Christian Papuans are supporters of the Free Papua Movement (Warta 2000).

No violent religious conflict has occurred in recent years between Muslim and Christian groups in Papua Land, with the exception the “2015 incident” when a group of Christian Papuan natives attacked Muslims who performed *Iedl Fitr* prayers in Tolikara in the Central Mountain region. However, there are religious tensions that frequently tend to erupt into communal conflicts in this area. For example, in 2007 there was a series of demonstrations conducted by Christian communities in Jayapura, the capital of Papua Province, to protest against the establishment of the Islamic State Institute by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Another example is the protest by Christian communities against the establishment of a grand mosque in Manokwari, the provincial capital of West Papua, in 2005. Their reason is that Manokwari is considered a “gospel city,” the first place in Papua Land where the Christian missionaries, Carl Otto and Johan Geissler, introduced Christianity in 1855, and from this place Protestantism spread to the whole of Papua Land (Kamma 1981; Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008). In 2007, the regency parliament of Manokwari drafted a bill labeling this regency a gospel city, meaning that all public life and symbols in the regency should adopt Christian values and teachings, as was done by the *Syariah* law in Aceh (Pamungkas 2008). Such a local bill faced many objections from both the national government and religious leaders because it would discriminate against non-Christian populations living in the regency. However, these religious tensions in Jayapura City and Manokwari did not develop into communal conflicts due to the significant roles played by the Papuan Muslim Assembly, the continuation of Papuan Muslim Solidarity, and a representative of native Papuan Muslims that created a bridge for cultural dialogue between Muslim migrants and Christian community leaders (Pamungkas 2008; Slama and Munro 2015).

Although most religious tensions ended by peaceful means, religious competition between Muslim and Christian groups has never totally ended. The expansion of Muslims into Papua Land after 1998 was started by the arrival of Islamic political groups who lacked an understanding of indigenous Papuan culture, which in turn resulted in inter-community tensions (Alhamid 2013). The contestation of religious broadcasting in public spaces of Jayapura City began to occur between Islamic and Christian groups. Since religious life practices integrate with political life, the struggle for public space is symbolic and seen as necessary within the political positions of the city government (Qodir 2015). By the 2010s, the role of the Muslim Papuan Assembly started to undergo decline in playing its moderating role because of the deepening Islamic conservatism as

found elsewhere in Indonesian cities. Therefore, religious tensions were no longer mediated by inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues.

Learning from the active efforts of the Muslim Papuan Assembly to facilitate inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogues between Muslims and Christians, we find the need for cultural interactions as mechanisms to prevent religious conflicts. Regarding efforts to promote peace, Lederach (1997) introduced a concept of peace agents that play a role in encouraging reconciliation processes at the level of civil society. Unlike Galtung, who emphasizes the structural dimension, Lederach emphasizes the cultural dimension and the need to encourage a peace process departing from civil society. The more peace agents work, the higher the likelihood that reconciliation processes will succeed at the community level.

A study of the reconciliation processes found in several conflicts elsewhere in Indonesia, such as Poso and Ambon, was conducted by Bräuchler (2009). She says that many researchers neglect the peace agency role at the grassroots level as the main actors in the reconciliation process. Bräuchler provides an example in which most peace efforts in Mollucas, which experienced violent conflicts between religious groups, were initiated and carried out by local people, community leaders, and religious followers at the grassroots levels. They tried to break through the structural obstacles that were hindering the process of reconciliation. In line with Bräuchler, Al-Qurtuby (2012) states that reconciliation between religious communities was carried out both in conflict areas and in areas that were considered peaceful. For example, reconciliation in Ambon was carried out by peaceful provocateur movements driven by leaders of the Islamic and Christian communities at the grassroots level. The success of reconciliation between religious groups in Poso and Ambon depended on the cooperation of all groups, especially peace activists and actors from religious groups.

Peace agents need an ecosystem to make sustainable peace possible by struggling with justice to achieve a favorable peace. Most concepts concerning peaceful relations among ethnic groups, including religious categories, are generally analyzed with mainstream perspectives in the peace study discourse. This includes the concepts of “positive peace” and “negative peace” in Galtung’s work (1967). Negative peace is the absence of organized and systematic physical violence by the state or a social group towards a particular community. The positive peace concept is related to the absence of symbolic and structural violence, namely the creation of justice, harmony, and social cohesiveness, which are generally long-term processes.

Populations of Papua and West Papua Provinces

Based on the 2010 Indonesian National Census (see Appendix Table 1), the population of Papua Province was 2,833,381 consisting of 15.89% Muslims,

65.48% Protestants, 17.67% Catholics, 0.90% Hindus, and 0.05% Buddhists. While West Papua Province's population in the same year (see Appendix Table 2) was 760,422 of which 38.40% were Muslim, 53.77% Protestant, 7.03% Catholics, 0.11% Hindus, and 0.08% Buddhists. Although there are no statistical data to prove it, most Muslims in both provinces belonged to non-Papuan ethnicities, except those who lived on the west coast of Papua, and a few groups which inhabited the Central Mountain region. Most Protestants and Catholics, who constituted the Christian communities, included Papuan indigenous people and some ethnicities from outside of Papua.

In Papua Province, the proportion of Muslims to regency population varied among regencies because most of them lived in provincial capitals such as Jayapura City (44.07%), or in regencies receiving transmigrants like Merauke (46.60%), Keerom (46%), Jayapura (26.07%), and Nabire (39.03%). The number of Muslims is significant in Mimika regency in which Freeport-McMoran, a transnational mining company, operated, and in Mimika (32.62%). In West Papua Province (see Appendix, Table 2), in addition to Fak-fak (60.63%) and Kaimana (41.94%), significant Muslim populations lived in transmigration receiver regencies including Teluk Bintuni (45.42%), Manokwari (30.75%), and Sorong (55.22%), and also in the industrial city of Sorong (44.39%). In regencies or cities where the Muslim number is significant, usually the number of native Papuans was less than half of the population. Such was the case in Merauke (37.27%), Jayapura City (34.92%), and Keerom (41.33%). The same phenomenon is observed in West Papua: the proportion of native Papuans was less in regencies dominated by Muslim migrants, such as Sorong (36.7%) and Sorong City (29.93%).

Religious tensions between Muslim and Christian groups have usually occurred in urban areas where the numbers of Muslim migrants were significant, with the exception of the provincial capitals, Jayapura City and Manokwari, where such tensions can also be observed. The only case of religious conflict in a regency where the Christian native population is a majority occurred in Tolikara in the Central Mountain region. It seems that class differences underpinned ethnoreligious tension and conflict in this particular region. There is labor division in Papua based on religion and ethnicity in which native Papuans, who mostly are Christians, dominate government offices at all levels. Even the Special Autonomy Law of Papua stipulates that the provincial governor and the vice governor must be Papuan indigenous people. However, almost all business sectors, especially services, banking, industries, construction, and transportation, are in the hands of migrant people because they have better human resources and education than the native people (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008). Most native populations work in a subsistence economy by cultivating sweet potatoes and other crops, animal hunting, and logging. Statistical data demonstrate that in regencies or cities where migrant populations are numerous significant, the number of people living under the poverty line is less, and vice versa. In Merauke,

Jayapura, Jayapura City, and Keerom, the percentage of poor people is between 10% and 16%, according to the 2010 National Census.

The tension between Protestants and Catholics is not significant due to the operational distribution of missionaries in the colonial period. Protestants spread in areas from the western to the northern and central parts of Papua Land, while Catholics were allowed to be dominant in the southern part (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Drooglever 2009). The number of Christian migrants is high, but they are still less numerous than Muslim migrants. Unfortunately, there are no statistical data on migrant populations by religion in either province.

Before world religions, such as Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholicism, came into Papua Land, each ethnic group of native Papuans already had a traditional belief system based on belief in the “rulers of the universe,” which usually took the form of ancestral spirits (Sinaga 2019). Although Papuan natives have mostly abandoned such a belief system, in times of difficulties or disasters Papuans will usually seek solutions in traditional belief systems (Rumansara 2015). The propagation of these world religions during the colonial period and up until the 1998 political Reformation did not pose any problem. However, as a consequence of the prolonged conflict in Papua, religious issues became ingredients for political provocation in the 1998-2000 period. Another impact has been the development of Papuan political identity, which strengthened after the implementation of individual autonomy in 2001 (Rohim 2014). Autonomy, which includes the politics of recognition, provides privileges in politics and the distribution of resources to Papuan natives who are predominantly Christian.

Some Recent Religious Tensions in Papua

Issues of religion in Papua reemerged into the communal public space when the Tolikara incident exploded in 2015. Controversies arose when a mosque caught fire and the stigma of religious intolerance was attached to Papuans. A report by the Communicative Forum Between Religious Groups (2015) stated that the mosque located at the market complex was set on fire when a crowd attacked the compound after many Papuans were shot down by security forces while protesting the activities of *ledl Fitr* prayers. According to the report, this incident exploded due to prejudice and suspicion between Muslim migrant groups and Christian groups, especially the Indonesian Evangelist Church. Religious fanaticism, ethnic primordialism, marginalization of indigenous Papuans, and demographic changes are challenges in maintaining religious harmony in Papua Land. If such problems are ignored in other places in Papua, then suspicion between groups and stereotyping will develop into communal conflicts, as a result of the demographic changes taking place.

The most visible area with a growing number of migrants, especially Muslims,

is Jayapura Regency. Since 2013, the development of this regency has been going on as a buffer area for the city of Jayapura. Migrants, who consist of Bugis, Buton, Makassarese, Javanese, and other Indonesian ethnic groups, contribute to making the wheels of the economy run, and they came into this area with their families and their cultural values from their places of origin. However, the development of Muslim migrant communities raises a perceived threat to Christian native groups. It is due to the significant proportion (26%) of Muslim (migrants) to the whole population in this regency in 2010. The migrant people usually live in urban settlements and the centers of economic growth, like Sentani and Nimboran. In comparison, most of the (Christian) natives live in village areas with subsistence economy and low access to essential services, such as health and education.

In 2018 tension developed between Muslim and Christian communities in Sentani district, the capital of Jayapura Regency, related to the renovation of the *Al-Aqsa* mosque. The mosque management planned to build the minaret higher than the nearby church. Learning of the plan, in March 2018, some priests affiliated with Jayapura Association of Churches sent a letter to the Jayapura Regent, stating:

- (i) The call to prayer sound which has been heard from the loudspeaker to the general public so far must be directed into the mosque; (ii) It is not permissible to devote all Papuan resistance specifically in Jayapura Regency; (iii) School students in public schools are not allowed to wear uniforms/clothing that have a particular religious nuance; (iv) There should be no unique spaces such as prayer rooms in public facilities, schools, hospitals, markets, terminals, and government offices; (v) In housing areas there must be no construction of mosques and prayer rooms; (vi) Construction of houses of worship in Jayapura Regency must obtain recommendations from church associations, local government, and tribal council; (vii) The height of the building of a house of worship and the tower of another religion must not exceed the height of the existing church building; (viii) The Jayapura Regency's Government and Parliament must draft a bill on religious harmony (Republika 2018, authors' translation).

Based on the statement's eight points, the association requested that the construction of the *Al-Aqsa* mosque tower be suspended, and the tower dismantled before March 31, 2018. In his interview with the *Republika* daily, the Chair of the association said that Muslims in the Sentani district wrongly understood tolerance (*ibid.*). This district is part of the *Kenambai Umbai*, the land of the gospel. It means the territory that God has blessed via Christian missionaries. Consequently, non-Christian groups should respect the Christian symbols and traditions, and all societal and governmental life should follow Christian teachings. Therefore, Muslims have to tolerate native Christian Papuans by not broadcasting the call to prayer. Some pastors considered that the Muslim call to prayer was a sign that Muslims disrespected the feelings of their surrounding Christian fellows. The provincial chairman of Indonesia Ulama Assembly, Saiful

Payage, stressed that Papuan Muslims' refusal of the association's demand for those points is irrational. The present-day Jayapura Regency is different from that in the past, when all communities living in this place were Christian.

A few days later, Jayapura's regent gathered several religious leaders to have a consultation session to find a solution. The groups attending the meeting included local government leaders, the Papuan People's Assembly, the Papuan Muslim Assembly, the Provincial Council of Ulama, and the Jayapura Association of Churches. A small team was appointed by the meeting to resolve the tensions. Finally, after a series of meetings, the Muslim leaders agreed that the minaret's height should not be allowed to exceed the current height. For their part, the Christian leaders revoked all their demands except those related to the minaret. Such an incident happened in 2017, one year after the election of the Jayapura regent and vice-regent. In the election, a Muslim migrant was elected vice-regent for the first time, while the regent was always a Christian native. So, the protest is a reflection against the growing dominance of Muslim migrants with a population now around 40% in the regency. Here, referring to ethnic group conflict theory (Gijsberts, Hagendoorn, and Sheepers 2004), religious intolerance is growing related to a perceived threat arising from economic, political, and religious competition.

Efforts to reject the construction of worship places in Papua Land were a reaction to the difficulty of obtaining permission to build churches in Muslim-dominated areas in many Indonesian provinces. Such is the case of the inferior majority syndrome, namely the reluctance of the majority group to allow religious minorities to build worship facilities. The majority group always claims that they have the right to decide whether or not places of worship for minority religions can be built (Sapriallah 2016).

Another critical issue was the arrival of *Laskar Jihad* in Papua land in 2015. The establishment of this group in Yogyakarta was related to the climate of openness following the fall of the New Order in 1998 and the political reforms that ensued. After the New Order's fall, Indonesia experienced a transition to democracy marked by a wave of political liberalization and democratization. By utilizing the openness and political system of liberal democracy, transnational Islamic networks emerged in Indonesia and spread to Papua Land. These included, for example, *Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), *Indonesian Mujahidin Assembly* (MMI), and *Laskar Jihad* (ICG 2008). Jafar Umar Thalib established *Laskar Jihad* to defend Muslim groups in ethnoreligious conflicts in Ambon and Poso. Many scholars believe that this group was related to some military and political elites that flourished during the end of the New Order period. During the authoritarian regime, as experienced by other Islamist groups, they focused only on religious activities. The transition to democracy provided them a way to express their values in public (Hasan 2002).

The rise of conservative Islamic groups and transnational migration, which

during the New Order regime had operated underground, followed the 1998 political reforms. In present-day Indonesia, the democratic political system is based on strong communitarian values suitable for utilizing identity politics to get popular support. In certain regencies and provinces, such as Jayapura and Papua, that have pluralistic ethnoreligious groups, the politics of identity has created ethnoreligious or racial tensions.

The presence of Jihadi groups in Papua Land changed its political and religious landscape and potentially exacerbated the peace process. Shortly after arriving in Jayapura, in December 2015, a group of Jihadi members clashed with a group of Papuan people. The Jihadi members felt disturbed by the religious songs played within a Christmas cottage. Various reactions to this incident emerged from both Muslim and Christian religious leaders. For example, Fadhal Alhamid, a Muslim leader, said that Laskar Jihad weakened the efforts to maintain peace in Papua Land. This group often used violent methods and gave support to religious intolerance. A Christian leader, Dedi Patywael, said that Jafar's presence disturbed the peace and religious harmony in Papua Land. Already several times, he and a number of religious organizations had asked the governor of Papua to expel Jafar (Lintas Papua 2017). However, the governor was reluctant to force him to leave Papua because he had not violated any Indonesian law. Four years later, approaching the 2019 general election, Jafar and his followers destroyed a house owned by a Christian in Jayapura City because the music coming from his house disturbed Jafar's preaching. Because of the intense pressure from all religious groups, the Papuan police then detained them. The court punished them with five-to-six months imprisonment. In that same year, Jafar passed away in prison because of a heart attack.

Migration as Social Context for Religious Tensions

The arrival of Laskar Jihad in Papua Land has made Christian communities increasingly feel threatened by this group. This feeling has been made worse by the reality of everyday life, namely the increasing number of migrant people, mostly Muslims, who dominate the economy. The reaction of Christians to Muslim (migrant) groups stems from their fear of Muslim dominance in the local economy and politics. Those groups with strong and more affluent connections belong to the Muslim migrant community, while native Papuans are mostly Christian and are increasingly marginal in economic competition. The symbols of Islam, such as mosques and Islamic schools, are being built in the public sphere in urban areas, including markets, residential areas, and government offices.

The displacement of Christian Papuan natives is a central discourse that has emerged into reality in Papua Land. Yosefa Alomang, a Papuan woman activist, claims that marginalization and discrimination of Christian indigenous Papuans

has been going on from 2001 to 2018. She projected that the percentage of Indonesian migrant populations in Papua and West Papua provinces has reached 55% and that of Papuans only 45%. This fact, according to Yosefa, is a death knell for Melanesians in Papua Land. She indicates: "Considering the spread of Christians, from time to time, the quality of faith development services continues to decline. On the contrary, the spread of Muslims continues to increase significantly" (Satu Harapan 2018, authors' translation). According to her, indigenous Papuans consider the transmigration program as an Islamization project of Papua. Since those who make spontaneous migrations are mostly Muslims, Yosefa is worried that indigenous Papuans, who are Christians and Catholics, will become a minority in their land by 2050. Therefore, she has asked all bishops in this land to prevent the increase of the non-Christian migrant population (*ibid.*).

Concerns about the depopulation and wave of migration of Muslims into Papua have been a focus of the International Crisis Group (ICG). In one of its publications, ICG (2008, 11) demonstrates the steady growth of Islam in Papua land. According to their analysis, based on the Central Statistics Bureau's data, most of the migrant population into this land in 2000 was Muslim (90%). The native Muslim Papuans (non-migrants) in Papua Land were around 9% of the Papuan native population, and they lived predominantly in the regencies from Raja Ampat to Kaimana. Most of the Papuan native population (81%) included Protestants and Catholics. While the migrant population resided in the urban areas, the natives resided in the interior parts of Papua; the indigenous Papuan population was only 34% of the urban population but 60% of the rural population in 2000. Church leaders generally believe that not all migrants register with the local government, and they fear that native Papuans will gradually become ethnoreligious minorities in their land.

The ICG data show that between 1969 and 1983 the government brought in 10,000 households, or 41,701 people, from outside into Papua, especially to Jayapura, Merauke, Manokwari, Paniai, and Sorong. Between 1981 and 1985, all 9,772 transmigrants were from Java, and most of them were Muslim. By 1985, since land available in other transmigration recipient areas had declined, Papua Land had become the leading destination for all government-sponsored transmigration. International criticism of transmigration into Papua Land, including those critics associated with Islamization, prompted the government in 1986 to send Christian populations from East Nusa Tenggara to transmigrate into Papua Land. However, at the same time, there was an increase in spontaneous migration from South and Southeast Sulawesi. Most spontaneous migrants were Muslim and lived in urban areas, and they quickly dominated the trading and transportation sectors.

The increasing number of migrants is acknowledged to be a powerful driving force in the economy of Papua Land. On the other hand, most of the migrants do not adjust their attitude to the Papuans' culture, including their religious cultures.

Both Muslim (migrant) and Christian (native and migrant) groups in Jayapura City compete to express their religious identities in the public sphere in order to assert their existence. Also, the construction of religious facilities shows that the contestation between the two groups is becoming fiercer. The two religious groups compete to show which is the most powerful in the city. Sometimes religious communities are also used by political elites, especially during general elections at the local and national levels (Alhamid 2014). The significant number of Muslim migrants has an impact on local politics. At present, the city vice-mayors of Jayapura and Sorong and the vice-regents of Keerom, Jayapura, and Merauke are from migrant communities.

Most Christian Papuans claim that “God’s Papua Land” is blessed via Christian missionaries, so Christian people or groups should be given recognition and privileges from the government (*ibid.*). In response, some say that Muslim migrant groups further strengthen many economic sectors; they have also re-entered the bureaucracy in the past to maintain their role in Papua Province and Jayapura City. Although religious and political elites hide this symbolic competition, it seems clear that it is likely to explode into violent conflict at the grassroots level. Latent conflicts continue to persist due to local government policies that prioritize indigenous Papuans or Christian communities based on the Special Autonomy Law. As a consequence, these two communities at the grassroots level are still suspicious of each other. For example, some Islamic communities suspect that Christian communities support Papua’s independence by controlling provincial and regency administrations. Meanwhile, Muslim groups support the national government by controlling the Papuan economy and carrying out Islamization.

Mutual suspicion between the two religious communities coincides with the divisions of ethnicity and class, and this also occurs in other regencies, such as Merauke. Despite the tolerance of Christian groups towards Muslim migrants in the Soeta District of Merauke Regency, the community remains divided between migrants and indigenous people. All indigenous Papuans living in the district are Protestants and Catholics, while immigrants are Muslim employees, traders, and transmigrants. This division often causes religious issues to arise. For example, when a Muslim student from a migrant family wore a headscarf, the school did not allow it. After his parents protested and explained to the school, they finally did not question it again (Murtadho 2014). Muslims in this district are the largest single group, 45% of the population, and most of them are transmigrant people. This change in demographic composition following transmigration make some Papuan native activists suspect that the transmigration project is a veiled Islamization project.

The demographic changes marked by the considerable increase of immigrants has given rise to a collective psychological feeling that Indonesians seek to exclude Papuans from their land (Chauvel 2005). During the New Order, indigenous

Papuans were concerned about the domination of non-Papuans because both government officials and new residents were from outside Papua, and they considered Papuans as second-class citizens (Chauvel and Bhakti 2004). Indigenous Papuans realized that from the beginning the national government has treated transmigrant populations better than indigenous Papuans by, for example, building asphalted roads and other facilities for the migrants. Also, most jobs in the past were given to migrants because they had the necessary administrative skills. The issue of migration has gradually resulted in competition for land and resources (MacLeod 2011). Migration that brings consequences such as competition over resources is the historical and social context for the emergence of religious issues in Papua today. While most indigenous Papuans are Christian, they now observe the symptoms of Islamization by the increasing size of migrant communities, which even exceed the number of the indigenous population in certain areas.

In order to avoid unnecessary tensions between Muslim and Christian communities in Papua, the Muslim groups are urged not to emphasize their Islamic symbols. Conditions in Papua do not permit the Muslim communities to build a grand mosque in each regency. The Christian communities have always opposed the construction of the great mosque in Manokwari, begun in 2006, for example, and it has never resumed. Muslims in Sorong City underwent a similar experience. Ultimately, the Muslim communities in that city, who are economically more well-established, built a large mosque without the label of a grand mosque, but as an Islamic Center. Such a mosque (or center) can accommodate more than 200 worshipers and includes meeting rooms, schools, and health clinics (Wekke 2013). In summary, the construction of a large mosque without political and cultural symbols is less likely to cause a difficult problem because religious symbols are essential for most Christian communities in Papua.

The fear of Islamization is related to the flood of migrants resulting in political violence and discrimination against indigenous Papuans. The whole issue revolves around the claim that the Papuan nation is faced with the threat of extermination (Myrntinen 2015). Discrimination against Papuan natives have made suspicious relations between Muslim and Christian groups in this region worse. When the government allowed the imposition of Islamic law in Aceh, as part of a concession to the Free Aceh Movement, this raised questions in Papua and Mollucas. In these latter two areas, the government does not allow the Christian population to apply Christian Law, such as the 10% religious tax to be handed over to the church and its pastors. This unequal treatment of Aceh and Papua makes some Papuan leaders view the Indonesian government as discriminatory against them based on religious differences (Steenbrink 2007).

Further scrutiny shows that tensions between religious groups in Papua are related to the feeling that a social group suffers relative deprivation. Feeling deprived generally arises within a group of people who are not in a safe position,

or when others neglect them. In such a group, information or provocation can stimulate relative deprivation (Santhoso and Hakim 2012). Deprivation is a feeling that comes up because inequality or gaps are experienced among individuals due to a mismatch between reality and individual expectations (Gurr 1968).

Another issue is related to the exploitation of religious identity in local politics. Religious identity is often politicized by certain groups to achieve their political goals. For example, issues regarding Islamization were apparent in the 2013 and 2018 elections for the provincial governors in Papua. Since their numbers were quite large, Muslims, especially migrants in coastal and urban areas, were considered significant constituents. The governor candidates carried out various approaches to the community even though no single candidate pair represented Islamic groups' aspirations. One example of the use of such identity politics was circulating hoaxes in social media to attract Muslim voters. The campaign was quite successful, for one candidate lost in areas where Muslim migrant populations were dominant (Alhamid 2013).

The indigenous Papuans, who are Christians, consider their religious identity as analogous to that of the Jewish nation. They have collective religious and cultural imagination that they confront common enemies who are Muslim, the way Israel does in the Middle East. They feel that Judaism and Christianity are the spirits that motivate their faith to confront Islamism, which is now threatening the Land of Papua. Christians describe Papua people in Papua Land as an "alone Christian island surrounded by Muslims" (Myrntinen 2015). The state of Israel is psychologically considered a natural ally of blessed Papua Land. Concerning such an affiliation with the Jewish identity, before the conflict in Tolikara broke out, the Evangelical Church in Indonesia (GIDI) held a spiritual devotional seminar by inviting foreign guests, including some from Israel. In fact, at that time, GIDI members were required to paint their houses and shops with the Israeli flag (Rosyid 2015).

Learning from Cultural Traditions of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding processes do not follow the same model even in the same nation-state, because those processes are not universal, but tend to depend on the local typology of the conflict and the cultural context. In a secessionist conflict, the reconciliation process usually follows a peace agreement achieved by granting political concessions and decommissioning the secessionist armed groups. However, in communal conflict, such reconciliations can go through official peace negotiations at the elite level and cultural interactions at the grassroots level. The Philippines model of peacebuilding in Mindanao is quite similar to the Aceh model, and it started with a peace agreement.

Nevertheless, the reconciliation experiences of communal conflicts in Sampit,

Central Kalimantan, and Poso, Central Sulawesi, show certain similarities, particularly the significant participation by women's groups. The reconciliation process in Ambon, Mollucas, depended on cultural mechanisms which had already emerged in colonial times. In Sampit and Poso, women's groups from the conflicting parties conducted many informal meetings and dialogues to implement peaceful, cooperative relations (Jogaswara 2012; Putranti and Subagya 2005). Ambon's peace-making processes went through cultural mechanisms that bound Muslim and Christian villages at colonial times as its departure point (Bartels 1978; Sterkens and Hadiwitanto 2009; Iwamony 2010). The Papuan cultural mechanism is different from the cultural bond mechanism between Muslim and Christian villages in Ambon because the history of interaction between religions has followed different paths in the two cases. In Ambon and Mollucas, the propagation of religions was in line with the colonialization process, and it segregated Muslim villages from those of Christians. Later, those villages invented some local wisdom to strengthen cultural ties. While in Papua, the encounter between Islam and Christianity was more peaceful, for Muslim and Christian native Papuans are bound within the same languages and ethnicities without losing their cultural ties.

Historically, the arrival of Muslim migrants to Papua took place hundreds of years ago, particularly on the west coast of Papua. Mahmud (2015) shows that the Bugis diaspora had settled in West Papua from the 17th to the 19th centuries, especially on Misool Island and Salawati. They traded textile and metal commodities for marine resources and forest products. Regarding the arrival of divine religions, most literature states that Islam was the first such religion introduced into the islands and coasts of West Papua. For example, Mansoben (1994) writes that Islam entered the Raja Ampat Islands when the area was under the political control of the Sultanate of Tidore. It was only since 1855 that the first Christian missionaries, Otto and Geissler, introduced Protestantism to Papuan natives living in Mansinam Island. Then in 1862, this missionary activity was continued by the Dutch under *Utrechtshe Zendingsvereniging* (UV), a missionary society.

Due to the propagation of Islam and Christianity in Papua Land during the colonial period, and the fact that the inhabitants of Mollucas Islands and Sulawesi were acculturated to Papuans on the Western coasts, the tradition of mutual respect for religious differences was embedded firmly in the West Papuan community, from Sorong to Kaimana. Weke's research (2013) tells that the Papuan community of Sorong is not easily provoked by religious issues, so that harmonious relations are more lasting in this city. For example, in 2010 someone threw a stone onto the main mosque during an Islamic Culture Festival. However, the incident did not turn into an interfaith conflict because local religious leaders quickly investigated it. In Sorong, the indigenous Papuans have the tradition of holding the *kaneka hagasir* ceremony, a form of gratitude feast for the family's

welfare. The smallest unit for this ceremony is a traditional village, consisting of a tribe that includes several houses with various religious affiliations. Every traditional village provides an opportunity for a clan to build a small house of worship by mobilizing resources from other clans who are of different religious affiliations.

The Papuan people who live on the West coast of Papua, especially in Fakfak, have a cultural tradition known as “one stove three stones” (*satu tungku tiga batu*), which is a metaphor constructed by indigenous peoples to maintain tolerance for religious differences. In families of indigenous Papuans, members of the same family can follow different religions (Wanggai 2009; Ernas 2014). The three stones are the metaphor for the three religious groups, namely Islam, (Protestant) Christianity, and Catholicism, and these religions engage in peaceful relations both in societal and state life. This reproduction of local wisdom and values maintains social stability within plural societies along the west coast of Papua.

Besides “one stove three stones,” there is also a tradition of “family religion,” which illustrates a cultural consensus about social balance. Family religion is a tradition that members may adhere to different religious affiliations in the same family or household. Although different religions exist, social and cultural mechanisms make them still bound to the family. An example is *masohi*, the custom of communities helping one another, especially in building houses of worship, both mosques and churches. Also, they have *tormormarge* culture, i.e., the obligation to help each other as an expression of kinship relations in ritual ceremonies. Those local pearls of wisdom were the result of acculturation between *adat* (customary law) and religion in Fakfak. Such acculturation produces values of harmony and tolerance and peaceful acceptance of religious differences (Ernas 2014). Through this tradition, the tribal leaders always resolve conflicts between religious communities in Fakfak through cultural dialogue. The underlying meaning of this local wisdom is that it is possible to avoid disputes and violent conflict and to resolve such disputes peacefully because everyone shares some cultural identity, such as clan, ethnicity, or language.

We can only find such cultural traditions in Fakfak and Kaimana regencies that have populations representing various religions and ethnicities. These regencies were opened for spontaneous migration even before the colonial period for buying exotic goods and selling textiles, porcelains, and metal products (Upton 2009; Widjojo 2010). In other areas, there are cultural mechanisms to resolve clan disputes or war between tribes, such as *para-para adat* (meeting at house on stilts) and *bayar kepala* (paying the head) (Handoko 2020; Osborne 1985). The former is a sacred house for discussing disputes between clans and ethnic groups and finding peaceful solutions. The latter is a mechanism for paying compensation for a death in tribal wars. In reconciliation, the conflicting parties will conduct a party together by cooking a pig with burned stones or *bakar*

batu. However, Papuan natives do not use these cultural mechanisms to resolve religious conflicts, but only for disputes between clans or for tribal wars.

The only cultural mechanisms used to resolve religious disputes are one stove three stones and family religion. However, the question is whether such cultural strategies developed by Papuan natives living on the coastal areas of West Papua can also be operable in other regencies or cities in Papua Land, where the number of migrants is quite significant. In reality, the tradition of “one stone stove three stones” has operated among Papuan natives within certain limits in Jayapura City (Rofiki 2018). We have, for example, celebration traditions and congratulatory holidays in one family. On the eve of Christmas, members of the Asso clan from Wamena, who live in Jayapura and are Muslim, congratulate and bring gifts to their Christian and Catholic relatives. Likewise, before *Iedl fitr*, members of the Asso family, who are Christians and Catholics, do the same. The same case applies also for other Papuan ethnicities when their members follow different religious affiliations.

These cultural mechanisms are only useful for bridging differences among Papuan natives with different religious affiliations. The migrant populations are not familiar with and are not bound by such cultural traditions. However, we can still adopt the essence of the traditions, such as cultural dialogue, to resolve disputes between conflicting parties peacefully. Both Muslim (migrant) and Christian (native) communities in Papua can develop other social mechanisms, such as dialogues at the grassroots level. For example, some leaders of native Muslim Papuans have acted as agents of peace, bridging communication between migrant Muslim and Papuan Christian native groups (Viartasiwi 2013a). These Muslim leaders, who are members of the Papuan Muslim Assembly (*Majelis Muslim Papua* or MMP), the continuation of the Papuan Muslim Solidarity, became facilitators of dialogue to explore several religious issues involving Islam and Christianity in Papua Land between 2006 and 2010. The MMP built narratives that Islam is identical to Indonesian-ness and thus a bridge of communication between immigrant Muslims and the indigenous people of Papua who are Christians (Slama and Munro 2015; Pamungkas 2008; Wanggai 2008). When the Christian Papuan native groups protested the establishment of the State Islamic Institute in Jayapura in 2007, the MMP mediated the dispute, and the native Papuan Christians agreed with the founding of the campus.

Referring to Galtung's (1967) concept of negative and positive peace, these religious tensions in Papua Land would not appear if the national government could resolve the secessionist conflict. Positive peace requires the absence of systemic physical and structural violence. To achieve this positive peace, the Indonesian Administration and the Free Papua Movement, consisting of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua and the West Papua National Liberation Army, should settle their political disputes in a dialogue. The dialogue would discuss the form of political integration that is suitable for Papua in the

Indonesian State. In such a dialogue, the marginalization and depopulation of Papuan natives should become the primary concern of conflicting parties. Through dialogue, the Indonesian government can distribute more power to Papua and West Papuan people through a self-rule government such as that existing in Aceh Province since 2005. The autonomous governments of Papua and West Papua could limit the migration from outside of Papua while preparing the Papuan natives to participate in a culture-based development program.

However, while waiting for such a peace process, the peace agencies, in the form of various social and cultural mechanisms at the grassroots level, can implement programs to prevent religious or even racial tensions. Unlike the political dialogue at the elite level, the revitalization of peace agencies is an effort to encourage the various ethnic and religious groups to meet and talk about their problems in order to resolve them peacefully. For example, the migrant (Muslim) groups can talk to the Papuan (Christian) natives about the freedom to build religious houses. The Papuan natives can also talk to migrant groups about the need for affirmative action for indigenous Papuans in economics and politics. Such dialogue requires peace ambassadors from both sides, the so-called dialogue facilitators or peace activists. The Papuan Peace Network was established in 2010 and has played a role in bridging the communication gap between (Muslim and Christian) migrants and Papuan natives (Viartasiwi 2013b).

However, this network of peace facilitators tends to approach the national government rather than mediate such religious tensions. In 2019 the violent protests of Papuan natives against Indonesian people's racist attitudes toward Papuan students in Surabaya of East Java broke out in most regencies and cities in Papua Land. In the riot in Wamena, the capitol of Jayawijaya Regency, a group of protesters killed 26 (Muslim) migrants working there. In Jayapura City, the protesters destroyed some of the kiosks and shops owned by (Muslim) migrants.

The challenges to establishing peace agencies come from the government side and also from the local political system. The Indonesian security officials define peace in a way that is different from the view of Papuan natives. According to the military, peace refers to Papua Land without the Free Papua Movement, and the military must destroy any political struggle against Indonesian authority. This concept does not support the concept of Papua Land of Peace that Papuan natives have developed since 2002. Another problem is that the national government maintains a repressive approach by sending more police and soldiers that increase the political violence in this land. Furthermore, some local government officials stigmatize the peace facilitators as part of the separatist group and do not support their program. Also, the use of identity politics in general elections since 2004 has strengthened the social and cultural cleavages along religious and ethnic lines (Chauvel 2010).

The remaining hope for developing peace agencies depends on the revitalization of social and cultural mechanisms to prevent religious tensions and conflict.

As mentioned above, this can be manifested through dialogue between different ethnoreligious groups at the grassroots level to resolve disputes between them. Therefore, all religious and ethnic organizations in Papua Land need to reproduce the so-called ecosystem of peace in everyday life, and to distinguish peaceful ethnoreligious relations at the local level from political contestation between the national government and the Free Papua Movement. One step would be to include the values of local wisdom related to peace in the primary education curriculum in Papua Land. Another would be the mainstreaming of moderate religious orientations among all religious communities in this Land.

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, we find that religious tensions in Papua Land came to national public attention mainly after implementing the Special Autonomy Law (2001) that provided privileges recognizing Papuan indigenous ethnicities. The recent religious tensions between Muslim and Christian groups in the regencies of Jayapura and Keerom are not expressions of hatred and hostility based on religious sentiment. Instead, they are an expression of disappointment among some Christian groups toward the increasing number of Muslim migrants. The migrant communities need to be the motor for economic wheels in Papua, but their continuous in-migration has led to gradually outnumbering the native Papuan population. Also, they become a threat, not only in the economic field, but also in local political competition. The spread of religious intolerance, as represented by the Jihadis groups, followed the expansion of migrant Muslim communities. However, both Muslim and Christian groups share a common vision to maintain pluralism in respecting differences in this Land.

To create sustainable, peaceful relations between religious groups in Papua, we need to revitalize some local wisdom mechanisms developed by Papuan native ethnicities living on the Western Coast of Papua. One example would be to import the metaphor of “one stove three stones” into modern life. It means both migrants and indigenous Papuans must respect differences, including in the matter of religion. Consequently, conservative religious teachings cannot be allowed to develop in Papua because they inevitably worsen the reconciliation process. Both Islam and Christian communities, both immigrants and native populations, must make Papua a shared peaceful home. Therefore, the tradition of dialogue between the two ethnoreligious groups is necessary in order to eliminate prejudice and communal tension. For the central and provincial governments, it is time to promote a positive peace by conducting an international dialogue with the secessionist groups and protecting indigenous Papuans’ fundamental rights.

Based on our research, we find that Lederach’s peace agency concept is relevant for pressing some civil elements and religious organizations to support

peacebuilding. Peace agencies here consist of both Muslim and Christian native communities that practice harmonious cultural traditions that have existed since the colonial period. We want to say that in order to prevent religious conflicts and tensions we have to revitalize some cultural bonds beyond religious ties. To counter the increasing religious conservatism, intolerance, and radicalism, we need to go back to cultural ties, or transfer such cultural bonds into the present societal life. Consequently, migrant populations must adopt those cultural values of native Papuans that are essential for ensuring sustainable peace.

Notes

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1. The term Papua is used to designate both territories and provinces as well as an ethnic group. The territory of Papua, or the Land of Papua, occupies the western half of the island of New Guinea. The territory of Papua is divided into two provinces: Papua Province, covering the eastern part of the territory, and West Papua Province, covering the western part. Regencies and cities are sub-regional divisions of the provinces.

Appendix

Table 1. The Percentage of Religious Groups in Papua Province

Regencies/cities	Islam	Protestant	Catholic	Hindus	Buddhist	Confu- cian	% of Native
Merauke	46.60	15.53	37.10	0.20	0.09	0.01	37.27
Jayawijaya	5.40	60.65	33.70	0.04	0.00	0.00	90.79
Jayapura	26.07	68.44	4.18	0.29	0.10	0.01	61.48
Nabire	39.03	50.08	9.97	0.21	0.11	0.00	47.54
Kepulauan Yapen	14.66	83.36	0.78	0.03	0.01	0.00	78.09
Biak Numfor	16.07	81.26	2.06	0.10	0.17	0.01	73.82
Paniai	1.66	73.06	23.71	0.02	0.00	0.01	97.58
Puncak Jaya	1.04	98.74	0.21	0.00	0.01	0.00	98.24
Mimika	32.62	39.24	20.56	0.13	0.05	0.00	42.51
Boven Digoel	19.85	28.17	51.25	0.05	0.06	0.00	66.95
Mappi	7.62	20.37	71.61	0.04	0.02	0.01	88.62
Asmat	5.29	38.93	55.70	0.02	0.00	0.00	89.59
Yahukimo	0.97	97.47	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.58
Pegunungan Bintang	1.16	69.50	29.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.31
Tolikara	0.42	99.42	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.05
Sarmi	22.77	74.40	1.58	0.05	0.03	0.00	70.25
Keerom	46.00	26.72	24.72	0.56	0.01	0.00	41.33
Waropen	13.65	85.26	1.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	79.59
Supiori	1.27	98.53	0.07	0.02	0.00	0.00	96.48
Mamberamo Raya	2.61	97.22	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.01	93.07
Nduga	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.16
Lanny Jaya	0.09	99.84	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.90
Mamberamo Tengah	0.17	98.13	1.70	0.00	0.00	0.0	99.47
Yalimo	0.13	99.80	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.20
Puncak	0.31	99.51	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.26
Dogiyai	0.76	38.02	61.20	0.01	0.00	0.00	99.01
Intan Jaya	0.15	66.57	33.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.81
Deiyai	0.73	61.94	37.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.94
Jayapura City	44.07	49.83	5.23	0.20	0.24	0.00	34.91
Total	15.89	65.48	17.67	0.09	0.05	0.00	76.31

Source: Census of Population 2010

Table 2. The Percentage of Religious Groups in West Papua Province

Regencies/cities	Islam	Protestant	Catholic	Hindu	Buddhist	Confucian	% of Native
Fakfak	60.63	22.28	16.15	0.05	0.03	0.01	47.61
Kaimana	41.94	47.91	8.55	0.06	0.02	41.94	51.56
Teluk Wondama	18.16	80.37	1.14	0.14	0.01	0.00	73.57
Teluk Bintuni	45.42	36.88	15.60	0.05	0.11	0.01	52.97
Manokwari	30.76	64.95	3.81	0.16	0.05	0.00	56.59
Sorong Selatan	21.66	77.11	0.68	0.03	0.00	0.00	83.08
Sorong	55.22	40.32	3.89	0.29	0.03	0.02	36.07
Raja Ampat	31.83	67.34	0.76	0.06	0.01	0.00	73.40
Tambrau	3.27	79.20	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	94.99
Maybrat	0.68	80.12	18.93	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.40
Sorong City	44.39	48.09	6.54	0.10	0.21	0.00	29.93
Total	38.40	53.77	7.03	0.11	0.08	0.00	51.49

Source: Census of Population 2010

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