

ARTICLE

***Lego-lego* and the Co-production of Religion: Orality, Performance, and Decolonial Agency in Eastern Indonesia**

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Abstract

Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg argue that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are co-produced religions—faiths that have historically formed and transformed through mutual interaction, imagination, and contestation. This paper extends their framework to Alor-Pantar, Indonesia, where interreligious life unfolds not only in textual or theological forms but in oral traditions, ritual performance, and embodied practices. Drawing on Izak Lattu's oral-based interreligious engagement and Mery Kolimon's exploration of boundary negotiation and hybrid identity in Timor Barat, this study examines *Lego-lego*, a traditional mass dance in Alor-Pantar with *pantun adat*, *moko* drums, and communal movements. *Lego-lego* functions as a living site where Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous traditions encounter and reshape one another. While Christian and Muslim influences appear in lyrics and gestures, the dance's Indigenous form sustains local epistemology, ensuring that co-production occurs on community-defined terms. Beyond illustrating hybridity or syncretism, *Lego-lego* enacts an embodied epistemology rooted in orality, kinship, and performance. It demonstrates that religious tradition in Alor-Pantar is not fixed but negotiated through communal practices. *Lego-lego* also mediates Muslim-Christian relations, facilitating ethical interaction and shared cultural participation. This study situates Indigenous ritual at the center of Religious Co-Production (RCoP), showing how world religions are continually co-produced in practice through performance, narrative, and relational engagement.

Keywords

Lego-lego, religious co-production (RCoP), Indonesia, oral tradition, Indigenous ritual, interreligious encounter, boundary and identity negotiation.

I. Introduction

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago with over 17,000 islands and 1,000 ethnic groups, recognizes six national religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, alongside numerous Indigenous faiths. The *Pancasila* state framework and the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity") provide an ideological basis for coexistence, yet tensions persist. Since the fall of Soeharto's New Order in 1998, religious conflicts, marginalization, and radicalism have affected many regions. Against this backdrop, Alor-Pantar in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) stands out for its relatively sustained interfaith harmony, maintained primarily through cultural practices rather than state policy.¹

One such practice is the *Lego-lego* dance, an Indigenous communal ritual embodying cohesion, ancestral reverence, and harmony with nature.² Performed in circular formations with *pantun adat* (oral poetry) and *moko* (drums), *Lego-lego* conveys collective identity and ethical principles such as *lukkiai* (respect, cooperation) and *mayai* (unity through handholding).³

1 The archipelago has more than two big islands of Alor and Pantar. It has some smaller islands, including Sika, Kepa, Pura, Ternate (not to be confused with Ternate in the North Moluccas), Buaya, and Tereweng.

2 There is no reliable information about the origin of this work of art. However, unlike M.A. Bouman, "De Aloreesche dansplaats," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 3, no. 4 (1943): 481-500, and S. Rodemeier, "Local Tradition on Alor and Pantar: An Attempt at Localizing Galiyao," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151, no. 3 (1995): 438-442, who argue that *Lego-lego* is tied to ancestor's veneration or death rituality, most local leaders maintain that the art expresses gratitude, joy, and cheerfulness (Adriana Tunliu, field interview with elders and participants, Alor-Pantar, May 4, 2022; Soleman Tang, Rudolf Haan, and Fredrik Lahal, WhatsApp group message to the author, February 28, 2023).

3 In the Abui language, *Lego-lego* is referred to as *lukkiai* and *mayai*. The term *lukkiai* derives from two words – *luk* (lit. bow, respect, conform, and abide) and *kiai* (lit. to sing, to utter or offer) – thus conveying meanings of embracing, standing shoulder to shoulder, and communal self-help or mutual cooperation. Meanwhile, *mayai* (lit. people holding hands) designates the *Lego-lego* dance performed collectively by the

Observed during harvest festivals and ceremonies, communities integrate Islamic and Christian messages into the dance without displacing Indigenous structure. Originally tied to harvest and rites of passage, *Lego-lego* demonstrates adaptive incorporation of Abrahamic elements while preserving its inclusive ethos.⁴

To analyze this dynamic, this paper engages Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg's *Religious Co-Production* (RCoP) framework, emphasizing mutual transformation among religions.⁵ It extends the RCoP beyond textual archives to embodied, oral, and performative practice, resonating with Izak Lattu's proposal for oral-based interreligious engagement and Mery Kolimon's findings on boundary negotiation and hybrid identity in Timor Barat.⁶ *Lego-lego* mediates Muslim-Christian encounter: Even when Indigenous ritual remains largely unchanged, shared performance fosters interfaith cooperation, ethical interaction, and cultural continuity.

II. Methods and Fieldwork

This study combines library and archival research with ethnographic fieldwork to examine *Lego-lego* as a mediating ritual among Indigenous, Muslim, and Christian communities in Alor-Pantar. Archival and ethnographic sources provided historical, theological, and cultural context for interpreting the dance's evolution. Library research analyzes Christian and Muslim settlement histories, Indigenous practices, and ritual texts, situating *Lego-lego* within broader patterns of religious co-production.

A key methodological strength of this study lies in the author's over 25 years of immersive participation in *Lego-lego* and related communal practices

community on the beach. See Petrus Ly, "Makna Edukasi Dari Simbol Dan Gerak Pada Tarian Tradisional Lego-Lego Masyarakat Alor Kampung Takpala Di Desa Lembur Barat Kecamatan Alor Tengah Utara Kabupaten Alor," *Gatra Nusantara*, Vol. 20, No. 1, April 2022, 22.

- 4 Rasyid P. Lewa, *Lego-lego Dalam Upaya Pemasyarakatan Dan Perbudayaan P4 di Kabupaten Alor*, (Pemda Alor, 1998), 2.
- 5 Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, "Co-produced Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam," *Harvard Theological Review* 118, no. 1 (2025): 159–80.
- 6 Izak Y. M. Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue: Orality, Collective Memory, and Christian-Muslim Engagements in Indonesia* (Brill, 2023); Mery Kolimon, "Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas: Eksplorasi Tema yang Muncul dalam Narasi Toleransi Beragama di Timor Barat," in *Costly Tolerance: Tantangan Baru Dialog Muslim-Kristen di Indonesia dan Belanda*, ed. Suhadi (CRCS [Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies], 2018).

through marriage to an Alorese community member. This extended engagement constitutes longitudinal participant observation, offering deep insight into the dance's social, ethical, and interreligious functions over multiple decades. Reflexively approached, this insider experience enables understanding of subtle practices, embodied knowledge, and relational dynamics that are often inaccessible to short-term researchers. These long-term insights are cross-verified with archival sources, interviews, and formal field observations, enhancing both depth and validity.

Fieldwork conducted in 2022 in Kabola involved participant observation during a Bible dedication ceremony and semi-structured interviews with elders, dance participants, and religious leaders. Observation documented *pantun adat*, *moko* drums, and communal formations, illustrating how Indigenous ritual principles – respect and cooperation (*lukkiai*) and unity through handholding (*mayai*)—facilitate interfaith interaction. One participant remarked, “*Lego-lego* brings us closer to each other,” highlighting its role in fostering cooperation without fundamentally transforming Indigenous practice.

Historical field experiences (1996–2000), while serving Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) congregations, provide longitudinal insight. In Immanuel Folbo in 1996, Christians and Muslims collaborated to build a mosque, combining labor, food, music, and *Lego-lego* performance. In 1997, the Pura Island presbytery meeting involved similar cooperation, culminating in *Lego-lego* and *pantun* recitations that reinforced communal and interfaith bonds. These encounters illustrate that *Lego-lego* has long mediated Muslim-Christian cooperation while preserving Indigenous ritual grounding.

Methodologically, this study enacts Religious Co-Production (RCoP) by integrating Indigenous, Christian, and Muslim voices through archival, oral, and performative engagements, positioning research itself as a dialogical practice. It follows a dialogical, oral-based engagement model inspired by Lattu and Kolimon. Reflexive positionality—acknowledging the author's dual insider/observer role—guides interpretation and ensures relational accountability. By privileging oral, performative, and community-centered models of knowing, this approach resists extractive research paradigms and centers Indigenous epistemologies as active sites of theorizing. Insights derived from long-term participation are contextualized within community consent and cross-checked through interviews, demonstrating that both theoretical categories and Indigenous practices are co-produced through ongoing engagement.

By integrating archival research, historical observation, participatory ethnography, and interviews, the study situates *Lego-lego* as a living site of Religious Co-Production (RCoP). It demonstrates how Islamic and Christian practices are continually reshaped through Indigenous ritual participation, highlighting both historical and embodied dimensions of co-production, and showing that interreligious interaction emerges not only through doctrine but through shared performance, orality, and kinship networks.

III. Historical Context of *Lego-lego* and Interreligious Boundary Negotiation

Lego-lego, as a traditional art form, originates in planting and harvest ceremonies, rites of passage, and communal festivity. Performed in circular formations, it welcomes participation from all ages, genders, and religions. Ten to fifteen dancers move in unison, guided by *pantun adat* (oral poems) and the beat of *moko* drums, which symbolize ancestral wealth and collective well-being. Mistakes are corrected by briefly leaving and rejoining the circle, reflecting dance's pedagogical function in socialization, moral instruction, and communal negotiation.

At the core of *Lego-lego* are ancestral songs. One elder explained, "There would be no *Lego-lego*, without the meaningful pearls of wisdom of our ancestors in its songs."⁷ *Pantun adat* transmits values of stewardship, solidarity, and respect for the land, and solidarity. For example, the *Nuh Atinang* group that sings *Boling Jal Mi Wela*:⁸

Chanter:

Boling boling boling eee
Boling eee ... boling e
Boling ia mutu e benung ee jalmi welabae

King king oh king
 Oh king ... oh king
 Come raja, siblings, brothers, and
 sisters, oh [come to] enjoy the water

Respond

Boling oo hele loe o hloba o ee boling hele
ho
Ajae benung jalta ee ladil ee
Dobu noa ba e boling

Oh king, listen and obey
 Sweet is the taste of cotton flowers, all
 enjoy it; Let's all that enjoy it, rejoice
 together

7 Adriana Tunliu, field interview with elders and participants, Kabola, May 4, 2022.

8 Dince Kristina Lalel, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Tari Lego-Lego Suku Alurung Di Sanggar Tari Golu Gapung Kabupaten Alor," *Indonesian Journal of Performing Art Education* 1, no. 1 (October 2020): 1–17, 7; also Fredrik Lahal, WhatsApp message to the author, March 5, 2023.

Another refrain declares:⁹

<i>Liling liling leto liling liling</i>	[We're] different but still united
<i>Lalang lalang bali lalang lalang</i>	Diverse yet one
<i>Liling tela liling hena hena koro hena hena</i>	If united, we will be prosperous and good

These lines function as social pedagogy, cultivating unity in diversity, and as Kolimon notes, mediate flexible boundaries of identity, allowing participants to negotiate their religious, cultural, and communal belonging.¹⁰

With the arrival of Islam along the coast and Christianity in the interior during the Dutch colonial rule, *Lego-lego* incorporated new religious elements while retaining its Indigenous ethos. Islamic phrases and Christian moral teachings may now be recited, yet *pantun adat* remains the moral and spiritual core.¹¹ *Lego-lego* thus illustrates a long-grounded model of religious co-production: While external traditions are incorporated, Indigenous epistemologies or orality, performance, and kinship continue to shape the interfaith encounter.

A parallel case is Ilawe village, where interfaith cooperation is grounded in the *bela* oath.¹² Local myth traces villagers' descent from water eels and sea fish, reinforced by an oath "[From now on] until the end of the world, brothers and sisters, fathers and children should not hate [each other]; otherwise, [they will] die." In the mid-twentieth century, two sisters, one Muslim and one Christian, donated land, and the *bela* oath was reinterpreted as a binding agreement that Muslims and Christians must never divide.¹³

9 Thesa D. A. Djobo, "Makna *Tara Miti Tomi Nuku* bagi Komunitas Islam dan Kristen di Kabupaten Alor Ditinjau dari Perspektif Studi Perdamaian" (masters thesis, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, 2021), 126–127.

10 Kolimon, "Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas," 254–258.

11 Hamsah Epikorus Asakameng, "Kerukunan Umat Beragama Antara Islam dan Kristen" (*Sarjana* thesis, Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Indonesia Bagian Timur Makassar, 2016), 49.

12 Adriana Tunliu, field interview with the chief of Kabola subdistrict, online, March 6, 2023; see also Syarifuddin R. Gomang, "Muslim and Christian Alliances: 'Family Relationships' between Inland and Coastal Peoples of the Belagar Community in Eastern Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 162, no. 4 (2006):468–489; Sastri Sunarti Yahya, *Mendengar Nenek Moyang Turun dari Langit: Motif Cerita Asal-Usul dari Alor, Pura, dan Pantar NTT* (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.55981/brin.406> and Merlin Tiran, "Kampung Ilawe: Beda Agama Membangun Masjid dan Gereja," *Perspective*, Pusat Studi Agama dan Lintas Budaya (CRCS), Universitas Gadjah Mada, 8 November 2019, <https://crs.ugm.ac.id/kampung-ilawe-beda-agama-membangun-masjid-dan-gereja/>.

13 Tiran, "Kampung Ilawe."

This ethos guided the construction of the Darul Falah mosque and Ilawe church, built with mutual support, and symbolically linked local solidarity to the shared ancestry of Isaac and Ismail. Muslims assist with Christmas services, Christian celebrations include Muslim qasida groups, and interfaith marriages are common.¹⁴

Kolimon's framework helps illuminate how these practices actively negotiate religious and cultural boundaries. Intergenerational participants learn to respect differences while embracing hybrid identities: Muslim and Christian participants engage in *Lego-lego* without relinquishing their faith, yet simultaneously affirm communal unity and Indigenous ritual authority.¹⁵ Together, *Lego-lego* and the Ilawe case demonstrate that Indigenous songs, myths, oaths, and rituals are central in Alor-Pantar's interfaith harmony. They show that religious co-production in the region is not only textual or doctrinal but embodied, oral, and relational, rooted in local epistemologies that balance continuity and transformation.

IV. Religious Landscape of the Alor-Pantar

To understand the significance of *Lego-lego* as a mediating site of religious co-production, it is first necessary to situate it within Indonesia's broader religious and political framework and the distinctive interfaith dynamics of the Alor-Pantar archipelago.

Indonesia, where over 87 percent of the population identifies as Muslim, embodies a pluralist national identity grounded in *Pancasila*, the five foundational principles of belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. The national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), affirms this ideal of coexistence among multiple faiths and ethnicities.

Yet, scholars such as Sumanto Qurtuby note, religious diversity in Indonesia has faced persistent challenges.¹⁶ Since *Reformasi* (1998), episodes of marginalization, radicalization, and interreligious tension have marked several regions. Fundamentalist movements on both sides, Christian evangelical networks on university campuses, and Islamic organizations

14 Tunliu, field interview, online, March 6, 2023.

15 Kolimon, "Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas," 261–262.

16 Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Merawat Agama dan Kepercayaan Nusantara," in *Agama Dan Kepercayaan Nusantara*, ed. Sumanto Al Qurtuby and Tedi Kholiludin (Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama [eLSA] Press, 2019), v–xi. See also Suhadi, *Costly Tolerance: Tantangan Baru Dialog Muslim-Kristen di Indonesia dan Belanda* (CRCS, 2018).

promoting a *Khilafah* (modern caliphate), have intensified polarization and tested the limits of pluralism.¹⁷

Amid these national challenges, the Alor-Pantar archipelago stands out as a site of enduring interfaith harmony. Its history reflects the convergence of three religious worlds: coastal Muslim communities, interior Christian congregations, and the resilient Indigenous traditions grounded in animism and ancestral veneration, and oral cosmologies.¹⁸ Islam arrived via Bugis, Makassarese, and Arab traders who settled along the coast, bringing maritime prestige and transregional connections.¹⁹ Christianity, introduced under Dutch colonial rule, spread inland through missionary schools and the *Indische Kerk* network. Beneath and alongside these faiths, Indigenous beliefs in ancestral spirits, the Sky God (*dewa*), and Mother Earth remained vital, shaping the rhythm of daily and ritual life.²⁰

Before Dutch rule, Alor-Pantar was governed by Bunga Bali kings, whose alliances with the neighboring rulers were remembered through *pantun adat* sung in *Lego-lego*. One poem from Alor Besar recalls this symbolic geography:²¹

- 17 Regarding evangelical networks on college and university campuses see, for example, Yayasan Mahanaim, The Joshua Project, Lampstand (Beja Kabuangahan), Partners International, Frontiers, the “Yoel Generation,” Inter-campus Christian Students (Perkantas), and the Indonesia Student Evangelical Institution (LPMI) actively promote evangelical missions, often targeting university campuses; see Izak Y.M. Lattu “Beyond Interreligious Dialogue: Oral-Based Interreligious Engagements in Indonesia.” *Intersubjectivity and Interreligious Studies* 10 (2019): 70–90, 77. For examples of Islamic organizations see, Ismail Marzuki, “Diskursus Khilafah dalam Kajian Fiqh Siyasah Klasik dan Kontemporer,” *Al-Manāhij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, 15, no. 2 (December 2021): 329–348; see also, Ahmad Muzakki, “Khilafah Islamiyah Antara Cita-Cita Dan Realitas (Kajian Atas Ayat-Ayat Tentang Pembentukan Negara),” *Proceedings of Conference on Strengthening Islamic Studies in The Digital Era*, vol. 1, no. 1 (September 2021): 14–26.
- 18 Sastri Sunarti et.al, “Lego-lego: An Attempt to Cultivate and Nurture Plurality in the Alor Tradition,” in *Proceedings of the 1st Workshop on Environmental Science, Society, and Technology (WESTECH 2018), December 8, 2018, Medan, Indonesia, 1–11* (WAI / EUDL, 2019), 1, <https://eudl.eu/doi/10.4108/eai.8-12-2018.2283970>.
- 19 Jan Sihar Artonang and Karel A. Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, Studies in Christian Mission 35 (Brill, 2008), 75–76.
- 20 Artonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 73.
- 21 Ismail Tamal Biat, “Nilai-Nilai Budaya Syair Lego-lego Di Desa Alor Besar,” *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2017): 12–20, 18; also, Alexander P. Pulinggomang, “Sistem Kekerabatan Sosial Masyarakat Desa Aimoli-Alor Dalam Relasi Islam dan Kristen,” (MSi. thesis, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, 2013), 51.

Eti-eti Bunga Bali inang Bunga Bali
Ali-ali Baorae amang Baorae

Eti-eti lefo Bunga Bali
Ali-lai fatang Baorae

Bunga Bali Taruamang
Tanglapui nemo suroleing

Boti Taruamang
Rua kakang amang

Taruamang tana kotong
Jaga tana kotong

Bunga Bali tana leing
Jaga tana leing

There is Bunga Bali, mother Bunga Bali
There is Baorae, father Baorae

There is Bunga Bali village
There is Baorae beach

Bunga Bali in Taruamang
Tanglapui [is] on the way down [the hill]

Carrying Taruamang
Two [are] siblings

Taruamang [is on] the highlands
Caring [for the] highlands

Bunga Bali [is on] the headland
Caring [for the] headland

As the poem suggests, Bunga Bali's domain stretched from "the bird's head to its tail," uniting the coastal Baorae (Baorae Watang) harbor and Taruamang consultative assembly.²² Tanglapui, nearby, was famed for its fertile lands. These kin-based alliances linked coast and mountain, harbor and headland, embedding power in shared responsibility for the land.

Islam entered this landscape through trade, but Indigenous spirituality remained robust. The result was a dual cosmology: ancestral and ecological spirits interwoven with transcendent deities, representing complementary male and female creative forces.²³ Christianity, introduced in 1901 with the baptism of Willem Hatsarani by Rev. J. F. Niks, gained institutional strength through the *Indische Kerk*, mission schools, and later Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT).²⁴ By 1939, the region counted 66,850 baptized Christians. Yet this expansion often entailed suppressing Indigenous practices, including *Lego-lego*, which was dismissed as "pagan" before being reinterpreted as a thanksgiving ritual.

22 "Head to tail" is a local metaphor for Alor Island, according to its shape, "a bird." See Eunike Molebila dan Delila Tanaem, "Tinjawuan Teologi Kontekstual Terhadap Konsep *Adang Bang Airnu*, *Ail Bang Tow*, *Pul Bang Itito* Serta Sumbangsihnya Bagi Penguatan Identitas Nasional Masyarakat Alor," *JURNAL LIK*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2019), 18, <http://ojs.untribkalabahi.ac.id/index.php/ejournal/issue/view/29>. Regarding coastal Baore see, Gomang, *The People of Alor and Their Alliances in Eastern Indonesia*, 16-22. For my understanding of Taruamang consultative assemle, I draw from Adriana Tunliu (field interview with Alor-Pantar elders, online, March 2, 2023).

23 Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 74.

24 Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 306.

The Japanese occupation (1942–1945) halted missionary activity and strengthened local Christian leadership.²⁵ After independence, GMIT inherited colonial structures, while *dakwah* and migration from Java and Sulawesi expanded Islam’s presence.²⁶ Though Christianity remained dominant, ancestral practices persisted beneath official religious identities. Baptism became a social marker of modernity, communion evoked healing power, and ancestral invocations coexisted with Christian prayers in funerary rites—illustrating how religious co-production unfolded in everyday ritual life.²⁷

Unlike other regions that saw violent conflict after the fall of the New Order, Alor-Pantar maintained peace. Its resilience derived not from state policy but from deeply rooted cultural traditions emphasizing mutual respect and ritualized engagement. Practices such as *Lego-lego* embody these values. Contemporarily performed at weddings, harvest festivals, and religious celebrations, *Lego-lego* encodes respect and cooperation, solidarity, as well as unity through handholding, cultivating coexistence through shared rhythm and movement.²⁸

Today, Alor Regency’s population remains roughly 75% Christian (71.71% Protestant; 3.09% Catholic) and 25% Muslim, with smaller numbers of Hindu and Buddhist minorities.²⁹ Yet these numbers obscure how many Alorese inhabit both *adat* and confessional worlds simultaneously—publicly Christian or Muslim while privately maintaining Indigenous ritual practices, ancestral offerings, and *mesbah* altars.³⁰ As Kolimon argues, such practices constitute negotiated boundaries of belonging, where faith and culture continuously reconfigure one another.

25 Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 309.

26 Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 310.

27 Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 311; see also Kolimon, “Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas,” 249.

28 In Abui, *Lego-lego* is *lukkiai* and *mayai* (from *luk*, “to bow, respect, conform, abide,” and *kiai*, “to sing, to utter, offer”) evokes cooperation, while *mayai*, meaning “to hold hands,” symbolizes shoulder-to-shoulder solidarity. About solidarity, see Paulo Freire, et al., *Pedagogy of Solidarity*, (Routledge, 2014), 49–69. As Fraire explains, solidarity “requires that one enter[s] into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture...fighting the reality at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these “beings for another” ... is found only in the plenitude of ... act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis.”

29 See “Demografi,” Pemerintah Kabupaten Alor, accessed September 2025, <https://alorkab.go.id/x/demografi>.

30 Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Alor, *Kabupaten Alor dalam Angka 2023* (BPS Kabupaten Alor, 2023); Sunarti et al., “Lego-lego,” 14, and 4–5.

Joint acts of labor and celebration—mosque and church construction, shared festivals, and *Lego-lego* performances—illustrate how Indigenous ritual mediates Muslim-Christian relations. These are not mere gestures of tolerance but forms of active coexistence (*pro-existence*), embodying an epistemology of kinship and collaboration. As Lattu suggests, oral-based interreligious engagement sustains coexistence by embedding theology within performance and community practice.

Through these interwoven traditions, Alor-Pantar demonstrates that harmony is not the absence of conflict but the embodied co-production of difference—a living process where Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous cosmologies continually shape one another through shared song, gesture, and ritual movement.

V. *Lego-lego* as a Mediating Site of Religious Co-Production

To understand how *Lego-lego* operates as a site of religious co-production, this paper engages four interrelated theoretical trajectories. First, it draws on Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg's framework of Religious Co-Production (RCoP), which argues that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have historically formed and transformed one another through mutual interpretation, contestation, and adaptation.³¹ Second, it engages Diana Eck's notion of pluralism, which moves beyond diversity or tolerance toward active, dialogical engagement that generates new modes of shared meaning and ethical relationship. Third, it extends these global frameworks through Izak Lattu's concept of symbolic imagination, which locates interreligious encounter in the oral, performative, and affective dimensions of Indonesian cultural life. Finally, it incorporates Mery Kolimon's theology of lived tolerance (*toleransi yang dijalani*), which grounds coexistence in embodied gestures of mutual care, kinship, and cooperation. Together, these perspectives shift the analysis of RCoP from textual and institutional

31 See Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, "When Theology and History Think Together about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 50 (2026): 4–33, as well as "What Theology and History Can Offer Each Other When Thinking Together about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" (keynote lecture, *Journal of Interreligious Studies* Interreligious Zoom-Webinar, January 18, 2024), https://coproduced-religions.org/storage/publications/heyden-and-nirenberg_history-and-theology-jirs-2025.pdf; also see, Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, "Introduction: The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," in *The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Artefacts, Rituals, Communities, Narratives, Doctrines, Concepts*, ed. Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, CORE 1 (Brepols, 2025), 13–31.

domains to the oral, performative, and relational dimensions of Alor-Pantar life, where *Lego-lego* becomes both archive and choreography—an Indigenous enactment of pluralism through which Muslims and Christians continually co-create shared moral and spiritual worlds.

Heyden and Nirenberg describe religions as “co-produced,” continually reshaped through shared archives, symbolic exchange, and mutual engagement. *Lego-lego* exemplifies this process in embodied form: An Indigenous communal dance through which Muslims and Christians participate together in enacting solidarity and negotiating difference. Yet, while enabling Abrahamic co-production, *Lego-lego* itself endures as a stabilizing Indigenous tradition, mediating transformation without being absorbed.³² Kolimon calls a “negotiation of boundaries”—an ongoing process of becoming-with the religious other within a shared moral and affective world.³³ Here, Indigenous ritual does not merely host interfaith encounter; it choreographs it, offering an epistemology of coexistence grounded in movement, orality, and reciprocity.

The Co-Production of Religions: A Heyden and Nirenberg Lens on *Lego-lego*

Heyden and Nirenberg identify three core dimensions of religious co-production that guide our understanding of *Lego-lego*. First, they focus on the role of historical archives as reservoirs of shared narratives that continuously shape theological and cultural identities. These archives, including sacred scriptures, symbols, and stories, are reinterpreted over time by different religious communities in response to their evolving needs and contexts. Their shared nature provides a foundation for interreligious dialogue and transformation, fostering deeper connections, though sometimes also intensifying divides.³⁴ In the context of Alor-Pantar, *Lego-lego* exemplifies this principle, functioning as a living archive where Indigenous, Islamic, and Christian communities preserve and reinterpret collective memory through dance and *pantun adat*. This archive is not textual but performative, not preserved in manuscripts but in muscle memory, melody, and collective participation—precisely the kind of embodied archive that Lattu and Kolimon foreground in their analyses of oral and performative religiosity.

32 Heyden and Nirenberg. *The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 15–17.

33 Kolimon, “Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas,” 247–248.

34 Heyden and Nirenberg. “What Theology and History Can Offer,” 3, 14. See also Heyden and Nirenberg, “When Theology and History Think Together,” 11–16.

Second, Heyden and Nirenberg discuss mutual transformation, arguing that interactions between religious traditions dynamically reshape each other. Engagement across traditions often produces new theological and cultural forms, including hybrid beliefs and practices, challenging static notions of religious identities.³⁵ This mutual transformation resonates with Lattu's terms "symbolic imagination," the capacity of oral ritual to reimagine kinship and faith through shared symbols and performances. *Lego-lego* embodies this process, as Christian and Muslim participants join Indigenous communities in shared ritual, they negotiate and integrate values and practices, creating a fluid and interconnected cultural-religious identity. The dance, its rhythms, and its oral poetry become mechanisms through which these hybrid forms are enacted and experienced in real time.

Finally, Heyden and Nirenberg advocate for ethical engagement with this shared archive. While the historical and theological resources can foster interfaith understanding, they can also reinforce exclusivism if approached narrowly. They advocate responsible reinterpretation, urging communities to engage these archives with the goal of promoting harmony, reconciliation, and mutual respect.³⁶ Here, the ethical dimension intersects with Kolimon's notion of "lived tolerance" (*toleransi yang dijalani*), where interreligious ethics emerge from ordinary gestures of mutual labor, care, and ritual participation. *Lego-lego* translates such ethics into rhythm and movement, where equality and respect are enacted through the dance's open, circular formation.

The *Lego-lego* dance in the Alor-Pantar archipelago is a vibrant example of how cultural traditions serve as living archives, preserving and evolving shared values and narratives across generations.³⁷ Originating as an Indigenous practice, *Lego-lego* functions as a site where Christian and Muslim practices meet, interact, and co-produce new shared moral worlds. Where Heyden and Nirenberg emphasize textual archives, the Alorese *Lego-lego* demonstrates how the co-production of religions can also unfold through non-textual, sensorial, and kinaesthetic media. *Lego-lego* has historically been

35 Heyden and Nirenberg. "What Theology and History Can Offer", 5-6, 10. See also Heyden and Nirenber. "When Theology and History Think Together."

36 Heyden and Nirenberg. "What Theology and History Can Offer", 11-12. See also Heyden and Nirenber. "When Theology and History Think Together," 25-32.

37 Adriana Tunliu, interview with Kabola subdistrict head, via WhatsApp message, January 17, 2023: "We are in our 50s now, and we continue to experience the art of *Lego-lego* as really inspirational. Never once in our lifetime, and God forbid, Alor turns into a war zone, even if we are so diverse." Fredrick Lahal, Alor Regency Board of Education Head, and Mery Kolimon, GMIT moderator, offered similar testimony.

a site of communal cohesion, performed during key events such as harvest celebrations, rites of passage, and peace-making ceremonies. Its cultural formation, rhythmic movements, and *pantun adat* (oral poem) reflect a worldview rooted in interconnectedness and collective identity.

As the coastal communities embraced Islam and Christianity took root in the hinterlands, *Lego-lego* became a dynamic site of religious negotiation, weaving Indigenous, Islamic, and Christian values into a shared ritual space. This Indigenous framework mediates religious co-production, allowing Abrahamic traditions to engage dynamically without displacing the underlying cultural values. This transformation exemplifies religious co-production in real-time, as described by Heyden and Nirenberg, where traditions dynamically interact and reshape one another.

Today, *Lego-lego* continues to function as a living archive, embodying the principles of interfaith coexistence through its performance. The oral traditions embedded in the *pantun adat* serve as repositories of shared values, preserving communal memory and reinforcing the interconnected identities of Alor-Pantar's diverse population. The coexistence is beautifully captured in a *Lego-lego* poem "*Eti-eti Bunga Bali*" from Alor Besar. This oral poem and the like mirror the concept of a shared historical archive proposed by Heyden and Nirenberg, as it embodies the cumulative wisdom of Alor-Pantar's communities, shaped by centuries of interreligious interaction.

The practice of *Lego-lego* highlights the dynamic interplay of history and embodiment. As participants dance together—joining hands or linking arms in a circular formation—the dance physically enacts values of unity and mutual respect. The sounds of *moko* drums and the rhythms of the dance create a sensory experience that reinforces communal bonds. The dance's inclusivity, allowing participants from any background to join, reflects the hybrid nature of Alor-Pantar's cultural and religious identity.

The *pantun adat* further deepens this interplay by serving as a living repository where Indigenous spirituality, Islamic teachings, and Christian principles converge. For instance, a *Lego-lego* song from *Hamap* (a coastal people) goes like this:³⁸

38 Katubi, "Tara Miti Tomi Nuku: Merawat Toleransi Dalam Tradisi Di Alor, Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Masyarakat Indonesia* 44, no. 2 (December 2019): 1–16; Fredrik Lahal, WhatsApp message to the author, March 20, 2023; Matt Anie, WhatsApp message to the author, March 22, 2023.

<i>Bap sutafen tofangsa</i>	Grandmother gave birth to so many children
<i>Den Lifang lol den Adang lol</i> ³⁹	Some went to the beach, ⁴⁰ some to the mountain
<i>Humno'no na arabusi fasi</i> <i>Pinang alo nuelang</i>	Uniting the kinship between the two Sweet betel nut water, sweet coconut water
<i>Atut lol abib mahil ade</i> <i>nebuir lol bimahil ade</i>	The two of us are just one bond If you take a walk to the beach, you eat lamb If you join the walk to the mountain, you eat pork
<i>Autur min nasalang aput</i>	If you die first, then I will bury you in the Islamic way
<i>nanofemin sarani aput</i> <i>buku melang mo'eng bang lafeni</i> <i>dasing kota baru la iyo lele la timba hama hamala</i>	If I die later, bury me the Christian way They came from the village above Let's contribute together

This song illustrates the seamless integration of religious practices within the Indigenous ritual framework. The *pantun adat's* call-and-response style fosters communal participation, ensuring that the messages of solidarity and coexistence are collectively internalized and reaffirmed.⁴¹

By preserving ancestral values while incorporating elements of newer religious traditions, *Lego-lego* exemplifies how cultural practices actively mediate interfaith engagement and serve as living archives. This dynamic reflects what Kolimon calls “narrating identity” (*menarasikan identitas*): The retelling of self and other through shared practices that continually redraw

39 In the Kabola language, the words for this stanza would be: “*Bapang sota, sota tabang sahi. Wani liwang, liwang adang dola. Dena adang dola*,” Matt Anie, WhatsApp message to the author, March 22, 2023.

40 “For the *Nuh Atinang* group, they will add “pulau” (island) on the song,” Fredrik Lahal, WhatsApp message to the author, March 20, 2023.

41 Adriana Tunliu, interview with Sardin Lobang, Head of MUI of Kabola subdistrict, via WhatsApp message, January 17, 2023: “There are five mosques and 17 churches in Kabola, but we do not feel dismissed by our Christian sisters and brothers. We are first related by blood and marriage before choosing religion. We have lived in harmony since the time of our ancestors ... When we built our mosque, many Christians donated materials and money.” Rev. Taimenas, Protestant minister, similarly notes that “ignorance is something unacceptable in our society” and that “different religions are a common treasure, and all are encouraged to contribute positively to living together” (Adriana Tunliu, field interview, May 4, 2022).

the boundaries of belonging. Such adaptive storytelling and performance align with Heyden and Nierenberg's view of archives as transformative and fluid, allowing traditions to evolve in response to changing contexts. As a mediating site, *Lego-lego* enables Muslim-Christian co-production without compromising the integrity of Indigenous identity. It demonstrates that interfaith harmony is not merely a historical phenomenon but an ongoing, embodied practice that bridges past and present, creating spaces for mutual respect and shared identity in pluralistic societies.

While Heyden and Nierenberg primarily focus on textual and historical co-production, the *Lego-lego* dance of Alor-Pantar provides a complementary lens through which religious co-production can be understood in embodied practice. This ritual, which blends Muslim, Christian, and Indigenous elements, serves as a powerful illustration of how co-production unfolds not just through textual reinterpretation but also through embodied traditions. The inclusive nature of *Lego-lego* bridges the historical and lived dimensions of co-production, fostering a shared space where diverse religious and cultural practices converge in harmony and mutual respect. In this way, both historical archives and embodied rituals reflect the ongoing negotiation and transformation of religious identity within a co-produced religious landscape.

Building on its role as a mediating site, *Lego-lego* also illustrates how historical and embodied co-production operate together in real time. The dance functions as a living archive, where the values of interfaith coexistence are remembered but actively performed and negotiated. Originally an Indigenous tradition emphasizing communal solidarity and ancestral reference, *Lego-lego* adapted with the arrival of Islam and Christianity, becoming a site where diverse values and beliefs were harmonized, fostering a hybrid cultural and religious identity in Alor-Pantar.

Participants join hands or link pinkie fingers (in some areas, embracing shoulders), in a circular formation, moving rhythmically to the sounds of gong, *moko* (drums), and *pantun adat* (oral poems).⁴² The *pantun adat* acts as a repository of communal wisdom, articulating themes of unity, interconnectedness, and mutual respect. The following lines from the Alila village encapsulate the shared identity of Alor-Pantar's multireligious communities:⁴³

42 Lewa, *Lego-lego Dalam Upaya Pemasyarakatan*, 2; Fredy Lahal, WhatsApp message to the author, January 15, 2023.

43 Adriana Tunliu, explanation of a *Lego-lego* song from East Alila Village, Kabola subdistrict, with Indonesian translation assistance from Soleman Duka and Fister Lobang, online interview, March 2, 2023.

*Pidiai mamenu kafaing
Tunhei tafuning nu aley
Lamehorok doi taanlol
Den buildon udeng til mel den tangamen
mopfo miliwang
Tarifu husa elemek a'hal
Mit tedun helto to malil
Umasigi bang palola
Mang tanai omle midek
Mang tanai omle mite*

We are siblings, bound by one womb,
One placenta, one umbilical cord.
Some journey to the heights of mountains,
While others wander through
every valley.
Partly Christian, partly Muslim,
We do not deny, nor do we fight.
In the village, we climb to visit,
To the mosque on the beach, a sacred
home,
Entered with reverence, not carelessly.

The Abui people express a similar sentiment:⁴⁴

*Pilanuku piwea nuku beti anuku hawali
Adio bapil onhe
Atenghu pil hawali
Wala fuimiya
Wala abumiya*

We share one blood, both red and white,
Connected by a single womb,
By the Creator and our ancestors,
Who sent us forth, united,
Partly by the beach, partly by the
mountain. You own the shore, thriving
by the sea, While I cultivate cassava
and sweet potatoes high.
From my sea, you draw fresh water,
From my mountain, we gather
sustenance, one since the beginning.

These oral traditions resonate with Heyden and Nirenberg's notion of shared archives, preserving and transmitting the collective memory of coexistence across generations. Beyond its historical significance, *Lego-lego* embodies the principle of mutual transformation by blending elements of Islamic, Christian, and Indigenous spirituality. Dancing together requires physical synchronization, emotional alignment, and shared participation, fostering a sense of solidarity that transcends doctrinal differences.

The ethical dimension of co-production is also evident: Elders leading the chants emphasize inclusion and respect, ensuring the dance remains a unifying force. In East Alila Village, the lyrics such as "Partly Christian, partly Muslim; We do not deny, nor do we fight" explicitly affirm the community's commitment to peaceful coexistence.⁴⁵ In this way, *Lego-lego*

44 Zet Michael Mailani and Rode Mabilegi, WhatsApp group message to the author, March 22, 2023.

45 Sunarti et al., "Lego-lego," 6.

models how embodied practices can enact ethical reinterpretation of shared histories, reflecting the dynamic interplay of faiths described by Heyden and Nirenberg.

Having established how *Lego-lego* enables mutual transformation through embodied participation and shared narratives, we now turn to the ethical dimensions of this co-production, examining how inclusion and respect are enacted in practice. Through embodied practices like *Lego-lego*, participants engage in a form of lived theology, experiencing transformation at both personal and communal levels. The physical act of dancing together requires emotional and social alignment, fostering a collective sense of belonging. In East Alila Village, for example, *Lego-lego* often includes visiting both the mosque and the church, symbolizing mutual respect and the harmonious blending of religious practices.

The adaptability of *Lego-lego* highlights its transformative potential: Participants bring their own beliefs and traditions into the dance, creating a space for negotiation and integration. The call-and-response style of the *pantun adat* ensures that every voice is heard, producing a dynamic dialogue that reshapes both individual and collective identities. This ongoing, reciprocal engagement reflects Heyden and Nirenberg's insight that reinterpretation is not linear but continuously reshapes communal and religious boundaries.

By blending Christian, Islamic, and Indigenous values, *Lego-lego* demonstrates that mutual transformation is rooted in embodied practices, extending Heyden and Nirenberg's framework beyond textual archives into lived experiences. The inclusive ethos depends on equitable participation, yet power dynamics inevitably influence whose voices are heard and whose traditions are prioritized. Addressing these dynamics is essential to ensuring that *Lego-lego* remains a genuinely participatory and ethically grounded practice.

Building on these ethical foundations, *Lego-lego* not only embodies interfaith coexistence but also foregrounds the ethical labor required to maintain it. The dance demonstrates that ethical engagement is both participatory and ongoing, requiring humility, reflexivity, and sensitivity to contested interpretations within the shared archive. By intertwining Indigenous, Christian, and Muslim traditions, *Lego-lego* creates a living space where coexistence is also performed, reinforced, and negotiated in real time.

The concept of hope and humility, as articulated by Heyden and Nirenberg, is vividly enacted in *Lego-lego*. Hope emerges in the dance capacity to provide a shared space for mutual respect and reconciliation,

while humility is reflected in the community's deliberate acknowledgment of diverse traditions, including references to both Islamic and Christian burial practices. Lyrics such as, "If you die first, then I will bury you in the Islamic way; If I die later, bury me the Christian way," exemplify how participants actively honor multiple faiths, turning ethical principles into lived experience.⁴⁶

Yet *Lego-lego* also highlights the ambivalence inherent in co-production. While it fosters unity, it is simultaneously a site of contestation, where differing interpretations, regional practices, and perceptions of religious purity can create tension. Ethical engagement, therefore, involves not only inclusion but also negotiating power dynamics and ensuring that marginalized voices, such as women, minority groups, or less dominant sects, are represented within the shared ritual.

The dance's embodied nature further reinforces ethical learning. Physical acts of linking hands, forming circles, and responding to rhythmic cues cultivate solidarity and mutual responsibility, demonstrating that ethics are enacted, not merely taught. The *pantun adat*'s call-and-response structure ensures that every participant is heard, fostering an egalitarian approach to moral negotiation and reinforcing the communal ownership of the co-produced archive.

Ultimately, *Lego-lego* expands Heyden and Nirenberg's framework by showing that ethical engagement with shared histories thrives in lived, participatory practices. The dance transforms historical and theological tensions into opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and reconciliation. Through continuous negotiation, embodied participation, and collective interpretation, *Lego-lego* exemplifies how communities can sustain pluralism ethically, translating hope, humanity, and historical awareness into enduring practices of coexistence.

***Lego-lego* as a Mediating Site of Religious Co-Production: Integrating Diana Eck's Pluralism**

Reading Heyden and Nirenberg's concept of co-produced religions in conversation with Diana Eck's framework of religious pluralism highlights a shared emphasis on interfaith inclusivity and the transformative potential of Indigenous wisdom. While Heyden and Nirenberg focus on the historical

46 The *pantun adat* from *Hamap* quoted earlier in Section V, "The Co-Production of Religions" subsection.

interactions and shared archives, Eck augments this by highlighting the significance of lived encounters among diverse faiths, showing how traditions dynamically interact in shared spaces of learning and coexistence.⁴⁷ In the context of Alor-Pantar, *Lego-lego* exemplifies this perspective, integrating Indigenous traditions alongside Christian and Islamic elements to create a site of ongoing dialogue and mutual transformation.

Unlike frameworks that center solely on blending major religions, Eck's pluralism underscores the foundational role of Indigenous traditions. Elements such as the *pantun adat*, ancestral songs, and respect for the natural world are central to *Lego-lego*, forming a bridge between past and present and inviting participants from multiple faiths to engage with shared ancestral wisdom. The call-and-response style of the dance facilitates participation and dialogue, reflecting Eck's vision of interreligious encounters rooted in relational understanding.

For example, a song from the southern part of Alor expresses this ethos:⁴⁸

<i>Kolele lang watah,</i>	When things are heavy [we] both lift
<i>Rasa lang watah</i>	When it's light [we] carry it together

This emphasizes reciprocal solidarity: community members are called to give and receive care.⁴⁹ Similar principles are expressed in Kabola's sayings, such as "*tara mihi tomnu* ("sitting together with one heart") and *pi mong tara no'o* ("we treat each other well"), which encourage presence, mutual support, and communal responsibility during challenging times.⁵⁰ These practices extend Eck's vision by showing that interfaith engagement is not only dialogical but also grounded in ancestral and place-based connections.

Another *Lego-lego* song of the Abui people reinforces this sense of shared humanity:⁵¹

47 Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Beacon Press, 2003).

48 According to Mailani, "this poem is often symbolized by coconut trees or a traditional house, so that when a local person sees these, they are reminded of the poem," Zet Michael Mailani, WhatsApp message to the author, March 23, 2023.

49 Welhelmina Selfina Beli, "Modal Sosial Dalam Budaya Tarian Lego-Lego Masyarakat Alor Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Seminar IQRA* 1, no. 1 (2017): 522–549, 534; also, Zet Michael Mailani, WhatsApp message to the author, March 23, 2023.

50 Rev. Kondrad Penlaana, WhatsApp message to the author, March 23, 2023.

51 Djobo, "Makna *Tara Miti Tomi Nuku*," 103; Rode Mabilegi, WhatsApp message to the author, March 22, 2023.

<i>Tara miti tara tanga</i>	Different place, different language
<i>Tara aremang tomi nuku te</i>	Yet, [our] heart is one
<i>Buaka peka tayai faring hoba dar</i>	Far and near [are] many friends
<i>Pi nehe lanuku</i>	Yet, [our] name remains one
<i>O ... Alor tomi nuku te naya mama</i>	Let's unite o Alor; mother; father; all sisters
<i>nefela faring e</i>	and brothers
<i>Reyme pisama tangi te piwe kariang hopuna</i>	Let's talk and walk together
<i>Hayok sama pi hayoke bang pila tanimbag</i>	When things are heavy, let me help you lift
	when it is light [still] let's carry together
<i>Alor hane dodaliala hehang hesama pi peida</i>	Alor; the name, continues to thrive you and I
	are happy together

Additionally, *Lego-lego* songs reinforce these values, celebrating intergenerational solidarity, care for outsiders, and mutual responsibility:⁵²

<i>Ite kakang aring</i>	We are older and younger siblings
<i>Tobo eti foto tobo ali watang gere eti uma</i>	Some build houses in the mountains
	some at the beach
<i>Ite kakang aring dodo feling baleleng</i>	We are older and younger siblings
	sharing a place to live
<i>Ote opung no anang</i>	Outside/outsideers are our beloved
	relatives
<i>Hate ta tei tena tou</i>	In the sea, we are in the same boat
<i>Ite dei dare larang tou</i>	On the land, we journey one path
<i>Ite kakang no aring</i>	We are older and younger siblings
<i>Ite opung no anang</i>	We are outside/outsideers the beloved
	relatives
<i>Ite ra tou nana tou</i>	We come from the same blood
<i>Tale tou tafune tou</i>	We originated in one womb
<i>Inga go kakang no aring</i>	Remember we are older and younger
	siblings
<i>Inga go opung no anang</i>	Remember we are outside/outsideers
	the beloved relatives
<i>Mene ite jadi tou</i>	Let's unite
<i>Pana feleng leing hama-hama</i>	Let's walk together
<i>Lelang ite lafo tana lafo tana dike sare</i>	[Let's] build our hometown [let's]
	make it a better place

52 Djobo, "Makna *Tara Miti Tomi Nuku*," 103.

These verses convey interconnectedness, collective care, and the ethical obligation to one another.⁵³ They illustrate philosophical concepts passed through generations, such as *tenang eli mule noa* (friendly living ensures safety and peace), *taume anuku, takalli anuku* (one heart, one bond, let's build our hometown), and *ovo min aivetang* (sacrificing for future generations), echoing Eck's emphasis on relational pluralism.

By incorporating Eck alongside Heyden and Nierenberg, *Lego-lego* can be understood as both a co-produced archive and a living, embodied practice of interfaith pluralism. It demonstrates that Indigenous traditions are not peripheral but central to fostering dialogue, solidarity, and ethical engagement, offering a powerful model of harmonious coexistence in pluralistic societies.

VI. *Lego-lego* as a Mediating Site of Religious Co-Production: Orality, Ritual and Symbolic Imagination

Lego-lego functions as a mediating site of RCoP, bringing Christians and Muslims together for shared ethical and theological reflection. While Heyden and Nirenberg locate co-production within shared archives of scripture and theology, Lattu and Kolimon invite us to consider how such archives are not only read but danced, sung, and performed. In Alor-Pantar, where religious tradition is embodied, negotiated practice rather than fixed doctrine, *Lego-lego* demonstrates how oral, communal practices sustain dialogue, co-creation, and theological reflection across religious boundaries. This perspective opens a conversation with Lattu's analysis of orality, highlighting how *Lego-lego* exemplifies the ways in which oral, symbolic, and participatory practices shape interreligious engagement and theological reflection.

Lattu argues that orally-oriented societies engage across faiths primarily through stories, songs, and rituals rather than textual or elite dialogues.⁵⁴ In Maluku, *kapata* (Malukan folksong) and ritual performances transmit memory and solidarity, creating what he calls a people's dialogue embedded in oral practices.⁵⁵ *Lego-lego* shares the same principle: *Pantun adat* and

53 Waamanah Hamap Demang, "Eksistensi Tarian Tradisional Lego-Lego Sebagai Alat Pemersatu Masyarakat Suku Kabola Di Desa Kopidil Kecamatan Kabola Kabupaten Alor Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur" (undergraduate thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, 2019), 18.

54 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 62, 176–177.

55 Lattu discusses *kapata* extensively in Chapter 2, titled: Folksong, Oral Narrative,

communal rhythms provide a structured yet flexible medium through which Indigenous, Muslim, and Christian participants interact. During the 2022 Bible dedication in Kabola, participants danced in an open circle, reciting *pantun adat* that narrated ancestral history and ethical teachings. Much like *kapata* in Maluku, *Lego-lego* becomes a performative dialogue across faiths, where rhythm, poetry, and movement create shared meaning without recourse to elite theological exchange.

Symbolic imagination is central to Lattu's approach, which he terms "symbolic-imagined interreligious engagement." Emerging from symbolic action and collective imagination, such engagements demonstrate that interaction with others does not always require physical encounters but may unfold through shared myths, rituals, and symbols.⁵⁶ In Maluku, the myth of *Nunusaku* symbolizes a common ancestry for Muslims and Christians, enabling the imagination of siblinghood despite conflict. Bedtime stories, the *cuci keramat* ritual, and the *tujuh syawal* feast are examples of how domestic and public spaces nurture kinship relations through imagination and memory, embodying a sense of *rasa orang basudara*—the feeling of being siblings.⁵⁷

Lego-lego's oral poetry reinforces a similar dynamic. Lyrics such as "We are siblings, bound by one womb" (*Pidiai mamenu kafaing* in Alila language) articulate an interfaith vision of belonging, while the circular formation and hand-holding (*mayai* in Abui tradition) physically embody connection and kinship. Just as Malukan practices of symbolic imagination sustain Muslim-Christian solidarity, *Lego-lego* enacts interreligious and intercultural bonds through embodied symbols and oral performance. As Lattu notes, Malukan interreligious engagement "illustrates the function of collective imagination, shared values and symbols, and collective memory in interreligious relationships," offering a model for societies where oral traditions remain central.⁵⁸ Through these symbolic practices, Christian, Muslim, and Indigenous participants enact social and spiritual bonds, aligning closely with Lattu's notion of symbolic imagination as a vehicle of unity performed through the body. In dialogue with Heyden and Nirenberg's concept of shared archives, Lattu reconceives the archive as imaginative and sonic—

and Collective Memory. "*Kapata* works in Malukan society as 1) a tool of ritual performance, 2) a shared knowledge and experience of the past, 3) a communicative action, 4) and social integration."

56 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 59–60.

57 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 69–70.

58 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 171.

shaped by rhythm, sound, and memory—and *Lego-lego*, in this sense, performs precisely such an imaginative archive.

For Lattu, ritual is not merely ceremonial but functions as a form of collective memory. Commemorative rituals act as performative memory, sustaining the past through the recurring enactments that bind communities together. In his words, rituals “maintain the past in participant or group mentality through depictive representations of past events,” becoming “constructed re-enactments of the past.”⁵⁹ In Maluku, *kapata* folksongs and ritual performances transmit ancestral origins and kinship ties, embedding shared values within communal memory. By listening to songs and engaging in bodily movements, communities connect with their history, drawing strength to face present struggles. Rituals such as *panas pela*, where women recount the story of kinship alliances and children participate in the enactment, ensure that moral teachings are not lost but passed down to new generations. This continuity demonstrates how ritual functions both as memory and pedagogy, preserving social identity across time.

Lego-lego operates within a similar symbolic framework, serving as a living archive of memory and morality. Each performance is not only artistic but reenacts interreligious cooperation and Indigenous ethical principles. The beating of *moko* drums anchors the participants in ancestral rhythm, while *pantun adat* conveys teachings of kinship, reciprocity, and harmony, echoing what Lattu describes as the transformative power of recurring performance. Just as Malukan rituals recall and re-create the past in the present, *Lego-lego* embodies the same dynamic: Ancestral memory is ritually revived and ethical norms are reinforced through repetition. In this way, symbolic imagination and collective memory converge, enabling communities to sustain cohesion and reaffirm their shared bonds across religious and cultural boundaries.

Critically, Lattu challenges the elite-dominated model of interfaith dialogue, which is often confined to clerical or academic exchanges. He advocates instead for grassroots, inclusive engagement rooted in everyday practices.⁶⁰ *Lego-lego* embodies this inclusivity: Anyone, youth or elder, different gender, Muslim, Christian, or Indigenous, may join the circle. At Kabola in 2022, the open dance blurred boundaries of age, gender, ethnicity, and religious identity, exemplifying what Lattu would call a

59 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, xxiv–xxv.

60 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 158–159, 163–165.

“people’s dialogue,” enacted in rhythm and movement rather than formal deliberation.⁶¹

By integrating Lattu’s insights, it becomes clear that *Lego-lego* is not only a mediating

site for Muslim-Christian co-production but also a performance, symbolic, and participatory medium that enacts interfaith understanding through oral tradition, collective memory, and inclusive ritual. This perspective complements the framework of co-production by foregrounding orality as the theological and social engine of pluralistic engagement, enriching our understanding of how communities negotiate difference and sustain unity in practice.

In dialogue with Indonesian scholars who foreground local epistemologies of interreligious encounter, this paper extends the RCoP framework through Mery Kolimon’s chapter, “Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas” (2018), published in the volume *Costly Tolerance*.⁶² Drawing on narratives from Christian Meto and Muslim Bugis communities in West Timor, Kolimon demonstrates that religious coexistence in Indonesia is not a stable achievement but an iterative, ongoing practice of negotiating and crossing boundaries through which these traditions are mutually produced. For Kolimon, tolerance is a lived process—an everyday labor of “narrating identity” through gestures of empathy, ritual cooperation, and social exchange. These acts, particularly among women who attend each other’s funerals or assist in community labor, reveal an interreligious ethics grounded in orality, kinship, and relational memory rather than in doctrinal uniformity. Kolimon’s emphasis on women’s participation, emotional labor, and domestic ritual extends the idea of co-production into spaces often excluded from theological discourse—echoing how *Lego-lego* itself, as a communal dance, is maintained through women’s songs, hospitality, and ritual labor.

Kolimon’s approach situates interreligious life within an Indigenous hermeneutic that complements and provincializes Heyden and Nirenberg’s textual emphasis. Where RCoP framework identifies co-production in scriptural and theological dialogue, Kolimon shows that it also unfolds through *cerita* (story), *adat* (custom), and embodied reciprocity. Her notion of boundary negotiating resonates with Lattu’s idea of oral-based interreligious engagement, yet adds a critical dimension of gender and power. Drawing on

61 Lattu, *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue*, 166–167.

62 Kolimon, “Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas”; see note 6 above.

Mechteld Jansen's insight that "every act of boundary-making is an act of power," Kolimon exposes how interreligious relations are shaped by the politics of recognition and exclusion. Acts of crossing—such as women participating in the rituals of the other faith—are thus creative performances of agency that subtly reorder social and theological hierarchies.⁶³

This perspective illuminates how *Lego-lego* in Alor-Pantar likewise operates as a performative site of co-production. The dance gathers Christians and Muslim participants into a shared rhythmic space where religious boundaries are reconfigured through movement, song, and bodily synchronization. As in Kolimon's Timorese context, *Lego-lego* does not merely represent coexistence but enacts it—producing new forms of relationality and belonging that redefine what it means to be Christian, Muslim, or Indigenous. The Indigenous form of the ritual grounds and conditions this encounter, ensuring that global religions are continually reshaped through local rhythm, emotion, and kinaesthetic memory.

By placing Kolimon's and Lattu's insights in conversation with Heyden and Nirenberg, this paper advances a decolonial, Indonesian re-reading of the Religious Co-Production (RCoP) framework—one that foregrounds relationality, performance, and agency within asymmetrical power relations. *Lego-lego*, like the interreligious practices Kolimon describes, demonstrates that co-production is not only textual or doctrinal but embodied, affective, and communal. It unfolds in the dancing body, in oral narrative, and in the everyday gestures through which people negotiate life together across religious difference. This re-reading challenges the dominance of text-based or elite discourses in the study of interreligious encounter, showing instead that theology and coexistence are co-created in rhythm, gesture, and shared affect.

In this Indonesian interpretation, the co-production of religions is not a static intellectual category but a lived ethic—performed in song, enacted in dance, and remembered in the body. *Lego-lego* thus stands as both archive and performance, theology and choreography, an embodied hermeneutic through which communities continually remake faith, kinship, and coexistence in Alor-Pantar.

VII. Challenge and Implications

The sustainability of the *Lego-lego* dance faces significant challenges from

63 Kolimon, "Menegosiasikan Batas, Menarasikan Identitas," 257–258.

modernity, radicalism, and shifting generational attitudes. These pressures reflect broader tensions in maintaining interfaith harmony within plural societies and illustrate the dual potential of shared histories to foster either unity or division, as noted by Heyden and Nirenberg. While they emphasize that historical archives can inspire both peace and conflict depending on how they are engaged, *Lego-lego* offers a living model for addressing these challenges through its inclusivity, adaptability, and ethical imagination.

Modernity and Changing Generational Perspectives

As younger generations in Alor-Pantar become increasingly shaped by urbanization and global media, traditional practices as *Lego-lego*, risk being perceived as outdated or merely performative heritage. This generational shift threatens not only the continuity of the dance but also the transmission of its interfaith ethic. If its values are detached from lived practice, *Lego-lego* could become a museum artifact rather than a living pedagogy of coexistence.

Yet modernization also presents opportunities. Digital platforms, educational, and tourism can reframe *Lego-lego* as a resource for intercultural dialogue rather than a relic of the past. Integrating *Lego-lego* into youth programs or promoting it through creative social media storytelling could revitalize its relevance. This aligns with Heyden and Nirenberg's call for responsible engagement with shared traditions—an approach that adapts ritual forms to new contexts while preserving their moral and spiritual core.

Rising Religious Radicalism

The growing influence of conservative religious movements in Indonesia—both Christian evangelicalism and Islamic fundamentalism—poses another challenge to *Lego-lego*'s hybrid and inclusive nature. Such movements often promote exclusivist theologies that Indigenous rituals as incompatible with “pure” expressions of faith. This ideological rigidity risks undermining *Lego-lego*'s function as a space of interreligious encounter, threatening to replace dialogue with segregation.

Despite these pressures, *Lego-lego* remains a counter-narrative to exclusivism. Its ritual inclusivity—where Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous participants join hands in circular dance—embodies what Heyden and Nierenberg describe as the ethical potential of shared archives. The *pantun adat*'s affirmation that participants are “partly Christian, partly

Muslim” demonstrates how orality and performance can subvert rigid identity boundaries and affirm coexistence as a lived ethic.

Implications for Interfaith Engagement

The resilience of *Lego-lego*’s highlights its potential as a model for pluralism grounded in embodied practice rather than institutional decree. Its call-and-response structure, where participants collectively chant “We are siblings, bound by one womb,” offers a sonic and physical metaphor for the relational nature of coexistence. This participatory dynamic enacts dialogue through rhythm and movement, ensuring that the practice remains responsive to social change.

The dual potential of shared histories, as identified by Heyden and Nirenberg, is clearly visible here. Misinterpretations or neglect of *Lego-lego*’s inclusive ethos could lead to its marginalization and the erosion of Alor-Pantar’s traditions of coexistence. Conversely, deliberate engagement with *Lego-lego* as a living archive can transform it into a pedagogical tool for peacebuilding—one that teaches reconciliation not through doctrine but through movement, memory, and shared emotion.

By grounding interfaith harmony in local wisdom, *Lego-lego* demonstrates how shared histories can be reimagined as ethical resources for contemporary pluralism. It reinforces Heyden and Nirenberg’s insight that archives are not static but dynamic, offering possibilities for both rupture and renewal. Ultimately, *Lego-lego*’s adaptability and inclusivity outline a decolonial ethic of coexistence, showing that the past, when embodied responsibly, can be a generative force for building a more harmonious future.

VIII. Conclusion

The *Lego-lego* dance offers a vital extension to Heyden and Nirenberg’s framework of religious co-production by emphasizing the role of lived, embodied practice in shaping interfaith relationships, while also resonating with Diana Eck’s vision of religious pluralism as active, participatory engagement with diversity. Whereas Heyden and Nirenberg foreground the interpretive and archival dimensions of co-production among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Eck highlights pluralism as a discipline of encounter—one that transforms coexistence into collaboration through shared practice and mutual transformation. *Lego-lego* thus relocates these

frameworks within an Indonesian epistemology grounded in orality, imagination, and relational performance. It demonstrates that pluralism, like co-production, is not confined to theological discourse or textual reinterpretation but is lived and enacted through rhythm, voice, and collective movement that continually reconfigures relationships in real time. Seen through this lens, *Lego-lego* becomes both a theological and cultural expression of pluralism in motion, embodying the dialogical spirit that unites diverse communities through performance and shared moral imagination.

Through its inclusive ethos, rhythmic movements, circular choreography, and *pantun adat*, *Lego-lego* functions as a living archive, preserving ancestral wisdom while generating new forms of solidarity and reimagining shared histories while fostering unity across religious and cultural divides. Lyrics such as “We are siblings, bound by one womb” and “Partly Christian, partly Muslim; We do not deny, nor do we fight” embody the communal values of coexistence and mutual respect. These oral traditions ensure that interfaith engagement remains dynamic and participatory, offering a tangible model for navigating pluralism in modern societies. In this sense, *Lego-lego* performs what Kolimon calls “narrating identity”—a dialogical process of becoming-with the other through story, song, and ritual. Simultaneously, it embodies Lattu’s notion of symbolic imagination, where coexistence is sustained not only through physical encounters but through shared symbols, memories, and affective bonds. These insights extend Heyden and Nirenberg’s idea of the “shared archive” into an imaginative and sonic register—constituted through rhythm, memory, and embodied performance.

By placing Kolimon’s and Lattu’s perspectives in conversation with Heyden and Nirenberg, this study advances an Indonesian re-reading of RCoP—one that emphasizes relationality, performance, and agency within systems of unequal power. *Lego-lego* thus shows that co-production is not only intellectual or textual but also embodied and communal, unfolding in the dancing body, in oral narrative, and in the everyday gestures through which people negotiate life together across religious difference.

Ultimately, *Lego-lego* challenges static conceptions of religious identity by revealing hybridity and fluidity as sources of strength. It reaffirms that religious co-production is an ongoing, lived phenomenon—performed in song, enacted in dance, and remembered in the body. As a model of inclusivity and mutual transformation, *Lego-lego* demonstrates how Indonesian Indigenous traditions can enrich global theories of coexistence by foregrounding interfaith ethics in embodied practice, ancestral memory, and the imaginative co-creation of community.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Building on the insights gained from this study of *Lego-lego* as a dynamic model of religious co-production, further research can deepen understanding of how traditions like this adapt, endure, and foster interfaith coexistence in changing contexts. The following directions draw from the intersecting insights of Heyden and Nirenberg, Eck, Lattu, and Kolimon, ensuring that future scholarship continues to develop an Indonesian framework for studying religious co-production.

- **Textual-Performative Interplay:** Investigate how communities integrate historical religious texts and theological narratives (as emphasized by Heyden and Nirenberg) with embodied practices like *Lego-lego*. Comparative studies could explore how oral and performative archives complement written ones in shaping Muslim-Christian relations across Southeast Asia.
- **Narrating Identity and Boundary Negotiation:** Drawing on Kolimon's idea of *menarasikan identitas* ("narrating identity"), future research could examine how rituals like *Lego-lego* function as sites of ethical negotiation—where communities continually rearticulate belonging and difference. This includes exploring the decolonial potential of Indigenous traditions to reframe interreligious dialogue from local epistemologies.
- **Symbolic Imagination and Orality:** Expanding on Lattu's concept of symbolic imagination, studies could analyze the affective, sonic, and narrative dimensions of rituals that foster interfaith empathy and kinship. Ethnographic attention to rhythm, gesture, and memory may reveal how oral traditions sustain coexistence beyond institutional frameworks.
- **Globalization and Youth Engagement:** Explore how globalization, education, and digital media influence young Alorese perceptions of *Lego-lego*. How do online platforms, tourism, and heritage discourses reshape the dance's interfaith ethos? Such studies could assess whether digital storytelling becomes a new form of "imagined archive."
- **Gender, Participation and Power:** Examine how gender roles within *Lego-lego* shape interreligious collaboration, leadership, and cultural transmission. Feminist and postcolonial readings could uncover how women's participation in ritual song and movement embodies Kolimon's vision of dialogical agency.
- **Rituals of Healing and Reconciliation:** Investigate the potential of *Lego-lego* and similar embodied practices to mediate post-conflict

reconciliation. Drawing on Lattu's emphasis on affective solidarity, research could explore how shared rituals build trust, repair ruptures, and nurture long-term peace in plural societies.

- **Ethics, Ecology, and Coexistence:** Analyze how ethical principles embedded in Lego-lego—mutual respect, reciprocity, and environmental stewardship—can inform contemporary frameworks of interfaith ethics. This may link local ecological cosmologies with Heyden and Nirenberg's idea of practice co-production as a moral and relational practice.
- **Policy and Preservation:** Assess how state, religious, and educational institutions can support the preservation of Lego-lego as a living, interfaith practice. Policy studies could explore how heritage initiatives can balance safeguarding tradition with ensuring its organic evolution within communities.

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