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SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

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National Leader of Azerbaijan

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MUHDI AKBAR: NURSERY OF LOCAL MULTICULTURAL IN SELAYAR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the destination: The background of the existence of *Muhdi Akbar* as the cult for Islamic society in Selayar and the culmination and the development of Multicultural in Selayar. This study used a qualitative research approach and phenomenological method. The collection of data is in the form of observation, in-depth interviews. The result of the research shows that *Muhdi Akbar* is one of faith genres in Islam, which deviates from the faith (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), practice (*amalan*) and idealism of most of Moslem. It raised pro and cons, and ignites conflict because it is the existence known as deviation from proper Islamic tradition. In its development, *Muhdi Akbar* known as syncretism because fused between the application of many religions such as Christian, Hinduism, and Islam. The fusion from those religions leads *Muhdi Akbar* to the Multicultural phenomenon, and then it becomes a model of society living in Selayar.

Keywords: *Muhdi Akbar*, Multiculturalism, Selayar

1. INTRODUCTION

The complexity problem of society is one of the reason for the existence many alternative ideologies as an instant way to be rescued from the problem. It also becomes an effort to gain the peace in life. Alternative ideology movement or sector (cult) has particular characteristics. It has very strong organizational management, discipline, and absolute. The cult is centered to the charismatic figure which has high rhetoric that can attract his follower. The figure guarantees safety and happiness for life.

The form of ideology and institution which has born after the existence of samawi religion is not only cause the existence of the cult as institution. It is also totally reconstructed the ideology and institution of previous belief of society and makes many differences from it. The last form of this phenomenon happens in Selayar called *Muhdi Akbar* as a group of new the faith based on Islam but its existence was denied.

Some of the followers of *Muhdi Akbar* chose Christian and Hinduism as their faith besides Islam as their previous faith. Their existence in Christian, Hinduism and Islam is only to get the acclamation as religious people, but they still believe the faith of *Muhdi Akbar* in Islam. The fusion of Christian, Hinduism and Islam in *Muhdi Akbar* finally placed them as the follower of "multicultural," which until now they belief that all human being is equal. They also belief that people is deserved to be human if they are nice and treat all the creatures very well every time and everywhere.

Based on the background of these issues, the research problem is formulated, as follows: 1). How does the existence of the doctrine *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar?, 2). What is the condition of diversity society Selayar road to multiculturalism?. 3). How is the development of doctrine *Muhdi Akbar*?. With the purpose of research is to reveal the background, the existence and development of the teaching of *Muhdi Akbar* as a pioneer in the emergence of multicultural life Selayar.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research used phenomenology as used for religion movement research and alternative ideology. (Aspers, Patrik. 2009: 1-2). [1] The application of phenomenology is aimed to develop general inquiry as a focus to lead the result that should be gained in some social phenomena especially about the existence of *Muhdi Akbar* as an alternative ideology. In this research, the researcher tried to investigate and to respond the exploration and also gave descriptive questions about the reason and the background of the existence of *Muhdi Akbar*. It also investigated the influence of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar and its development in society until it becomes as a multicultural society.

Qualitative approach used in this research is snowball sampling (Bienacki and Waldorf, 1981: 141-163) [2] technique to determine research subject and to identify resource and people in *Muhdi Akbar* which proper to the necessity in this research. This research used the researcher as the instrument to collect and analyze the data of the research but still consider the reliability, validity, barometer, and measurement. The measurement and the instrument are abstract, but it is strengthened by the completion of notes, Handy cam and tape recorder. The researcher position as an instrument also becomes the designer and the collector as much as possible the data from the field.

The technique of collecting data in this research is interviewing that taken from the main informant that well known the information of the existence of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar. As supplementary of interview technique, the observation has done in the location that is known as the starting place where *Muhdi Akbar* existed. Besides that, the researcher also analyzed the document of *Muhdi Akbar* that relevant to this research. In order to avoid misinterpretation of the focus in this research, the verification data was done in Fokus Group Discussion (FGD).

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The research location is in Selayar Regency that is known as a place where *Muhdi Akbar* was born and developed. Specifically the location of this research is in Binanga Benteng Village Layolo District Bontosikuyu Selayar regency. It was one of the regencies in South Sulawesi Province located on the tip of the south and extended north to south.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Existence of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar

Recently, Islamic religious life in Selayar is characterized by the appearance of the strange teachings or cult. It deviated from the faith (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*) and practice (*amalan*) of Islam. The ism called cult (aliran sempalan) which in sociology studies known as an alternative ideology (Bromley, 2007) [3]. One of those ism would be analyzed in this research is Islamic Teachings of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar. The existence of *Muhdi Akbar* in Islam became pro and cons and raised conflict among institution in Islam, which has a different ideology. They stated that *Muhdi Akbar* is the deviation ism from mainstream in Islam and has a big contradiction from proper religion tradition. In the other side, *Muhdi Akbar* is known as an alternative ideology as a respond from main religion (mainstream) because it does not stand for spirituality seekers. Those spirituality seekers considered that the religion failed to give spiritual development as their necessity. This phenomenon started when the nobleman, government, and religious leader collaborated to manage religion and privacy space of the followers (Anton Lucas and De Jong, 2009: 185)[4].

The born of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar could not be separated from the charismatic of the founder Haji Abdul Gani. He comes from Islam orthodox and the religious nobleman. A *Muhdi Akbar* teaching is introduced called by Binanga Benteng around in 1881 or 1300 Hijriyah. It related to the name of the village where Haji Abdul Gani lived. Then around year 1918, this ism had many developments especially for the followers until it changed to *Muhdi Akbar* (Anton Lucas and De Jong, 2009:249-250) [5] (Punna, 1980:26) [6].

Muhdi Akbar teaching is egalitarian because its existence does not differentiate the humanity from all sides. All human are equal for their position and their rights. For *Muhdi Akbar* human need to recover their soul and keep their relationship to other people and the environment. From the principle, *Muhdi Akbar* could beyond social gap that makes Haji Abdul Gani, and his followers become popular and many people were attracted to be part of *Muhdi Akbar* especially for society from Selayar in Binanga Benteng (Sinaga, 1992:78) [7]. The table below shows the development of *Muhdi Akbar* philosophy in all districts in Selayar Island since 1950.

Table 1. Distribution of Adherents *Muhdi Akbar* Data 1950-1951

No.	District	Adult		Children	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1.	Bonea	176	185	129	111
2.	Buki	77	85	36	36
3	Onto	42	53	21	14
4	Batangmata	28	36	14	18
5	Tanete	46	48	33	23
6	Ballabulo	75	67	29	25
7	Laiyolo	210	229	80	87
8	Barang-barang	143	174	73	52
TOTAL		797	877	415	316
		2455 People			

Source: Archives 1950-1951, Registration Number 1022. [N]

The development of the followers of *Muhdi Akbar* shows in Table 1 is the data taken before *Muhdi Akbar* has got the instruction to be dismissed from the other Islamic group in society. It also includes government pressure to fuse *Muhdi Akbar* in the official religion in Indonesia: Islam, Christian and Hinduism.

Muhdi Akbar is concerned to the *tasawuf* of Islam, which emphasize to the eschatology and has an acclamation of Isa as a center of all reality. Beside that *Muhdi Akbar* divided manifestation of the divine into four Isas. Those are Isa *Kalenna* (Isa comes from Allah), Isa *Arenna* (Isa comes from the name of Allah), Isa *Gau'na* (Isa comes from the act of Allah), Isa *Sipa'na* (Isa comes from the nature of Allah) (Ngelow, 1996:10) [9]. It is in line with the statement of Badulu stated that:

During believe on *Muhdi Akbar*, there are no contradictions to the other religion. There is no funeral but for seven days, forty days and the offerings to the angel. We believe Isa because we have been Christians, and we do not have particular prophets as a central for our beliefs. *Syahadat* (Confession) is not belongings to us as our central as Islam did. Badulu interviewed in February, 20, 2013.

The existence of the cult for Isa in *Muhdi Akbar* was caused by the prohibition from the government to belief on *Muhdi Akbar*. They chose to convert to Christian and Islam, but most of them convert to Christian. From those instructions, *Muhdi Akbar* known as mystic teachings called "Isa-sentries.

The Condition of Society Diversity in Selayar: Way to Become Multiculturalism

Mostly people in Selayar were Islam since it was spread out in Selayar. They were known as orthodox Islam. They also developed orders (*tarekat*) which concern on Sufism (*tasawuf*). The development of Islam in Selayar characterized by the dimension of mystic and Sufism (*tasawuf*). Sufism used as a media to spread Islam and concern on penetration Pacifique; it was hidden mission without any conflict (Sewang, 2005:113) [10] (Pelras, 2006:115) [11]. The development of Moslem in Slayer can be seen on table below:

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Table 2. The Data of Religion in Selayar Island in 2011

Source: BPS Selayar in 2012 [12]

No	Religion	Bonto Haru	Bonto Sikuyu	Bonto Matene	Benteng	Bonto Manai	Pasi Masunggu	Pasi Marannu	Pasi Masunggu Timur	Pasi Lambena	Takabonerate	Buki	Total
1	Islam	14012	14332	14067	24046	13092	8120	64108	7509	8698	12296	6125	186.405
2	Protestant	6	219	21	283	-	-						529
3	Catholic	-	221	-	160	-	4						385
4	Hinduism	-	140	-	-	32	-						172

Table 2 does not show the number of *Muhdi Akbar* followers because they were spread into some religions. Government asked them to fuse in the official religion in Indonesia. Based on the data showed that their identity card (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*) officially written as Hinduism, Christian, and Islam. In fact, they still believe on *Muhdi Akbar*. They stated "this is the way to maintain our faith as *Muhdi Akbar* followers, so we have to choose one of the official religions as government instruction." Interviewed Baduru on February, 22, 2013.

On religion view, every faith includes *Muhdi Akbar* has moral value to appeal their follower to be peaceful and harmonious on their life. For example in Islam, there was a regulation to manage the respond for every act from another religion. Islam manages the attitude, moral and the guideline to behave individually and socially. The formation of morals in family is a priority for Moslem. It was an obligation for all religion. Even moral is one of the human ideas from philosophy as analysis object. It was also reflected from custom and culture in society.

According to Parson cited in Thomas (1990: 24-29) [13], religion is a System of reference values for all system of actions for the followers. Parson placed religion as reference to apply behavior in society, so for a particular part it would be known as a barometer for the follower's act. In religion mechanism context as system of reference values, religion becomes a link in society especially for the typology of society that has homogeny religion and ideology.

Muhdi Akbar is one of the ism that the practice influenced by Islam. However, some of their understanding are different but still use some of Al-Quran verses on their ritual. Said Sarjan stated. Interviewed on, February, 24, 2013 in *Muhdi Akbar* ritual there are some of the Al-Quran verses".

Muhdi Akbar is considered as the freedom movement to the customs regulation. The movement was an appearance because of the weakness of social condition. It was proofed by; first, there was a mixing between the faith of society before Islam and the faith of society after Islam. Second, the leak of the society understanding of Islam changed social management in the society diversity by the appearance of *Muhdi Akbar* as an alternative ideology. Third, *Muhdi Akbar* proposed worship system that does not rule by *shari'a*. It makes *Muhdi Akbar* could attract society to be part of it. It was different to Muhammadiyah which developed in the same year, because *Muhdi Akbar* denied very important aspect in Islam such as pray five times a day. They believe that they could contact to God through Sufism and meditation.

The Dismissing of *Muhdi Akbar*: The Culmination of Multiculturalism Development in Selayar Society

After the releasing of President Decree 1966, post of G 30 September, it was comered most of socialist organizations and the cult. The President Decree only recognized six religions; they are Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, which would be influenced the development of *Muhdi Akbar* in Selayar.

The dismissing of *Muhdi Akbar* did not stop the leader to be active and get a power. They understood the political system in Indonesia. The movement was pioneered by Ruku Daeng Mappata. Most of the leaders of *Muhdi Akbar* joined in the branch organizations of Golkar called *Musyawarah Keluarga Gotong Royong* (MKGR). The main target of Ruku Daeng Mappata was struggle for *Muhdi Akbar* in House of Representative (DPR). The planning was failed when Daeng Mappata became representatives of South Sulawesi Province and vowed in the name of Islam. The strategy of Daeng Mappata to confirm *Muhdi Akbar* became boomerang because result the antipathy from government (Punna, 1980) [14].

An important note for the dismissing of *Muhdi Akbar* was seen by the reaction of its followers. They did not have a particular reaction that showed their fanatics to the doctrine of *Muhdi Akbar* whereas the fact they have some ritual patterns that can be used to build solidarity in their group. This opportunity was not used by *Muhdi Akbar* to get power for the struggle.

According to Anton Lucas and De Jong, (2009:275) [15], the followers of *Muhdi Akbar* have been disoriented after the dismissing. They lose their base because they did not allow doing their mystic ritual. The condition described the faith of *Muhdi Akbar* is a part of the follower's life. The followers of *Muhdi Akbar* were given two options. They could convert to Islam or convert to Christians. Lucas stated that there was no reaction for the dismissing; they faced this calmly without struggle. They respond for government instructions through converting their religion to another religion. Not only converted to Islam and Christian, but also Hinduism. Although they all converted to those religions, they still stand to their faith as *Muhdi Akbar*.

The conversion of *Muhdi Akbar* to one of the official religions in Indonesia is one of government achievement to solve society's worry for the existence of *Muhdi Akbar* as a cult. They claimed that *Muhdi Akbar* is a part of Islam, but they denied *syariat* from Islam. However, the conversion of *Muhdi Akbar* followers to the official religion it does not mean could change

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their ideology. They only followed the instructions from the government to avoid a dispute in society. In fact, they still stand to their faith as *Muhdi Akbar*.

Based on the observation and the information taken from proper member of *Muhdi Akbar*, it was found that the position of *Muhdi Akbar* in society is not a problem anymore. They are free to express their specific rituals among society without any burden. It makes them feel they are now part of society in Selayar. It was proofed by the fact that for one family who, lived in the same place has different faith and religion: Islam, Christian and Hinduism. The informant is Patta Lolo and Mallarangeng, on February, 22nd and 23rd, 2013.

From an interview with Baduru and Hanafiah 24 February 2013, was found that when Moslem in Selayar held celebration for example wedding party and circumcision and also led (*Lebaran*), *Muhdi Akbar* followers also participate and attend the celebration and vice versa. Baduru also stated, *Muhdi Akbar* cured Moslem people when they got sick using spells, and many techniques come from *Muhdi Akbar*. It is also done by Moslem when *Muhdi Akbar* followers need help from them. The fact shows that Multicultural is applied in Selayar where *Muhdi Akbar* developed, where all individual. Religion, and also faith shows their respect and honor each other. It is suitable to the theory stated by Lawrence Blum, cited in Lubis (2006:174) [16]: Multiculturalism includes understanding, respect, and honor to people's culture, and how to be curious to other ethnic and culture. Parekh (1997) cited in Azra (2007) [17] stated: A Multicultural society is one that includes several cultural communities with their overlapping but none the less distinct conception of the world, system of meaning, values, forms of social organizations, histories, customs and practices." The condition shows in social life in Selayar, where *Muhdi Akbar* and other religion are respected each other in every celebration. They do not mind about what the religion, but they need each other and can live together as a human being.

4. CONCLUSION

Muhdi Akbar was brought by Haji Abdul Gani is a kind of religion movement rooted from Islam. The appearance might be born from the weakness of society condition in Selayar. In the socialization of Islam is one of the reasons of the existence of *Muhdi Akbar*. Islam socialization was far developed and made the deviation from the mainstream. When *Muhdi Akbar* existed, the respond for its exclusion makes them strong. Beside that the fusion of Islam, Christian and Hinduisms strengthen the process of multicultural understanding. *Muhdi Akbar* believes that all religions are same and equal because religion lead human to be better in life. Mud Akbar also stated that good human is when he can be used to other and environment where he belongs. It makes them be accepted in society because they show their multicultural life. From the principal, society in Selayar can live through multiculturalism.

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