

## The Existence of Non Muslim Policewomen in Banda Aceh: Between Piety and Identity

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### Abstract :

*Aceh is the only province in Indonesia that implements Islamic sharia. Muslims living in Aceh must comply and support the implementation of sharia law. However, there is an impact of implementing Islamic sharia for non-Muslims in Aceh. This article focuses on three non-Muslim policewomen from various police institutions in Banda Aceh. How do they express their piety as a non-Muslim minority group while still maintaining their identity but using symbols and activities in the Muslim environment in Banda Aceh. As qualitative research, the data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation with three informants. Then analyzed using the theory of piety identity politics initiated by Saba Mahmood, the researcher found that the expressions of piety shown by the three policewomen in the public spaces even though they used the symbols and identities of other religions, but at the same times, they have created religious values for their beliefs as a Christian minority in Aceh to become stronger*

**Keywords :** non-Muslim, Policewomen, piety, identity

### Abstrak :

*Aceh merupakan satu-satunya provinsi di Indonesia yang menaerakan syariat Islam. Masyarakat Muslim yang tinggal di Aceh harus taat dan mendukung pelaksanaan syariat Islam. Namun pelaksanaan syariat Islam juga memberikan dampak kepada warga non-Muslim di Aceh. Fokus artikel ini adalah terhadap tiga polwan non-Muslim dari berbagai institusi kepolisian di Banda Aceh. Bagaimana mereka mengekspresikan kesolehan mereka sebagai kelompok minoritas non-Muslim dengan tetap mempertahankan identitas mereka namun menggunakan symbol dan aktivoitas di lingkungan masyarakat Muslim di Banda Aceh. Dengan menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, serta dokumentasi dengan tiga informan. Selanjutnya dianalisa dengan menggunakan teori politik identitas kesolahan yang digagas oleh Saba Mahmud, peneliti menemukan bahwa, ekspresi kesolehan yang ditunjukkan oleh ketiga polisi wanita tersebut di ruang public meskipun mereka menggunakan symbol dan identitas agama lain, namun di waktu yang bersamaan, mereka telah menciptakan nilai-nilai religious terhadap keyakinan mereka sendiri sebagai kelompok minoritas Kristen di Aceh menjadi semakin kuat*

**Kata Kunci:** Non-Muslim, Polisi Wanita, Kesolehan, Identitas

### INTRODUCTION (Written in bold capital, Book Antiqua 12)

The application of Islamic law in Aceh through qanun syariat has had a widespread impact on minority groups, especially non-Muslim residents. The impact that is felt especially on non-Muslim women is the use of clothing with head coverings or veils. This phenomenon is not only in civil society, but also in the police environment, namely non-Muslim policewomen. Based on 2018 data, there were 10 non-Muslim policewomen in Aceh and were spread throughout Aceh. In general, all

policewomen wear veils, including non-Muslim policewomen. Another impact of the implementation of Islamic law is that all of them obey the recitation of remembrance and prayers in the field every time they carry out the morning assembly, including non-Muslim policewomen. This was reinforced by a statement from Kompol Zul, who said that since the first implementation of Islamic law he witnessed all policewomen in Aceh wearing veils and all personnel were required to read remembrance and prayers every morning before carrying out their duties (Interview with Kompol Zul, Kasubbag Renmin (Planning and Administration) at DLT Polda Aceh, on 05 July 2019).

So far, studies on non-Muslim minority groups have been written up by several researchers, some argue that the application of Islamic sharia in Aceh has caused various difficulties, especially for non-Muslims who live in Aceh, also for Acehnese who commit violations while he is outside Aceh, or people other than Acehnese who commit violations in Aceh and various other issues (Siregar, 2008). Other researchers also emphasized that Islamic law does not only have implications for individuals as Acehnese citizens who are Muslim, but also for non-Muslims, and it has the potential to create legal tensions at the regional or even national levels (Siregar, 2008). Meanwhile, other writings tell about the experiences of female Christian teachers in public schools in Aceh which highlight the school's public space as an arena for power struggles between Muslim and Christian women minority. The writings illustrate that the application of Islamic law encourages the emergence of Christian women who wear veils. The study gave birth to the theory of "hybrid identity", which was born from the results of complex negotiations between identities as female teachers, adherents of Christianity, and Acehnese (Ansor & Meutia, 2016).

This research is intended to complement the lack of existing studies, by carefully mapping the experiences of non-Muslim minority groups in the police institution on 3 non-Muslim policewomen in Banda Aceh; how is the experience of 3 non-Muslim policewomen in maintaining their identity in the public sphere while on duty in Aceh, and as a minority group how do they continue to express piety in the midst of the socio-cultural life of the Acehnese people.

This paper is based on one argument that the application of Islamic law in Aceh has implications for non-Muslim minority groups in police institution, where they are unable to express their identity in the public space in accordance with their beliefs, namely Christianity. Based on researcher's observations, non-Muslim groups in carrying out their duties also wear veils; when they are in the morning assembly line, they also participate in reciting remembrance and prayer and join every activity with the Muslim community, both in police institution and in the environment where they live, such as celebrating Maulid Nabi, mourning neighbors who have suffered a disaster, mingling on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and joining other activities with Islamic nuances. Meanwhile, qanun No. 18 of 2001 states that Islamic sharia in Aceh only applies to Muslim communities, therefore non-Muslim communities are not required to follow various laws and regulations based on Islamic law. However, in the field it is not as it is. Therefore, researcher assumes that intolerant practices have

occurred within the police institution. In this paper the researcher uses Saba Mahmood's theory of political identity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The focus of this research are three different police institutions, namely DLT Polda Aceh, Polsek BTM and Polsek JR (pseudonym place). All of these locations are in the area of Banda Aceh, and these will be the representation of all areas in Aceh.

The type of research in this article is qualitative with a sociological approach using participant observation method and field research. With regard to data sources, primary and secondary data are used. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with the three policewomen as well as other selected informants who were initially determined purposively. Once selected then it rolls in such a way as a snowball. Meanwhile, for secondary data, all types of literature and documents related to the topic of discussion of the article were used, which Tripa calls primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials (Tripa, 2019).

Data collection was carried out by means of interviews with the 3 policewomen, direct observation at Mapolda Aceh as well as the three non-Muslim policewomen's work units, namely DLT Polda Aceh, Polsek JR and Polsek BTM Banda Aceh. Interviews were also conducted with seniors and co-workers of the policewomen. Meanwhile, researcher also conducted interviews with other parties such as colleagues and superiors of the three policewomen.

In-depth interviews that researcher conducted began with three non-Muslim policewomen, superiors and co-workers of the three personnel, several departments at Mapolda Aceh. Interviews were conducted flexibly and in a semi-structured way, but researcher still used interview guidelines according to the research theme. Using a guide, all conversations were recorded via an audio-recorder, then transcribed, then analyzed according to the research theme.

Documents are another data source that complements the main data related to the problem and research focus, such as images connected to the activities of each personnel including complete uniforms with veils and other activities such as morning assembly and so on. This data is further used to complement the results of interviews and observation of places and events. All information from informants in the form of words or stories as well as the reasons from those observed in qualitative research become the main data. Secondary data consists of various writings, documents, and photographs. Informant activities that can be obtained from interviews via a recorder are also documents that can provide authentic information related to the research focus.

In addition, data collection was also in the form of manuscripts related to the topic of the dissertation. Besides that, the researcher also used textbooks, memes, and up-to-date online news to obtain the latest information to complete this paper.

Data Processing technique is carried out to determine the data used from all the data obtained. Normally, the information collected cannot be analyzed immediately.

Researcher will carry out a number of processes to turn field data into research data, namely correcting, editing and copying existing data (Miles et al., 2014).

The steps for data analysis in writing this dissertation are: First, all data obtained through observation and interviews were verified and reduced by simplifying them in the form of narratives and schematics so that it is easy to read the data. Second, the next step is to categorize the data in order to formulate or support a hypothesis or inference. Third, the data is then arranged in the form of units, the smallest parts that can stand alone apart from the others but can be recognized and understood so that they can be used to form patterns. Fourth, each unit is collected into a single data unit, which is then simultaneously verified and triangulated using observation techniques, in-depth interviews and documentation, as well as sources from all research subjects which are carried out continuously throughout the entire time span of data collection and analysis. Fifth, to build a systematic configuration of the relationship between the inferences of the problem formulation by engaging dialogue with various relevant theories so that a systematic and coherent pattern is built as an answer to the problem formulation that was built from Saba Mahmood's identity politics theory. Sixth, the theory is then re-analyzed to be standardized into a new theory and novelty regarding the identity of non-Muslim policewomen in Aceh (Glasser & Staruss, 2006).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Researchers need to inform several important (original) field data obtained from interviews, observations, questionnaires, surveys, documents, and other data collection techniques. The findings are presented in full and are related to the pre-determined scope of research. Findings can be supplemented with tables, graphs, and/or diagrams. Tables and figures are numbered and titled. Example:

*FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION*

1. *Profiles and experiences of three non-Muslim policewomen*

<b>No</b>	<b>Informant (pseudonym name)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Work Unit</b>	<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Duration of Staying in Aceh</b>
1.	Eli (P1)	31 years	Female	DLT Polda Aceh	Batak	Catholic	8 years
2.	Kristina (P2)	34 years	Female	Polsek JR	Papua	Catholic	6 years
3.	Maria (P3)	26 years	Female	Polsek BTM	Batak	Protestant	Since born

**1.1 Eli, first non Muslim policewoman**

The first Polwan (policewoman) that researcher met was with Eli (pseudonym name), 31 years old, at DLT Polda Aceh work unit, originally from the Batak tribe, and



a Catholic. Eli talked a lot about her experiences while in Aceh. When she was first to be placed in Aceh, there was indeed a feeling of worry, because according to her Aceh was one of the areas of conflict and also an area that implemented Islamic law; besides that, Aceh was also a disaster-prone area. Although at first she felt strange because she had to adjust to the uniform with a veil, both the policewomen's uniform and Persit's uniform because she was also the wife of a TNI soldier. Yet, as a Christian, Eli tried to adapt to the culture and customs of the Acehnese, from attitudes, behavior, and dress. Eli admitted that the first person who taught her to wear the veil was his neighbor, who was also Ibu Persit (wife of a TNI member). Even though there were difficulties and discomfort that this was not her world and identity, she preferred to follow the rules. As time went by, she got rid of all these difficulties and she also started to get used to Islamic clothing and the veil. Even the friends around her praised her by saying that she was beautiful with the veil she was wearing and it didn't look like she was a Christian (The result of interview with Brigadir Eli DLT Polda Aceh, on 07 December 2019, in Banda Aceh).

From the beginning until the research process was running, researcher observed every activity carried out by a member of polwan (policewoman) named Eli. The routine carried out by Eli every day began with the morning assembly, then continued with the recitation of remembrance and prayers led directly by the commander of the assembly leader. Uniquely, at the time of reading the prayer, Eli was still in the assembly line with her colleagues who solemnly recited the remembrance and prayer, but she just kept silent while following the reading to the end. Researcher asked if she memorized each verse of the remembrance and prayer; she answered that she memorized all of them, because every day she heard these chants for days or even years, and she felt comfortable following the process (The result of interview with Brigadir Eli DLT Polda Aceh, on 07 December 2019, in Banda Aceh).

Regarding veiled uniforms, all policewomen wore veils, because at the time of procurement of uniforms from Mabes Polri, specifically for the Aceh region, the policewomen's uniforms were equipped with veils. However, before the distribution was carried out, especially for Eli and colleagues who were non-Muslims, they were given a choice, whether they were willing to wear the veiled uniform or not, but they, including Eli, chose to wear the veil. So that they would not be different from other personnel and wanted to adapt with the people of Aceh, who were predominantly Muslim, both in the TNI dormitory environment and in the police institution where she worked, and in this case, she did not feel under pressure at all (The result of observation and interview with Eli, on 02 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh, Banda Aceh).

Furthermore, another challenge that Eli faced was in the work environment, when a handful of her Muslim co-workers threw the word "*kafir*" (infidel) at her. Yet, Eli did not reply, she just excused herself and understood that these words had nothing to do with someone's religion. She did not see these words coming from a Muslim, but referring to the person who said those words (The result of observation and interview

with Eli, on 02 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh, Banda Aceh). Another experience she had was when a colleague who used to be in the same religion as her then embraced Islam. Her colleague invited her to join in changing religion and becoming a Muslim, then Eli refused; she remained consistent with the teachings she professed. For her all religions teach goodness, without having to force one another to covert religions. In essence, ones must respect each other and maintain tolerance between religious communities wherever they are, including in the work environment (The result of observation and interview with Eli, on 02 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh, Banda Aceh).

Talking about tolerance was not something strange to Eli. She even said that in her extended family religious diversity was a common sight. Eli's father had three siblings, the oldest brother was a Muslim and had 12 children, domiciled in Aceh Tamiang. His wife had died first and his children were raised by her father; Eli called him Pak Tua (old uncle). But not long after, he also followed his wife and left 12 children who were all Muslims. While Eli's mother had 10 biological children, one of whom was her self. After Eli's father's biological brother died, all of his 12 children (six boys and six girls) were raised by Eli's mother. They lived in a simple house with only 5 bedrooms. They were raised by their mother from childhood to adulthood. Uniquely to this day, none of them had converted to Christianity. This tolerance was really built in the Eli family, which was predominantly Christian. And one thing that really amazed researcher was that Eli's mother, who was only a pork seller, was able to support 22 children who all had various religions. There were many amazing stories in a family that had different beliefs. When Muslims celebrated *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, Eli's mother fulfilled all the needs of the 12 nephews such as new clothes, cooking special *Eid* food, and accompanying them to carry out the *Eid* prayer at the mosque or field. Mother raised them without feeling burdened and never complained. They even called Eli's mother "mama". Eli's mother was a pork seller, but she never fed pork to all of her Muslim nephews. She even separated their tableware such as plates, cups, spoons and so on from her own children, because she knew that the food was prohibited for Muslims (The result of observation and interview with Eli, on 02 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh, Banda Aceh).

The researcher also conducted an interview with Iptu Cut AY, Kanit 1 at Laka DLT Polda Aceh and was Eli's direct supervisor. He said that while being Eli's superior at Subdik Gakkum, Eli was known to have a good personality. In the capacity of a superior to her subordinates, she always did every job given to her well without delay, even Eli was one of the members who had very high loyalty. Cut AY had never distinguished or treated Eli in a special way, all members were the same, both Muslims and non-Muslims (Interview with Iptu Cut AY, Kanit 1 at Laka DLT Polda Aceh on 27 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh). AY added that in the police institution there was no problem regarding the religion that each member adhered to. There was no discrimination between Muslim and non-Muslim personnel, especially in the division of tasks; all were equal and balanced; there was no sorting or selection or even segregation between personnel of different religions; all were

subject to the orders of the Dir DLT. Regarding the veiled uniform, according to AY, it was an equated rule, both for Muslim and non-Muslim personnel; this applied because Eli was in the area of Islamic Sharia so she had to submit and obey these rules even though she was a Christian (Interview with Iptu Cut AY, Kanit 1 at Laka DLT Polda Aceh on 27 August 2019 at DLT Polda Aceh).

### **1.2 Kristina, second non Muslim policewoman**

Furthermore, the second *polwan* that researcher met Kristina (pseudonym name), aged 34, with the work unit at polsek JR, from Papua and a Catholic. Kristina also shared a lot about her experiences while in Aceh. Kristina was assigned to Aceh in 2014, following in the footsteps of her husband who was also a TNI soldier. Before arriving and settling in Aceh, Kristina asked her friends about Aceh, because there was a fear that Aceh was a conflict and disaster-prone area. And from them she also received information that every woman living in Aceh was required to wear the veils. Where she was assigned was at Polsek JR bidang Reskrim (Criminal Investigation Division). Even though it was not required to wear a Polri uniform in the department where she worked, she still wore a veil (The result of observation and interview with Kristina on Desember 02 2019 at Polsek JR, Banda Aceh). According to Kristina's statement, being in Aceh for her and her husband made them really feel they were a minority. This condition was very different from when she served in Papua, where the majority of the population was Christian (The result of observation and interview with Kristina on Desember 02 2019 at Polsek JR, Banda Aceh).

Unlike Eli, Kristina had never felt discrimination or inappropriate words against her from people. It's just that with regard to freedom of worship, when there was a schedule for Spiritual Guidance (*Bimbingan Rohani* or *Binroh*), all Muslim personnel took part in these activities at polres or polda regularly on a predetermined day, while for those who were Christians, according to her, they would be provided with a special room such as the work room if the commander was also a Christian; if not they were just waiting in the room until the Muslim personnel finished participating in the *binroh* event (The result of observation and interview with Kristina on Desember 02 2019 at Polsek JR, Banda Aceh). On another occasion, if there was a policewomen regular social gathering or other activities such as thanksgiving held at the mosque, Kristina and her Christian colleagues were waiting outside the mosque until they finished. They conditioned the situation; if the activity allowed them to participate, they would participate and vice versa, if the activity was related to religion and was carried out at the mosque, they would wait outside the mosque. Unless it's held at home, they would participate like any other Muslim personnel. However, when the *Yasinan* reading and prayers were taking place, they just sat quietly and listened (The result of observation and interview with Kristina on Desember 02 2019 at Polsek JR, Banda Aceh).

One of Kristina's colleagues named Briпка Fach, Babin Kamtibmas *Gampong Emperom*, City of Banda Aceh, told a glimpse of Kristina. After 2 years of service at polsek, Fach knew Kristina as a good policewoman. Just like Eli, Kristina was also the only Catholic police officer. According to Fach, even though Kristina was not a

Muslim, there was no discrimination and special treatment for her, all personnel were the same despite their different religions. Even when the male police personnel held Friday prayers at the mosque, the policewomen were willing to guard the *Mako* (*Markas Komando*) Polsek. The total number of policewomen personnel at Polsek JR were four people, even the Kapolsek was also from among the policewomen members (Interview with Bripka Fachrul, Babin Kamtibmas Gampong Emperom Kota Banda Aceh on August 29 2019 at Polsek JR). Fach added that Kristina had high loyalty to her work. Even though she realized that she was a non-Muslim, she really respected fellow Muslim personnel. Likewise, her Muslim colleagues respected Kristina as a Catholic. Regarding her freedom in carrying out worship, just like other Catholic followers Kristina performed worship in the Church, so it did not interfere with work activities (Interview with Bripka Fachrul, Babin Kamtibmas Gampong Emperom Kota Banda Aceh on August 29 2019 at Polsek JR). Fach.

### **1.3 Maria, third non Muslim policewoman**

Furthermore, researcher conducted interviews with the third informant, namely Maria. In contrast to her two colleagues Eli and Kristina, apart from her initial placement in Aceh, Maria had lived in Aceh since birth, and her father was also a police officer at Polresta Banda Aceh at *Lantas* (Traffic Division), and had served in Aceh for a long time even before the conflict and *tsunami*. Maria was the youngest personnel compared to her two colleagues, even her status was still single when this research was conducted. When researcher interviewed Maria, she was listed as a student at a campus in Banda Aceh, namely Muhammadiyah in her seventh semester. The reason for choosing Universitas Muhammadiyah (UNMUHA) as a study destination was because at the start of the placement of the work unit, she was placed at Polsek BTM, which was not too far from the campus, namely in Batoh, Lueng Bata. If she chooses Unsyiah (Unsyiah (Universitas Syiah Kuala) is one of the oldest and well-known state universities in Aceh, located side by side with UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh, at Komplek Pelajar dan Mahasiswa (Kopelma) Darussalam Banda Aceh), which was located in Darussalam, of course it would take time on the road, because the distance was quite far compared to Muhammadiyah, the campus of her choice (Interview with Maria on December 02 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh). Even the lecturers and her friends supported her studying there. When the student data presence began, one of the lecturers asked Maria why she was wearing the veil, and the lecturer gave the option if non-Muslims were not required to wear the veil, but Maria chose to use the veil to adjust to the campus environment, which in fact was a campus labeled Islam (Interview with Maria on December 02 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh). When they found out about Maria's identity, some of her friends were proud, but some others also avoided and kept their friendship at a distance. This was one of the challenges for Maria as a non-Muslim group, but she had principles, the point was to respect each other (Interview with Maria on December 02 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh).

At Maria's residence, all of her neighbors were Muslim, even her neighbourhood was also Islamic. This was evident from the location of Maria's



residence which was in front of one of the Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) in Banda Aceh. So it was almost unavoidable if at any time Maria and her family heard the call to prayer (*adzan*) echoed, lectures from the *ustaz* and the recitation Quran of the students. When researcher asked how she felt about this, she answered that everything was normal, she was even familiar with the atmosphere of Muslim worship. From Maria's childhood to high school and even college, Islamic lessons were not something new for her, including learning Arabic. Maria could also write Arabic and she memorized *hijaiyah* letters. She could not avoid all of that because every time the teacher gave assignments and homework, she had to do it, from writing to reading the letters. Until her friends on campus wondered how she was proficient at writing literally in Arabic starting from the right. Maria explained that she had learned this for a long time even since she was still in school (Interview with Maria on December 02 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh).

Maria was also well known by her colleagues, such as Bripka Agus, a member of polsek BTM in Shabara. Even though he had only known Maria for one year, Agus saw that Maria had a good personality, even being able to mingle with fellow Muslims at polsek. Even though Agus was in a different unit from Maria, they supported each other and could work well together. According to him, Maria was able to adapt to the work environment as well as the surrounding community, and she really respected her Muslim colleagues, just as they respected Maria who was a Christian.

Maria also respected the implementation of Islamic sharia, as evidenced by the veiled uniform she wore, even Maria never took off her veil when she was on duty. Agus also shared that according to Maria's confession she had tried to fast for one day without eating or drinking. She did this to feel how tired her Muslim colleagues were during fasting (Interview with Bripka Agus, a member of Shabara Polsek BTM, on September 11, 2019). Researcher also received this statement via a message on her WhatsApp status which stated that for the sake of her colleagues she was willing to endure hunger during the day, because all of her Muslim colleagues were fasting. Before the assembly was held, Maria and other personnel carried out recitations of remembrance, *salawat* and prayers, as was carried out at Polda and Ditlantas. During the process of reciting the remembrance and prayer, Maria was in line while following the process until it was finished. And before reciting the prayer, the assembly commander instructed to all to follow him in accordance with the beliefs of each personnel besides reciting the remembrance and prayer; they also read the same text of the prayer as all police institutions throughout Indonesia (Interview with Maria on December 02, 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh).

Even though Eli, Kristina and Maria had different experiences, this did not become a significant obstacle when they carried out their duties. Regarding the veiled uniform as stated by Eli, this was a strategy that she did so that everything she did was comfortable. She followed the rules happily without coercion and burden, she even feels wearing the veil as fashionable. Even though there was a desire for her to wear a uniform without a veil like her colleagues outside Aceh, that is a policewomen's uniform with short hair over the shoulders, for her she refused this because she

respected Islamic sharia. She also wore the veil only in the office environment. Meanwhile, if it's outside business hours she took off it again (The result of interview with Brigadir Eli, DLT Polda Aceh, on December 07, 2019, in Banda Aceh). And this was witnessed by researcher oneself through her WhatsApp status when celebrating Christmas with her family at church; during Mass she wore a short-sleeved blouse and without a veil.

Meanwhile, Kristina (P2) stated that regarding uniforms with veils, she and her peers would not resist, because she knew that it was one of the rules, besides that if she did not comply with these rules, then she would look different from the other personnel, and would be the center of attention of people. Therefore, there was nothing wrong with her and her non-Muslim colleagues also adjusting to the work environment because it was polite and made her comfortable, not aiming to find a safe position, because Aceh was indeed safe already. And there is no compulsion at all; she even saw Aceh had a high enough tolerance. Even outside of official hours, sometimes Krsitina also wore a veil. Unless they were asked to wear inappropriate clothing, she and her colleagues would surely refuse. But she also stated that the appearance she showed would never affect her faith in the beliefs she professed (Interview with Kristina on December 02, 2019 at Polsek JR Banda Aceh). Researcher saw that they adapted both in terms of clothing and their participation in every activity with Muslim personnel, as one of their strategies to live and work in an area that implemented Islamic sharia, but everything they did was not under pressure or coercion from any party.

Furthermore, Maria (P3) also had her own experience. For her, regarding uniforms with veils, when the researcher asked Maria whether there was an effort to resist with her other Christian colleagues so that they would wear a uniform without a veil. Maria replied that until now there had never been a non-Muslim minority group to reject and also fight against the clothes they were wearing, on the grounds that the uniform she was currently wearing was very comfortable for her and there was no problem whatsoever with it. Although from deep inside her heart she still wanted uniforms without veils, but she positioned and adapted herself because she served in Aceh, and still followed the rules (Interview with Maria on December 02, 2019 at Polsek BTM Banda Aceh).

When researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the three policewomen regarding their existence while on duty in Aceh, the three showed various responses according to their respective experiences. However, the point that could be concluded was that the habitus attached to them had positioned them in a "safe zone" and comfortable being in the midst of Acehnese society, which was predominantly Muslim. Wearing veiled uniforms, being in an assembly line accompanied by reciting remembrance and prayer with Muslim personnel, participating in Muslim religious recitations and rituals such as Maulid Nabi, breaking the fast together and so on were very valuable experience for them, and this practice had continuously produced their various habits. However, all the activities they participated in were without the intention of showing a symbol and identity as a "Muslim". The three admitted that

even though they wore veiled uniforms, participated in recitations and prayers, and participated in various religious activities of the Muslim community; they remained steadfast in their Christian religion, in fact they truly felt they were true and devout Christians during their time in Aceh.

## 2. *The Concept of Piety*

Saba Mahmood's study very much discussed the debate over the status of religious minorities in a liberal society. She believed in the importance of struggle in secular feminist politics. She also struggled intellectually to highlight the failure of secular Western feminism in understanding the lives of religious women, who were only seen as objects to be empowered or reformed. Through her socioanthropological research, Mahmood showed that women could become agents even in a patriarchal religious tradition. Mahmood responded that even though the United States and France claimed to be secular countries, they were still involved in policies and decisions about how religion was practiced and expressed in public spaces, including prohibiting and defining Muslim women's clothing such as the niqab, which was something that was normatively considered as a matter of personality in liberalism (Mahmood, 2005).

In the book "Politics of Piety", she also compared the Islamic movement between Egypt and Pakistan. According to her, the development of the Islamic movement in Pakistan was quite tragic, where they played a very destructive role as a result of the methodical war, and destroyed the infrastructure and socio-political life in that country. Meanwhile in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood movement avoided militancy and even tended to be reformist, and their focus was on social welfare. Therefore, the politics of piety was the theory that she used to analyze the two different Islamic movements (Mahmood, 2005).

There are two very important concepts or theories in this book, namely:

- a) *Pious self-cultivation*; is a paradigm in which religious individuals have the desire to develop themselves to be more obedient and pious. It is different from a secular point of view, where the self is the source of one's will and truth.
- b) *Embodiment*; is focus on the body as a realm of embodiment and achievement of norms, not as a tool to show praiseworthy qualities (virtue). The body is not only a canvas of symbolism, but also the main tool in the formation of the body (embodied subject) (Mahmood, 2005).

Likewise, in Mahmood's view, the politics of the piety of Muslim women can be a form of agency, resistance and freedom. The essence of the book *Politics of Piety* initiated by her is the emergence of awareness about the more secular the values of life are, the more Islamic values must be upheld. Mahmood criticized Western feminism, especially liberal and secular regarding her study towards study groups on Muslim women in Egypt, by exploring their ways of fighting male domination. While in researcher's study, regarding the existence of 3 non-Muslim policewomen, by borrowing the term *Politics of Piety* from Saba Mahmood, politics is used by policy

makers, in this case the government, which has the authority to establish social piety for minority groups among non-Muslim policewomen through Islamic identity and symbols. This phenomenon can be seen through wearing uniform with a veil, reciting the remembrance at the assembly line in the field, participating in various activities inherent to Muslim personnel and so on, which, when observed, has a mixture of pseudo piety and the political interests of those in authority.

#### ANALYZING

If analyzed using Saba Mahmood's politics of piety theory, where the state is involved in policies and decisions about how religion is practiced and expressed in public spaces, in the context of the 3 non-Muslim policewomen, including regulations in terms of dressing and participating in various religious activities by using symbols of Islamic teachings, according to Mahmood, the state had a role to play in forming this identity, but researcher saw that the three were not under pressure and coercion, they lived it in a conscious state. All of those were done as a strategy to position their existence in an area that implemented Islamic shari'a.

If Saba Mahmood in her theory said that the higher secularism is in the value system of a country's life, the more Islamic values must be upheld. For the context of Aceh researcher tried to use this term with a different meaning. The higher the expression of piety is carried out by the three non-Muslim policewomen in Aceh, the more their religious values towards their religious beliefs increase. Researcher tried to formulate a new theory, if the practice of piety that they display does not expose resistance to the public sphere, and they are able to present their identity through Islamic symbols, then an "obedience engineering" is born, which exceeds religious symbols, meaning that they are in a comfortable position during living in Aceh.

Even so, basically the social practices experienced by the three – such as in the form of obedience to wear a veiled uniform, obedience with regulations that are equivalent to Muslim policewomen when carrying out the assembly and reciting remembrance and prayer, and other religious activities involving Muslim symbols – are not formed as permanent practices. These practices are constantly changing according to the social relations in which these agents are located, as experienced by the three non-Muslim policewomen, Eli, Kristina and Maria. When in the office they wore veils, but outside their working hours they returned to their identity as Christians. This was also practiced by the other non-Muslim policewomen, Eli and Kristina, who were both wives of members of the TNI. Every time they attended the Ibu Persit ceremonial event, they wore uniforms with veils, took part in the reciting of *wirid* and *yasin* in their complex, mourned community members who had died and so on. They practiced this habit continuously as long as they lived and stayed in Aceh. Likewise, Maria, who was a student at Universitas Muhammadiyah, which was an Islamic campus, always wore Muslim clothes like her Muslim friends, so there was no visible difference among them.

Borrowing a term initiated by Ansor, where in his writings he described a Christian woman who wore a veil so that his study gave birth to a "hybrid identity"



which was the result of a complex negotiation between identities as a female teacher, an adherent of Christianity, and an Acehnese, where according to him this phenomenon was not a true identity but a creative strategy to become a Christian woman in Aceh (Ansor & Meutia, 2016; Shepard, 2004).

The comfort felt by the three non-Muslim policewomen was inseparable from the treatment of the people of Aceh towards other people who came from outside Aceh, including non-Muslims. There was one trait and character which was very prominent of the Acehnese, namely, their penchant for glorifying or honoring guests. This was revealed in a *hadih maja*, "*Peumulia jame adat geutanyoe Aceh*", which meant glorifying guests is our Acehnese custom. Fills holistic comfort through indicators of relief, ease, and transcendence. Several studies have shown that this theory is useful in addressing various comfort needs, such as reducing perioperative anxiety and fear, and facilitating the emergence of personalized responses (Bergström et al., 2018; Pomalango, 2023).

If looking at the character of the Acehnese, in essence there was almost no religious tendency towards non-Muslim groups, including non-Muslim minorities, both in civil society and in the police institution, provided that they did not disturb the comfort of the Muslim community in the Aceh region. Even in Aceh there were almost no SARA conflicts (ethnicity, race, religion and groups), as various groups acknowledged when researcher conducted interviews. They highly valued non-Muslim groups and provided comfort and protection for them.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion contains the short summary of the findings and discussion, The religious practices presented by the three non-Muslim policewomen through symbols of other religions had formed "pseudo or false piety" by not exposing resistance to the public sphere. Borrowing the theory initiated by Saba Mahmood namely pious self-cultivation, which is a paradigm in which religious individuals have a desire to develop themselves to be more obedient and pious. This was the experience of the three policewomen who focused more on their beliefs than on rejecting various regulations in force. In fact, the higher the expression of the piety of the three policewomen in the public sphere by using symbols of other religions such as wearing veiled uniforms, being obedient when in line by reciting remembrance and prayer, and actively participating in various activities with the Muslim community in Aceh, the more religious values towards their religious beliefs increase. This is evident from the confessions of the three that all these experiences did not evoke faith to the "Christian" religion they professed.

The experience had by the three policewomen did not encounter any significant obstacles. They were able to place themselves in the midst of the majority Muslim community, and in the police institution, "religion" was a realm of privacy. Even though they lived in a shari'a area that upheld Islamic values, it did not affect their beliefs. They even became more obedient to their Christian religion. The experiences had increasingly made them devout non-Muslims in Aceh. Whatever the three non-Muslim policewomen felt - such as dressing in uniforms with veils both at work and

in the neighborhood, the majority of whom were Muslim, reading prayers in the morning and evening assembly lines, attending the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, celebrating *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* (feast of the sacrifice), studying at an Islamic campus, or living near a boarding school environment – all these activities did not undermine their faith, and no one forced them to covert religions. The identity displayed by the three non-Muslim policewomen was a strategy to become "Muslim" symbolically but not substantively.

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